

HISTORISCHE

TEXTE UND STUDIEN

Catholicism and Fascism in
Europe 1918 - 1945

Edited by Jan Nelis, Anne Morelli
and Danny Praet

OLMS

Historische Texte und Studien

Band 26

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Georg Olms Verlag
Hildesheim · Zürich · New York
2015

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Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

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www.olms.de
E-Book

Umschlaggestaltung: Inga Günther, Hildesheim
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ISBN 978-3-487-42127-8

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THE STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CATHOLICISM AND FASCISM, BEYOND A MANICHEAN APPROACH?

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When the fascist ‘March on Rome’ took place on October 28, 1922, Pius XI had been in the Vatican less than a year. From the very outset, both ‘parties’ actively endeavoured to establish a *modus vivendi*. Whereas Mussolini saw the Church as an *instrumentum regni* which he simultaneously wooed – for example by introducing religious instruction into primary schools and allowing the display of crucifixes in public spaces – and intimidated – cf. as in the attacks on Catholic Action carried out by the regime –, the Pope adopted a more *Real* political attitude, considering fascism to be the most viable political option at that moment. In his view, and in light of the ‘lesser options’ offered by liberalism and socialism, fascism was capable of establishing the conditions seen as ideal by the Vatican for the intended ‘re-christianisation of society’, such as social order and discipline, but more particularly the establishment of an anti-liberal and anti-socialist, authoritarian and hierarchical State.¹

Pius XI piloted the Church’s move towards intervention in civil society primarily at an organisational level. When viewed in relation to the mentioned project of ‘re-christianisation’ of society, the Church’s approach could be termed as a ‘total’, ‘totalising’ or even (sociologically and psychologically) ‘totalitarian’ drive.² The Pope characterised the Church’s ambitions in similar terms, endeavouring to forge the latter into an institution that pursued its goals ‘combatively’, in the name of Jesus Christ ‘the King’ (*Cristo Re*, cf. the Papal

¹ Cf. Giovanni Miccoli, *Fra mito della cristianità e secolarizzazione. Studi sul rapporto chiesa-società nell’età contemporanea*, 1985, Marietti, Casale Monferrato, p. 120.

² On the ‘totalitarian’ character of the catholic Church under Pius XI – cf. the role of Catholic Action –, see Yves Chiron, *Pie XI (1857-1939)*, 2004, Perrin, Paris, p. 196-215, and Giovanni Sale, *Fascismo e Vaticano prima della Conciliazione*, 2007, Jaca Book, Milano, p. 91.

encyclical *Quas Primas*, 1925).³ In this context, the Vatican's gradual abandonment of the catholic *Partito Popolare Italiano* (°1918) can also be seen as a 'tactical' choice not to compromise itself in the game of party politics, a choice reinforced by the fact that the *Partito Popolare* adopted an outspokenly anti-fascist stance.⁴

For the duration of the fascist *ventennio*, the competing institutions of fascism and catholicism developed a mutual relationship of 'give-and-take', which led eventually to the *Conciliazione* of 1929, a pact which comprised not only the Lateran Treaty (essentially a politico-territorial deal between two nations), but also a 'Concordat' which specified the civil rights and duties of both parties. Although the actual implementation of these agreements was to prove somewhat problematic, the two parties never experienced a radical rift or schism, managing to maintain a troubled yet reasonably stable relationship.

Largely considered as a test case for Church-State relations in the context of interwar 'totalitarian modernity',⁵ the outlined relationship between catholicism and the first, quintessential manifestation of 'fascism'⁶ is but one of the many ways in which the Vatican, national Churches and individual catholics dealt with the rise of the extreme right in Europe throughout the 1920s, 1930s and early 1940s. These diverse approaches will be explored and debated in the following series of papers, which cover the period between 1918 and 1945, from the end of the First World War, arguably one of the main catalysts of European interwar fascism, to the conclusion and immediate aftermath of the Second World War.

After the present editorial introduction, three general studies on the catholicism-fascism relationship, by Emilio Gentile, Roger Griffin and Renato Moro, serve as a fitting introduction to the book's subject matter. Gentile, Griffin and Moro explore the various ways in which the mentioned relationship manifested itself, in which it has been studied and discussed, and finally and more particularly, in which it may be studied in the future. They contextualise

³ In this context, as well as for an analysis of the mentioned project of a 're-conquest' or of a 're-christianisation' of Italian society, see Emma Fattorini, *Pio XI, Hitler e Mussolini*, 2007, Einaudi, Torino, p. 20-24.

⁴ On the Vatican attitude *vis-à-vis* the *Partito Popolare* during the *ventennio fascista*, see, among others, Pietro Scoppola, *La Chiesa e il fascismo. Documenti e interpretazioni*, 1976, Laterza, Roma-Bari, p. 63-68.

⁵ Cf. e.g. Emilio Gentile (ed.), *Modernità totalitaria. Il fascismo italiano*, 2008, Laterza, Roma-Bari. See also Id., *La via italiana al totalitarismo. Il Partito e lo Stato nel regime fascista. Nuova edizione*, 2008, Carocci, Roma.

⁶ For a more elaborate treatment of the Italian situation, see the introduction to the paper by Nelis included in the present volume (on which the present observations are based), and above all the introductory paper by Emilio Gentile, as well as his paper entitled 'New idols: Catholicism in the face of Fascist totalitarianism', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 11/2, 2006, p. 143-170, and Renato Moro, 'Religione del trascendente e religioni politiche. Il cattolicesimo italiano di fronte alla sacralizzazione fascista della politica', *Mondo contemporaneo. Rivista di storia* 1, 2005, p. 9-67.

and establish the main interpretive lines along which the following papers will treat their subject.

Emilio Gentile's paper is to be read in combination with his writings on the theme of 'totalitarian Caesarism', which he sees as central to a comprehensive treatment of the relations between interwar Italian fascism and catholicism.⁷ This thesis is here combined with his thinking on the notion of fascism (Italian, but not exclusively) as a 'political religion',⁸ a concept which he has been developing and refining, recently also in relation to catholicism.⁹ He clearly shows that, especially as evidenced in the mindset of Pius XI, fascist totalitarianism and the sacralization of politics were a near tangible reality, with which Vatican diplomacy dealt in varied ways.

In his conclusion, Gentile reminds us that, in spite of the catalyzing effect that the notion of political religion has had not only on the study of fascism and totalitarianism, but also of traditional religion, the debate is all but closed, homogenous and free of controversy. Indeed, only "by removing the obstacles that are the misunderstandings, misconceptions and mystifications, is it possible for exploration, conducted with intellectual integrity and a genuine desire for knowledge, to be fruitful."

Roger Griffin, author of a number of landmark studies on fascism,¹⁰ presents a highly vibrant discussion on the tension between 'revealed' religion and the phenomenon of sacralisation of politics in Europe. As is also the case with Gentile, Griffin's thinking orbits to a certain extent around the notion of modernity,¹¹ whereby he situates the book's general theme against the background of a nomic crisis which led to a proliferation of solutions and possible attitudes, both from the part of fascists and catholics.

Drawing from a variety of sources, Griffin aptly illustrates how the breakdown of liberalism paved the way for the phenomenon of ultranationalism. He offers an incisive look at the highly distinctive context of interwar European modernity, notably, and most poignantly, observing that "the storms of progress that repeatedly battered European civilization triggered a pandemic

⁷ Cf. Emilio Gentile, *Contro Cesare. Cristianesimo e totalitarismo nell'epoca dei fascismi*, 2010, Feltrinelli, Milano.

⁸ Cf. e.g. Emilio Gentile, 'Fascism as Political Religion', *Journal of Contemporary History* 25/2-3, 1990, p. 229-251; Id., *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*, 1996, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (MA); Id., *Politics as Religion*, 2006, Princeton University Press, Princeton (N.J.).

⁹ Cf. Gentile, 'New idols', op. cit.; Id., *Contro Cesare*, op. cit.

¹⁰ Cf. e.g. Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, 1993, Routledge, London; Id. (ed.), *Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion*, 2005, Routledge, London-New York; Id., *Modernism and Fascism. The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*, 2007, Palgrave, London.

¹¹ Cf. Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, op. cit., and Gentile (ed.), *Modernità totalitaria*, op. cit. In this context, see also Renato Moro, 'Il 'modernismo buono'. La 'modernizzazione' cattolica tra fascismo e postfascismo come problema storiografico', *Storia Contemporanea* 19/4, 1988, p. 625-716.

of collaboration among Catholics with what a moment's sober meditation in more serene times would have soon revealed to be one of their arch-enemies.”

Renato Moro, who has published extensively on Italian (and international) catholicism and fascism during the interwar years,¹² underlines the great value of a comparative analysis, and a need to take into account the many potential attitudes that Catholics, both clergymen and laymen, could adopt when confronted with fascism. He does so by maintaining a focus on the way in which Catholics perceived fascism, and on the changes which this relationship implied for the Catholic religious experience, in so doing aligning with Gentile's successful attempts at developing an ‘inner approach’ in the study of fascism, and Catholicism.

Thoroughly revisiting the theme of an earlier paper,¹³ Moro also crosses the divide between the fascist and immediate post-war periods, pointing to the fact that in many national contexts, Catholics, even if not openly opposed to fascism, also played a ‘moderating’ role, allowing them to “appear to public opinion as a force that was not directly connected either with fascism or with leftist political anti-fascism.” Indeed what could be termed as Catholic postwar ‘triumphalism’, as exemplified for example by the figure of Pius XII,¹⁴ does not seem to have been hindered by the at times intimate ties that had existed between fascists and Catholics, who generally were seen as having been opposed to rather than inclined towards fascism.

The remaining 22 papers that make up the present book were originally intended to be collated into a series of subsections, each of which would unite papers that for reasons of subject or method are closely related. However, because some papers are not limited to one specific geographical area – for example by developing a comparative or combining approach – or to one specific methodology, the editors have opted to abandon the originally intended internal division, instead presenting papers in a roughly geographical order, from West to East, whereas the more purely theoretical considerations are located towards the end of the volume. This has the advantage of allowing for an even closer interlacing of the papers, facilitating the intention of realizing a ‘cluster’-like interpretive scheme for the study of Catholicism and fascism (cf. *infra*).

¹² Cf. e.g. Renato Moro, *La formazione della classe dirigente cattolica (1929-1937)*, 1979, il Mulino, Bologna; Id., ‘Azione Cattolica, clero e laicato di fronte al fascismo’, in: Francesco Malgeri (ed.), *Storia del Movimento Cattolico in Italia*, IV, 1981, Il Poligono, Roma, p. 87-377; Id., ‘Le premesse dell’atteggiamento cattolico di fronte alla legislazione razziale fascista. Cattolici ed ebrei nell’Italia degli anni venti (1919-1932)’, *Storia Contemporanea* 19/6, 1988, p. 1013-1119; Id., ‘Religion and Politics in the Time of Secularisation: The Sacralisation of Politics and Politicisation of Religion’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 6/1, 2005, p. 71-86.

¹³ Moro, ‘Religion and Politics in the Time of Secularisation’, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ Cf. Oliver Logan, ‘Pius XII: romanità, prophesy and charisma’, *Modern Italy* 3/2, 1998, p. 237-247.

More concretely, the present volume consists of a number of papers focusing primarily on theoretical, methodological issues pertaining to the book's general theme, whereas the majority of papers focus on a country or region where a fascist movement or regime flourished between the wars and during World War II, and where there was a significant catholic presence in society. The different chapters cover almost the entire European continent, and they explore a wide range of relevant methodologies and contexts. In particular, the following themes and investigative pathways are treated:

- 1) the heuristic notion of fascism as a 'political religion';
- 2) the concept of catholic 'politicisation of religion';
- 3) the definition of the phenomenon of 'clerical fascism' and its possible manifestations;
- 4) the value and usefulness of a comparative approach;
- 5) the various forms of reception of Italian, German and Spanish fascism by catholics in foreign contexts;
- 6) the prospect of research based on recently discovered and/or released archival materials;
- 7) the importance of the role of catholic and fascist intellectuals: towards a historiography of fascist and catholic culture;
- 8) the relationship between catholic and fascist 'modernism'.

As exemplified by the title of this short introductory chapter, the declared intent of the present volume is to go 'beyond a Manichean approach'. The historiography in this particular field of research has often been characterised by very outspoken and frequently conflicting ideological currents. In extreme cases, the latter either fully deny any possible convergence between catholic religion and fascist ideology, or on the other hand sustain the thesis that catholics supported fascism unconditionally.

As a response to the need for open-minded, dispassionate discussion on the outlined subject matter, some papers explicitly address, in the context of their specific topic, the relevant debate concerning the ideologisation of historiography – the mentioned Manicheism –, whereas others offer, where applicable and possible, a varied account of the general relations between catholicism and fascism (or the extreme right) in each specific geographical context.

For some countries, primarily Italy, but also Portugal, Spain and France, the inclusion of various differing studies also offers the advantage of combining mainly convergent, but occasionally also divergent, perspectives, thus allowing these papers to enrich, but also refine and in some cases question or oppose, each other's viewpoint. Thanks to the various individual and combined approaches and themes, the book thus serves a double purpose: on the one hand authors present research on the general theme of the relationship between catholicism and fascism in Europe (fundamental contribution at the

level of content); on the other hand the discussion is moved to a theoretical level (fundamental methodological contribution).

As stated, the initial editorial scope was twofold: both spatial and methodological. These goals have been largely achieved, because the book spans almost the entire European continent – an endeavour that is unprecedented for this kind of publication – and also further explores a host of methodological approaches, thus contributing to the general development of an interpretive ‘cluster’ model that incorporates a series of investigative matrixes, and that can hopefully serve future research. In closing, it should also be added, on a more concrete level, that the recent opening of the Vatican archives has provided researchers with a whole new spectrum of investigative possibilities, many of which have yet to be fully explored. In light of this, the upcoming years seem highly promising. It is also hoped that the present volume will contribute to a better and more refined knowledge of not only the notions of ‘catholic Church’ and ‘catholics’, but also of the notion of ‘fascism’, which could and can cover a wide variety of subjects.

Before leaving the stage to the 27 scholars that have participated in this project,¹⁵ the editors would like to thank all participants, as well as all those instances that have contributed, whether directly or indirectly, to its realisation, and this in random order: the Academia Belgica in Rome, the Belgian Historical Institute in Rome, Ghent University (Centre for the Study of Christian Traditions-CSCT), the Université libre de Bruxelles (Centre interdisciplinaire d’étude des religions et de la laïcité-CIERL), the Fonds de la Recherche scientifique, and the Fonds voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek-Vlaanderen. Special thanks also goes to Ruth Stewart Leach, who carefully and insightfully revised part of the English papers, Gitte Callaert and Eline Scheerlinck (Ghent University), Jean-Philippe Schreiber (Université libre de Bruxelles-CIERL), Patrick Loo-buyck (University of Antwerp), Paul Wynants (Université de Namur), Jeffrey Tyssens (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), and finally also to Peter Guyot at Olms-Weidmann for welcoming this initiative.

¹⁵ The project was started in 2010. As a consequence, some of the papers included in the present volume do not make reference to very recently published scholarship.

CATHOLICISM AND FASCISM. REALITY AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS

Emilio Gentile, Università di Roma 'la Sapienza'

- “Sempre più chiaramente si delineano i danni portati dal Fascismo. Infatti il Fascismo:
1. ha creato una confusione tra partito, Italia, Duce. Conclusione: un capriccio del Duce è la rovina d'Italia;
 2. ha distrutto qualsiasi libertà di azione e di discussione. Conclusione: gli italiani sono ormai un popolo di pecore che corrono dove il pastore, col bastone, le porta;
 3. ha educato le generazioni alla violenza. Conclusione: tutti sono eroi, pronti a menar le mani, sicuri che agli altri non rimarrà... che prendere le busse;
 4. ha seguito in politica estera una linea fatta da colpi di testa, sgarbatezze, urti, minacce, prepotenze. Conclusione: ha fatto sì che tutto il mondo fosse contro il Fascismo;
 5. ha preannunziato, preconizzato, proclamato un impero. Conclusione: si sta esaurendo in una guerra coloniale, dura e dispendiosa, che non avrà che due scopi: sciupar soldi e conquistar terre inospiti;
 6. ha gridato ai quattro venti la forza, la grandezza, la ricchezza dell'Italia. Conclusione: oggi un popolo di straccioni si dà arie da... Sardanapalo, un popolo debole e poco evoluto si dà l'aria del più grande popolo della terra;
 7. ha divinizzato il Duce, facendo chinare tutti davanti a questo Nume. Conclusione: non c'è più vita politica, non c'è più possibilità di preparare nuove energie per i bisogni inevitabili del domani;
 8. ha preteso, imposto a tutti la più assoluta ed intransigente docilità. Conclusione: non c'è ormai che un'accozzaglia di schiavi, pronti sempre a dir di sì, a batter le mani, saturi... di entusiasmo;
 9. ha accentrato tutti i poteri, tutti i mezzi, tutte le età nelle mani e nelle organizzazioni dello Stato. Conclusione: la Chiesa non può più contare su moltissime anime che son prese dal demone del Nazionalismo e che credono più a Mussolini che al Papa;
 10. ha creato tutto un groviglio di leggi, di consuetudini, di associazioni che pongono ogni cosa e ogni persona in balia dello Stato. Conclusione: il comunismo troverebbe, domani, già pronte le leggi. Non avrebbe che ad applicarle, con altro nome, con altro spirito, ma con la stessa tendenza autocrate e distruttrice delle energie individuali.”

These are not the words of an historian of the fascist political religion, but were instead penned by monsignor Domenico Tardini, *sottosegretario della congregazione per gli Affari ecclesiastici straordinari*, in his notes on 'thirteen years of fascism', written on behalf of Pius XI between September 23^d and December 13th, 1935, i.e. at a time when fascist Italy was attacking Ethiopia.¹ In order to grasp the

¹ The document, which can be consulted in the Vatican Secret Archives, is integrally reproduced in Lucia Ceci, "Il Fascismo manda l'Italia in rovina." Le note inedite di monsignor Domenico Tardini (23 settembre-13 dicembre 1935)', *Rivista Storica Italiana* 1, 2008, p. 323-346. On Tardini,

gravity of Tardini's judgments and previsions, it is important to observe that he wrote his notes at a moment when the adhesion of Catholics and the clergy to fascist politics seemed more intense and enthusiastic than it had ever been throughout the *ventennio fascista*. The document seems even more significant when we consider the fact that Tardini did not develop a contingent and personal denunciation of fascism, but echoed, in his considerations, a series of alarmed reflections on the dangers posed by fascism, as a form of totalitarianism and political religion, both to the Church and to the Catholic religion. This warning was certainly met with an increasingly fearful preoccupation by Pius XI, who more than a year earlier had ordered the Jesuits of the Holy Office to prepare the materials necessary to assemble an encyclical with which the pope intended to publicly condemn nationalism, racism and totalitarianism (*Elencus Propositionum de Nationalismo, Stirpis cultu, Totalismo*), recognizing the fact that the Church and Catholicism "were dealing with a political religion that deified the state".² The elaboration progressed through a number of stages in 1936, with most of the preparatory texts subsequently included in the 1937 encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge*, as well as in the last encyclical Pius XI prepared before his death, *Humani generis unitas*, which was, however, concealed by his successor.³

As I have shown in my publications on this subject,⁴ in the history of relations between Catholicism and fascism, a fundamentally important aspect, and one that had its roots in Catholic antifascism, was the interpretation of fascism as a political religion. Amply confirmed as it has been by further research, as well as by the majority of papers presented in the present volume, today this interpretation has once more, and with a certain degree of authority, been confirmed by Tardini's notes.⁵ As observed by the researcher who has published them, in his notes Tardini

cfr. Carlo Felice Casula, *Domenico Tardini. L'azione della Santa Sede nella crisi fra le due guerre*, 1988, Studium, Roma.

² Peter Godman, *Hitler and the Vatican. Inside the Secret Archives that Reveal the New Story of the Nazis and the Church*, 2004, Free Press, New York, p. 85 sqq.

³ Cfr. Georges Passelecq/Bernard Suchecky, *L'encyclique cachée de Pie XI: une occasion manquée de l'Église face à l'antisémitisme*, 1995, La Découverte, Paris.

⁴ Emilio Gentile, 'Fascism as Political Religion', *Journal of Contemporary History* 25/2-3, 1990, p. 229-251; Id., *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*, 1996, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (MA); Id., 'The Sacralization of Politics: Definitions, Interpretations and Reflections on the Question of Secular Religion and Totalitarianism', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 1, 2000, p. 18-55; Id., *Politics as Religion*, 2006, Princeton University Press, Princeton (N.J.); Id., 'New Idols: Catholicism in the face of Fascist totalitarianism', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 2/11, 2006, p. 143-178; Id., *Contro Cesare. Cristianesimo e totalitarismo nell'epoca dei fascismi*, 2010, Feltrinelli, Milano.

⁵ Cfr. Renato Moro, 'Religione del trascendente e religioni politiche: Il cattolicesimo italiano di fronte alla sacralizzazione fascista della politica', *Mondo contemporaneo* 1, 2005, p. 9-67; Jan Nelis, 'The Clerical Response to a Totalitarian Political Religion: *La Civiltà Cattolica* and Italian Fascism', *Journal of Contemporary History* 46/2, 2011, p. 245-270; Jorge Dagnino, 'The intellectuals of Italian

“metteva a fuoco elementi di analisi del regime puntuali e nodali, in una disamina che sembra precorrere, in certi passaggi, alcune interpretazioni sviluppate successivamente dalla storiografia sul fascismo. Vi si trovano infatti puntualmente additati, sia pure nella forma breve e schematica dell’elenco per punti, i temi del totalitarismo, del consenso, del culto della personalità, del fascismo come religione politica, della rivalità tra cattolicesimo e fascismo per il controllo e la formazione delle coscienze.”⁶

That said, the scholar has abstained from furnishing information on the historiography that treated the contents of Tardini’s document, as if they were themes that by now had become generally recognized by historians.

In reality however, concerning the phenomenon of the fascist political religion, totalitarianism, the attitude of the Church and catholicism versus the latter, and even concerning the rivalries and conflicts between catholicism and fascism for the control and the formation of the minds and the education of the new generations, there still exist polemics and controversies, many of which, as I have already shown elsewhere and as I will show in the present paper, are caused by ignorance of the phenomenon in itself, or by the underestimation of its importance to the comprehension of the relations between catholicism and fascism.⁷

Because these controversies have generated misconceptions, misunderstandings or even mystifications, resulting in an altered version of the interpretation of fascism as a political religion and of the attitude of the Church and catholicism being presented, it is necessary to rid the field of investigation of such controversies, whereby showing their historical unreliability and inappropriateness.

Fascist political religion: auto-image of the regime?

A primary misunderstanding concerns the origins of the interpretation of fascism as a totalitarian political regime. Scholars have contested this interpretation, or denied its importance in the history of the relations between fascism and catholicism, arguing that interpreting fascism as a political religion validates the image of fascism conveyed by fascism itself. In reality, these scholars show that they do not know that the first people to interpret fascism as a political religion were Italian catholic antifascists.⁸ They intuitively comprehended the tight connection that existed in fascism between its political ideas and its practical struggle. As early as August 1922, the catholic democrat

Catholic Action and the Sacralisation of Politics in 1930s Europe’, *Contemporary European History* 21/2, 2012, p. 215-233.

⁶ Lucia Ceci, *Il papa non deve parlare. Chiesa, fascismo e guerra d’Etiopia*, 2010, Laterza, Roma-Bari, p. 138-139.

⁷ Emilio Gentile, ‘Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion: Definitions and Critical Reflections on Criticism of an Interpretation’, in: Roger Griffin (ed.), *Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion*, 2005, Routledge, London-New York, p. 32-81.

⁸ Cfr. Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics*, op. cit., p. 73-74; Id., *Politics as Religion*, op. cit., p. 68 sqq.

Francesco Luigi Ferrari had written that Mussolini dreamt of a fascist oligarchical State, modelled upon pagan Rome, and therefore absolutely irreconcilable with christianity. After the ‘march on Rome’, Ferrari led a passionate campaign to show that fascism, proclaiming itself champion of the Church, intended to subordinate catholicism to its political ambitions. Under the cover of religiosity, fascism is pagan and materialist, thus Ferrari on February 18th, 1923, “è antidemocratico per la sua origine, per il suo metodo, per le sue finalità oligarchiche” that are openly proclaimed.⁹ In August 1923 Novello Papafava, a catholic liberal, was one of the first to intuitively sense that there was an intimate connection between the antidemocratic politics of fascism in power and its claims to the “possesso di una assoluta verità di cui appunto il fascismo e specialmente Benito Mussolini sono gli unici depositari e che essi devono spargere ed imporre in Italia per salvare gli italiani.” Mussolini proclaimed himself

“unico interprete e depositario della nuova religione della Patria. [...] Dunque, chi non ama la Patria secondo i dogmi di Benito Mussolini e secondo i riti da lui fissati, è un eretico che va consegnato al fuoco purificatore dei moschetti della milizia nazionale”.¹⁰

Both the Church and fascism had an aversion for communism, liberalism and democracy, and while the fascist party presented itself as the protector of catholicism, the Vatican started to negotiate with the Mussolini government. But the priest Luigi Sturzo, founder and secretary of the *Partito popolare italiano*, unequivocally and firmly condemned fascism as an antichristian movement, because it sacralized the nation and the State as a divinity, putting in danger both the liberty of the individual and that of the Church. Above all, Don Sturzo denounced the way in which fascism acted, i.e. as a “sistema di minacce, di violenze e di oppressione”, thanks to which fascism had come to power and was presently moving towards the “assimilazione dello Stato”, through political action in which

“la tendenza prevalente è quella della trasformazione *totalitaria* di ogni e qualsiasi forza morale, culturale, politica, religiosa in questa nuova concezione: ‘la fascista’. E poiché le menti non si piegano né le coscienze si trasformano, è fatale che si pieghino le teste e le ginocchia con l’uso della forza esterna”.¹¹

In October 1923, don Sturzo warned: “la minaccia più grave è la pretesa del fascismo di monopolizzare l’azione educativa, dai balilla alla scuola, dai fasci all’associazione combattenti”, whereby priests are assigned with the task of

⁹ Francesco Luigi Ferrari, *‘Il Domani d’Italia’ e altri scritti del primo dopoguerra (1919-1926)*, M. G. Rossi (ed.), 1983, Storia e Letteratura, Roma, p. 13-16.

¹⁰ Novello Papafava, ‘Il Fascismo e la costituzione’, *La Rivoluzione Liberale*, August 28, 1923.

¹¹ Luigi Sturzo, ‘Spirito e realtà’, *La Rivoluzione Liberale*, January 15, 1924.

supporting, with the prestige of the catholic tradition, the sacralization of the nation and of fascism itself. In this way, so warned the founder of the *Partito popolare*, fascism degraded catholicism “come una religione nazionale”, and used it “come uno strumento di potere”.¹² In a January 1924 article on ‘La Rivoluzione Liberale’, Sturzo came to a similar conclusion, i.e. that fascism denied the existence and function of the other parties, and that it used coercion to impose its “tendenza totalitaria e dominatrice”, constantly seeking the elimination of all other parties. In February 1924, the priest condemned the collaboration between catholicism and fascism, because he deemed the substance of fascism as being “fondamentalmente pagana e in antitesi col cattolicesimo. Si tratta di statolatria pagana e di deificazione della Nazione.” Furthermore, Sturzo added, fascism admitted and encouraged “le azioni immorali, quali l’omicidio a fini nazionali. L’incitamento alla violenza contrasta direttamente non solo contro lo Stato di diritto ma peggio contro la legge dell’amore proclamata dal Vangelo.” Those catholics that thought they could adhere to fascism while remaining faithful to catholic doctrines were lying to themselves or deluding themselves, because fascism “vuole essere *adorato* per sé, vuole arrivare a creare lo *Stato fascista*.”¹³ The following April, Sturzo denounced “la mortificazione totalitaria e livellatrice del fascismo stato-nazione contro ogni altra corrente di idee politiche, che si concretizzi in partito e aspiri alla vita.”¹⁴

Don Sturzo was one of the first to use the neologism “totalitario”, coined in 1923 by the liberal Giovanni Amendola¹⁵ to define not only the ideology, intentions or ambitions of the fascists, but above all to define the concrete political action of fascism as a party and as a regime, which did not only pretend to dominate the will of the Italians, but also wanted to dominate their conscience, claiming for itself, much in the way of a religion, the prerogative to interpret the sense and finality of existence, by imposing its ideology as a new collective credo. In the same way, in May 1924, Iginò Giordani, a militant of the *Partito popolare*, wrote of the “religione fascista”, and warned catholics and the Church against giving in to the offers of the Mussolini government, and to not let themselves be cheated by its praise of catholicism, because fascism was a new version of caesaro-papism, that wanted to subjugate the forces of the Church to its politics, “non potendo lasciarle operar fuori dei quadri dell’occupazione totalitaria.”¹⁶

Ordered into exile by the Vatican in October 1924, don Sturzo continued, in the following years, to work on the interpretation of fascism as a new

¹² Luigi Sturzo, *Popolarismo e fascismo*, 1924, Gobetti, Torino, p. 338.

¹³ Luigi Sturzo, *Il Partito popolare italiano*, 2003, Storia e letteratura, Roma, p. 14-17.

¹⁴ Sturzo, *Il Partito popolare*, op. cit., p. 24.

¹⁵ Emilio Gentile, ‘Fascism in power: the totalitarian experiment’, in: Adrian Lyttelton (ed.), *Liberal and Fascist Italy 1900-1940*, 2002, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 139-141.

¹⁶ Iginò Giordani, ‘Motivi di religione fascista’, *Il Popolo*, May 10, 1924.

form of antichristian religion, disapproving, even if with the caution inherent to his priesthood, of the relations between the Church and the regime.¹⁷ On January 18th, 1926, he stated that the *Partito popolare* had

“il diritto e il dovere di non dare la sua adesione a un sistema politico che vuole fare della Religione uno strumento di dominio; mentre tende alla deificazione della Nazione-Stato, e alla confusione dello Stato col Governo e del Governo con il partito e del partito con una persona.”¹⁸

During the consolidation of the regime, and after the *Conciliazione*, of which he privately disapproved, Sturzo was one of the most keen observers of the process of sacralization of politics under totalitarian regimes, considering it not as a phenomenon of auto-representation, but as the revelation of the anti-democratic and antichristian essence of these regimes, a very real phenomenon which Sturzo defined, in 1933, as a “religione secolarizzata” and an “idolatria collettiva”:

“But why should we be surprised? Is it perhaps not the case that there are more idols and more idolatry in modern times and amongst Christian and civilized peoples? They may not be called Jove or Moloch, but our idols have more seductive names: they are called Nation, State, Liberty, Authority, Republic, Monarchy, Race, and Class. While incense and hieratic or rather occultist rituals are not offered up to them, there is another much more significant incense used, that of infinite praise, and there is no shortage of civil rituals, which often take on religious forms. It is true that modern idolatries are secularized religions, but they are not without sanctuaries, altars and victims. Since the development of the cult of the goddess reason, modern idolatries in moments of particular fervor feel nostalgia for the ancient idolatries and the need to imitate their rituals of worship. But what they particularly need are victims. Today the number of victims sacrificed to these cruel gods in civil and conventional wars is far greater than at the time of Iphigenia. They can be counted in thousands and in millions.”¹⁹

For these reasons, Sturzo was always opposed to the politics of reconciliation between the Church and the regime, considering as absolutely incompatible the union between catholicism and the fascist totalitarianism that divinized the State and the *duce*. The collective idolatries realized by these regimes were not marginal or spectacular aspects, but the essence of their will to dominate the bodies and minds:

“The preconditions for idolatry are that the idol has more power than man and that this power derives from absoluteness. It does not matter if there are more than one idol; indeed it is in the nature of idolatry that it increases the number of idols, because it is in them that man attempts to rediscover the means to make up for the deficiencies

¹⁷ Gentile, *Politics as Religion*, op. cit., p. 98-103.

¹⁸ Elena Aga Rossi (ed.), *Dal partito popolare alla democrazia cristiana*, 1969, Cappelli, Rocca San Casciano, p. 248.

¹⁹ Cit. in Gentile, *Politics as Religion*, op. cit., p. 68.

of the individual through a symbol of the collective force. Idolatry is collective rather than individual. It is the *totem* of primitive society, and the symbol of the clan, the tribe, the race or the nation. Hence the individual's duty to sacrifice himself as though to the principle itself of social vitality. If you apply these elements to Russian bolscevism, German Nazism and Italian fascism, you will find the idolatrous motivations contained within their essence and affirmation as *totalitarian* systems. Why the surprise that Lenin's tomb is today the object of pilgrimages, veneration and religious exaltation? The logic of bolscevism drives its leaders to declare open war on every religion, because every religion today – in our civilization – is Christian and can only allow for the one true God. Hitler's Germans do not go as far as openly fighting against Christianity, as they would encounter fierce resistance. However, they use insidious means to fight it, as they attack the universal principle of the children of God and human brotherhood outside the confines of race and nation. The Nazi gospel is the race, the purity of Aryan race, which is the foundation of their mystical religion. [...] Today victims are sacrificed to the German race, in the midst of hymns of adoration and revelry. Fascism does not escape this idolatry. For some time Catholics have been complaining of the use of theological terms and rituals to exalt fascists and fascist festivals. On several occasions, orators, journalists and ministers have let slip the word *god*, attributing it to Mussolini, and the word *godhead* when speaking of Italy."²⁰

In the 1930s, thanks also to the writings of don Sturzo, which were translated in the main Western languages, the interpretation of fascism and of the other totalitarianisms as political religions was disseminated across Europe and the United States, and it was shared not only by catholic intellectuals and theologians, but also by many protestant intellectuals and theologians, who studied the political religions, considering them not only as ideologies or forms of auto-representation, but as integral parts of the political reality of totalitarian regimes.²¹

Replace catholicism with fascist religion?

Another major misunderstanding common among critics of the interpretation of fascism as a political religion, is the attribution, to the *duce* and the fascist regime, of having the intent to replace catholic and fascist religion. Here also, criticism has been based on facts that do not exist, or on hypotheses that lack any foundation in historical reality. For example, polemicizing with the author of the book *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*, Lutz Klinkhammer has sustained that the “sacralizzazione fascista della politica” was in any case “troppo debole per poter sostituire il Cattolicesimo senza una promessa dell’Aldilà. E una credenza ultraterrena propria del Fascismo sarebbe stata assurda al cospetto delle tradizioni cristiane italiane, oltre che incompatibile con il Concordato.”²² John Pollard seconds this thesis, adding that “there was never

²⁰ Cit. in Gentile, *Politics as Religion*, op. cit., p. 99-100.

²¹ Cfr. Gentile, *Contro Cesare*, op. cit., p. 341 sqq.

²² Lutz Klinkhammer, ‘Il fascismo italiano tra religione di Stato e liturgia politica’, in: Vincenzo Ferrone (ed.), *La chiesa cattolica e il totalitarismo*, 2004, Olschki, Firenze, p. 202-203.

the remote possibility that Fascism could in any sense replace Catholicism as a national religion, despite Mussolini's many claims to the contrary."²³

In reality, *The Sacralization of Politics* does in fact not speak of the fascist religion as a religion that wanted to supplant catholicism, nor has the author ever sustained that fascism proposed its own ultraearthly credence in order to substitute catholicism as the national religion. On the contrary, the author clearly writes that fascism "practiced what we might call a syncretic form of cohabitation, looking to associate Catholicism with its own totalitarian project":

"With an eye on a form of syncretic marriage, Fascist religion managed not to become a direct antagonist of Catholicism [...] because it had properly evaluated the risks in so doing to the stability of the regime, nonetheless tried to absorb the church into its own mythical universe. Catholicism, Fascists thought, could be syncretically absorbed into Fascist religion as a 'religion of the fathers', thus as a creation and component of the traditions of the 'Italian race', and not, therefore, as a universal 'religion of man' revealed by God. For Mussolini, Catholicism, born as an oriental sect, had become universal only by transplanting itself to Rome and putting down the foundations for its development in imperial traditions. [...] From this synthesis [Fascism] could build a new, universal civilization, in which Catholicism would be a constituent and inseparable part of Italian identity in the common search for Romanity."²⁴

Moreover, it is not true that the *duce* wanted to "replace Catholicism as a national religion". On the contrary, from 1920 onwards, and for the duration of the entire *ventennio*, Mussolini declared, publicly as well as privately, that he wanted to preserve and valorize catholicism to use it in the context of Italian expansion. In May 1920, at the second *Fasci di combattimento* congress, Mussolini abandoned the antichristianism to which he had professed up until 1919, and declared:

"Quanto al Papato bisogna intendersi: il Vaticano rappresenta 400 milioni di uomini sparsi in tutto il mondo ed una politica intelligente dovrebbe usare ai fini dell'espansionismo proprio questa forza colossale. Io sono, oggi, completamente al di fuori di ogni religione, ma i problemi politici sono problemi politici. Nessuno in Italia, se non vuole scatenare la guerra religiosa, può attentare a questa comunità spirituale."²⁵

In the following month of August, Mussolini hailed the spiritual empire of christianity "che non ha territori, ma ha ancora un'idea nella quale si raccolgono quattrocento milioni di uomini sparsi sulla faccia della terra": "È un impero che conta oramai la sua vita a millenni. Sui flutti agitati della storia è ancora la barca

²³ John Pollard, 'Clerical Fascism in Interwar Europe', in: Matthew Feldman/Marius Turda/Tudor Georgescu (eds.), *Clerical Fascism in Interwar Europe*, 2008, Routledge, London-New York, p. 232. Pollard repeats the same in 'Fascism and Catholicism', in: R. J. B. Bosworth (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism*, 2009, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 183.

²⁴ Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics*, op. cit., p. 70-75.

²⁵ Benito Mussolini, *Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini*, E. Susmel/D. Susmel (eds.), vol. XIV, 1951-1963, La Fenice, Firenze, p. 471.

del divino ebreo Gesù quella che galleggia meglio di tutte le altre”.²⁶ On September 5th, 1920, Mussolini added once more that fascism did not even have to be anticlerical, because anticlericalism was

“ormai una cosa rancida e superata. Ma meno ancora io voglio che siamo anticattolici. Abbiamo in Italia una grande forza riconosciuta: da Roma si parla a quattrocento milioni di uomini. Roma, oltreché come capitale d’Italia, va riguardata come capitale di un immenso impero spirituale. Se il nazionalismo utilizzasse, ai fini dell’espansione nazionale, la forza del cattolicesimo, io credo che potrebbe trarne molta utilità.”²⁷

Mussolini’s new course in matters of religious politics continued in 1921, when fascism became a mass party, imposing itself with the violence of *squadrisimo* and presenting itself as the defender of Italy, of order, of bourgeois society and of catholic religion. “Qualcuno può dirvi”, thus Mussolini during the May 1921 electoral campaign, “che il fascismo è nemico della religione, che vuole cristianizzare l’Italia. Questa è una ridicola e ignobile calunnia. Noi non facciamo dell’anticlericalismo vecchio stile: noi rispettiamo profondamente la religione quando sia sinceramente professata”.²⁸ At the foundational congress of the National fascist party, Mussolini spoke of the relations between State and Church, stressing the fact that the State was sovereign

“in ogni campo dell’attività nazionale. Prima di togliere la legge delle guarentigie occorrono cautele. La diplomazia vaticana è più abile di quella della Consulta. Bisogna imporre il rispetto a ogni fede, perché per il fascismo il fatto religioso rientra nel campo della coscienza individuale. Il cattolicesimo può essere utilizzato per l’espansione nazionale”.²⁹

When Benedict XV died on January 22nd, 1922, Mussolini commented on the pontiff’s death by exalting “il più vasto e il più vecchio impero del mondo”, that had been in existence for twenty centuries, with its universal centre in the Eternal City:

“Verso Roma guardano in quest’ora uomini di tutte le razze e di tutti i continenti. Il fatto ha una sua grandiosità che non può essere diminuita dai pronunciamenti o dai silenzi del mondo laico, che non ha creato e non può creare niente che assurga, anche in parte, all’enorme potenza spirituale del cattolicesimo”.³⁰

On February 5th, 1922, while at piazza San Pietro waiting for the outcome of the conclave that followed upon Benedict’s death, Mussolini observed: “E’ incredibile come i governi liberali non abbiano capito l’universalità del papa,

²⁶ Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, op. cit., vol. XV, p. 125.

²⁷ Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, op. cit., vol. XV, p. 187.

²⁸ Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, op. cit., vol. XVI, p. 314-315.

²⁹ Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, op. cit., vol. XVII, p. 221.

³⁰ Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, op. cit., vol. XVII, p. 250.

erede dell'universalità dell'Impero romano, rappresenti la gloria più grande della storia e delle tradizioni italiane.”³¹ After the ‘march on Rome’, Mussolini repeatedly showed his respect for catholicism. During an international conference in Lausanne, while speaking to a number of foreign journalists, Mussolini said: “Affermo che il cattolicesimo è una grande potenza spirituale e morale e confido che i rapporti fra lo Stato italiano e il Vaticano saranno d’ora innanzi amichevoli.”³²

Eight years later, the *duce* had not changed this attitude towards catholicism, an attitude which had been manifest since 1920. In 1930, in a secret speech to the federal secretaries of the fascist party, Mussolini said:

“There is no need to get all tied up with antireligiousness and give Catholics reason for unease. We need instead to multiply our efforts in education, sports and culture. Until priests start with tridiums and procession and the rest, there’s nothing we can do. A fight on this ground between Church and State, the State would lose. Catholic Action is another matter. There confrontation is a duty. When it comes to religion, maximum respect – which Fascism had always given. To win individual souls, we need the appropriate means, not exaggerating the difficulties or depressing ourselves by considering there difficulties as insurmountable. A Holy War in Italy? Never! Priests will never get the peasant to rise against the State... At most, consent; show ourselves toward religious processions and the like, in anything that regards the salvation of the soul. Protestants save their souls, but we are Catholics and let the priests do their work. On the other hand, when they try to interfere in politics, socially, in sport, then fight them.”³³

Two years later, writing on the topic “Fascismo” for the *Enciclopedia Italiana*, the *duce* stated that fascism did not intend to put a new god on the altars, as Robespierre had done, but on the contrary recognized “the God of ascetics, of saints, and of heroes, alongside God as he is seen and prayed to in the honest, basic hearts of the people.” And once again, on December 18th, 1934, Mussolini declared to the French newspaper *Le Figaro*, in a sarcastic allusion to nazi neopaganism:

“In the Fascist concept of a totalitarian state, religion is absolutely free and, within its sphere, independent. It never even remotely entered our heads to found a new religion of the State, or to subject the religion professed by all Italians to the State. The State’s duty does not consist in writing a new gospel or other dogmas, in overthrowing old gods substituting them with others, called ‘blood’, ‘race’, ‘Nordic’ and things of the kind. The Fascist State does not consider that its duty requires it to intervene in religious matters, and this happens only when religion touches on the political or moral order of the State. [...] A State that does not desire to disseminate spiritual disturbance

³¹ Gentile, *Contro Cesare*, op. cit., p. 95.

³² Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, op. cit., vol. XIX, p. 33.

³³ Cit. in Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics*, op. cit., p. 70.

and create divisions between its people should beware of any intervention in strictly religious matters.”³⁴

In conclusion, concerning the relations between fascism and catholicism, one historical reality should be certain, and let there be no misunderstanding: Mussolini never intended to supplant catholicism and substitute it with a fascist religion, but always tried, by means of praise and threat, concessions and restrictions, flattery and aggressions, to use it as an instrument of his own totalitarian and imperialist politics. In the same way that, for its part, the Church and Pius XI tried to catholicize fascism, thinking they could use it as a providential instrument to reestablish hegemony in Italian society and in the Italian State. With these opposing goals, Mussolini and Pius XI lived together for twenty years with a periodical swing between unity and conflict, a situation in which, for Mussolini and the regime, every reconciliation was considered an armed truce, never definitive peace. Pius XI did not directly realize this, but over the years the awareness dawned on him that behind its conciliatory façade, fascism hid the intent of domination and hegemony, with the intent to compromise the Church and catholicism in its politics.

A 'Holy Alliance' between opportunists?

When on February 6th the archbishop of Milan, Achille Ratti, was elected pope at the age of sixty-five, and wanted to bless the crowd from the external lodge of St. Peter's – something that had not happened since 1870 –, Mussolini commented favourably on his election: “Ritengo che con Pio XI le relazioni fra l'Italia e il Vaticano miglioreranno”.³⁵ For his part, the new pontiff had also expressed himself very positively on the subject of Mussolini, in a private talk in 1921 at which a French journalist was present:

³⁴ Cit. in Gentile, *The Sacralization of politics*, op. cit., p. 70-71. Referring to this book of mine, Pollard writes that “Emilio Gentile, in particular, has claimed that fascism resacralized an Italian state which had been desacralized.” (Pollard, ‘Fascism and catholicism’, op. cit., p. 183) In reality, I have never sustained such a thesis, neither in that book nor elsewhere. Pollard is also mistaken when he associates my interpretation of fascism as a political religion to the theory of the ‘aestheticization of politics’ and to the thesis of the ‘void’ created by the death of God; in fact I have never said, as Pollard writes, that “fascism’s ‘aestheticisation of politics’ and ‘sacralisation’ of politics, its construction of a ‘political religion’ through the use of rituals, uniforms, colorful display, processions and so on, filled this void.” (Pollard, ‘Clerical Fascism in Interwar Europe’, op. cit., p. 231) In reality, my interpretation of the sacralization of politics is something quite different from the “aesthetisation of politics”, and has nothing to do with the theory of the ‘death of God’; on the contrary, I sustain a totally different thesis, i.e. the persistency and metamorphosis of the sacred in secularized societies. Gentile, *The Sacralization of politics*, op. cit., p. 153 sqq.; Id., ‘The Sacralization of Politics: Definitions, Interpretations and Reflections’, op. cit., p. 21-26; and Id., *Politics as Religion*, op. cit., p. 142-144.

³⁵ Giulio Castelli, *La Chiesa e il fascismo*, 1951, L’Arnia, Roma, p. 45-46.

“Mussolini, un uomo formidabile: avete compreso bene? Formidabile [...] che avanza a grandi passi e invade tutto come una forza di natura. È un neoconvertito, perché viene dai ranghi dell'estrema sinistra, e dei novizi ha lo zelo che lo spinge ad andare avanti. E poi, afferra dai banchi di scuola i suoi seguaci e, in un colpo, li innalza alla dignità di uomini, e di uomini armati. E li seduce, li fanatizza, regna sulla loro immaginazione. Vi rendete conto di quel che ciò significa, e quale forza è nelle sue mani? [...]. Lui è l'avvenire. Resta da vedere come tutto questo andrà a finire e l'uso che egli farà della sua forza. Come si orienterà il giorno in cui dovrà scegliere un orientamento? Riuscirà a resistere alla tentazione, che insidia tutti i capi, di ergersi a dittatore assoluto?”³⁶

Cardinal Ratti had previously met Mussolini during a religious ceremony for the Unknown soldier in Milan's cathedral on November 4th, 1921, a ceremony at which the fascists and their *duce* were present. The cardinal was “cortesissimo”, letting the *squadristi* enter the cathedral with their pennons, as Mussolini himself remembered some time later.³⁷

There seem to have been no other meetings, even coincidental ones, between cardinal Ratti and the leader of the blackshirts.³⁸ Having been formed by lombardian conservative catholicism, authoritarian by temperament, anti-liberal and above all antibolshevist, and having lived in Poland as nuncio in 1920, Pius XI was inflexibly opposed against any form of collaboration between the *Partito popolare* and the socialists.³⁹ He condemned the violent methods of fascism, but he certainly did not dislike, in common with the majority of conservative catholics, both in the Curia and the *Partito popolare*, the defeat that fascism had inflicted upon socialism, as well as the one it was preparing to inflict upon liberalism.

As the ambassador of Belgium learnt from Secretary of State cardinal Pietro Gasparri, the new president of the council informed the Vatican that he “era un buon cattolico e la Santa Sede non aveva nulla da temere da lui”.⁴⁰ And to demonstrate this, Mussolini desired all the members of his government, among which there were *popolari*, liberals, laics, agnostics and immanentists, to participate with him in a solemn mass in the Basilica of S. Maria degli Angeli commemorating the November 4th anniversary. On November 16th he presented his government to the Chamber of deputies and won a vote of confidence, with a very large majority, following a speech which he concluded with an invo-

³⁶ L. Valti, *Celui qui ouvrit le Vatican*, *L'Illustration*, January 9, 1937, p. 33.

³⁷ Castelli, *La Chiesa e il fascismo*, op. cit., p. 46.

³⁸ The theory of a meeting between cardinal Ratti and Mussolini on March 28th, 1921 in the cathedral of Milan, at the occasion of the funeral of the victims of an assault on the *Diana* theatre, as reported by Margherita Sarfatti in *Duce* (1926, Mondadori, Milano, p. 241), and as repeated by various Mussolini biographers, is unfounded as in that period the cardinal was apostolic delegate in Poland.

³⁹ Yves Chiron, *Pie XI (1857-1939)*, 2004, Perrin, Paris, p. 81-103.

⁴⁰ Baron Beyens, *Quatre ans à Rome (1921-1926)*, 1934, Plon, Paris, p. 137.

cation: “Così Iddio mi assista nel condurre a termine vittorioso la mia ardua fatica”.⁴¹

The Holy See benevolently received the new government presided over by the *duce* of fascism, who had invoked God in his very first speech in parliament. “Questo movimento”, declared the secretary of State on November 11th, “è diventato una necessità. L’Italia andava all’anarchia e il Re ha saggiamente agito, perché comandare ai soldati di sparare era egualmente dannoso”.⁴² When father Gemelli, founder and rector of the Milanese *Università cattolica*, asked him how he should act in relations with the new government, Pius XI answered: “Lodare no. Fare l’opposizione aperta non conviene, essendo molti gli interessi da tutelare. Occhi aperti!”⁴³ *La Civiltà cattolica* told Italian catholics that they should in any case subject themselves to a form of government, when “sia legittimamente costituita, sebbene inizialmente difettosa o anche discutibile per diversi aspetti”, in the name of “l’ordine pubblico o il bene comune della società”, and that it was not permitted for anyone, whether they be parties or individuals, to “tramare ad abatterla o soppiantarla o modificarla con vie ingiuste”.⁴⁴

For the next three years, the Holy See scrupulously held to this rule of respect for the legitimately established government, assisting silently at the demolition of parliamentary democracy by a government dominated by a party that acted with its proper armed militia to annihilate adversarial organisations, including catholic ones. For its part the Mussolini government was generous from the outset, spontaneously offering gifts to the Church, appeasing desires and claims that had been denied for sixty years by liberal, anticlerical and masonic governments. These included the introduction of the teaching of catholic religion in elementary schools; the obligation to display the Crucifix in classrooms, the institution of the State exam that put private catholic institutions and public schools at the same level; substantial economic improvements for the clergy and matters of cult; the recognition of religious holidays included in the calendar of civil festivities; the protection of processions and religious ceremonies; the measures for the protection of public morality, of good customs, of family; the opposition to divorce and the recognition of the sacrality of matrimony; the repression of pornography and of betting. In addition, the government succeeded in saving the *Banco di Roma*, which financially sustained a number of catholic newspapers, whereas the Grand Council of fascism, the supreme organ of the Fascist party, declared the incompatibility of fascism with freemasonry. And, finally, the biggest gift: the beginning of secret discussions between the government and the Holy See in

⁴¹ Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, op. cit., vol. XIX, p. 23-24.

⁴² Giovanni Sale, *Fascismo e Vaticano prima della Conciliazione*, 2007, Jaca Book, Milano, p. 10.

⁴³ Sale, *Fascismo e Vaticano*, op. cit., p. 25.

⁴⁴ Sale, *Fascismo e Vaticano*, op. cit., p. 27.

order to resolve the Roman question and arrive at the *conciliazione* between the Italian State and the Church of Rome.⁴⁵

The Church replied to the fascist gifts by showcasing an attitude that was increasingly favorable toward maintaining Mussolini's government in power. With this in mind, the Holy See saw the existence of the *Partito popolare* as an obstacle to collaboration with the fascist government, and urged for its liquidation. The principal advocate of the collaboration between Church and regime was Pius XI, although not without the caution, preoccupations and distrust caused by the fascists' violent methods. Even if saddened by the acts of violence against catholic associations and members of the clergy, the pontiff effectively continued to put his trust in the "uomo formidabile", sharing fascism's aversion for liberalism, democracy, socialism, and bolshevism.⁴⁶ Because of this shared aversion the pope, the Church and the entire catholic world – except for the few catholic antifascists –, assisted willingly, even if not approving of the brutality of the methods applied, in the persecution of laic or atheist parties, the suppression of the parties, the destruction of liberal democracy, the suffocation of the liberty of thought, and the liquidation of citizens's civil and political liberties.

The anxiety of a pope

In reality, and notwithstanding his favorable attitude towards the government and the fascist regime, Pius XI was one of the first catholics to consider the fascist sacralisation of politics as a real threat, an integral part of the mentality, ideas, ideals and methods of action of fascism. During the first years of the regime, he was continuously distressed by the frequent episodes of fascist aggression against catholic associations and members of the clergy, and was also worried by the fascist exaltation of the absolute primacy of the State, the denial of the individual, and the use and the cult of violence. In his December 14th, 1925 speech, Pius XI declared that the Church condemned not only liberalism and socialism, but also that "ogni concezione politica che facendo la società e lo Stato fine a se stessi, è facilmente, per non dire fatalmente portata a sacrificare ed assorbire i diritti individuali e particolari, con esito, come facilmente si intende, non meno disastroso."⁴⁷ Commenting on the pope's speech, *La Civiltà Cattolica* clearly alluded to fascism when it issued the warning not to "abbassare la dignità della persona umana, coi suoi diritti sacri e inalienabili", a reminder of the fact that christianity had always defended it against the "statolatria pagana di Roma e di Atene, per cui gli individui erano cose dello stato", as well as against medieval barbarians "che riconoscevano

⁴⁵ Roberto Pertici, *Chiesa e Stato in Italia. Dalla Grande Guerra al nuovo Concordato (1914-1984)*, 2009, il Mulino, Bologna, p. 102 sqq.

⁴⁶ Chiron, *Pie XI*, op. cit., p. 216 sqq.

⁴⁷ *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 1926, p. 15.

solo il diritto del più forte”, and against the supporters of the French Revolution, and especially “della dittatura e della tirannide, come quella di Napoleone”.⁴⁸

During the years in which the negotiations for the concordat were being initiated, the pope also continued to be agitated by fascist violence against catholic associations, and by fascism’s statalist idolatry. At the beginning of 1926, an anonymous antifascist observer, who seems to have known the Vatican *milieu* quite well, described the Vatican attitude *vis-à-vis* fascism in the following words:

“grado a grado si è venuto formando negli ambienti dei cattolici puri, degli osservanti e di buona parte degli uomini politici del Vaticano uno stato di spirito di crescente allarme e diffidenza verso il fascismo, o meglio verso il clima spirituale fascista. Molti tra questi si chiedono se per l’avvenire spirituale della nazione la brace della idolatria statalista e del feticismo personalistico, e del paganesimo nazionalista del fascismo non sia peggiore della padella framassone e demoliberale. Le critiche alla idolatria statalista gentiliana [i.e. the ideas of philosopher Giovanni Gentile] e rocchiana [i.e. the ideas of jurist Alfredo Rocco], alla concezione della religione come strumento di dominio sociale e politico da riserva per debito di ufficio si sono grado a grado tramutati in sentiti motivi di resistenza. L’accaparramento sempre più vorace a scopo nazionalista della chiesa e del Papa ha sempre più allarmato: è ovvio che questo è uno dei punti in cui la Chiesa come istituzione internazionale è più sensibile. A quanto è lecito giudicare da molteplici e concordi indizi si può dire che nessuno degli uomini che rappresentano gli interessi e la tradizione cattolica si illude sul significato che la ‘conciliazione’ ha nel fondo del pensiero fascista e nello sbocco fatale di una politica totalitaristica senza senso del limite né di controllo: si vede chiaro che su questa china si va alla creazione di una chiesa nazionale e cesarea, all’assoggettamento in ogni modo della chiesa allo stato. Si può dire in generale che da una fase di filofascismo intonato alla mentalità di moderato lombardo del Papa contrastato dalla disapprovazione e dal rimorso per la violenza fisica ma scarsamente sensibile alla violenza politica contro i partiti e la vita sociale e sorretto dalla speranza di una sincera normalizzazione rigidamente conservatrice e antisocialista, si sia passati ad una fase di crescente spavento e resistenza per la crescente ingordigia fascista, contrasti attenuati [and] resi perplessi ed oscillanti dalla seduzione dei benefici materiali certamente assai grandi ed allettanti donati dal fascismo alla Chiesa.”⁴⁹

From an historical point of view, it is a caricatural banalization to interpret the complexity of relations between the Church and the regime, between catholicism and fascism, as a “Holy Alliance” between two “black Internationals”, as the anticatholic and antifascist F. A. Ridley suggested in 1937. As inconsistent, from a historical point of view, is the interpretation of the *modus vivendi* of Mussolini and Pius XI as “a form of peaceful co-existence that was to last for the next six years, [...] precisely because they were both opportunists”,

⁴⁸ ‘Gioie e dolori nell’allocuzione pontificia’, *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 1926, p. 31.

⁴⁹ Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Ministero dell’Interno, Direzione generale di Pubblica sicurezza, Atti speciali, busta 4.

as Pollard stated in 1985.⁵⁰ The most serious work on the personality of Pius XI and his pontificate, without diminishing his responsibilities in the consolidation of the regime, with the support of the Vatican and the clergy, has documented the extent to which the pope's participation in the so-called "peaceful co-existence" with the regime was marked by worry, anxiety and finally even fright.⁵¹

A harmonious marriage?

Recently it has been repeated that, as Klinkhammer claims, there was a "connubio proficuo ed essenzialmente armonico" between the Church and the regime, while the "conflitti sorsero là dove la sacralizzazione fascista della politica s'imbatté in modo inconciliabile con la forma cattolica di sacralizzazione della religione. Tuttavia, si trattava spesso di conflitti che riguardavano la mobilitazione concorrenziale delle masse."⁵² Such conflicts were "soltanto superficiali, che da ultimo non potevano compromettere il connubio tra il regime fascista e la Chiesa cattolica, così come è stato codificato nel 1929."⁵³

The idea of the "connubio armonico" between the regime and the Church is seriously questionable both because of the argumentation and the limited correspondence with historical reality. For example, it is difficult to understand what is meant by a "forma cattolica di sacralizzazione della religione". Moreover, the representation of the relations between Church and fascism as a union that was substantially harmonious repeats an old topic of the propaganda of filofascist catholicism and of filo-catholic fascism, and one that historical research has substantially denied since the 1940s.⁵⁴ In his *Church and state in Fascist Italy*, published in 1941 but still of considerable interest, catholic scholar D. A. Binchy observed:

"No one, least of all Pius XI himself, can have expected that the agreement of 1929 would prove an unmixed blessing for the Italian Church. The totalitarian claims of Fascism, even if they were not so crudely asserted ten years ago as to-day, were there to remind Catholics of the risks inherent in any settlement with Mussolini's Italy. *Historia concordatorum historia dolorum* is almost a maxim of ecclesiastical history, and it applies with unprecedented force to Concordats with modern dictatorships. Even the parallel with the absolute monarchies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is not complete; for at least these based their authority on tradition, and on a formal acceptance of the faith and morals of Christianity. But a State which expressly rejects all

⁵⁰ F. A. Ridley, *The Papacy and Fascism. The Crisis of the Twentieth Century*, 1937, Martin Secker Warburg, London, p. 185; John F. Pollard, *The Vatican & Italian Fascism. 1929-32. A study in conflict*, 1985, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 194.

⁵¹ Cfr. Chiron, *Pie XI*, op. cit.; Emma Fattorini, *Pio XI, Hitler e Mussolini. La solitudine di un papa*, 2007, Einaudi, Torino; Gentile, 'New Idols', op. cit.; Id., *Contro Cesare*, op. cit.; Ceci, *Il Papa non deve parlare*, op. cit.

⁵² Klinkhammer, 'Il fascismo italiano', op. cit., p. 202.

⁵³ Klinkhammer, 'Il fascismo italiano', op. cit., p. 198.

⁵⁴ See D. A. Binchy, *Church and State in Fascist Italy*, 1970 (1^o 1941), Oxford University Press, Oxford.

transcendental values, recognizes no binding norm outside its own immanent morality, and grounds its title to rule on a so-called 'permanent Revolution' is a far more troublesome partner. Association with such a State involves the Church in dangers which call for an exceptional degree of firmness in its spiritual leaders."⁵⁵

In reality, behind the façade of the *Conciliazione* the tensions, the conflicts between the Church and fascism occurred frequently during the entire *ventennio*. And it is not true that the conflicts were superficial or limited to competition in the field of the mobilization of the masses, because they concerned religious and theological questions that related to the foundations of catholic doctrine and ethics, as happened in 1925-26, in 1929-31, and in 1938-39. The final outcome of each of these periods of conflict was not so much opportunistic compromise for peaceful coexistence, as armed truce, at least from the point of view of the *duce* of fascism. But even for Pius XI they seem to have been of this nature, in the sense that after each peace compromise, he always remained cautious in the face of the fascist sacralization of politics and the regime's totalitarianism, and as he approached the final years of his pontificate, he was increasingly anxious because of their acceleration and intensification.

These conflicts between the Church and the regime have been the object of much research. I will limit myself here to identifying the most significant turbulences, during the period preceding and following the *Conciliazione*, to demonstrate that they were not superficial conflicts or conflicts limited to the matter of influence on the masses, but that they were born from deep dissension concerning the fundamental values that existed between the Church and the regime. These were the reasons for the persistent state of tension, always latent, between Church and regime, likewise in moments when the union seemed most harmonious. And the turbulence was always provoked by Mussolini and fascism.

The signing of the Lateran Pacts, on February 11th, 1929, which in various moments had been at the point of capsizing because of the confrontations between the regime and the Holy See on the subject of catholic organizations, had been preceded by nearly five years of difficult negotiations. After the agreements, on March 24th, plebiscitarian elections were held for the new integrally fascist Chamber, elections that were largely supported by the clergy, in favour of the regime. The two events seemed to dissolve any doubts concerning the conciliability between catholicism and fascism. But not even two months after the announcement of the reconciliation between State and Church, their irreconciliability exploded into a public conflict between the regime and the Church, right in the middle of discussions on the ratification of the agreements between the Holy See and the Italian State.

⁵⁵ Binchy, *Church and State in Fascist Italy*, op. cit., p. 668.

Causing the conflict between the Church and the regime, while the signing of the Lateran Pacts was still fresh, were the declarations the *duce* made before the Chamber on May 13th, 1929, on the Romanness of catholicism and on the intransigence of the totalitarian State in claiming the educational monopoly over the new generations.⁵⁶ Mussolini had already expressed himself on the first theme on March 1st, in his speech to the five-yearly assembly of the Fascist party:

“L’Italia ha il privilegio unico di ospitare il centro di una religione da oramai due millenni. Non è per una mera coincidenza o per un capriccio degli uomini che tale religione è sorta e si è irradiata e si irradia da Roma. L’impero romano è il presupposto storico del cristianesimo prima, del cattolicesimo poi. La lingua della Chiesa è ancora oggi la lingua di Cesare e di Virgilio.”⁵⁷

In his speech to the Chamber, the *duce* repeated that Italy had a singular privilege and was proud “di essere l’unica nazione europea che è sede di una religione universale”, but he added, with the obvious intent to provoke, that christian religion, “nata nella Palestina, molto probabilmente sarebbe stata una delle tante sette che fiorivano in quell’ambiente arroventato, come ad esempio quella degli Esseni e dei Terapeuti, e molto probabilmente si sarebbe spenta, senza lasciare traccia di sé”, had it not been grafted in Rome: “il cristianesimo trova il suo ambiente favorevole in Roma.”⁵⁸ Concerning the monopoly of education of the young, the *duce* declared that “nello Stato la Chiesa non è sovrana e non è nemmeno libera”, and he confirmed that on the issue of the education of the new generations,

“siamo intrattabili. Nostro deve essere l’insegnamento. Questi fanciulli debbono essere educati nella nostra fede religiosa, ma noi abbiamo bisogno di integrare questa educazione, abbiamo bisogno di dare a questi giovani il senso della virilità, della potenza, della conquista; soprattutto abbiamo bisogno di ispirare loro la nostra fede, e accenderli alle nostre speranze.”⁵⁹

At the end of his speech, the *duce* arrogantly and peremptorily pretended that the totalitarian fascist State incorporated catholicism as State religion, but that it did not allow any limits to be imposed on its claim to political and ethical primacy.⁶⁰

The pope reacted immediately and firmly to such declarations. The day after the *duce’s* speech, Pius XI said, during an audience, that the State “non è

⁵⁶ Cfr. Pertici, *Chiesa e Stato*, op. cit., p. 153 sqq.; Mario Casella, *Stato e Chiesa in Italia dalla Conciliazione alla riconciliazione (1929-1931). Aspetti e problemi nella documentazione dell’Archivio storico diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri*, 2005, Congedo, Galatina.

⁵⁷ Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, op. cit., vol. XXIV, p. 13.

⁵⁸ Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, op. cit., vol. XXIV, p. 45-46.

⁵⁹ Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, op. cit., vol. XXIV, p. 75-76.

⁶⁰ Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, op. cit., vol. XXIV, p. 89.

fatto per assorbire, per inghiottire, per annichilire l'individuo e la famiglia; sarebbe un assurdo, sarebbe contro natura, giacché la famiglia è prima della società e dello Stato”, which had to lend its help to the families, respecting their desires and “soprattutto il diritto divino della Chiesa.”⁶¹ Then, in a letter to secretary of State Gasparri, published on June 5th, Pius XI denounced the fact that in the *duce's* speech there were “espressioni ereticali e peggio che ereticali sulla essenza stessa del Cristianesimo e del Cattolicesimo”, and asserted that “il pieno e perfetto mandato educativo non spetta allo Stato, ma alla Chiesa, e che lo Stato non può né impedirle né menomarle l'esercizio di tale mandato, e neanche ridurlo al tassativo insegnamento delle verità religiose”, whereby also threatening not to ratify the agreements.⁶² To the pope's reaction the *duce* replied in a less polemic manner, justifying the “crudo” tone of his speech at the Chamber as necessary in order to deny the misinterpretation “per cui si poteva pensare che il trattato del Laterano avrebbe vaticanizzato l'Italia o che il Vaticano sarebbe stato italianizzato”.⁶³

Public opinion responded in various and contrasting manners, depending on the way in which the problem of the conciliability between fascism and catholicism was perceived. For the catholics and the clergy that had applauded the *Conciliazione* and given their consent to the regime in the plebiscitarian elections, the *duce's* speech was, as could be read in a report of the *Arma dei carabinieri*, “una inaspettata doccia fredda. L'entusiasmo ha subito un tempo di arresto”. The more intransigent catholics had seen in the speech “quasi una palese irricoscenza del Duce verso lo slancio col quale, anche nelle ultime elezioni, il Clero era venuto incontro ai desideri del Regime, ed una tendenza a fare della Chiesa uno strumento dello Stato.”⁶⁴

Among the most disappointed were the priests who, after the *Conciliazione*, hoped that “la propria azione, altamente protetta dalla sovranità del Papa, avrebbe potuto aumentare notevolmente di importanza e di estensione e sfuggire al controllo dei poteri dello Stato.” But after what Mussolini had said concerning christianity and the education of the young,

“gli osanna che accolsero la Conciliazione possono dirsi da parte del clero alquanto diminuiti, ed alcuni esprimono dubbi che, nonostante che i Patti Lateranensi siano stati sanzionati con la firma Reale, vi si in effetti un qualche raffreddamento nei rapporti.”⁶⁵

⁶¹ *Discorsi di Pio XI*, Domenico Bertetto (ed.), vol. II, 1960, Società editrice internazionale, Torino, p. 78.

⁶² Cit. in Pietro Scoppola, *La Chiesa e il fascismo. Documenti e interpretazioni*, 1976, Laterza, Roma-Bari, p. 219-221.

⁶³ Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, op. cit., vol. XXIV, p. 98-99.

⁶⁴ Comando Generale dell'Arma dei Carabinieri, Ufficio Storico, Archivio, Ufficio servizio e situazione, 1929, *Varie*, 19/15, Roma, 21 maggio 1929.

⁶⁵ Comando Generale dell'Arma dei Carabinieri, Ufficio Storico, Archivio, Ufficio servizio e situazione, 1929, *Varie*, 19/15, Alessandria, 7 giugno 1929.

Other reports mentioned that concerning the question of the young, various family fathers had expressed “la convinzione che lo Stato non può sostituirsi alla famiglia” and that “generalizzare il compito di educazione dei giovani da parte dello Stato è gravissimo errore, in quanto la famiglia è prima dello Stato.”⁶⁶ The fascists’ reaction was different. A May 23rd report from Messina mentioned that the *duce*’s speech had met with much favour from the fascists, especially the most anticlerical among them, who feared “che l’invadenza del clero, mal contenuta, potesse culminare nell’assorbimento dell’educazione della gioventù italiana, ormai diventata caposaldo dell’azione del Governo fascista, il quale vuole nei nuovi italiani anime preparate ai grandi cimenti che le tradizioni imperiali della stirpe esigono”, whereas the Pope’s May 15th speech had contributed “ad aumentare nel clero e nei cattolici intransigenti quella certa avversione che alcuni vogliono possa in avvenire determinare il nocciolo intorno al quale si potrà verificare un latente dissidio fra i due poteri.”

Sensing the possibility of a latent difference of opinion between the Church and the regime, the author of the report, optimistically, and in a highly rhetorical manner, as if he were a preacher, stated

“che il popolo tutto, specie quello delle officine e dei campi, quel popolo che ormai, nella religione fascista, ha compreso il nuovo spirito animatore della nazione forte e potente, sente tutta la bellezza dell’atto compiuto per volontà del Duce il quale, nella sua immensa genialità, ha saputo – con azione di apostolo – sorpassando tempi ed eventi – additare alla Chiesa quale è il suo nuovo cammino nel momento storico in cui Roma – sotto gli immortali segni del Littorio – risorge maestra eterna di civiltà e di gloria.”

As far as the clergy was concerned, the author of the report stated that it,

“ricordando le tormenti subite sotto le varie rivoluzioni, va persuadendosi che ogni avversione sia vana e che converrà non creare difficoltà allo Stato italiano ed eliminare dissidi, convinto che la rivoluzione fascista ha dato ora luce e potenze alla religione di Cristo.”⁶⁷

In a more moderate and probably more realistic manner, the *Arma dei carabinieri* wrote from Milan, on May 31st, that after the enthusiasm for the signing of the agreements, and after the perplexity of the clergy following Mussolini’s declarations in front of the Chamber, which were then compensated by the more peaceful speech in the Senate, one could

“affermare, senza riserve, che gli accordi lateranensi hanno segnato un magnifico successo per il Regime nazionale, hanno conciliato con l’idea fascista masse cospicue,

⁶⁶ Comando Generale dell’Arma dei Carabinieri, Ufficio Storico, Archivio, Ufficio servizio e situazione, 1929, Varie, 19/15, Livorno, 25 maggio 1929.

⁶⁷ Comando Generale dell’Arma dei Carabinieri, Ufficio Storico, Archivio, Ufficio servizio e situazione, 1929, Varie, 19/15, Messina, 23 maggio 1929.

specie di lavoratori della terra, che oggi identificano l'idea politica nazionale con i precetti secolari della Chiesa, hanno sconcertato le residuali opposizioni interne e fuoruscite ed hanno rinsaldato il concetto di potenza e di autorità della nostra Patria nel mondo.”⁶⁸

As confirmed by a report from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs dated July 20th, 1929, the regime attributed the Holy See with a plan to mobilize Catholic Action,

“onde preparare la difesa accanita degli intendimenti che il Papa si sarebbe proposti mediante la conciliazione, onde compiere la piena restaurazione sociale dell'educazione e della stampa in Italia, onde preparare e sferrare degli attacchi avvolgenti contro lo spirito, i propositi, le manifestazioni del Regime Fascista, se, nonostante l'imponenza e l'attività dell'Azione Cattolica, persistesse a contrastare allo spirito, ai propositi, alle manifestazioni della Chiesa, onde conquistare comunque lo Stato italiano, che, quando retto da Uomini Cattolici, allora soltanto sarebbe, secondo lo Statuto e gli accordi lateranensi, veramente cattolico.”⁶⁹

Furthermore, according to another report of September 4th, reliable sources in the Vatican asserted that the Holy See was trying “con tutti i mezzi di far perdere la pazienza all'On. Mussolini così da trascinarlo a qualche atto irreparabile o a qualche affermazione che possa permettere di gridare al mondo la slealtà del governo fascista e la mancanza di fede ai patti stipulati.”⁷⁰

Indeed in the year of the *Conciliazione*, the esteem and trust of Pius XI for the “uomo formidabile” that Providence had made him meet, were considerably weakened, according to observations made already on October 21st, 1929 by *monsignor* Luigi Maglione, apostolic nuncio in Paris, in a meeting, in the Vatican, with a prelate who was an informant of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: “Non parla più con lo stesso entusiasmo del Fascismo e di Mussolini, si lagna, e fortemente, che il Governo Italiano voglia usurpare i suoi diritti sull'educazione della gioventù e sulla organizzazione cattolica”, two points considered as

“essenzialissimi [and] sui quali egli non intende assolutamente transigere; si rattrista sino alle lagrime, pensando alle persecuzioni che hanno subito e dovranno subire i suoi amatissimi giovani delle Federazioni e dei Circoli cattolici; prevede, nonostante le apparenze cortesi e deferenti verso i suoi rappresentanti, rallentamento di rapporti se non una grave rottura a non lunga scadenza; mi ha ripetuto più volte, siamo restati vittima della nostra generosità, ci hanno ingannato; Dio solo sa dove andremo a finire. Frasi, queste, che va ripetendo, mi dicono in Vaticano, da cinque mesi, anche con molti altri.”

⁶⁸ Comando Generale dell'Arma dei Carabinieri, Ufficio Storico, Archivio, Ufficio servizio e situazione, 1929, Varie, 19/15, Milano, 23 maggio 1929.

⁶⁹ Archivio storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Affari Politici, Santa Sede, 1929-1930, b. 7, Roma, 20 luglio 1929.

⁷⁰ Archivio storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Affari Politici, Santa Sede, 1929-1930, b. 7, Roma, 4 settembre 1929.

To the words of comfort “per sgombragli l’animo dalle esagerate paure assicurandolo delle buone intenzioni e dei migliori propositi del Governo italiano”, the pope, so confessed the nuncio, had shown himself

“come suggestionato da potenze occulte e da uno spirito inesplicabile di contraddizione. Mentre, invero, afferma che è stato ispirato da Dio in tutto, che la Conciliazione l’ha voluta per il bene della Chiesa, che ha redarguito e redarguisce sempre con molta severità chi osa non apprezzarlo, nello stesso tempo, di punto in bianco, si abbatte, piange, si dispera per le difficoltà che incontra nell’applicazione del Concordato, minacciando tutte le vendette divine contro coloro che perseguitano a sentir lui, la gioventù e l’azione cattolica.”⁷¹

It is from this state of mind that originated the encyclical *Divinis illius Magistri* on the christian education of the young, published on December 31st. The pope argued that taking position against the doctrine of the Church were “quanti osassero sostenere che la prole, prima che alla famiglia, appartenga allo Stato, e che lo Stato abbia sulla educazione diritto assoluto.” Thus, he added, should be considered as “ingiusto e illecito ogni monopolio educativo o scolastico che costringa fisicamente e moralmente le famiglie a frequentare le scuole dello Stato contro gli obblighi della coscienza cristiana e anche contro le legittime preferenze”. And referring even more explicitly to fascism, he warned that the State should not “ledere i diritti della Chiesa e della famiglia per quello che a loro spetta”, nor should it, following “un nazionalismo quanto esagerato e falso, altrettanto nemico di vera pace e prosperità”,

“eccedere i giusti limiti nell’ordinare militarmente l’educazione così detta fisica e dei giovani (e talora anche delle giovinette, contro la natura stessa delle cose umane), spesso ancora invadendo oltre misura, nel giorno del Signore, il tempo che deve restare dedicato ai doveri religiosi, e al santuario della vita familiare.”⁷²

The tragedy of a taciturn and solitary pope

“Dopo la firma del Trattato del Laterano il Papa passa notti insonni. E’ diventato taciturno e solitario”. With these words the French newspaper *Paris Midi* commented, on January 7th, 1930, upon the encyclical on the education of the young, speaking of the “inquietudine del pontefice per il patto firmato con Mussolini”, of the “delusione profonda”, of the “amarezza”, and the “pessimismo” that had followed the pope’s “intempestiva allegria” at the time of the signing of the agreements. Convinced of being an instrument of Providence in accomplishing the *conciliazione* with the Italian State, “ai più intimi amici il papa confessava di passare molte notti insonni”, as he feared he had made a mistake.

⁷¹ Archivio storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Affari Politici, Santa Sede, 1929-1930, b. 7, Città del Vaticano, 21 ottobre 1929.

⁷² Eucardio Momigliano/Gabriele M. Casolari (eds.), *Tutte le encicliche dei Sommi Pontefici*, 1986, Dall’Oglio, Milano, p. 851-856.

Here originated “la tragedia: una tragedia psicologica, più che religiosa o politica”.⁷³

In the year of the *Conciliazione*, the union between Church and regime was all but harmonious, with important public manifestations of irreconcilability between catholicism and fascism. This was clearly expressed by the pope, even if he never explicitly mentioned fascism, and it was also asserted by the fascist press, and even by the segment that was less prone to extremism such as *Critica Fascista*, which, commenting upon the encyclical on the education of the young, limited itself to observe “che alla volontà educatrice e intransigente del Fascismo, si oppone una concezione anche più totalitaria e intransigente”, and to conclude that the “miglior cosa, per noi, è naturalmente che Mussolini è ‘intrattabile’ e non molla: e siamo dunque tranquilli. Per il resto, sappiamo che son mille e novecento anni che quelle cose sono ripetute, eppure la storia ha fatto la sua strada.”⁷⁴

The turbulence created by the encyclical on the education of the young was followed by an act of *détente*, i.e. a visit of the secretary of the Fascist party to the pope, “interpretata”, as was mentioned in a report of the *Arma dei Carabinieri*, “come il sintomo più evidente di un’intesa fra lo Stato e la Chiesa sullo scottante problema dell’educazione dei giovani”.⁷⁵

But the unity did not last, as in the following months, even if there were no public confrontations between Church and regime, the inquests of the party and the fascist press on the clergy and the leaders of the catholic associations, accused of being *ex-popolari*, continued. Hereupon followed seizures and dissolutions of circles and sequestrations of catholic newspapers, while the ONB continued its proselytizing activities, antagonizing the clergy and the catholic associations, who tried, as best as they could, to react in order to prevent their members from transferring to the fascist organization, thus exposing themselves to the risk of governmental repression or of retaliations by the fascist party. The president of ONB, Renato Ricci, stressing the incompatibility for the *Balilla* and *Avanguardisti* to be members of the catholic associations, opined, as he wrote to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on February 20th, 1930, that

“sussista una diffusa e precisa intesa tra i Dirigenti le Associazioni suddette dirette ad impedire la appartenenza dei loro organizzati all’ONB, là dove non viene perpetrata

⁷³ Dudley Heathcote, ‘Depuis la signature du Traité de Latran le Pape passe des nuits blanches’, *Paris Midi*, January 17, 1930.

⁷⁴ Agostino Nasti, ‘Avvenimenti e idee. Dell’educazione’, *Critica Fascista*, February 1, 1930.

⁷⁵ Comando Generale dell’Arma dei Carabinieri, Ufficio Storico, Archivio, Ufficio servizio e situazione, 1929, Situazione politica, Roma, 15 febbraio 1930.

un'opera sorda e sistematica di avversione al nostro movimento giovanile, che ne pregiudica abbastanza sensibilmente gli sviluppi.”⁷⁶

The Holy See reacted by stating that the accusations were without foundation, because the catholic associations' activities were purely religious, and limited to the promotion of camps and colonies “a favore della gioventù bisognosa di riposo e di cure igieniche e climatiche”, as could be read in a June 27 promemoria of the apostolic Nunciature of Italy, which however complained that prefectural orders hindered this assistance because they reserved camps and colonies “alle esclusiva competenza delle organizzazioni del Regime e specialmente dell'Opera Nazionale Balilla.”⁷⁷ The exclusive competence of the ONB was in fact confirmed by the minister of Internal Affairs on July 4th, and with irrevocable dispositions, “poiché esse derivano direttamente dai concetti informativi dello Stato Fascista, che vuole riservare a sé tutte le opere che tendono all'educazione fisica della gioventù”, whereas the recognition of Catholic Action by the State, based on the Concordat, only allowed activities in the moral and religious field.⁷⁸

But not even in the moral and religious field did the fascist regime have any intention to respect the agreements with the Holy See. Four years after the foundation of the ONB, the *Ispettorato centrale per l'assistenza religiosa* of the ONB told the Secretary of State that, based on information contained in the bishops' reports, in August 1930 in 27 dioceses the assistance was given “in modo abbastanza continuativo, sebbene tra difficoltà e vicende”, but limited to the celebration of mass at the occasion of big meetings and of Easter, whereas “non è stata prestata alcuna assistenza, perché o non è stata chiesta dai Comitati Provinciali dell'Opera o si è proceduto alla nomina dei Cappellani e poi non è stata data loro la possibilità di compiere la propria Missione in 42 diocesi.” As for religious teaching in secondary schools, only in very few dioceses was the “assistenza [...] prestata con qualche efficacia”, whereas elsewhere it was insufficient or “non [...] prestata per nulla”.⁷⁹ And some months later, in February 1931, the *Ispettorato generale* reported the “scarsi successi finora ottenuti, e addirittura gli insuccessi” due to a series of causes, such as “l'incomprensione dei capi, qualche volta; qualche altra, atteggiamento dei cappellani, rimasti senza iniziative, come ai margini dell'opera, non curanza dei giovani, delle famiglie

⁷⁶ Archivio storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Affari Politici, Santa Sede, 1929-1930, b. 7, Roma, 20 febbraio 1930.

⁷⁷ Archivio storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Affari Politici, Santa Sede, 1929-1930, b. 7, Roma, 27 giugno 1930.

⁷⁸ Archivio storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Affari Politici, Santa Sede, 1929-1930, b. 7, Roma, 4 luglio 1930.

⁷⁹ Archivio Ordinariato Militare, Ispettorato centrale per l'educazione e l'assistenza religiosa, ONB-GIL, b. 10, A/5, Carteggio con la Segreteria di Stato di Sua Santità e con le congregazioni romane, Relazione dei Vescovi circa l'assistenza Religiosa dell'ONB, Roma, 28 agosto 1930.

ecc.”⁸⁰ Finally, just before the outbreak of the new public conflict between the regime and the Holy See, in March 1931, the *Ispettorato generale* reported equally negatively on the collaboration with the ONB, speaking of a “risultato mediocre per la scarsa buona volontà della Presidenza Centrale [of the ONB], incompiensione dei dirigenti locali, insufficiente attività del Clero”, whereas it hoped for “un possibile miglioramento dell’assistenza religiosa, specie per l’atteggiamento benevolo delle autorità scolastiche.”⁸¹

It was in this situation of reciprocal antagonism and distrust that in March 1931, the most violent and well-known conflict between the regime and the Church erupted, started by a campaign, in fascist press, against presumed fascist activities of Catholic Action, a campaign which included squadrist assaults on catholic offices, the dissolution of numerous Catholic Action groups, the closure of the catholic university federations, the seizure of the catholic newspapers that participated in the polemic debate in defence of the Church.

The pope reacted against the fascist persecution with the encyclical *Non abbiamo bisogno*, written in Italian, dated June 29th, 1931, and published on July 5th, whereby the pope had assured its diffusion abroad, as he rightly feared that the regime would impose silence on the subject in the Italian press. In the encyclical, for the first time the pope clearly and decidedly pronounced a public condemnation of the fascist “religiosità”, which was manifest in the concrete reality of the regime. Following the enumeration of all the intimidations and persecutions that catholic organizations had undergone in the past years, the pope issued his gravest accusation against fascism, i.e. the fact that it promoted a new pagan statolatry.⁸² He reminded that he had always refrained from issuing “formali ed esplicite condanne”, forcing himself instead to favour “compatibilità e cooperazioni che ad altri sembrano inammissibili”, whereby he was under the illusion that what he observed were “affermazioni ed azioni esagerate, sporadiche, di elementi non abbastanza rappresentativi”; however, recent events showed a fundamental contradiction between what catholic doctrine taught and what fascism preached, imposing, for example, on young boys and girls to take an oath obliging them to execute, without discussion, orders that

“possono comandare contro ogni verità e giustizia la manomissione dei diritti della Chiesa e delle anime, già di per sé stessi sacri e inviolabili; e di servire con tutte le forze, fino al sangue, la causa di una rivoluzione che strappa alla Chiesa ed a Gesù Cristo la

⁸⁰ Archivio Ordinariato Militare, Ispettorato centrale per l’educazione e l’assistenza religiosa, ONB-GIL, b. 10, A/5, Carteggio con la Segreteria di Stato di Sua Santità e con le congregazioni romane, Appunti di organizzazione, febbraio 1931.

⁸¹ Archivio Ordinariato Militare, Ispettorato centrale per l’educazione e l’assistenza religiosa, ONB-GIL, b. 10, A/5, Carteggio con la Segreteria di Stato di Sua Santità e con le congregazioni romane, Assistenza Religiosa all’ONB, Relazione, Roma, 16 giugno 1931.

⁸² Momigliano/Casolari (eds.), *Tutte le encicliche*, op. cit., p. 970-972.

gioventù, e che educa le sue giovani forze all'odio, alla violenza, alla irriverenza, non esclusa la persona stessa del Papa, come gli ultimi fatti hanno compiutamente dimostrato.”⁸³

Foreign press paid enormous attention to the encyclical, and for this reason the fascists considered it “una provocazione del Vaticano contro il Regime”, blamed the “Capo della Chiesa di avere scatenato contro il Fascismo una campagna di denigrazione da parte degli stranieri nemici del nostro Paese, e di tutti gli elementi antifascisti che vivono all'estero”, whereas approved, “senza alcuna riserva – [of] l'intransigente ed energico atteggiamento assunto dal Duce del Fascismo e dalla Direzione del Partito verso la Chiesa a tutela degli intangibili diritti della sovranità dello Stato”.⁸⁴

The ‘reconciliation’ between the Church and the regime took place on September 2nd, with the signing of a new agreement, in which the Holy See committed itself to limiting the activities of Catholic action to exclusively religious and recreational tasks, and had it be contingent directly upon the bishops, who could not appoint, as its administrators, clergymen or laymen who had belonged to antifascist parties. The population greeted the agreement favourably, whereas the clergy and

“i cattolici di idee più avanzate... non sanno dissimulare lo scacco subito, in quanto la vertenza si è risolta con l'affermazione della tesi sempre sostenuta dal Regime. D'altro canto, gli estremisti del PNF non vogliono dimenticare, né tampoco perdonare, l'attacco mosso al Partito nella nota enciclica, specie per quanto riguarda il giuramento ed i presunti poco elevati motivi che indurrebbero al tesseramento. Comunque la questione può considerarsi del tutto risolta e decisamente superata”.⁸⁵

Historia concordatorum historia dolorum

Notwithstanding the reconciliation, the pope remained strongly worried and uncertain about the future of the relations between the Church and the regime. In a lengthy report from Vatican city, which was probably written in November 1931, somebody who well knew the thoughts and mind of the pope, described a situation that was worrying to the point where even an upcoming “sconciliazione” was to be foreseen, due to the hostility of Pius XI towards the regime’s statolatry, as well as the sacralization of nationalism as a religion which fascism was intensifying in Italy:

“The day will certainly come when the pope decides to publish the much discussed Encyclical on nationalism, on which he has been working for so long now. If more pressing and timely problems did not exist, the current pope would certainly be happy

⁸³ Momigliano/Casolari (eds.), *Tutte le encicliche*, op. cit., p. 972-973.

⁸⁴ Comando Generale dell’Arma dei Carabinieri, Ufficio Storico, Archivio, Ufficio servizio e situazione, 1931, Napoli, 6 luglio 1931.

⁸⁵ Comando Generale dell’Arma dei Carabinieri, Ufficio Storico, Archivio, Ufficio servizio e situazione, 1931, rapporto di settembre 1931.

to go down in the history of the church as an enemy of nationalism, much as Pius IX went down in church history as the enemy of modernism. The former poses just as serious a threat as the latter, both for the Catholic church and for humanity at large, not only because it is the chief factor inciting and fomenting misunderstandings and wars between brothers in Christ, not only because it renders the universal governance of the church increasingly difficult and intricate, but also because it constitutes a genuine religious threat; indeed, it now represents perhaps the greatest dogmatic danger: inasmuch as nationalism is becoming the true civil religion of the masses, indeed, the first true civil religion. A national flag in place of a crucifix, national heroes in place of saints, the political or military leader in place of the religious leader, parades in place of processions. In wars, in major and minor upheavals, the nation has supplanted religion, and religion, alas, no longer stirs the masses. How should the Catholic church view all this? And can the church have genuine likes and dislikes, can it truly give its support to a regime, like the Fascist regime, which has implemented – as much as and even to a greater degree than others – the results of the most extreme nationalism, to the point of deifying (as mentioned above) and rendering infallible the regime’s Chief?⁸⁶

The definition of nationalism as a ‘civil religion’ shows that the author of the report thoroughly understood to what extent, for Pius XI, the phenomenon of sacralization of politics had become alarming, as it manifested itself in fascist religiosity, with the divinization of the nation and the State, and with the cult of the *duce*. “Hanno voluto innalzarlo come un idolo, ma in realtà non è che un falso profeta”, said a parish priest during a sermon in which he deplored the fascist aggression against Catholic action.⁸⁷

Intention or reality?

As we have seen up until now, the sacralization of politics, as a religious aspect of fascist totalitarianism, caused growing anxiety in the mind of the pope, who effectively did not consider it a *mise en scène* of symbols and rites or simple aping of religious language. His condemnation of fascism’s pagan statolatry, even if never explicit, echoed the themes and topics with which catholic antifascists such as Ferrari and don Sturzo, first in Italy and then from exile, had denounced, since 1923, and continued to denounce after the Concordat and the ‘reconciliation’, the agreement between the Church and the regime, deeming catholicism absolutely irreconcilable with fascism, as much as for religious, theological and ethical reasons as the corrupting effects that such an agreement could have inside the catholic world.⁸⁸

The ignorance or underestimation of this important aspect of the relations between catholicism and fascism has caused another major misun-

⁸⁶ Cit. in Gentile, ‘New Idols’, op. cit., p. 153-155.

⁸⁷ Comando Generale dell’Arma dei Carabinieri, Ufficio Storico, Archivio, Ufficio servizio e situazione, 1931, rapporto di luglio 1931.

⁸⁸ Gentile, *Contro Cesare*, op. cit., p. 223 sqq.

derstanding concerning the fascist sacralization of politics and its consequences. For example, Martin Blinkhorn has observed that

“while Gentile’s work has convincingly indicated the seriousness of (some) Fascists in attempting to institutionalize the ‘new religion’ [...], he has to yet to demonstrate conclusively that its popular acceptance and mass internalization went anything like as far as Fascist visionaries wished it to do, or therefore were truly central to the popular experience of Fascism.”⁸⁹

In reality, as for the “popular acceptance”, in my work I have shown, using numerous examples, that during the twenty years of fascist dominion, the effects on the population were evaluated in various and contrasting ways by the fascists themselves, in relations to time, space, circumstance, social class, gender and age.⁹⁰ Equally varied and contrasting was its evaluation by the Church and Catholics, who, as is known, did not constitute a unitarian and homogenous world, with one single, constant attitude when confronting fascism, its regime and its politics. Regarding the people’s attitudes and reactions *vis-à-vis* totalitarian politics, I have repeatedly observed, including in the article referred to by Blinkhorn, that

“speaking generally about the relationship between the party and the populace, we must point out that at the end of the 1930s there were many symptoms of growing negative reactions, provoked by party politics, and the more intrusive and oppressive its obsession with organizing and mobilizing became.”⁹¹

And I have shown “conclusively” that the fascist totalitarian experiment concluded with failure:

“The totalitarian experiment of the Fascist political religion failed amid the ruin of a disastrous military defeat, during a war that both fascism and antifascism fought as ‘a war of religion’. Probably, the reasons for the failure lie in the very nature of the experiment, conducted in the euphoria of a voluntarism which believed enduring what was ephemeral, mistook emotions for convictions, the enthusiasm of success for confession of faith, the physical mass, as being similar to ocean waves, for the conscious body of the nation.”⁹²

That being said, the final failure is not a valid historical argument to sustain the assertion that the fascist sacralization of politics remained confined

⁸⁹ Martin Blinkhorn, ‘Afterthoughts. Route Maps and Landscapes: Historians, ‘Fascist Studies’ and the Study of Fascism’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 5/1, 2004, p. 518.

⁹⁰ Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics*, op. cit., p. 96-101, 143-152; Id., ‘Fascism in power’, op. cit., p. 163-165, 171-173; Id., *La via italiana al totalitarismo. Il partito e lo Stato nel regime fascista*, 2008, Carocci, Roma, p. 196 sqq.

⁹¹ Gentile, ‘Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion’, op. cit., p. 350.

⁹² Emilio Gentile, *Il culto del littorio. La sacralizzazione della politica nell’Italia fascista*, 1993, Laterza, Roma-Bari, p. 279.

to the level of intentions, and that it did not have consequences in reality. Had this not been the case, it would then be very difficult to understand the constant and growing concern that this phenomenon caused in antifascist catholic circles firstly, and later in Pius XI and among other members of the higher and lower clergy. It is difficult to believe that they were all influenced by the image that fascism promoted of itself, becoming as it were the victims of an imaginary nightmare, if they did not have the certain perception of a real danger. And even the interpretation put forward by Renato Moro is unconvincing, Moro who, while recognizing the importance of the fascist sacralization of politics and the reactions it caused in the catholic world, concludes by stating that fascism's "carica religiosa", "per quanto ritenuta innegabilmente presente e altrettanto sicuramente gravemente pericolosa, apparve alla Chiesa anche essenzialmente legata a correnti interne al regime piuttosto che alla sua struttura e realtà di fondo".⁹³

In reality, the sacralization of the State, the divinization of the nation, and the idolatrous apotheosis of the *duce* cannot be considered aspects of the fascist reality that are linked only to "correnti interne al regime piuttosto che alla sua struttura e realtà di fondo", because, as it can be seen in the documents I cited, as well as in recent research, during the 1930s Pius XI and other members of the Church, both higher and lower clergy, were increasingly aware, as had been from the beginning such catholic antifascists as Ferrarini and don Sturzo, of the fact that the sacralization of politics was an integral part of the regime's structure and essence. So it was considered, for example, by *monsignor* Tardini, who did not refer to "correnti interne al regime" but to the *duce* and to fascism and its complex totalitarian politics, denouncing with alarmed pre-occupation the "disastrosi" effects which the latter were having on the Church's world. It is important to stress that Tardini's considerations were formulated in a period of maximal unity between the regime and the Church, between fascism and catholicism. And it is equally important to underline the fact that Tardini did not refer to the fascists' ideology or intentions, but to factual reality, i.e. the regime's concrete politics and its consequences to the Church and the catholic masses.

After thirteen years of regime, so stated Tardini, the *duce* was ruining Italy:

"Sembra che in Italia tutti abbiano perduto la testa, i Capi conducono ciecamente il Paese alla rovina, mettendolo contro tutto il mondo. Il popolo si esalta al pensiero della guerra e, educato alla violenza, pensa di poter vincere tutto il mondo."

In this way, continued Tardini, the Church lost its influence over "moltissime anime" and even over a considerable part of the bishops and the clergy:

⁹³ Moro, 'Religione del trascendente e religioni politiche', op. cit., p. 66.

“Questo è il disastro più grande. Il clero deve essere calmo, disciplinato, obbediente ai richiami della Patria: è chiaro. Ma invece questa volta è tumultuoso, esaltato, guerrafondaio. Almeno si salvassero i Vescovi. Niente affatto. Più verbosi, più eccitati, più... squilibrati di tutti. Offrono oro, argento puri: anelli. Catene, croci, orologi, sterline. E parlano di civiltà, di religione, di missione dell’Italia in Africa... E intanto l’Italia si prepara a mitragliare, a cannoneggiare migliaia e migliaia di Etiopi, rei di difendere casa loro... Difficilmente poteva compiersi nelle file del clero un confusionismo, uno sbandamento, un disequilibrio più grave e pericoloso.”

The effect of the “disastro più grande”, added Tardini, could also be felt abroad, in catholic nations, where the Holy See was accused of being “in combutta con il Fascismo”: “Mai la Santa Sede ha passato – credo – un periodo più difficile di questo.”

In the opinion of the Vatican secretary the fascist regime (and the *duce* himself), not some “correnti interne al regime”, after having subjected the Italians by turning them into a “popolo di pecore”, had “divinizzato il Duce, facendo chinare tutti davanti a questo Nume”; it had “preteso e imposto a tutti la più assoluta ed intransigente docilità”, “accentrato tutti i poteri, tutti i mezzi, tutte le età nelle mani e nelle organizzazioni dello Stato”, created “un groviglio di leggi, di consuetudini, di associazioni che pongono ogni cosa e ogni persona in balia dello Stato”, withdrawn from the Church’s influence “moltissime anime che son prese dal demone del Nazionalismo e che credono più a Mussolini che al Papa”, and achieved “il disastro più grande” for the Church and catholicism, i.e. making the clergy “tumultuoso, esaltato, guerrafondaio”, and the bishops “verbosi, più eccitati, più squilibrati di tutti”.⁹⁴

Here once again, concerning Tardini’s considerations on the relations between fascist totalitarianism and the catholic Church, it can prove useful to turn towards Binchy’s reflections from 1941. While not having access neither to the Vatican Secret Archives nor to those of the fascist State, this catholic scholar understood better than many of his contemporaries, who underestimated the historical significance of fascist totalitarianism for the Church and catholicism – as do Klinkhammer, Pollard and Blinkhorn –, what kind of risks the Church of Christ was put up against by the totalitarian fascist regime:

“How far is the ordinary Italian conscious of the secret battle that is being waged between is spiritual and secular leaders underneath all exchanges of compliments and assurance of mutual esteem? [...] So far, things have not been made unduly difficult for him in practice. He may not be a fervent Catholic, but he is a still less fervent Fascist, and the Dictatorship takes good care not to force him to make a final option between these conflicting loyalties. The present generation has grown in a climate which was no more than partly Fascist, and Mussolini is quite content that an unobtrusive dualism should govern its practical dealings with Church and State. But what of the rising generation, the men and women of to-morrow, who have been moulded by the totalitarian machine from their earliest years? That is the great question the answer to

⁹⁴ Ceci, “Il Fascismo manda l’Italia in rovina”, op. cit., p. 343-345.

which is still outstanding. The difficulty of forecasting the answer is increased by certain characteristics of the Fascist regime which have already engaged our attention. In Italy the issue is by no means so clear-cut as in Germany, for the aim of Fascism is not to destroy the Church but to incorporate it in the totalitarian system. Accordingly, if Mussolini's dreams are realized, the Italian of to-morrow will be a Catholic of a sort, professing and practising his religion within the limits prescribed for him by the Fascist State. Catholicism will take its place as an important element in the Fascist order of life, a part of a greater whole; no longer recognized, it is true, as a force which escapes the competence of the State, but receiving in exchange for its independence a certain amount of autonomy within the totalitarian system. To use the Dictator's own word, it will be 'integrated' with the other national forces that have moulded the greatness of Italy, receiving in this harmonious synthesis a place commensurate with its glorious record in Italian history. It will be allowed to collaborate with Fascism in building up a new order in Europe, in the revival of that Roman Empire, among whose greatest gifts to mankind the Roman Church should certainly be numbered."⁹⁵

At the end of the 1930s, after another grave conflict between the Church and the regime on Catholic action, after the contrasting opinions on racism and antisemitism, after Pius XI's deploration on the ever closer ideological and political *entente* between fascism and nazism, another prelate, the archbishop of Milan, cardinal Schuster, who in 1937 had openly supported the regime and Mussolini, whom he declared greater than Constantine and Charlemagne, expressed, regarding the fascist system, a condemnation that was similar to that of Tardini. On January 17th, 1939, speaking of the "pericoli dell'ora presente" in front of the bishops of his diocese, the cardinal said:

"Speaking confidentially, the Catholic church today is faced, not so much by a new Fascist state, since this already existed in the year of the Concordat, but rather by an all-powerful philosophical and religious system in which, although it is not openly stated, there is an implicit rejection of the Apostolic Creed, of the spiritual transcendence of religion, of the rights of the Christian family and of the individual. [...] Confronting the Apostolic Creed and the Catholic church of divine origin, then, we find a Fascist creed and a totalitarian church which, precisely like its Hegelian counterpart, claims a number of divine attributes for itself. In religious terms, the Concordat is vaporized. [...] Now, if the principle of non-contradiction in philosophy is still valid, anyone can see that between Christianity, founded on the Ten Commandments and the Credo of divine origin and this new Hegelian, totalitarian, authoritarian, sovereign state, the source of Catholic spirituality and ethical behavior – of that Roman Catholicism, we mean to say, that existed even before Christianity – there is an irresolvable conflict. Christianity is in its essence supernatural, and it is spirit. This Hegelian state, in contrast, is a material force and it is entirely a political entity. Christianity yearns to love, rear, and serve God; this form of statolatry, in contrast, usurps the rights of God and opposes him. [...] In the Fascist state [...] there is a single absolute, totalitarian, entirely sovereign entity which makes no room for others, and yields command to no one. It is the state, which penetrates the very spirits and minds."

He concluded his speech with an apocalyptic invocation of the martyrs, saints and doctors of the Church, the first apostles, inciting them to stand up

⁹⁵ Binchy, *Church and State in Fascist Italy*, op. cit., p. 694-695.

“to free our homeland and the world itself from the pagan menace that once again threatens. I use the term ‘threatens’ and I am speaking especially to the shepherds of souls who have gathered here at this Synod; because it is you, oh reverend priests, who know, even better than I, how the totalitarian state, through its manifold institutions, is increasingly seizing control of the education of our youth, declaring to be useless nowadays the Sunday schools and parish youth clubs and the youth associations of Azione Cattolica, especially now that the GIL [*Gioventù Italiana del Littorio*, or Italian Fascist Youth Movement, literally, ‘Italian Lictorian Youth’] already has its own military chaplains.”⁹⁶

In those same days, a dying Pius XI was living in fear, while he was preparing a speech for the tenth anniversary of the Lateran pacts, a speech which he wrote in the night of the 31st and February 1st, while fascist press was conducting a campaign against him, orchestrated by the *duce* himself, who in private talked about his reborn antichristianism and about an irritated hostility against the pope for his criticism of racist and antisemitic laws and for his aversion towards the alliance with nazism. On October 18, 1938, while talking to Giuseppe Bottai, the *duce* called the Vatican, in an all but respectful manner, the “ghetto cattolico”: “Ribadisce il suo giudizio sul Papa: nefasto”.⁹⁷ As the *duce* told Ciano on January 1st, 1939, he accused the Holy See of wanting to constitute, with Catholic action, “un vero e proprio partito politico, che, prevedendo ore difficili per il Fascismo, vuole essere pronto a raccoglierne la successione.”⁹⁸ And the next day, via the ambassador at the Holy See, he sent the following message to the Vatican: “Il Papa ricordi che l’Italia è ghibellina”.⁹⁹

In this stormy, fearful period of persecutions and wars, during the night of January 31st, as mentioned Pius XI worked on a speech that he would have delivered in front of “venerabili fratelli” on an occasion marking the ten years of the *Conciliazione*.¹⁰⁰ He denounced the publicatory campaign against his person, a campaign which altered and falsified the sense of his words, warned the “venerabili fratelli” to be cautious as to what they said and to whom, even on the telephone, to avoid distortions both of their public speech as “della vostra parola privata, quella in ispecie che forse voi, con bontà e fiducia paterna, rivolgete o scambiate con persone portanti qualche carica politica o di partito, dei così detti gerarchi”: for this reason, “non affidate mai al telefono ciò che vi preme che non si sappia. Voi credete che la vostra parola vada senz’altro al lontano corrispondente, ed invece essa, ad un certo punto, viene avvertita e intercettata.” Pius XI’s speech finished, as did that of cardinal Schuster, with an

⁹⁶ Cit. in Gentile, ‘New Idols’, op. cit., p. 165-166.

⁹⁷ Giuseppe Bottai, *Diario 1935-1944*, Giordano Bruno Guerri (ed.), 1982, Rizzoli, Milano, p. 138-139.

⁹⁸ Galeazzo Ciano, *Diario 1937-1943*, Renzo De Felice (ed.), 1980, Rizzoli, Milano, p. 233.

⁹⁹ Ciano, *Diario 1937-1943*, op. cit., p. 234.

¹⁰⁰ The text is reproduced in Fattorini, *Pio XI, Hitler e Mussolini*, op. cit., p. 240-244.

apocalyptic invocation that he would, the next day in the Apostles' Basilica, have made in the following manner during prayer:

“esultate ossa glorificate di quei grandi fra gli amici e gli apostoli di Cristo, che hanno onorato e santificato questa Italia colla loro presenza, con la loro opera, col loro glorioso martirio, con la porpora del loro nobilissimo sangue; esultate in questo memorabile giorno, che ci ricorda ridato Dio all'Italia, e ridata l'Italia a Dio, auspicio ottimo di benedetto avvenire. E in presenza di tale auspicio, anche voi, ossa sacre e gloriose, come quelle dell'antico Giuseppe, profetate... Profetate la perseveranza di questa Italia nella fede da voi predicata e suggellata col vostro sangue: ossa sante, profetate una perseveranza intera e ferma contro tutte le scosse e tutte le insidie, che, da lontano e da vicino, la minacciano e la combattono; profetate, ossa sante, la pace, la prosperità, l'onore, soprattutto l'onore di un popolo cosciente della sua dignità e responsabilità umana e cristiana; profetate, ossa venerate e care, profetate l'avvento od il ritorno della vera Fede a tutti i popoli, a tutte le nazioni, a tutte le stirpi, congiunte tutte e tutte consanguinee nel comune vincolo della grande famiglia umana; profetate, ossa apostoliche, l'ordine, la tranquillità, la pace, la pace, la pace a tutto questo mondo, che, pur sembrando preso da una follia omicida e suicida di armamenti, la pace vuole e con noi dal Dio della pace la implora e spera d'averla. Così sia!”

Pius XI died on February 10th, 1939, and his successor Pius XII blocked the publication of the speech. Much in the same way, he did not order the publication of Pius XI's last encyclical, *Humani Generis Unitas*, in which the pope of the *Conciliazione* expressed a condemnation of all forms of totalitarianism that sacralized the Nation, the Race, Class.¹⁰¹

Is it possible to historically interpret such anguish and such torment by the pope and the other prelates of the Church, as well as by many other catholic antifascists, as the product of an imaginary nightmare about an imaginary danger, because imaginary is what they would be if, as goes the argument sustained by some historians, fascist totalitarianism and the sacralization of politics were mere intentions without reality? Of course, this is possible, when one conceals historical reality with misunderstandings, misconceptions or mystifications, generated by purely polemic controversy. The knowledge of the relations between catholicism and fascism is a vast field of research that for a great part has yet to be explored. Only by removing the obstacles that are the misunderstandings, misconceptions and mystifications, is it possible for exploration, conducted with intellectual integrity and a genuine desire for knowledge, to be fruitful.

¹⁰¹ Passelecq/Suचेchy, *L'encyclique cachée de Pie XI*, op. cit.

AN UNHOLY ALLIANCE? THE CONVERGENCE BETWEEN REVEALED RELIGION AND SACRALIZED POLITICS IN INTER-WAR EUROPE

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Catholicism's cosmological incompatibility with fascism

There is no shortage in monographic studies of the dealings which the Christian Churches entered into with fascism in Italy and Germany,¹ while clerical fascism has recently received a much-needed attention as an international phenomenon,² and the intricacies of the Iron Guard's relationship to Romanian Orthodoxy are finally in the process of being exposed.³ Yet Anglophone comparative publications in this area seem reluctant to offer a generic conceptual framework within which to explore the areas of conflict and collusion between Catholicism and fascist movements or states.⁴ Reticence on this issue is doubtless due in part to the perennial problems of defining fascism, but also to the sheer heterogeneity of a topic which defies generalization, with markedly different situations arising for the Church not just under Mussolini and Hitler, but in other Catholic countries where autonomous fascist movements were denied power (Spain, France, Brazil), unless they could operate (however briefly) under the umbrella of the Axis Powers (as in Slovakia, Hun-

¹ E.g. John S. Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches 1933-45*, 1968, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London; John Pollard, *The Vatican and Italian Fascism, 1929-32: A Study in Conflict*, 2005, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge; Richard Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919-1945*, 2003, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

² Various authors, 'Clerical Fascism' in *Interwar Europe*, special issue of *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8/2, 2007.

³ A spate of excellent scholarship on the Iron Guard is being produced by a new generation of scholars in Romania, and its involvement with Orthodoxy is the subject of what promises to be a significant PhD undertaken at the Central European University.

⁴ Such a conceptual framework is conspicuous by its absence, for example, in Horst Junginger (ed.), *The Study of Religion under the Impact of Fascism*, 2008, Brill, Leiden, rendering the 22 essays written in three different languages utterly incoherent and minimizing their value as a contribution to the topic.

gary, and Croatia), not to mention parafascist⁵ Catholic states such as Dollfuss' Austria, Salazar's Portugal, and possibly Pilsudski's Poland.

What follows are some general premises which may help, if not to resolve the conundrum, then at least to loosen the knots of controversy surrounding the extensive collaboration that could arise between Catholicism and fascist movements and regimes in the interwar and wartime period. In particular, this chapter hopes to illuminate the general context for the numerous cases of apparent Catholic enthusiasm that arose *in extremis* for a political force now so mired in connotations of paganism, imperialism, war, persecution, and genocide that any genuine, rather than purely tactical, convergence between the two must be particularly shocking and incomprehensible to post-war generations of Catholics who chance upon them.⁶ Given the appearance of scholarly works asserting the need to take at face value the affirmations of Nazi leaders of their movement's Christian nature,⁷ it is perhaps useful to avoid misunderstandings at the outset by stressing the radical *incompatibility* of fascism, a secular utopia of the reborn organic nation realizable through human agency within historical time, with Christianity, a revealed theology of redemption through the unique sacrifice of the son of God who has entered history.

However dense the mystification of fascist ideals through a discourse replete with allusions to sacrifice, God, and a higher destiny, it is impossible to reconcile the *soteriology* of Christianity, the doctrine of redemption and the prospect of personal immortality in a suprahistorical realm, with the myth of national redemption and rebirth within historical time. Nor can the New Testament doctrine of love and forgiveness be used credibly to sanction the purging use of state violence to achieve national 'greatness'.⁸ The myth of the reborn nation, which even the likes of Ian Kershaw now concedes⁹ lies at the heart of all fascisms,¹⁰ is, whatever its mollifyingly euphemistic wrapping, un-

⁵ By 'parafascist' I mean right-wing authoritarian states with no revolutionary agenda for the nation's socialist, spiritual and anthropological revolution characteristic of fascist utopianism. See Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, 1993, Routledge, London, ch. 5.

⁶ My impression is that there has been no concerted attempt made by the Catholic Church or secular state educationalists in Catholic countries to ensure modern Catholics are educated about the events of the inter-war and wartime period, or about the deep involvement of the Church in the fascist or parafascist control of European societies.

⁷ Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich*, op. cit.

⁸ There are, of course, some fascinating anticipations of modern notions of collective national resurrection in the Old Testament, Judaic concept of the Jews as a chosen people with its own suprahistorical destiny, but this is not to be conflated with Christian, and hence Catholic, principles of personal redemption and forgiveness. See S. Leyla Gürkan, *The Jews as a Chosen People: Tradition and Transformation*, 2009, Routledge, London-New York.

⁹ Ian Kershaw, 'Hitler and the Uniqueness of Nazism', *Journal of Contemporary History* 39/2, 2004, p. 245-246.

¹⁰ This is no place to rehearse the intense debate generated by the definition of generic fascism and my claim that a degree of scholarly consensus has emerged about the centrality of paligenetic myth to an attempted ultranationalist revolution as its definitional feature. For a

compromisingly Nietzschean at heart in its defiantly this-worldly vision of reality, its cult of the human will, and rejection of the objective reality of supra-natural, metaphysical realms. This does not, of course, prevent convinced fascists from drawing extensively on Christianity's value as a source of tropes and metaphors for a higher morality, a secular transcendence, and a *historical* immortality rooted in the nation conceived as a *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* (a 'community of destiny'). Indeed, in a country such as Romania, Hungary, or Finland, a particular denomination of Christianity may even acquire extraordinary value to fascism as a marker of ethnic belonging and national identity, and hence a source of mass-mobilizing myth in the Sorelian sense.¹¹ But any apparent con-fusions of Christianity and fascism are to be treated with extreme caution.

Thus, *pace* Steigman-Gall,¹² it is important to remain on one's guard against being beguiled by appearances when a fascist proclaims his Christian fervour, as when Hitler declared in a speech made on 12 April, 1922:

"My feeling as a Christian points me to my Lord and Saviour as a fighter. It points me to the man who once in loneliness, surrounded only by a few followers, recognized these Jews for what they were and summoned men to fight against them and who, God's truth! was greatest not as a sufferer but as a fighter.[...] In boundless love as a Christian and as a man I read through the passage which tells us how the Lord at last rose in His might and seized the scourge to drive out of the temple the brood of vipers and adders. How terrific was his fight against the Jewish poison.[...] Today, after two thousand years, with deepest emotion I recognize more profoundly than ever before the fact that it was for this that He had to shed his blood upon the Cross.[...] As a Christian I have no duty to allow myself to be cheated, but I have the duty to be a fighter for truth and justice.[...] And if there is anything which could demonstrate that we are acting rightly, it is the distress that daily grows. For as a Christian I have also a duty to my own people. And when I look on my people I see them work and work and toil and labour, and at the end of the week they have only for their wages wretchedness and misery."¹³

When Hitler identifies himself with Christ as a 'fighter' who cast Jews out of the temple, he provides a theological gloss to the ultimately genocidal

recent 'objective' survey of the debate see Constantin Iordachi, *Comparative Fascist Studies: New Perspectives* (Rewriting Histories), 2009, Routledge, London. See also my chapter 'Fascism and Culture: A Mosse-centric Metanarrative (or how fascist studies reinvented the wheel)', in: António Costa-Pinto (ed.), *Rethinking the Nature of Fascism: Comparative Perspectives*, 2011, Palgrave MacMillan, London, p. 85-118.

¹¹ The Iron Guard's appropriation of Romanian Orthodoxy to provide doctrinal substance to its fascism, and legitimacy to its myth of national regeneration (resurrection) is a particularly rich case-study in collusion between fascism and Christianity which awaits its authoritative history in English.

¹² See the comprehensive scholarly demolition of Steigmann-Gall's thesis (despite his spirited defence) that Nazism was at bottom a Christian movement in *Journal of Contemporary History* 42/1, 2007.

¹³ Norman H. Baynes (ed.), *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler*, April 1922-August 1939. Vol. 1, 1942, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 41-42.

project of purging ‘Aryan’ Germans of Jews and other alleged embodiments of racial decay or ideological evil: racial persecution and eliminatory anti-Semitism become a Christian duty to the *Volk*. To imply parallels between Hitler’s small band of followers in the early 1920s as head of the NSDAP and Jesus’ disciples is not a sign of Christian piety, and cannot be dismissed as a politician’s harmless piece of rhetorical hyperbole. For any devout Christian it is a blasphemous obscenity. Given our detailed historical knowledge of the personality and value-system of the person who made this claim, it is safe to assert that in sober historiographical terms that it is cynical dissimulation of a man who is anti-Christian to his the bottom of his soul (a dark place indeed, even in the post-Christian sense of the phrase), yet adroitly and perversely turns a feigned Christianity into a tool of anti-Semitism.

In later speeches Hitler could afford to drop the mask and declare the essentials of his utterly this-worldly creed of ‘destiny’, ‘belief’, and ‘miracles’ more overtly:

“Perhaps in the future one may speak of a miracle that destiny worked on us. Be that as it may, at the beginning of this miracle stood belief – the belief in the eternal German nation. [...] The creative bearer of this rebirth is the National Socialist Workers Party. [...] It had to cleanse Germany of all parasites for whom the distress of the Fatherland and of the people was a source of personal enrichment. It had to recognize the eternal values of blood and soil and raise them to the level of the governing laws of our life. It had to begin to fight against the greatest enemy that threatened to destroy our people: the international Jewish world enemy. [...] Its task was to purge the German nation, our race and our culture from this enemy.”¹⁴

In private he was prepared to be even more candid about his rigorously secular vision of immortality:

“To the Christian doctrine of the infinite significance of the individual human soul [...] I oppose with icy clarity the saving doctrine of the nothingness and insignificance of the individual human being, and of his continued existence in the visible immortality of the nation.”¹⁵

Those tempted by the Steigmann-Gall thesis as a premise to understanding fascism’s sometimes disturbingly cosy relationship to the Catholic Church would do well to read the eye-witness accounts bequeathed by the American social scientists Herbert Schneider concerning Fascism’s increasing success in mobilizing mass support in the late 1920s in the build-up to the Lateran Pacts. Having witnessed Mussolini’s fledgling regime at first hand, in particular its impressive displays of theatrical politics, he referred to Fascism as “a new religion”. However, he immediately qualified this observation by stres-

¹⁴ ‘Speech of 6 September 1938’, in: Baynes (ed.), *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler*, op. cit., p. 242.

¹⁵ Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich*, 2000, Macmillan, London.

sing that he did not mean that Fascism had developed “its own theology”, but that “it has given to thousands of Italian youths an ideal for which they are ready to sacrifice all”.¹⁶ In other words it was a *political* religion, not a scion of Christianity, however many endorsements it received from theologically challenged clergy at the time. The importance of not conflating political religion with revealed religion is underscored by a close study of fascism’s leading ideologues, even those of the Romanian Iron Guard, celebrated for its syncretism of a virulently racist fascism with Romanian orthodoxy.¹⁷

It is consistent with this approach that by the mid-1930s the most authoritative ideologues of Italian Fascism were extremely heterogeneous in their conception of what constituted the core of the regime’s mission. Nonetheless, despite their movement’s apparent *rapprochement* with the Catholic Church for over a decade, all of them axiomatically rejected the basic precepts of Catholic faith: the divinity of Christ, the theological apparatus of redemption and the transformative power of Holy Communion, and the pessimistic scheme of Christian history (the Doctrine of Original Sin, the need for contrition, the Apocalypse at the end of human time). After all, the Christian doctrine of the universality of access of all ‘gentiles’ to salvation through Jesus was based on an essentially supra-national and supra-ethnic dimension of faith which had no truck with imperialism, militarism, racism, or violence. Mussolini himself was an atheist, a former voluntarist Marxist of a genus close to revolutionary syndicalism, who was outspokenly anti-clerical in the early ‘San Sepolcro’ phase of his movement. When he chose, he was prepared to be perfectly up-front about his recognition of modern relativism and nihilism, and the need to overcome it proactively, not through Catholicism, but through man-made heroic mythopoeia. The language he used after the First World War still contained echoes of the Nietzschean analysis of modernity that had been transmitted to him through the pre-war *Vociani* who had such a decisive influence on his perception of himself as a world-historical ‘*homo novus*’ from 1908 onwards¹⁸:

“If relativism signifies contempt for fixed categories and men who claim to be bearers of an objective, immortal truth [...] then there is nothing more relativistic than Fascist attitudes and activity [...] From the fact that all ideologies are of equal value, that all ideologies are mere fictions, the modern relativist infers that everybody has the right to

¹⁶ Herbert Schneider, *Making the Fascist State*, 1968, Howard Fertig, New York (1^o 1928, Oxford University Press, New York), p. 229.

¹⁷ Radu Ioanid, ‘The Sacralized Politics of the Rumanian Iron Guard’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 5/3, 2004, p. 419-453.

¹⁸ The only Anglophone study of Mussolini which gives due weight to Mussolini’s ‘heavy-weight’ ideological credentials is James Gregor in *The Young Mussolini and the Intellectual Origins of Fascism* (1979, University of California Press, Berkeley). The historians who fully documents Mussolini’s sustained attempt to forge a total revolutionary ideology is Emilio Gentile, *Le origini dell’ideologia fascista*, 1996 (1^o 1975), il Mulino, Bologna; and *Il mito dello stato nuovo Dall’antigiolittismo al fascismo*, 1982, Laterza, Bari.

create for himself his own ideology and to attempt to enforce it with all the energy of which he is capable.”¹⁹

Such revealing assertions by the leaders of Fascism and Nazism have radical implications for the study of any aspect of fascism’s multifaceted and complex relationship with Catholicism. Clearly if Catholicism is gutted of its theology and redemptive promises and reduced to a reactionary bulwark of national identity, conventional morality, and bourgeois interests, and if revolutionary fascism is likewise stripped of its revolutionary – modernist²⁰ – radicalism, and then examined in its most compromised, conservative adulterations, or solely as an authoritarian regime in league with existing ruling elites, then an impression can emerge that they are as natural buddies as Bonnie and Clyde, or Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. Marxist assumptions about the capitalist roots of fascism and the repressive ideological function of religion under capitalism are especially conducive to such a shot-gun marriage of two alien entities. It would thus be salutary to dispel such misconceptions in preparation for such study to read some key passages of St Paul, Luther, Kierkegaard, or Jesus Christ Himself, and by the same token refresh an acquaintance with the more uncompromising pronouncements of Giovanni Gentile, Roberto Farinacci, Julius Evola in Italy, Gottfried Benn and Martin Heidegger (at least in their supinely Naziphile phase), Arthur Rosenberg, or Hitler himself, so as to bear in mind a deep impression of the chasm that existed between them. Revisiting the pictorial record of a death camp would also serve as a useful prophylactic against a wishy-washy, intellectually lazy blurring of definitional boundaries.

The core of Nazism is thus not to be found in the occasional public assertions by Nazis to assure Germans that the revolutionary programme was a form of ‘positive Christianity’ (a slogan adopted at the 1920 congress of the NSDAP for the most cynical of cosmetic purposes, where it is explicitly equated, not with theological Christianity, but with a struggle ‘against the Jewish-Materialistic spirit in and outside the party’). Rather it is revealed in texts such as Heinrich Himmler’s infamous speech to Gauleiter in Posen where he acknowledges that the higher morality of the Nazis which enabled them to carry out the extermination of all Jews, men, women and children out of love for the Aryan race was still incomprehensible to ordinary Germans to a point where the genocide must be kept from them:

¹⁹ Benito Mussolini, ‘Relativismo e fascismo’, in: Vincenzo Morello (ed.), *Diuturna*, 1924, Alpes, Milan, p. 374.

²⁰ Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism. The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*, 2007, Palgrave, London.

“At a future point we will perhaps be able to consider whether to tell the German people more about this matter. I believe that it is better for us all to have endured this for our people, and accepted our responsibility (the responsibility for deeds not the idea behind them), and then take the secret with us to our graves.”²¹

Catholicism and fascism: some premises

So the first premise to bear in mind in venturing onto this slippery and treacherous historical terrain is that fascism is radically incompatible in theological, soteriological, and ‘cosmological’ terms with Catholicism. A second is that the ideology of fascism in the interwar period not only varies markedly from nation to nation, but contains within each movement a number of conflicting interpretations of the core myth of national rebirth, so that there will be no ‘one’ fascist position on the Church or Christianity. Nevertheless, claims that fascism is carrying out a divine will are to be treated like suspicious packages left in railway stations: they need to be carefully examined and dismantled.

The third premise is that Catholicism had been riven by debates over social and political issues long before the advent of fascism and was as ever intensely concerned with the problems of how Christian theology and praxis could be adapted to the realities of the modern age without surrendering to the forces of secularism.²² The papal encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) are symptoms of an intense ongoing debate within Catholicism over the possibility of a distinctively Catholic variant of modernity, an issue made all the more urgent by the turbulent aftermath of the Great War, the Bolshevik Revolution, and what seemed to be the imminent collapse of liberalism. Inevitably, there was no single, uniform Catholic response to modernity or the rise of fascism. In short, both entities are dynamically changing, multifaceted, and factious, precluding a particular ‘relationship’.

It follows from these reflections that any significant episodes of symbiosis or collusion between them should perhaps be conceived in terms of a series of cartoon-like Venn Diagrams illustrating the way Christianity and fascism responded to each other over time in a particular nation-state, with every national dialect of fascism overlapping to a lesser or greater degree with Catholicism or another form of Christianity. Such a graphic presentation, at least as a mental construct, would highlight the varying degrees of collusion in different nations against the background of a dynamically changing interna-

²¹ Himmler’s Speech to Gauleiter in Posen, Poland, 6 November 1943, in Gerhard Grimm (ed.), *Der Nationalsozialismus*, 1981, Günter Olzog, Munich-Vienna, p. 277-280, originally reproduced in Bradley F. Smith-Agnes Peterson (eds.), *Heinrich Himmler. Geheimreden 1933-1945*, 1974, Propyläen, Berlin, p. 168-171.

²² Martin Conway (ed.) *Political Catholicism in Europe, 1918-1965*, 1996, Oxford University Press, Oxford; and Id., ‘The Christian Churches and Politics In Europe, 1914-1939’, *The Cambridge History of Christianity. World Christianities c.1914-c. 2000*, 2006, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 151-178.

tional and national situation. Even this would drastically simplify the situation on the ground. Certainly there is no question of approaching the topic as if it was constituted by a stable relationship between two discrete and static entities. Furthermore, collusion when it did occur was rarely between Catholicism and fascism as two utopian *ideologies*, since these were in principle incompatible (though some exceptions to this assertion will be considered later). Rather it was between two rival, mutual hostile, institutional *power centres* each attempting to exert its influence over modern society: the first a millennial institution that has always had to constantly adapt to the shifting secular political and economic forces shaping society, not least the rise of secularism and secular ideologies of revolution and progress; the second a profoundly modern political “late-comer”²³ with a totalizing claim to establish a new order by imposing its various schemes for resolving modernity’s crisis of meaning, which it proposed to do unfettered by the trammels of liberalism or democracy.

Their natural enmity means that any compromise between them goes against the grain of both historical forces (thus rejecting Marxist assumptions about their elective affinity under the aegis of capitalism), and must have at some point defied or overridden what *in theory* are legitimate concerns with ideological purity and consistency *on both sides*. Such ‘accommodation’ has thus taken place deep in the shadow that according to T. S. Eliot always falls ‘between the idea and the reality’.²⁴ Accommodation of fascism by Catholicism occurred in the shadow between, on the one hand, the Christian ideal of the Church as the agency for God’s plan for the world to be fulfilled in the Earthly City, culminating with the eventual destruction of the secular world order as the prelude to a new immortal realm in heaven where all the saved shall live eternally; and, on the other, the compromised, corrupted material and all-too-human reality of the Church’s institutional and historical role as a major player in cultural production, as well as in conditioning socio-economic control and power relations in secular society. With the advent of secularism, Catholicism found itself an increasingly beleaguered force, pitted against the hydra-like enemy of modernity which generated first secular liberalism, then socialism, then ultranationalism, then communism, and then fascism (and, some might add, the most lethal threat of all: consumerism). The diabolical logic that ‘your enemy’s enemy is your friend’ all too easily drove elements within the Church, faced by the radical anarchy and uncertainty of the post-1918 era and the very real threat seemingly posed by atheistic communism’s bid for world power, into an alliance with the forces of authoritarian nationalism and fascism which outwardly converged with Christianity on some core issues.

²³ Juan Linz, ‘Political space and fascism as late-comer’, in: S. Larsen et al. (eds.), *Who Were the Fascists?*, 1980, Universitetsforlag, Bergen, p. 153-189.

²⁴ T. S. Eliot, ‘The Hollow Men’ (1925).

Meanwhile, any accommodation of Catholicism by fascism took place in the shadow between, on the one hand, the fascist ideal of the regenerated nation as a non-religious, but sacralized entity, destined to achieve a new golden age within human history through the collective forces of patriotism and the race; and on the other, its pragmatic need as a highly marginalized force to co-opt the forces of tradition and established religion in order to achieve a mass following and access to state power. In order to achieve popular legitimacy, some fascists were prepared to cultivate the essentially deceptive (or self-deceptive) impression that their cause broadly defended the moral values of Christianity or the interests of the Church (not necessarily the same thing), while at the same time seeking to marginalize into *insignificance* the theology and rituals of the Church as vehicles of a personal redemption which could only be found henceforth in the service of the regenerated national community.

The pursuit of a mutually beneficial collaboration was encouraged by a number of shared values in their response to modernity. Both were, for radically different reasons, anti-materialist, anti-individualist, anti-decadence, and hostile to the forces of modernization that bred anomie, atomization, and moral anarchy. Both valued family life (in the case of fascism only available for the ‘chosen’, fully ‘human’ segment of the population), and detested the blurring of gender boundaries and sexual emancipation. Both were generally patriarchal and (officially) homophobic. Both were anti-communist, anti-liberal and opposed to the extremes of laissez-faire capitalism, asserting the values of ‘community’ over society.

But the affinities ran deeper still. Both experienced modernity, again for very different reasons, as what Walter Benjamin called in his *Theses on the Philosophy of History* ‘the storm of progress’, or what Eric Jameson presented as “a catastrophe” that “dashes traditional structures and lifeways to pieces, sweeps away the sacred, undermines immemorial habits and inherited languages, and leaves the world as a set of raw materials to be reconstructed rationally”.²⁵ Both fascists and Catholics were intensely concerned, not just with the external symptoms of the breakdown of history, but with secular progress’s destruction of meaning and morality. They were acutely aware that, not just the violent upheavals in modern history, but modernity itself had stripped human beings living in the West of an overriding world-view, ‘nomos’, or *Weltanschauung*. As one contemporary critique of the status quo under liberalism put it, a totalizing vision of the world in which an individual could believe was the precondition for a meaningful life: “by helping to raise man above the level of bestial vegetation, faith contributes in reality to the securing and safeguarding of his existence”. Indeed, “not only does man live to serve higher ideals, but

²⁵ Fredric Jameson, *The Seeds of Time*, 1994, Columbia Press, New York.

[...] these higher ideals also provide the premise to his existence". The contemporary was Adolf Hitler.²⁶

The root difference is that, whereas Catholicism saw itself as offering a shelter from the storm that it had taken nearly two thousand years to construct and was based on the revealed truth concerning the intertwining of human with divine history, fascism precisely saw in the destruction of the old liberal order the opportunity to construct a new one employing the exclusively human forces both of rationality and irrationality, the power of will, and the will to power. To use the sort of organic metaphor beloved of fascists themselves, the voluntary collusion of elements within the Catholic world with fascism resembled a situation where a host plant offers itself up to infiltration and colonization by a deadly parasitic plant bent on drawing sustenance from the vitality of its victim, and does so because it has been conceived by the prospect of drawing on its greater vitality and strength.

Such a self-destructive strategy on the part of some clerics and many more lay-believers was facilitated by a long-standing ecclesiastical tradition. This was its involvement in and compromise with the secular social and political life of each empire or nation in which it took root (a process which non-believers might see as originally a parasitic activity itself). Historically this had led institutionalized Christianity since its infancy as a state religion to an almost instinctive accommodation with the ruling elites, whatever their morality, and to endemic Catholic acquiescence throughout its history with – and sometimes proactive support of – such deeply un-Christian forces (theologically speaking) as feudalism, absolutism, militarism, imperialism, male chauvinism, capitalism, ultranationalism, dictatorship, fascism, and racism.

Indeed, for long periods of its existence the very institution of papacy itself was the seat – and at times a hotbed – of a political, material and moral corruption which spread throughout the Catholic empire to the point where it provoked the Lutheran revolution. It is also worth pointing out that, alongside the moral depravity of some of its highest representatives, the Catholic Church in its fight against heresy, secularism, the Reformation, paganism, witchcraft, and modernity itself had recourse to systematized torture and methods of repression on a scale worthy of any modern totalitarian state. Moreover, it has been deeply embroiled in anti-Semitism and the brutal persecution of other cultures and faiths in the past. Hence collusion with yet another contemporary anti-Christian political and cultural force thrown up by secular history, fascism, was to a large extent 'business as usual' for many elements within the Church even at the highest levels, the latest episode in a long saga of corruption and depravity.

²⁶ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 2, 1992, Pimlico, London, p. 345-346.

The need for specificity

Having formulated a series of general premises, it is vital to stress the need for each episode of *rapprochement* between Catholicism and fascism or parafascism to be considered in its relation to the particular constellation of factors that brought it about and conditioned its outcome, and not to see it as a glimpse into the essentially fascist nature of Catholicism or vice versa. The pressures on both the Vatican and Mussolini to reach the degree of *entente* that led to the Lateran Pacts of 1929, for example, arose from a unique set of circumstances which have now been explored in some depth.²⁷ A few years later the Civil War broke out in Spain, creating a deeply polarized situation which forged an alliance between the Church and both Franco's parafascist regime and the fascist Falange which was utterly different in its historical roots and contemporary configuration than the Italian case. Hitler's relationship with the Vatican was radically different again, and the degree to which Pius XI and Pius XII were committed to opposing The Third Reich has been a subject of considerable scholarly debate, but was clearly motivated by conflicting external factors and personal motives.

Simplistic notions of spineless or proactive collusion with Nazism by both Popes²⁸ have been effectively refuted by thorough archival work,²⁹ the fruits of which reveal how the leaders of the Catholic Church agonized over their appropriate response as the screw of Nazi terror was tightened, first on Germany and then on occupied Europe, like a garrotte. The situation in occupied Poland and Belgium, and the Third Reich's Catholic satellites Hungary and Slovakia reveal yet more unique permutations of general patterns. A particularly complex (and, to liberal Catholics, surely *disturbing*) case of collaboration with fascism is presented by the Catholic Church in Nazi-occupied France, where it became a staunch supporter of the Vichy regime and of Pétain's *révolution nationale*, partly as the result of a bitter feud with the secularizing liberalism of Republicanism that had been raging ever since the French Revolution.³⁰

Yet at the heart of such investigations lies a phenomenon that seems to transcend the peculiarities of a specific national context and stretch intelligibility and methodological empathy to the limit: the undeniable evidence of collusion sometimes at the highest level of authority between at least *some* ostensibly

²⁷ John Pollard, *The Vatican and Italian Fascism 1929-32*, 1985, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

²⁸ The most influential example of this is John Cornwell, *Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pope Pius XII*, 1999, Viking, London.

²⁹ Notably, Philip Jenkins, *The New Anti-Catholicism: The Last Acceptable Prejudice*, 2003, Oxford University Press, Oxford; Peter Godman, *Hitler and the Vatican: Inside the Secret Archives that Reveal the New Story of the Nazis and the Church*, 2004, Free Press, New York.

³⁰ W. D. Hall, *Politics, Society, and Christianity in Vichy France*, 1995, Berg Publishers, Oxford-Providence.

Christian believers and the elites of fascism, a political force that by the mid-1930s, well before the revelations of the death camps, had already paraded for all to see its unvarnished lust for a secular power that deliberately set out to inflict unspeakable suffering on countless human beings in order to achieve its goals, even if it was only in a particularly brutal colonial war or through mass internments. However secularized or cynical about religion many have become in the post-Christian era, this collusion still constitutes a historical fact which is not just ‘brute’, but morally ugly and theologically *obscene*. To give Caesar his due is one thing, but would Jesus really have exhorted his believers to ‘render to Hitler that which is Hitler’s’?

Thanks to the Web, chilling souvenir photos capturing the moral compromise of Catholic dignitaries prepared to give the fascist salute alongside their hosts are now in public domain,³¹ and still retain a shock value even if they have been published by politically questionable sources. Also in public domain is the bestselling *The Vatican in World Politics* (1949) by Avro Manhattan, who showed the single-mindedness of a dedicated conspiracy theorist by devoting considerable intellectual energy to publishing a stream of books between 1945 and 1986 indicting the Roman Catholic Church with systematic complicity in totalitarianism and terror. The facts he unearths are fascinating, even if the zealous anti-Catholic interpretation he imposes on them is suspect.

The chapter ‘Italy, the Vatican and Fascism’, for example, offers a detailed account of how the Catholic Church gave its blessing to the Fascist dismantling of parliamentary democracy and workers’ rights, the demographic campaign, the conquest of Abyssinia, the anti-Semitic campaign, and by implication, the militarization of Italy and the Axis. Nor, so he claims, was the ecclesiastical enthusiasm for the regime always feigned as a matter of expediency:

“Fascist leaders harangued in public squares and Catholic priests and bishops in their churches, both busy asking the people to support the Duce. When Mussolini asked the Italian women to give up their gold and silver rings to the State, Catholic priests preached that they should give as much as they could. Many bishops and priests led the offering by giving to the Fascists the jewels and gold belonging to their churches, even offering the church bells so that they might be made into guns.”³²

The ecclesiastical endorsements of the ‘liberation’ of Ethiopia included the Bishop of Siena eagerness to give his blessing to “Italy, our great Duce, our soldiers who are achieving victory for the truth and for justice”, and the pastoral composed by the Bishop of Nocera Umbra, which he ordered to be read in all his churches. It declared that as “an Italian citizen I consider this war just

³¹ E.g. <http://alamoministries.com/content/english/Antichrist/nazigallery/photogallery.html#>.

³² Avro Manhattan, *The Vatican in World Politics*, 1949, Gaer Associations, http://www.cephas-library.com/catholic/catholic_vatican_in_world_politics_chpt_9.html.

and holy”. The Bishop of Cività Castellana went as far as thanking God in the presence of Mussolini “for having allowed me to see these epic and glorious days, sealing our union and our faith”. The Cardinal Archbishop of Milan, Cardinal Schuster, went even farther and conferred on the Abyssinian War the nature of a holy crusade: “The Italian (Fascist) flag is at the moment bringing in triumph the Cross of Christ in Ethiopia, to free the road for the emancipation of the slaves, opening it at the same time to our missionary propaganda”.³³

Manhattan captures the mood of ecclesiastical enthusiasm at the prospect of a new Roman Empire with this vignette:

“The Archbishop of Naples even employed the image of the Madonna, which was brought from Pompeii to Naples in a great procession. Ex-soldiers, war widows, war orphans, and Fascists all marched behind it, while Fascist war planes overhead showered down pamphlets in which the Virgin, Fascism, and Abyssinian War were all glorified at the same time. After this the Cardinal Archbishop himself jumped on a tank and solemnly blessed the excited crowd.”³⁴

Even more disturbing examples of some Catholic clergy willingly embracing fascism in its most brutal manifestations occurred outside Italy. Godman’s *Hitler and the Vatican* devotes considerable space to the case of Bishop Alois Hudal, one of the major representatives of Austrian Catholicism in Rome, who went to inordinate lengths to synthesize Christianity with National Socialism, a world-view which led to his sustained efforts at the end of the war to use his influence in the Vatican to save the lives of major and minor Nazi war-criminals through the so-called ‘ratline’. Hudal left copious writings to document his systematic perversion of Christianity into a willing hand-maiden of state terror and genocide. But the most extreme examples of a proactive ‘modus vivendi’ on the part of Catholics with fascist terror occurred in Croatia once it had become an ally of the Nazis. Mike Budak, Croatian Minister of Religion, declared in July 1941, three months after the Croats had broken away from Yugoslavia to join the Axis Powers:

“The Ustashi movement is based on the Catholic Religion. For the minorities, Serbs, Jews and Gypsies, we have three million bullets. A part of these minorities has already been eliminated and many are waiting to be killed. Some will be sent to Serbia and the rest will be forced to change their religion to Catholicism. Our new Croatia will therefore be free of all heretics, becoming purely Catholic for the future years.”³⁵

³³ Manhattan, *The Vatican in World Politics*, op. cit.

³⁴ Manhattan, *The Vatican in World Politics*, op. cit.

³⁵ Robert Nordlander, ‘Catholicism and Fascism: A Brief Retrospective’, http://www.newyouth.com/archives/historicalanalysis/catholicism_and_fascism.html. He is quoting Branco Bokun, *Spy in the Vatican*, 1973, Praeger, London.

The previous month a Roman Catholic Priest is quoted as saying: "Brethren, up to now we have worked for the Holy Roman Apostolic Church with the cross and the missal. Now the moment has come to work with a knife in one hand and a gun in the other. The more Serbs and Jews you succeed in eliminating, the more you will be raised in esteem in the heart of the Roman Catholic Church."³⁶ In *Spy in the Vatican*, Branco Bokun, who served as an intermediary between Yugoslavia and the Vatican during the war, claims that on July 14, 1941, Pope Pius XII received a delegation of one hundred Ustashi policemen who had been selected because of their prowess in the game 'cut throat'. Played in death camps, the winner was the Ustashi guard who demonstrated his ability 'to kill a Serb or a Jew causing the least agony'. Certainly there is overwhelming evidence of the direct participation of Roman Catholic clergy or ex-clergy in the genocidal actions of the Ustashi state in Croatian concentration camps under the rule of Ante Pavelić. The Jasenovac camp was run by the former Franciscan monk, Miroslav Filipović, and Bokun claims to have seen documentary evidence of atrocities committed in the presence of Catholic priests or committed specifically against the Orthodox Church:

"I saw a picture of an Orthodox Church in the village of Glina. In front of the church was a pile of bodies, with two Ustasis in the foreground throwing the body of a dead Orthodox priest on the pile. To the left of the photograph, a Catholic priest stood watching. The next photograph depicted an Ustashi in the act of beheading an Orthodox priest, his axe raised, ready to strike. In the background several other Ustasis were standing around laughing. The third picture showed an Ustashi brandishing a knife dripping with blood, at his feet the bodies of several women and children. My eyes fixed on a naked child in the front who could not have been more than three years old. The look of surprise in his wide-open eyes made him look as if he were still alive."³⁷

By far the most high profile example of Catholic collusion with fascist terror at the highest level is Aloysius Stepinac, Bishop and then Cardinal of Zagreb who, despite his subsequent beatification by Pope John Paul II in 1998, gave his full support to the establishment of the Ustashe regime in Croatia and the ensuing mass-murder of Serbs and Jews, and also headed the committee responsible for the forcible conversions of Serbs to Catholicism under pain of death. It was under his aegis that the Croatian Catholic press gave its blessing to the transformation of Croatia into a puppet state of the Nazis:

"God, who directs the destiny of nations and controls the hearts of Kings, has given us Ante Pavelic and moved the leader of a friendly and allied people, Adolf Hitler, to use his victorious troops to disperse our oppressors and enable us to create an Indepen-

³⁶ Nordlander, 'Catholicism and Fascism', op. cit.

³⁷ Nordlander, 'Catholicism and Fascism', op. cit.

dent State of Croatia. Glory be to God, our gratitude to Adolph Hitler, and infinite loyalty to chief Ante Pavelic.”³⁸

Despite the abundance of such facts, Manhattan reveals a simplistic, and hence fundamentally ahistorical, propagandistic, approach to the relationship between Catholicism and fascism when he declares that, unrestrained by liberalism and operating under the protective shield of the Axis powers, the Catholic Church erected in Croatia:

“a State in complete accord with all her tenets. The result was a monster standing upon the armed might of twin totalitarianisms: the totalitarianism of a ruthless Fascist State and the totalitarianism of Catholicism – the most bloodthirsty hybrid yet produced by contemporary society. What gives to such a creature of Vatican diplomacy its peculiar importance is that here we have an example of the Catholic Church's implementing all her principles, unhampered by opposition, or by fear of world opinion. The uniqueness of the Independent Catholic State of Croatia lies precisely in this: that it provided a model, in miniature, of what the Catholic Church, had she the power, would like to see in the West and, indeed, everywhere. As such it should be carefully scrutinized. For its significance... is of the greatest import to all the freedom-loving peoples of the world.”³⁹

Collusion, Hybridization, and the Stubbornness of Old Men

To suggest that Stepinac and his willing executioners in the Jasenovac camp somehow exhibited the *essence* of Roman Catholicism is, of course, a crude demonization of Catholics on a par with, or even a deliberate emulation of, the demonization of Serbs by the Ustashe, and contains its own seeds of racist exclusion and eliminatory violence. Nevertheless, Manhattan's phrase ‘blood-thirsty hybrid’ raises an important issue which demands clarification if scholars are to investigate effectively the murky world of Catholicism's fascistization and fascism's Catholicization, namely a distinction between ‘collusion’ and ‘hybridization’.

On a phenomenological level, in other words when scholarly attempts are made to understand how the ‘actors’ involved in the Church-fascist collaboration often loosely referred to as ‘clerical fascism’ actually experienced their involvement in the fascistization of society,⁴⁰ it is important to abandon simplistic assumptions about the homogeneity of the human psyche and the coherence or rigour of ideological commitment. As Robert Lifton makes clear in *The Protean Self*, human beings have a remarkable capacity for rationalization,

³⁸ Nedelja, April 27, 1941, cited in Manhattan's *The Vatican's Holocaust*, <http://www.reformation.org/holocaust.html#>.

³⁹ Manhattan, *The Vatican's Holocaust*, op. cit., p. 14.

⁴⁰ See Roger Griffin, ‘The ‘Holy Storm’: Clerical fascism through the Lens of Modernism’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8/2, 2007, p. 213-227.

for controlled schizophrenia, for doublethink, and denial.⁴¹ It is a position abundantly confirmed by research into cognitive dissonance.⁴² Once we abandon the idea that there are two monolithic ideological or moral camps labelled 'Roman Catholic' and 'fascism' in inter-war Europe, then not one, but several possible relationships can be ideal-typically identified between the two at an affective level.

First, 'shallow duplicity', where those with a weak inner core of religious faith could all too easily see both fascism and Catholicism as compatible on central social issues (family values, anti-Communism, stopping moral and cultural decadence, stabilizing and respiritualizing society), but without entering any deep sense of cognitive dissonance or conflict, since the Church was merely for them part of Italian or German everyday normality. Second, 'passive collusion', where the human adeptness at moral gymnastics and self-deception made it eminently possible for practising Catholics living under fascism (along with millions of others with respect to their own core beliefs) to commute relatively painlessly on a daily basis or even minute-by-minute basis between Catholic ritual, observances, family life, and professions of faith, and fascism, outwardly (and at least partly inwardly) accepting the myths disseminated by fascists themselves about their commitment to Christian institutions (e.g. in Italy), or 'positive Christianity' (in Germany), overriding the Christian principle 'by their works ye shall know them'.

The next level up in intensity of moral compromise was *proactive* collusion. Here devout congregational or clerical Catholics entered a more complex state of accommodation with fascism by convincing themselves that by supporting it they were lending their weight to the bulwark being created against the arch-enemies of Christianity: materialism, secularism, atheistic science, liberalism, communism, the atomization and disenchantment of society, moral anarchy, and even the hegemony of 'Jewish' values. This could lead to a feeling that fascism was a providential force sent to rescue the Church from destruction, as when a German pastor's response to Hitler's appointment as Chancellor in January 1933 that "the wing of a great turn of fate [was] fluttering above [them]".⁴³ But perhaps the most fascinating, and certainly the most radical 'solution' of all to the dilemma of choosing between fascism and Catholicism was hybridization of the sort we encounter *prima facie* in the case of Cardinal Schuster and Cardinal Stepinac. At this point Catholic faith is so extensively fascistized and fascism so thoroughly Christianized in the mind of the

⁴¹ Robert Lifton, *The Protean Self: Human Resilience in an Age of Fragmentation*, 1993, Basic Books, New York.

⁴² E. Harmon-Jones/J. Mills (eds.), *Cognitive Dissonance: Progress on a Pivotal Theory in Social Psychology*, 1999, American Psychological Association, Washington, DC; J. Cooper, *Cognitive dissonance: 50 years of a classic theory*, 2007, Sage, London.

⁴³ Cited in Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: 1889-1936, Hubris*, 1999, W. W. Norton, New York, p. 432.

believer that a new politico-religious compound or alloy is created. It is a process analogous to the one that led some evangelical Christians in the US to interpret 9/11 as punishment for America's immorality, or to see Bush's neo-Conservative solution to the crisis as a *Christian* mission to invade Iraq.

In my *Modernism and Fascism* I offer an elaborate model of the way the crisis of meaning under the impact of modernization (the permanent 'nomic' crisis of modernity) generates a permanent 'liminoid' state of culture (referred to as 'anomic' by Émile Durkheim and 'liquid' by Zygmunt Bauman) against which some human beings rebel by postulating total revolutionary solutions to restore the lost 'nomos'. The process of devising a new nomos characteristically involves a process of 'mazeway resynthesis' in which elements of normally conflicting ideologies are hybridized into a new overarching world view (*Weltanschauung*) which, once adopted by a 'revitalization movement' under a charismatic leader, may come to form the nucleus of a new society or a new order. The genuine hybridization of two such theoretically incompatible ideologies as Catholicism and fascism during the sustained nomic crisis of interwar Europe, and the resulting liquefaction of values, provide a case-book paradigm of mazeway resynthesis in operation.

In short, the many forms of alliance produced between Catholicism and fascism in inter-war Europe cannot be understood without a considerable act of methodological empathy with the spiritual distress generated by the abyss of fear and despair that opened up under the feet of Europeans between 1914 and 1945. Michael Burleigh's perceptive observation about the NSDAP applies to all fascisms that gained some sort of mass momentum: "Nazism sank a drillhead into a deep-seated reservoir of existential anxiety, offering salvation from an ontological crisis".⁴⁴ It was a time where anomie became the norm, a time of miscommunication and spiritual breakdown, when events were reflected in distorting mirrors, and when palingenetic mirages could assume greater solidity than reality itself, spawning ideological *mésalliances* and spiritual *liaisons dangereuses* exerting a Siren-like fascination on millions of 'ordinary people' who had lost their spiritual bearings and cultural roots. The situation inspired William Butler Yeats to write a poem evoking the prospect, not just of a false dawn, but of a false apocalypse in his famous poem *The Second Coming*. It was written while the corpses of soldiers had not yet fully decomposed in the continent-wide No-Man's-Lands of the First World War after a slaughter that had turned Western civilization itself into a spiritual No-Man's-Land:

"Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,

⁴⁴ Burleigh, *The Third Reich*, op. cit., p. 256.

The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
 The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
 The best lack all conviction, while the worst
 Are full of passionate intensity.”

Between the wars it could seem if the earthly avatar of Christ, and not for the first time in ecclesiastical history, had lost the protection of the Catholic Church to which it had been entrusted. The failure of its duty of care sowed deep spiritual confusion and existential *angst* among the many Christians subjugated or enthralled by fascism, even among theologically trained clergy who in other times might, or at least should, have known better. Where liberalism broke down and ultranationalism filled the void, the storms of progress that repeatedly battered European civilization triggered a pandemic of collaboration among Catholics with what a moment’s sober meditation in more serene times would have soon revealed to be one of their arch-enemies.

It took another poet to see in lucid *theological* terms how the hecatombs of violence drenching contemporary history with blood stemmed from the readiness of an allegedly Christian civilization to allow the message of Christ being broadcast from the City of God to be drowned out by first the hustle and bustle, and then the barked orders and tormented screams emanating from the Earthly City:

“So Abram rose, and clave the wood, and went,
 And took the fire with him, and a knife.
 And as they sojourned both of them together,
 Isaac the first-born spake and said, My Father,
 Behold the preparations, fire and iron,
 But where the lamb for this burnt-offering?
 Then Abram bound the youth with belts and straps
 and builded parapets and trenches there,
 And stretchèd forth the knife to slay his son.
 When lo! an angel called him out of heaven,
 Saying, Lay not thy hand upon the lad,
 Neither do anything to him. Behold,
 A ram, caught in a thicket by its horns;
 Offer the Ram of Pride instead of him.
 But the old man would not so, but slew his son,
 And half the seed of Europe, one by one.”⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Wilfred Owen, ‘The Old Man and the Young’ (1918).

CHURCH, CATHOLICS AND FASCIST MOVEMENTS IN EUROPE: AN ATTEMPT AT A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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The discussion contained in the following pages is an attempt to reconsider the attitudes of international Catholicism toward a number of fascist movements and regimes. Utilising the vast quantity of documentary materials unearthed by both past and current research, it will try to suggest some new investigative pathways.

In recent years a sense of deep renewal has transformed the area of fascist studies, introducing totalitarianism and political religions as central issues. This new awareness has also changed the approach to the way that the relationship between Catholicism and fascism is studied.¹ For decades historians have been oriented towards studying the diplomatic relations between the Holy See and the fascist regimes, as well as to the scrutiny of positive or negative attitudes held by Catholics. Thus the subject has often been viewed through the limiting lens of a restrictive question: did Catholics consent or dissent? Interpretations generally polarised around the simplifying (and moralistic) notions of the denunciation of clerical support or the apology of the few examples of 'prophetic' protest. Today, because of the 'cultural turn' in fascist studies, scholars are no longer confined to this limited approach, but have widened their scope of research so as to consider Catholics' attitudes within the wider context of mass politics, national myths, secularisation processes, and the ideologization of politics itself: they have begun to delve into the sphere of collective beliefs and mass belonging and to ponder the issue of the consequences and effects of Catholicism's encounter with fascism on religious life itself, from the mentality of the faithful to the varying forms of organization and expression. This essay aims to examine the differing perceptions that Catholics and Catholicism held of fascism from this perspective.

¹ Emilio Gentile, 'New Idols: Catholicism in the Face of Fascist Totalitarianism', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 11/2, 2006, p. 143-170.

Problems of Definition

The first difficulty in dealing with this subject stems from “the prerequisite of all comparative investigation, the definition of terms”.² In our case, defining both Catholicism and fascism is a problematic process.

What exactly do we mean when we use the word ‘Catholic’? This is not a rhetorical question: in the current international debate there is a widespread inclination to extend the concept, considering very few requirements to be sufficient as proofs of a Catholic identity. Some authors go as far as to individuate Catholics almost solely on the basis of baptism.³ Nevertheless, as one great scholar of ecclesiastical history, Roger Aubert, suggested, the notion of Catholicism is all but unequivocal,⁴ because it is composed of at least five levels: the Holy See, with its diplomatic activity and the central role of papal teaching; the episcopacy, which entails a number of different positions, all of which may differ greatly according to various national contexts; the clergy, who very often represent the Church in the daily life of many Catholics, albeit while not always being on the same wavelength as the papacy or the bishops;⁵ theologians with their specialised cultural and philosophical responsibilities pertaining to doctrinal development; and then the laity, which is, again, a complex notion, because it gathers both active subjects (Catholic-oriented intellectuals and journalists, along with members of Catholic organizations) and the anonymous mass of the faithful.⁶ Consequently, it is necessary for historians to keep all these different levels in mind and thus consider as being ‘Catholic’ any person who, in one way or the other, participates in the life of the Catholic community.

The definition of fascism is even more complex, and it remains the subject of extensive scholarly debate concerning the inclusion (or exclusion) of a number of regimes and movements. Dealing with this debate and tackling the difficult problem of a “fascist minimum” (or that of the boundaries of the fas-

² Carl Levy, ‘Fascism, National Socialism and Conservatives in Europe, 1914-1945: Issues for Comparativists’, *Contemporary European History* 8/1, 1999, p. 99.

³ Richard Steigmann-Gall comes very near to this in a recent article: ‘The Nazis’ ‘Positive Christianity’: A Variety of ‘Clerical Fascism’?, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8/2, 2007, p. 316.

⁴ Roger Aubert, ‘L’Église Catholique et le problème de la guerre. Bilan des travaux et état des problèmes’, in: *Les internationales et le problème de la guerre au XX^e siècle. Actes du Colloque organisé par L’École française de Rome, le Centro per gli studi di politica estera e opinione pubblica de l’Università de Milan, l’Academia Belgica, l’Accademia di Danimarca, le Nederlands Instituut in Rome e L’Istituto svizzero di Roma (Rome, 22-24 Novembre 1984)*, 1987, École Française de Rome, Roma, p. 107.

⁵ Some inquiries show that, in the case of fascism, membership of religious orders could also change attitudes, considering that Jesuits, Dominicans or Franciscans had different inclinations on the subject. For Croatia, cf. Mark Biondich, ‘Radical Catholicism and Fascism in Croatia, 1918-1945’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8/2, 2007, p. 394.

⁶ Aubert, ‘L’Église catholique et le problème de la guerre’, op. cit., p. 107-112.

cist phenomenon) goes beyond the scope of this essay.⁷ However, one could argue that an examination of Catholic attitudes *vis-à-vis* fascism is impossible without an established definition of fascism itself. In fact, can we limit our analysis to Italy and Germany, as well as to the few undisputed cases of fascist movements in Europe, or must we also examine more ‘dubious’ cases such as Portugal, Spain – both De Rivera and Franco –, Austria, Hungary, etc.? The only sensible solution, in our view, comes from history itself: focusing on the perspective of the human beings who were the protagonists of the past. What was their perception of reality? What terms did they use? What was ‘fascism’ to them? If we fail to take into account this point of view, we historians risk overlooking an aspect of the experience of the 1920s and 1930s that is very important when examining reactions or judgements: the difficulty of grasping a univocal fascist reality.

There is one final complexity in the definition of our terms, and one impossible to ignore, because it concerns both Catholicism and fascism. It is related to the widespread category of ‘clerical fascism’, which has until recently largely been imbued with a double meaning, with one referring to Catholicism, and the other to fascism: on one hand, it has been used to describe every kind of illiberal Christian or Catholic policy, and consequently every individual Catholic who was not an anti-fascist; on the other hand, it has been applied to authoritarian or military regimes that had the broad backing of conservative religious forces.⁸ It is often stated that leading scholars of fascism have not used the term ‘clerical fascism’, but this is not completely accurate: George L. Mosse, for example, used the category, through which he individuated a variety of fascism that gave birth to authoritarian regimes in Catholic countries such as Portugal, Austria or Spain. In his opinion, the ideological basis of these ‘fascisms’ was Catholicism; hence they were significantly different from the Italian or German case: Catholic morals limited dynamism and the people’s soul was not expressed through the organic State and the insight of the chief.⁹

⁷ For a clarifying approach to the discussion, see Emilio Gentile, *Fascismo. Storia e interpretazione*, 2002, Laterza, Roma-Bari, p. 44-49.

⁸ Scholars have examined its birth and features: Richard A. Webster, *The Cross and the Fasces. Christian Democracy and Fascism in Italy*, 1960, Stanford University Press, Stanford; Camillo Brezzi, ‘Sul clerico-fascismo’, in: Alberto Monticone (ed.), *Cattolici e fascisti in Umbria (1922-1945)*, 1978, il Mulino, Bologna, p. 409-421; Andrea Riccardi, ‘I clerico-fascisti’, in: Francesco Traniello/Giorgio Campanini (eds.), *Dizionario storico del movimento cattolico in Italia, 1860-1980*, vol. I/1, *I fatti e le idee*, 1981, Marietti, Torino, p. 79-84; Roger Eatwell, ‘Reflections on Fascism and Religion’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 4/3, 2003, p. 147; Roger Griffin, ‘The ‘Holy Storm’: ‘Clerical Fascism’ through the lens of modernism’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8/2, 2007, p. 213-215; John Pollard, ‘“Clerical Fascism”: Context, Overview and Conclusion’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8/2, 2007, p. 433-446.

⁹ George L. Mosse, *La cultura dell’Europa occidentale. Nell’Ottocento e nel Novecento*, 1986, Mondadori, Milano, p. 420-422 (1° *The Culture of Western Europe: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, 1974, Rand McNally, Chicago).

A highly versatile recent trend consists of trying to clarify the term by defining it in detail and restricting its scope.¹⁰ For example, the second meaning of ‘clerical fascism’ (as used by Mosse) has now been discarded by the majority of scholars, because they are inclined to consider Portugal, Austria and Spain as not being truly fascist. However, international research often continues to regard any ecclesiastical or theological support of, or collaboration with, fascism as a form of ‘clerical fascism’. At present, the definition is still too wide for incisive use. There is, after all, a manifest hiatus between the original Italian term (*clerico-fascismo*) and the meaning that it has currently acquired in international research. The hiatus is, first of all, linguistic. The Italian expression is normally translated as ‘clerical fascism’, but *clerico-fascismo* does not exactly mean *fascismo clericale*. The hyphen has a fundamental role and the term was modelled by Italian anti-fascist Catholics on their condemnation of the earlier phenomenon of *clerico-moderatismo* (clerical-moderatism), that is the conservative Catholics’ inclination to collaborate with liberalism. According to Luigi Sturzo, the originator of the expression, “the clerico-fascisti” were conservative Catholics, ready to support any party prepared “to keep workers’ masses in check with the help of religion”.¹¹ Therefore *clerico-fascismo* indicated collaboration on a common policy between different, and potentially equal, entities. Thus, in its Italian sense, *clerico-fascismo* is not a synonym of philo-fascism, but it refers to a much more restricted phenomenon. We will use *clerico-fascismo* in this specific sense.

Basic Features

The challenge Catholicism faced in the case of fascist movements and regimes was much less dramatic but much more treacherous than was the case with communism. Fascism could involve and delude Christians: it could appear either as the sign of a new trend against liberalism or as the promise of a future spiritual regeneration.¹² This was true for every Christian, but Catholicism, which preserved its own strong peculiarity – an international rather than a national dimension, an institutional and almost State character, organic discipline, mass organizations, social doctrine, education –, had its own, particular relationship with fascism.

¹⁰ I refer in particular to some of Griffin’s interventions, such as ‘The ‘Holy Storm’’, op. cit. See also Matthew Feldman/Marius Turda, ‘Clerical Fascism’ in Interwar Europe: An Introduction’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8/2, 2007, p. 205-212.

¹¹ Luigi Sturzo, *Popolarismo e fascismo (1924)*, 1956, Zanichelli, Bologna, p. 15-16.

¹² Renato Moro, ‘Le chiese e la modernità totalitaria’, in: Giovanni Filoramo (ed.), *Le religioni e il mondo moderno*, vol. I, Daniele Menozzi (ed.), *Cristianesimo*, 2008, Einaudi, Torino, p. 418-451.

The politicization of religion is a modern phenomenon that may concern every confession,¹³ but Catholicism had an undisputed primacy in the field.¹⁴ Catholic parties in Italy, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and France were in competition with (and often an alternative to) fascist parties. This deeply conditioned Catholic responses: the feeling of belonging and the distrust Catholics reserved for their parties conditioned many of their choices. From the mid-1920s, Catholic Action, and not the Catholic Party, was the prevailing form of Catholic presence. Catholic Action had a distinctive supra-party nature.¹⁵ The Vatican actively discouraged priests from getting involved in party politics and running for elected office. Likewise, bishops defended a supposedly neutral Catholic Action as they were afraid of growing factionalism within the Catholic movement. Still, it would be completely wrong to consider the development of Catholic Action as a form of de-politicization of Catholicism, because its anti-party stance was the radical opposite of every ‘non-Catholic’ solution. In 1937, a very preoccupied American observer spoke of the cumbersome presence of a “political Catholicism”.¹⁶ This did not prevent cooperation and alliance with fascism, but it imposed limitations. The most relevant of them is likely the distinction that many members of Italian and German Catholic Action made between a “national regime”, which represented the main aspiration of the nation and deserved loyalty and support, and a “party regime”, in which the dominant party’s vision of life and reality, as well as its totalitarian aims, could not be shared by Catholic militants.¹⁷

Another remarkable characteristic of Catholic reactions to fascism is the lack of their homogeneity, in spite of Catholic Action’s development. Catholics were not only differentiated according to the various national contexts to which they belonged (countries of consolidated democracy, countries

¹³ As for Orthodoxy, see the considerations of Maria Falina, ‘Between ‘Clerical Fascism’ and Political Orthodoxy: Orthodox Christianity and Nationalism in Interwar Serbia’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8/2, 2007, p. 247-258, and Aristotle A. Kallis, ‘Fascism and Religion: The Metaxas Regime in Greece and the ‘Third Hellenic Civilization’: Some Theoretical Observations on ‘Fascism’, ‘Political Religion’ and ‘Clerical Fascism’’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8/2, 2007, p. 229-246. On the politicization of Liberal Evangelical theology, see Lena Berggren, ‘Completing the Lutheran Reformation: Ultra-Nationalism, Christianity and the Possibility of ‘Clerical Fascism’ in Interwar Sweden’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8/2, 2007, p. 303-314.

¹⁴ Émile Poulat, *Eglise contre bourgeoisie. Introduction au devenir du catholicisme actuel*, 1977, Casterman, Tournai.

¹⁵ For the consequences in two very different contexts, see: Anton Shekhovtsov, ‘By Cross and Sword: ‘Clerical Fascism’ in Interwar Western Ukraine’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8/2, 2007, p. 271-285; Bruno De Wever, ‘Catholicism and Fascism in Belgium’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8/2, 2007, p. 343-352.

¹⁶ Cit. in John McGreevy, ‘Thinking on One’s Own: Catholicism in the American Intellectual Imagination, 1928-1960’, *The Journal of American History* 84/1, 1997, p. 103.

¹⁷ For the Italian case, see Renato Moro, *La formazione della classe dirigente cattolica (1929-1937)*, 1979, il Mulino, Bologna, p. 368-385.

with an authoritarian regime, countries with a fascist regime, collaborationist countries during World War II), but they also differed in cultural and political attitudes. The Vatican and national episcopacies tried, often in vain, to stay on course and impose unity. In many countries the Catholic ‘front’ was both organisationally and politically so fragmented that the very existence of a ‘Catholic political movement’ has been questioned.¹⁸ The Italian priest (and intellectual) Giuseppe De Luca argued in 1931 that it was impossible to define what a Catholic was, because there were at least “twelve categories”.¹⁹ This was certainly an exaggeration; be that as it may, it points to the necessity of distinction. The Italian communist leader Antonio Gramsci, who spent many years in fascist jails studying Catholicism, individuated, in his notes, three main trends: the “Jesuits” at the centre, the “integrals” at the right, the “modernists” at the left.²⁰ The definitions he proposed are certainly not precise – as we will see –, but the general picture is correct. Perhaps the most accurate diagram to define Catholic political tendencies in the interwar years would be a tree with three great branches: a majority of conservatives at the centre, and two smaller wings at the extremes.

However, the three main groups still require qualification. The majority of Catholics belonged to a ‘centrist’ Catholicism, generally linked to ecclesiastical hierarchies and Vatican circles. Centrist Catholicism was conservative, distinguished by the idea of the preservation of tradition, convinced that social order could be maintained by old institutions and traditional parties; therefore it was hostile to one-party regimes, but not opposed to regarding authoritarian experiences with a certain amount of sympathy (notable due to such regimes’ insistence on order), especially if they remained confined to a specific national context. Conservative Catholics were staunchly anti-communist and went as far as seeing fascist movements as a possible bulwark in a period of social, economic and political collapse, and to regard them as “the armed wing of the Conservative Party” itself;²¹ they were anti-laicist and anti-liberal, opposed to libertine press, corruptive cinema, scandalous theatre, and materialist schools; they were also ‘national’ in the sense that they were convinced of a strong correspondence between religion and nation. As in the case of the French *Fédération Nationale Catholique*, founded in 1924 by general Édouard de Castel-

¹⁸ For the case of Croatia, see Stella Alexander, ‘Croatia: The Catholic Church and Serbian Orthodox Church under Yugoslav Communist Rule from 1945 to 1970’, in: Richard J. Wolff/Jörg K. Hoensch (eds.), *Catholics, the State and the European Radical Right, 1919-1945*, 1987, Social Science Monographs, Boulder, p. 31-66.

¹⁹ Giuseppe De Luca/Giuseppe Prezzolini, *Carteggio 1925-1962* (ed. by Giuseppe Prezzolini), 1975, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, Roma, p. 83.

²⁰ Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere. Edizione critica dell’Istituto Gramsci* (ed. by Valentino Gerratana), 1975, Einaudi, Torino, p. 539-541.

²¹ Cit. in John Newsinger, ‘Blackshirts, Blueshirts, and the Spanish Civil War’, *The Historical Journal* 44/3, 2001, p. 827.

nau,²² they did not refuse the universal and peaceful values of Church doctrine, but identified religion as the basis of order and national greatness, whereby a primary problem was guaranteeing Catholic loyalty towards the country and vice versa, as this was the essential basis of order and anti-communism. Therefore, they appreciated what the ‘good’ fascists were doing to religion, but, at the same time, wondered whether a statist idolatry, the cult of personality or national paganism were really better than masonry or anti-clerical democracy.²³

At the left were situated the Christian democratic and liberal minorities that very often acted alongside the Christian Union movements. Those groups (beginning with the Italian Catholic anti-fascists inside the *Partito Popolare*) insisted on the incompatibility, not only at the political and cultural level but also at the religious and theological one, between fascism and Catholicism. They repeatedly denounced the fascist attack against liberties, the exaggerated nationalism and the monopoly of patriotism of the fascist movement, as well as its violence, its continuity with anti-clericalism, its anti-Christian, “pagan” religion of State and nation, its “totalitarianism”.²⁴ In Fascist Italy first, and then in Nazi Germany, any political militancy inside the Catholic movement would soon be halted. Hence, the minority groups of Catholics who continued to share a sympathetic attitude towards the past democratic tradition of the movement had to choose between emigration or a sort of “a-fascist Catholicism”, which intended to simply wait for better times, avoided any praise of the regimes and restricted itself to the defence of a cultural or religious discourse that was incompatible with the fascist world view.²⁵

The analysis of the Catholic right is more difficult. Generally speaking, it was composed of philo-authoritarian, radically anti-secularist and anti-masonic (often also anti-Semitic), frequently nationalist groups; but it is very difficult to generalize. When looking at rightist Catholicism, we have to keep in mind the distinction made both by Payne and Griffin among right, extreme right and fascist right²⁶ and pay attention to the deep differences, distinguishing different components.

Concerning the small *clerico-fascista* wing, we only have a few words to say. During the 1920s, a group of Catholic laymen engaged themselves for an entente with fascism: their proposal was political, and their keynote conser-

²² Corinne Bonafoux-Verrax, *À la droite de Dieu. La Fédération Nationale Catholique, 1924-1944*, 2004, Fayard, Paris.

²³ For an interesting comparison, see Philip Williamson, ‘Christian Conservatives and the Totalitarian Challenge, 1933-1940’, *The English Historical Review* 115/462, 2000, p. 607-642.

²⁴ Emilio Gentile, *Contro Cesare. Cristianesimo e totalitarismo nell'epoca dei fascismi*, 2010, Feltrinelli, Milano, p. 139 sqq.

²⁵ Renato Moro, ‘Afascismo e antifascismo nei movimenti intellettuali di Azione Cattolica dopo il ‘31’, *Storia contemporanea* 6/4, 1975, p. 733-799, and Moro, *La formazione della classe dirigente cattolica*, op. cit.

²⁶ Levy, ‘Fascism, National Socialism and Conservatives’, op. cit., p. 116.

vative. *Clerico-fascismo* represented a particular case of conservatism with a more rightist tone and it was typical of the 1920s, doomed to be absorbed in the philo-fascism of many Catholic conservative circles in the 1930s.

'Reactionary Catholicism' – we use the adjective in its proper historical meaning, i.e. as a trend in which visions of the past assumed mythical proportions – is fundamentally different. Reactionary groups (among which *Action Française* has been particularly well studied²⁷) expressed "hostility to industrialization and urbanization and its purported disruption of rural family, religious and political values" ('materialism' and 'modernism') and nurtured a "sense of decadence and decline" in the face of the protestant countries that had won the Great War.²⁸ Reactionary Catholicism was often radically nationalist and always anti-Semitic. Contrary to conservatives who proposed a Christianization of the existing system, reactionaries advocated an authoritarian, often military or dictatorial turn. These Catholics defined themselves as *intégrali* (in their total refusal of any modernism²⁹) but were also influenced by Charles Maurras's idea of *nationalisme intégral*. Hence these Twentieth-Century followers of Augustin Barruel, Joseph De Maistre, Donoso Cortés and Louis Veuillot were also passionate readers of Maurras and Maurice Barrès, and, with their anti-conformist, antibourgeois spirit, often became the first link between Catholicism and rising fascism, considering this essentially as a movement of restoration, as evidenced by the cases of Italy,³⁰ Belgium,³¹ France,³² Portugal,³³

²⁷ Eugen Weber, *Action Française*, 1962, Stanford University Press, Stanford; Edward R. Tannenbaum, *The Action Française*, 1962, Wiley, New York; Ernst Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism: Action Française, Italian Fascism, National Socialism*, 1966, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York; Samuel M. Osgood, *French Royalism since 1870*, 1970, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague; Michael Sutton, *Nationalism, Positivism, and Catholicism: The Politics of Charles Maurras and French Catholics, 1890-1914*, 1982, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge-New York; Bertrand Renouvin, *Charles Maurras, l'Action Française et la question sociale*, 1983, Ars magna, Paris; Jacques Prévotat, *L'Action Française*, 2004, Presses universitaires de France, Paris; Michel Leymarie/Jacques Prévotat (eds.), *L'Action Française. Culture, Société, Politique*, 2008, Presses universitaires du Septentrion, Villeneuve d'Ascq.

²⁸ C. Stewart Doty, "Monsieur Maurras est ici": French Fascism in Franco-American New England', *Journal of Contemporary History* 32/4, 1997, p. 532-533.

²⁹ Emile Poulat, *Intégrisme et catholicisme intégral, un réseau secret international antimoderniste: la 'Sapinière' (1909-1921)*, 1969, Casterman, Paris.

³⁰ Émile Poulat, *Catholicisme, démocratie et socialisme. Le mouvement catholique et Mgr Benigni de la naissance du socialisme à la victoire du fascisme*, 1977, Casterman, Tournai; Gianni Vannoni, 'Integralismo cattolico e fascismo: 'Fede E Ragione'', in: Francesco Margiotta Broglio (ed.), *La Chiesa del Concordato. Anatomia di una diocesi: Firenze, 1919-1939*, 1977, il Mulino, Bologna; Gianni Vannoni, *Massoneria, fascismo e Chiesa cattolica*, 1980, Laterza, Roma-Bari; Danilo Veneruso, "La Liguria del Popolo' e i cattolici integralisti genovesi dalla fine della prima guerra mondiale all'apogeo del regime fascista (1918-1936)", in: Assessorato alle Attività Culturali del Comune di Genova, *Saggi di storia del giornalismo in memoria di Leonida Balestrieri*, 1982, Istituto Massimiano, Genova, p. 229-310; Maria Teresa Pichetto, *Alle radici dell'odio: Preziosi e Benigni antisemiti*, 1983, Angeli, Milano; Renato Moro, 'Le premesse dell'atteggiamento cattolico di fronte alla legislazione razziale fascista. Cattolici ed ebrei nell'Italia degli anni venti (1919-1932)', *Storia contemporanea* 19/6, 1988, p. 1013-1119; Renato Moro, 'Propagandisti cattolici del razzismo antisemita in Italia

Argentina³⁴ and Brazil.³⁵ Even after the 1926 papal condemnation of *Action Française*, attraction for reactionary nationalism remained widespread, for example in Quebec,³⁶ Argentina,³⁷ and among the Franco-American elite in New England.³⁸ At the same time, in its radical anti-modernism, reactionary Catholicism was clearly different from fascism, and its representatives did not always hold strong sympathies toward it. Catholic reactionaries condemned socialism and communism as variants of liberalism and democracy, but, unlike fascists, devoted their struggle essentially in opposition to masonry and anticlericalism, because they viewed the conspiracy against Church and religion as the origin of every revolutionary attempt.³⁹ Along with De Maistre, they did not want “counter-revolution (a contrary revolution) but the contrary of revolution”⁴⁰: only the spiritual legitimation of the Church, i.e. the acceptance of the spiritual sovereignty of the papacy, might restore the real meaning of the idea of revolution and provide it with political legitimation.⁴¹ Elitist and never populist, reactionary Catholics argued that the fascist “pragmatist, plebeian and revolutionary philosophy of life would be self-defeating”.⁴²

‘Catholic fascism’ was, once again, a completely different phenomenon: while reactionary Catholicism was an old Nineteenth-Century reality, like fascism itself, Catholic fascism was a child of the Twentieth-Century; while reactionary Catholicism was radically anti-modern, Catholic fascism was modernist. Especially in the 1930s, young students, intellectuals and, sometimes, members of the clergy (priests or chaplains linked to the various fascist

(1937-1941)’, in: Giovanni Miccoli/Catherine Brice (eds.), *Les racines chrétiennes de l’antisémitisme politique (fin XIX^e-XX^e siècle)*, 2003, École Française de Rome, Roma, p. 275-345.

³¹ De Wever, ‘Catholicism and Fascism in Belgium’, op. cit.

³² Jacques Marx, ‘La ‘Revue internationale des sociétés secrètes’ et l’action antimaçonique entre les deux guerres’, *Problèmes d’histoire du christianisme* 11/4154, 1982, p. 63-78.

³³ Antonio Costa Pinto/Maria Inácia Rezola, ‘Political Catholicism, Crisis of Democracy and Salazar’s New State in Portugal’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8/2, 2007, p. 355.

³⁴ Alberto Spektorowski, ‘The Ideological Origins of Right and Left Nationalism in Argentina, 1930-1943’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 29/1, 1994, p. 155-184; Loris Zanatta, *Dallo Stato liberale alla nazione cattolica. Chiesa ed esercito nelle origini del peronismo, 1930-1943*, 1996, Angeli, Milano, p. 43-52.

³⁵ Emanuel Jehud De Kadt, *Catholic Radicals in Brazil*, 1970, Oxford University Press, London-New York, p. 56 sqq.; Margaret Todaro Williams, ‘Integralism and the Brazilian Catholic Church’, *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 54/3, 1974, p. 431-452.

³⁶ Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, *Action Française: French Canadian Nationalism in the Twenties*, 1975, University of Toronto Press, Toronto.

³⁷ Zanatta, *Dallo Stato liberale*, op. cit., p. 45, 102.

³⁸ Doty, “Monsieur Maurras est ici”, op. cit., p. 527-538.

³⁹ Costa Pinto/Rezola, ‘Political Catholicism’, op. cit., p. 355-356.

⁴⁰ Alberto Spektorowski, ‘Maistre, Donoso Cortés, and the Legacy of Catholic Authoritarianism’, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 63/2, 2002, p. 287.

⁴¹ Spektorowski, ‘Maistre, Donoso Cortés’, op. cit., p. 290.

⁴² Spektorowski, ‘Maistre, Donoso Cortés’, op. cit., p. 286.

militias⁴³) fully adhered to the fascist movements, appreciating fascism not as a bulwark against modernity, but as the vanguard of a “new world”.⁴⁴ Even in Germany, Nazism appealed to a minority of the Catholic clergy: these ‘brown’ priests longed for transcendence and a broader sense of purpose, and claimed to have found it in the messianic racial mission of the Nazis.⁴⁵ It is worth noting that the cultural origins of this Catholic fascism were often the same as those of the early Catholic anti-fascism of the 1930s. As left-wing progressives defended democratic modernity and hoped for it to reach an entente with the Church, Catholic fascists were convinced of the necessity of a compromise between Church and modernity; their fascist choice was based on the same hope, as is exemplified by the title of an Italian Catholic-fascist journal: *Segni dei tempi* (*Signs of the times*).⁴⁶ While reactionaries and *clerico-fascisti* continued to be autonomous, looked for collaboration among different perspectives, and proposed a sort of moderate ‘accommodationism’, Catholic fascists lent their full-fledged support to movements and regimes, aimed at synthesis – attempting to mesh Catholic faith and fascist ideology –, asked for a renewal of Catholic teaching in order to keep up with the times, and were often critical of Catholic social doctrine as well as of Vatican policy.⁴⁷ As a consequence, they often came into conflict with their ecclesiastical superiors over their pro-fascist feelings, and aroused much suspicion among the vast majority of Catholics. Contrary to what one might think, however, they were not particularly appreciated by fascist movements and regimes, this for rather obvious reasons, i.e. out of fear of the clerical danger.

As the previous discussion demonstrates, an extended use of the category of ‘clerical fascism’ contains the very tangible risk of reducing the Catholic attitude. Above all, inside differences show that the encounter with fascism happened in a context of growing fragmentation among Catholics. Even though support and consent were widespread, it cannot be overlooked that the issue of fascism remained a divisive element within the Catholic community.

⁴³ Mimmo Franzinelli, *Stellette, croce e fascio littorio. L’assistenza religiosa a militari, balilla e camicie nere, 1919-1939*, 1995, Angeli, Milano.

⁴⁴ See for example Pasquale Pennisi, *Ordine politico e ordine religioso*, 1938, Segni dei Tempi, Fidenza, p. 166.

⁴⁵ Kevin P. Spicer, *Hitler’s Priests: Catholic Clergy and National Socialism*, 2008, Northern Illinois University Press, DeKalb.

⁴⁶ Some information can be found in Renato Moro, ‘I cattolici italiani di fronte alla guerra fascista’, in: Massimo Pacetti/Massimo Papini/Marisa Saracinelli (eds.), *La cultura della pace dalla Resistenza al Patto Atlantico*, 1988, Il Lavoro Editoriale, Ancona, p. 120-121.

⁴⁷ De Wever, ‘Catholicism and Fascism in Belgium’, op. cit.

The Different Phases of a Relationship

As we have seen, the relationship between Catholicism and fascism cannot easily be defined in general terms because of the complexity of the Catholic 'world'. This relationship involved a long and complicated history, made of profoundly different moments. Catholicism's generally positive attitude did not alter, although perspective, mentality and psychology did undergo some change.

The context within which Italian Fascism came to power in 1922 is radically different from the climate of the 1930s, dominated by communism and Nazism. One year after Mussolini seized power, in Spain a traditional and pro-Catholic dictatorship began with Primo De Rivera. 1926 saw analogue cases in Portugal and Poland. The Church had a longstanding tradition of indifference toward political regimes. In the opinion of many Catholics, it made no sense to defend parliamentary secularist democracy. When the new Mussolini government announced a radical change of direction in ecclesiastical policy, breaking with the Italian tradition of separation between Church and State,⁴⁸ many conservative Catholics saw fascism as a (perhaps excessive and violent, but sane) reaction not only to bolshevism but also to anti-clerical liberalism, materialism and individualism. Fascism seemed a new, confused phenomenon that opened the path to a reassessment of the value of religion, a hint of spiritual awakening that, in time, could not fail to end with a complete recognition of the value of Church teachings.⁴⁹ Even the more conservative press of the German *Zentrum* Party, while defending Sturzo's Popular Party and denouncing some of Fascism's dictatorial aspirations, delivered a very positive evaluation of Mussolini's religious policy and of Fascism itself as a civil defence movement.⁵⁰ Following *L'Osservatore Romano* and *La Civiltà Cattolica*,⁵¹ the con-

⁴⁸ See Francesco Margiotta Broglio, *Italia e Santa Sede dalla Grande Guerra alla Conciliazione. Aspetti politici e giuridici*, 1966, Laterza, Bari; Sandro Rogari, *Santa Sede e Fascismo. Dall'Aventino ai Patti Lateranensi. Con documenti inediti*, 1977, A. Forni, [Bologna]; Gentile, *Contro Cesare*, op. cit., p. 82-107.

⁴⁹ John P. Diggins, 'American Catholics and Italian Fascism', *Journal of Contemporary History* 2/4, 1967, p. 52; Fredrick B. Pike, 'Church and State in Peru and Chile since 1840: A Study in Contrasts', *The American Historical Review* 73/1, 1967, p. 45; Pellegrino Nazzaro, 'L'atteggiamento della stampa cattolico-moderata americana verso il fascismo prima e dopo la Conciliazione', in: Giuseppe Rossini (ed.), *Modernismo, Fascismo, Comunismo*, 1972, il Mulino, Bologna, p. 49; Peter R. D'Agostino, *Rome in America: Transnational Catholic Ideology from the Risorgimento to Fascism*, 2004, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill; Kevin L. Morris, 'Fascism and British Catholic Writers 1924-1939: Part 1', *New Blackfriars* 80/935, 2007, p. 34-35; Jesús Eloy Gutiérrez, 'Catholicismo y Fascismo en la prensa católica hispanoamericana durante las entreguerras: Venezuela y España', *Procesos Históricos* 17, 2010, p. 21.

⁵⁰ Karl Egon Lönne, 'Il fascismo italiano nel giudizio del cattolicesimo politico della Repubblica di Weimar', in: Rossini (ed.), *Modernismo, Fascismo, Comunismo*, op. cit., p. 31-32.

⁵¹ For the *Osservatore*, see Albert C. O'Brien, 'The 'Osservatore Romano' and Fascism: The Beginning of a New Era in Church-State Relations, October 1922-July 1923', *Journal of Church and State* 13/3, 1971, p. 445-463; Albert C. O'Brien, 'The 'Osservatore Romano' and the Matteotti

servative Catholic global press proposed a distinction that was destined to last and to be repeated in the case of Nazism, of Franco's regime and even of that of Pavelić: Catholic publications condemned radicalism, violence and totalitarian aspirations, but excluded the leader, whose merits in the religious field showed that the radicals' only goal was sabotaging collaboration between Church and State, from responsibility.⁵² No one was willing to introduce Mussolini's methods in the United States, insisted *Commonweal*, an American Catholic journal, but their value, when applied to Italy, should be firmly acknowledged.⁵³ In 1925, Luigi Sturzo arrived in London as an exile; he was struck by the sympathy that Mussolini had elicited from British Catholics.⁵⁴ In 1926, John A. Ryan, professor at the Catholic University of America, endeavoured to demonstrate that fascist principles were basically in contrast with those of Catholicism. Immediately, *Commonweal*, the journal that had published the relevant articles, then published a harsh answer from Harvey Wickman, who reminded that Fascism had made the name of God resound in Italy's parliament and streets.⁵⁵ *The Dublin Review* regarded Mussolini, Primo de Rivera and Mustafa Kemal as incarnations of a sort of "benevolent despotism".⁵⁶ Therefore the main viewpoint from which Catholics perceived fascism in the 1920s, the 'age of the anti-modernists' (Belloc, Chesterton, Maritain),⁵⁷ was as a reaction against modernity.

A number of ongoing problems were due to the fact that Italian Fascism included a strongly anti-Catholic element, that there was on-going tension between Fascist and Catholic organizations, and that the Church did not accept the fascist idea of State omnipotence, especially in the field of youth

Crisis: A Study of Journalistic Evasion', *Cithara* 10/2, 1971, p. 27-39; Edoardo Bressan, 'Mito di uno stato cattolico e realtà del regime: per una lettura dell'"Osservatore Romano" alla vigilia della Conciliazione', *Nuova rivista storica* 64, 1980, p. 81-128. For the Jesuits' review, see Bruna Talluri, 'La "Civiltà Cattolica" e il fascismo. I. 1922-1924', *Studi Senesi* 14/2, 1965, p. 285-330; Id., 'La "Civiltà Cattolica" e il fascismo. II. 1925-29', *Studi Senesi* 15/2, 1966, p. 257-298; Pier Giorgio Zunino, 'La rivista "La Civiltà Cattolica" e l'avvento del fascismo', in: Ettore Passerin d'Entrèves (ed.) *Dal nazionalismo al primo fascismo*, 1967, Giappichelli, Torino, p. 133-148; Jan Nelis, 'The Clerical Response to a Totalitarian Political Religion: "La Civiltà Cattolica" and Italian Fascism', *Journal of Contemporary History* 46/2, 2011, p. 245-270.

⁵² René Rémond, 'Il fascismo italiano visto dalla cultura cattolica francese', in: Rossini (ed.), *Modernismo, Fascismo, Comunismo*, op. cit., p. 19, and Gentile, *Contro Cesare*, op. cit., p. 173.

⁵³ Diggins, 'American Catholics', op. cit., p. 57.

⁵⁴ Wolfram Kaiser, 'Co-Operation of European Catholic Politicians in Exile in Britain and the USA during the Second World War', *Journal of Contemporary History* 35/3, 2000, p. 445.

⁵⁵ Nazzaro, 'L'atteggiamento della stampa cattolico-moderata americana', op. cit., p. 63-64.

⁵⁶ Nazzaro, 'L'atteggiamento della stampa cattolico-moderata americana', op. cit., p. 52.

⁵⁷ Jay P. Corrin, *G.K. Chesterton & Hilaire Belloc: The Battle against Modernity*, 1981, Ohio University Press, Athens, and Philippe Chenaux, *Entre Maurras et Maritain. Une génération intellectuelle catholique (1920-1930)*, 1999, Les Editions du Cerf, Paris. But see also Renato Moro, 'La religione e la "nuova epoca". Cattolicesimo e modernità tra le due guerre mondiali', in: Alfonso Botti/Rocco Cerrato (eds.), *Il modernismo tra cristianità e secolarizzazione. Atti del Convegno internazionale di Urbino, 1-4 ottobre 1997*, 2000, Quattroventi, Urbino, p. 513-573.

education.⁵⁸ In 1929, however, the Lateran Pacts seemed to dispel such pre-occupations and point to the conservative aspects of Mussolini's regime. Fascism really seemed to be the instrument that God had offered in order to realize the Church's goals. Global Catholic opinion was deeply impressed: Fascism needed to be understood not as an ideology or as a theory, but as a concrete experience that had officially recognized Catholic religion and given birth to a "Catholic State".⁵⁹ *La Croix* considered Mussolini "a new Constantine" and the *Conciliazione* the "greatest event of this century".⁶⁰ G. K. Chesterton admitted, in *The Resurrection of Rome* (1930), that if he had lived in Italy at the birth of the fascist movement, he would probably have voted for the Catholic Popular Party; but now the world witnessed "the return of the Romans" and, with them, a new Italian "renaissance".⁶¹ Enthusiasm was, of course, mitigated by the disputes that occurred after the *Conciliazione* and especially by the 1931 conflict over Catholic Action;⁶² but many continued to think that, after the Lateran Pacts, it was impossible for Catholic Italy to fail to succeed in slowly modeling and conditioning fascism.⁶³ Thus, after the September 1931 agreements between the Fascist Party and Catholic Action, and even more so after Mussolini's February 1932 solemn visit to the Vatican, the favourable opinion that prevailed in global Catholic press did not change and, in many cases, such as for example in Argentina, the Italian fascist model continued to obtain widespread support.⁶⁴ In the US *America*, a Jesuit review, maintained that fascist attacks were perpetrated only by "the atheists, the socialists, and all the left wingers" inside the movement⁶⁵: therefore, it was not fascism that required condemnation, but merely its radical leftist wing.

A new phase started with the rise of Nazism in 1933. From this moment on, the perspective from which fascism was considered by Catholics altered completely. Fascism could not be perceived any more as a distant Italian phenomenon, but was now seen as a possible political alternative that could develop in any country. In addition, the rapidly developing German *Kirchenkampf* raised a number of dramatic questions for the Catholic conscience. If Nazism was anti-communist, as it repeatedly stated, why did it persecute Christians? The answer formulated by some observers was that the negative

⁵⁸ Pietro Scoppola, *La Chiesa e il fascismo. Documenti e interpretazioni*, 1971, Laterza, Bari, p. 103-144.

⁵⁹ For the case of the French *La Vie Intellectuelle*, see Walter E. Crivellin, *Cattolici francesi e fascismo italiano. 'La Vie Intellectuelle' (1928-1939)*, 1984, Angeli, Milano, p. 35.

⁶⁰ Rémond, 'Il fascismo italiano visto dalla cultura cattolica francese', op. cit., p. 20-21.

⁶¹ Gilbert Keith Chesterton, *The Resurrection of Rome*, 1930, Hodder and Stoughton, London.

⁶² Diggins, 'American Catholics', op. cit., p. 60; Eloy Gutiérrez, 'Catholicismo y Fascismo', op. cit., p. 22.

⁶³ Todaro Williams, 'Integralism and the Brazilian Catholic Church', op. cit., p. 440.

⁶⁴ Zanatta, *Dallo Stato liberale*, op. cit., p. 106. But see also Crivellin, *Cattolici francesi*, op. cit., p. 40, and Eloy Gutiérrez, 'Catholicismo y Fascismo', op. cit., p. 25-26.

⁶⁵ Diggins, 'American Catholics', op. cit., p. 60.

features of Nazism only originated, as was the case in Italy, with a fanatical minority that Hitler knew how to keep in check, while the merits of National Socialism, such as the elimination of the Church's enemies (bolshevism and liberalism), counted for much more.⁶⁶ However, the great majority suggested that the fault arose because of Nazism's radical racist and pagan ideology. In 1934, after the Vatican condemnation of Alfred Rosenberg's *Myth of the Twentieth-Century*,⁶⁷ the Catholic press, as well as that belonging to rightist groups that were close to the *Action Française*,⁶⁸ began to openly condemn the Nazi "religion of the race".⁶⁹

In this new context, an assessment of the fascist phenomenon became much more complicated. Mankind was heading "towards the right", an Argentinian bulletin wrote.⁷⁰ The Great Depression encouraged the revival of Catholic criticism of liberal capitalism, whereas "many [...] Catholic activists" were now "more readily prepared to abandon democracy in favour of a more assertive and authoritarian policy".⁷¹ The development of a new Catholic authoritarian model in Portugal and Austria,⁷² the growing inclination of grassroots Catholicism for fascist movements,⁷³ and the ensuing sharp divisions inside the

⁶⁶ See Renato Moro, 'La Germania di Hitler come 'eresia protestante'', in: Wolfram Pyta/Carsten Kretschman/Giuseppe Ignesti/Tiziana Di Maio (eds.), *Die Herausforderung der Diktaturen. Katholizismus in Deutschland und Italien, 1918-1943/45*, 2009, Niemeyer, Tübingen, p. 93-108. For an example of the Austrian case, see Julie Thorpe, 'Austrofascism: Revisiting the 'Authoritarian State' 40 Years On', *Journal of Contemporary History* 45/2, 2010, p. 332.

⁶⁷ Fritz Sandmann, *L'Osservatore Romano' e il nazionalsocialismo, 1929-1939*, 1976, Cinque Lune, Roma, p. 72-77 (1° *Die Haltung des Vatikans zum Nationalsozialismus im Spiegel des 'Osservatore Romano' (von 1929 bis zum Kriegsausbruch)*, 1966, [E. Lokay], [Reinheim/Odw.]).

⁶⁸ Jean Louis Loubet Del Bayle, *I nonconformisti degli anni trenta*, 1972, Cinque Lune, Roma, p. 409 (1° *Les non-conformistes des années 30. Une tentative de renouvellement de la pensée politique française*, 1969, Éditions du Seuil, Paris).

⁶⁹ Frederick K. Wentz, 'American Catholic Periodicals React to Nazism', *Church History* 31/4, 1962, p. 400-420.

⁷⁰ Cit. in Zanatta, *Dallo Stato liberale*, op. cit., p. 153.

⁷¹ Biondich, 'Radical Catholicism and Fascism in Croatia', op. cit., p. 387.

⁷² Martin Kitchen, *The Coming of Austrian Fascism*, 1980, Croom Helm/McGill-Queen's University Press, London/Montreal-Kingston; Antonio Costa Pinto, *Os camisas azuis: Ideologia, elites e movimentos fascistas em Portugal, 1914-1945*, 1994, Estampa, Lisboa; Isabella Ackerl, 'Was the Authoritarian, Christian, Corporative State an Effective Means of Resisting National Socialism?', in: William E. Wright (ed.), *Austria, 1938-1988. Anschluss and Fifty Years*, 1995, Ariadne Press, Riverside, p. 71-90; Antonio Costa Pinto, *Salazar's Dictatorship and European Fascism: Problems of Interpretation*, 1995, Columbia University Press, New York-London; Robert Pyrah, 'Enacting Encyclicals? Cultural Politics and 'Clerical Fascism' in Austria, 1933-1938', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8/2, 2007, p. 369-382.

⁷³ For a general approach, see Martin Conway, *Catholic Politics in Europe 1918-1945*, 1997, Routledge, London. In Belgium, many young Catholics inclined towards Léon Degrelle's *Rexisme*, casted doubts on Catholic political unity and obliged episcopacy to solemnly confirm the importance of a Catholic party, even though, in the end, *Rexisme* obtained only limited support: Pierre Joye/Rosine Lewin, *L'Église et le mouvement ouvrier en Belgique*, 1967, Société populaire d'éditions, Bruxelles; Jean-Michel Étienne, *Le mouvement rexiste jusqu'en 1940*, 1968, Colin, Paris; Jean Baufays, *Les partis catholiques en Belgique et aux Pays-Bas: 1918-1958*, 1973, Bruylant, Bruxelles;

Catholic community on the subjects of democracy and anti-communism (in France,⁷⁴ the USA⁷⁵ and Chile⁷⁶) made it much more difficult to make a clear distinction between Italian Fascism and the many authoritarian (and often Catholic) movements that aped it. In many right-wing circles, the Catholic “third way” was now located in a “good”, “Latin”, “Catholic” fascism, distant from the Nazi model but close to the Austrian or Portuguese, and especially their formula of “God, Fatherland and Family”, their idea of “strong governments” only as a transitory means, and their request for the State to not invade the sphere of “intermediate societies” and to place no limits on the Church’s action. But was it possible to consider Italian Fascism as a form of such Catholic authoritarianism? Many Catholics, when comparing Italy and Germany, concluded that the bright spots of the Fascist landscape largely outweighed the darkness of the Nazi’s. In 1934 Mussolini was seen as the defender of Catholic Austria against Hitler’s Germany. Many, including the Jesuit journal *America*, hoped that the *duce* might even, in time, be able to mitigate the

Marco Tarchi (ed.), *Degrelle e il Rexismo*, 1978, G. Volpe, Roma; Pierre-Henri Laurent, *Belgian Rexism and Léon Degrelle*, in: George L. Mosse (ed.), *International Fascism: New Thoughts and New Approaches*, 1979, Sage, London, p. 295-315; Martin Conway, ‘Building the Christian City: Catholics and Politics in Inter-War Francophone Belgium’, *Past and Present* 128, 1990, p. 117-151; Martin Conway, ‘The Extreme Right in Inter-War Francophone Belgium: Explanation of a Failure’, *European History Quarterly* 26/2, 1996, p. 267-292. In the Netherlands, Mussert’s National-Socialist movement exerted strong attraction, so that the Dutch bishops were also obliged to intervene: L. M. H. Joosten, *Katholieken en Fascisme in Nederland 1920-1940*, 1964, Brand, Hilversum; Ludovicus Jacobus Rogier, ‘Mussert bij Mussolini en Pacelli’, in: Id., *Terugblik en Uitzicht. Verspreide Opstellen*, vol. II, 1964, Brand, Hilversum-Antwerpen, p. 357 sqq.; S. Y. A. Vellenga, *Katholieke zuid Limburg en het Fascisme: Een Onderzoek naar het Kiesgedrag van de Limburger in de Jaren Dertig*, 1975, Van Gorcum, Assen; Johannes Petrus De Valk, ‘Italië, het Vaticaan en de Nsb (1933-1937)’, *Archief voor Geschiedenis van de Katholieke Kerk in de Nederlanden*, 1984, p. 91-118. In the USA, the National Union for Social Justice, founded in 1934, and the Christian Front, founded in 1936, in both of which a leading role was played by Father Charles Coughlin, were radical, anti-liberal, anti-British, anti-Semitic and pro-fascist: James P. Shenton, ‘Fascism and Father Coughlin’, *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 44/1, 1960, p. 6-11; Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and the Great Depression*, 1982, Knopf, New York. See also Todaro Williams, ‘Integralism and the Brazilian Catholic Church’, op. cit., p. 441-443; Luigi G. Pennacchio, ‘The Torrid Trinity: Toronto’s Fascists, Italian Priests and Archbishops during the Fascist Era, 1929-1940’, in: Mark Mc Gowan/Brian Clarke (eds.), *Catholics at the ‘Gathering Place’. Historical Essays on the Archdiocese of Toronto, 1841-1991*, 1993, Canadian Catholic Historical Association, Toronto, p. 234; Spektorowski, ‘The Ideological Origins’, op. cit., p. 162; Zanatta, *Dallo Stato liberale*, op. cit., p. 154-156; Paula Maurutto, ‘Private Policing and Surveillance of Catholics: Anti-Communism in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto, 1920-1960’, *Labour/Le Travail* 40, 1997, p. 113-136.

⁷⁴ René Rémond, *Les catholiques, le communisme et les crises, 1929-1939*, 1960, Colin, Paris; John Hellman, ‘Vichy Background: Political Alternatives for French Catholics in the Nineteen-Thirties’, *Journal of Modern History* 49/1, 1977, p. D1111-D1144; Crivellin, *Cattolici francesi*, op. cit., p. 86.

⁷⁵ Wilson D. Miscamble, ‘The Limits of American Catholic Antifascism: The Case of John A. Ryan’, *Church History* 59/4, 1990, p. 523-538.

⁷⁶ Pike, ‘Church and State in Peru and Chile’, op. cit., p. 30-50, and Sandra McGee Deutsch, *Las Derechas: The Extreme Right in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, 1890-1939*, 1999, Stanford University Press, Stanford.

viciousness of Nazism.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, a more deeply dramatic explanation of the difference between Fascism and Nazism was also possible, as it could as well be acknowledged that Nazism was merely a more radical and fully developed form of fascism, and that the Italian regime risked undergoing a similar evolution in the future. Hence, Catholics paid extraordinary attention to the evolution of the Italian situation.⁷⁸

A primary point of debate was the relationship between fascist corporatism and Catholic tradition. On this subject Catholic opinion was highly divergent, whereby one and the same journal could often host various differing positions.⁷⁹ Conservative and social Catholicism (i.e. ‘centrist’ Catholicism) followed the papal line, showing some appreciation of the fascist corporatist institutions, but distinguishing them sharply from Catholic doctrine, because of their ‘statism’ and union monopoly. Leftist democratic Catholicism insisted on the negative, authoritarian features of fascist corporatism, and denied the existence of any link with the tradition of social Catholicism. Right-wing Catholics praised Mussolini’s experiment without any reserve, and interpreted it as coincident with Catholic “social doctrine”. Different again was the position taken by the young Catholic *non-conformistes* intellectuals who, encouraged by the economic depression to individuate a “crisis of civilization”, looked at corporatism from the perspective of a “new order”. Therefore, as in the case of Emanuel Mounier’s journal *Esprit*, their first reaction in the face of fascism was one of curiosity and sympathy;⁸⁰ they felt a sort of “fascist temptation” against which, nonetheless, they thought it was necessary to resist.⁸¹

During the 1935 Ethiopian crisis, a second discussion began, regarding aggressive fascist international attitudes and politics. Again, opinion was acutely divided. In the French case, Catholics publicly expressed divergent positions, signing three different documents: a manifesto of the conservative right, supporting Fascist Italy and blaming the League of Nations, a manifesto of the leftist intellectuals, deploring the assault against the League and condemning Italian aggression, and a *Manifeste pour la justice et la paix* that, in the name of Christian conscience, not only refused any justification of the Fascist cause, but also condemned right-wing Catholics’ attitudes as “pagan”.⁸² Bitter controversy ensued. *La Vie Intellectuelle* wrote that “Mr Mussolini’s hymns to dagger, to machinegun, to the beneficial value of war” were clearly “in opposition to

⁷⁷ Diggins, ‘American Catholics’, op. cit., p. 57.

⁷⁸ For the case of the French *La Croix*, see René Rémond, ‘L’évolution du journal ‘La Croix’ et son rôle auprès de l’opinion catholique (1919-1939)’, *Bulletin de la Société d’histoire moderne* 4, 1958, p. 3-10. See also René Rémond/Émile Poulat (eds.), *Cent ans d’histoire de La Croix*, 1988, Centurion, Paris.

⁷⁹ For the case of *La Vie Intellectuelle*, see Crivellin, *Cattolici francesi*, op. cit., p. 31, 60.

⁸⁰ Loubet Del Bayle, *I nonconformist*, op. cit., p. 398.

⁸¹ Loubet Del Bayle, *I nonconformist*, op. cit., p. 398-399.

⁸² Crivellin, *Cattolici francesi*, op. cit., p. 71-72

Church doctrine”.⁸³ Right-wing Catholics charged leftist Catholics with wanting war and not peace⁸⁴ or having “too much stubbornness against Fascism and Mr Mussolini”.⁸⁵ The majority of Catholics, however, were above all impressed by the extraordinary support and enthusiasm that Italian Catholics were showing for the African war.⁸⁶

The third and most difficult debate concerned the notion of totalitarianism. Was totalitarianism a distinguishable feature of the times? And, if so, was it a mortal danger for Christianity? Was Italian fascism really totalitarian? Even though the issue of totalitarianism had become central in Catholic debates after the Nazi victory, much confusion remained. According to many conservative Catholics, totalitarianism had to be interpreted as a general trend of modernity, which could be found even in democratic societies⁸⁷: could it not be that liberal democracy, with its lay school, was more “totalitarian” than a dictatorship in which the Church was freely allowed to teach religion?⁸⁸ In this perspective, German Nazism and Italian Fascism, even though unpleasant, remained being perceived as less horrible than communism. Some observers went even further, identifying totalitarianism, in a most perplexing way, with an “integral” attitude towards life: the Argentinian newspaper of the episcopacy, for example, wondered “whether a really totalitarian State based on Catholic religion might exist”, and answered that Catholic religion was “the only one that might claim this cherished title for itself”.⁸⁹ There were, of course, Catholics who distinguished clearly between democracy, authoritarian regimes and those of a totalitarian nature. In the six lessons French philosopher Jacques Maritain held in the summer of 1934 in Santander – published in 1936 under the title of *Humanisme intégral*, to enormous influence –, he brought the notion of communism and the “fascist forces” together under the common category of “totalitarianism”,⁹⁰ i.e. a will to bend “man to an inhuman humanism, to the atheist humanism of the dictatorship of the proletariat, or to the idolatrous humanism of Caesar, or the zoological humanism of blood and race”.⁹¹ Luigi Sturzo also continuously stressed the incompatibility of Christianity and fascist

⁸³ Crivellin, *Cattolici francesi*, op. cit., p. 71.

⁸⁴ Françoise Mayeur, *L'Aube. Studio di un giornale di opinione: 1932-1940*, 1969, Cinque Lune, Roma, p. 198 (1° *L'Aube. Etude d'un journal d'opinion, 1932-1940*, 1966, Colin, Paris).

⁸⁵ Cit. in Crivellin, *Cattolici francesi*, op. cit., p. 77.

⁸⁶ Crivellin, *Cattolici francesi*, op. cit., p. 79-80.

⁸⁷ Adam Schwartz, ‘Confronting the ‘Totalitarian Antichrist’. Cristopher Dawson and Totalitarianism’, *The Catholic Historical Review* 89/3, 2003, p. 472-474.

⁸⁸ See for example Zanatta, *Dallo Stato liberale*, op. cit., p. 160-161.

⁸⁹ Cit. in Zanatta, *Dallo Stato liberale*, op. cit., p. 156.

⁹⁰ Jacques Maritain, *Umanesimo Integrale*, 1947, Studium, Roma, p. 110 (1° *Humanisme intégral. Problèmes temporels et spirituels d'une nouvelle chrétienté*, 1936, Aubier, Paris).

⁹¹ Maritain, *Umanesimo Integrale*, op. cit., p. 215-216. See also Giovanni Scapinelli, ‘Jacques Maritain e il fascismo’, *Civitas* 28/4, 1978, p. 255-270.

totalitarianism, with its “deification” of “class, nation, race”.⁹² However, the majority of Catholics did not lose trust in Mussolini. According to the conservative Catholic press, Italian Fascism was not totalitarian, as evidenced by the Lateran Pacts and the support of the Vatican.⁹³ The opinion of rightist Catholicism was even more positive. An Argentinian intellectual, Cesar Pico, responded to Maritain that Italian Fascism was only anti-liberal and anti-democratic. Fascism was still looking for a doctrine; therefore it was necessary for Catholics to collaborate in order to Christianize it: a fusion of Catholicism and fascism would re-Christianize the world.⁹⁴ Thus, with the exception of the anti-fascist minority, both the positive evaluation of fascism as a system that only “suppressed some excessive liberties of false democracy”⁹⁵ and the idea that the Italian regime, in particular, together with Portugal, Austria, Hungary and Ireland, was part of the group of “Catholic states”, became common.

The 1934-1937 debate transformed Catholic perception of fascism. The latter’s image had previously been dominated by what had happened in Italy in terms of relations between Church and State, and fascism had been essentially appreciated as a reaction against modernity, a reversal of a long trend, something particularly fitting for the Mediterranean peninsula. Little attention had been paid to dictatorial features, which were often considered as being transitory. Now, for the first time, Catholics began to discuss the “essence” of fascism. Fascism could now be considered “neither a response to communism nor purely a result of the first world war, but rather a total cultural and political response to the problems presented by political modernization”,⁹⁶ a kind of a new “post-liberal” solution that lay the foundations for a new order.⁹⁷ Hence, it seemed to be something that was no longer properly Italian but universal, from which all peoples could learn, and which could be applied in any global setting. The discovery of the modernity of fascism destroyed many Catholic illusions, but also created some new ones. It was now possible to consider fascism (especially the Italian version) as an alternative (and potentially acceptable) way into modernity, one that avoided the potential damage of secularization and was capable of halting the worst anti-traditionalist global forces.⁹⁸ The critique of the totalitarian State could also be mitigated by the idea that a “strong State” was indeed the fruit of a new age. Accordingly, the subordination of individual to collective will was increasingly theorized by Catholic

⁹² Cit. in Crivellin, *Cattolici francesi*, op. cit. p. 81, 92.

⁹³ See for example Zanatta, *Dallo Stato liberale*, op. cit., p. 157.

⁹⁴ Zanatta, *Dallo Stato liberale*, op. cit., p. 173, and Spektorowski, ‘The Ideological Origins’, op. cit., p. 162.

⁹⁵ So the Catholic Argentinian newspaper, cit. in Zanatta, *Dallo Stato liberale*, op. cit., p. 165.

⁹⁶ Spektorowski, ‘The Ideological Origins’, op. cit., p. 164.

⁹⁷ Jorge Dagnino, ‘Catholic Modernities in Fascist Italy: The Intellectuals of *Azione Cattolica*’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8/2, 2007, p. 330.

⁹⁸ Moro, ‘La religione e la ‘nuova epoca’’, op. cit., p. 560-568.

ideologues, to such a point that they did not necessarily consider the totalitarian fascist State from a negative point of view, often seeing it, rather, as a new experiment that could avoid the risks both of socialist “statolatry” and of liberal individualism.⁹⁹

The Spanish Civil War united Catholic youth, Catholic intellectuals and conservative centrist Catholics even more radically with the political right. The atrocities committed by the Republicans against the clergy in the early phase of the war, followed by Franco’s ‘crusade’ in defence of religion,¹⁰⁰ convinced the hierarchy, global Catholic press, the vast majority of the clergy and lay organizations – which were already influenced by the recent Mexican events –, that the Spanish Republic was only a façade being used to mask communist atheism and that the only way to save Spanish Catholicism was to side with the insurgents.¹⁰¹ Almost every parish in the world became a loudspeaker for Francoist propaganda.¹⁰² The war polarized and radicalized Catholic opinion into a Manichean antithesis between religion and communism, in which defining any boundary on the right hand side proved very difficult. Anti-fascist Catholics refused the idea that a choice had to be made between fascism and communism, because both systems were anti-Christian and secularist. Their opposition to Francoism was the occasion to forge a deep revision of the fundamentals of the very ideal of a “Catholic State”, through a new consciousness of the dangers that fascism provoked in Christian conscience.¹⁰³ But it was precisely this refusal to choose the “lesser evil” that earned them blistering attacks from the Catholic majority.¹⁰⁴ The consequence was that those who wished for a result different from the Francoist victory were progressively beginning to be considered as outsiders,¹⁰⁵ with all other components uniting. However, while the choice for the anti-communist authoritarian front was clear,

⁹⁹ Maria Bocci, *Oltre lo Stato liberale. Ipotesi su politica e società nel dibattito cattolico tra fascismo e democrazia*, 1999, Bulzoni, Roma, p. 177-250.

¹⁰⁰ Giuliana Di Febo, ‘La crociata e le rappresentazioni del nazionalcattolicesimo’, in: Luca Alesandrini/Luigi Arbizzani/Maryse Bertrand de Muñoz (eds.), *Immagini nemiche. La guerra civile spagnola e le sue rappresentazioni, 1936-1939*, 1999, Compositori, Bologna, p. 27-36.

¹⁰¹ Catholic press had initially been sceptical about Franco’s insurrection: see J. David Valaik, ‘American Catholic Dissenters and the Spanish Civil War’, *The Catholic Historical Review* 53/4, 1968, p. 539; James Flint, ‘“Must God Go Fascist?” English Catholic Opinion and the Spanish Civil War’, *Church History* 56/3, 1987, p. 367; Renato Moro, ‘Il cattolicesimo internazionale e la guerra civile spagnola’, in: Giuliana Di Febo/Claudio Natoli (eds.), *Spagna anni trenta. Società, Cultura, Istituzioni*, 1993, Angeli, Milano, p. 278.

¹⁰² Newsinger, ‘Blackshirts, Blueshirts’, op. cit., p. 840. See also Flint, ‘“Must God Go Fascist?”’, op. cit., p. 364-374.

¹⁰³ Francesco Traniello, ‘Presentazione’, in: Crivellin, *Cattolici francesi*, op. cit., p. 8.

¹⁰⁴ Rodger Van Allen, *The Commonwealth and American Catholicism: The Magazine, the Movement, the Meaning*, 1974, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, p. 60-66.

¹⁰⁵ Paul Vignaux, ‘Cattolici francesi di fronte ai fascismi e alla guerra di Spagna’, *Cristianesimo nella storia* 3/2, 1982, p. 399.

it often appeared without a complete acceptance of the fascist model.¹⁰⁶ President Roosevelt refrained from supporting Spanish democracy as a result of well-organized Catholic opposition (supported by the hierarchy and by the united position of the American Catholic press) to arms sales to the Republic.¹⁰⁷ However, at a mass rally in Washington, the popular and respected Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen explained to the Catholic audience that the embargo should not be lifted to benefit either side in Spain because Americans were obliged to oppose all forms of totalitarianism: German Nazism, Italian Fascism, and Russian Communism. He added that fascism was the principal threat of the hour, even though communism, against which fascism was but a reaction, was not better.¹⁰⁸ Even Father Coughlin urged Catholics to bombard their representative with telegrams, letters and calls to preserve the embargo, both for Christianity and against communism and fascism.¹⁰⁹

The reason for this was that in the course of 1937 and 1938, the idea of a “Latin bloc” of Catholic states progressively vanished, whereas the ghost of totalitarianism reappeared, causing anxiety among Catholics. In March 1937, the Church chose to not solemnly condemn totalitarianism in its different forms, as the Holy Office had once envisaged in the summer of 1936,¹¹⁰ but to promulgate separate encyclicals: one against Nazism, for its “idolatrous divinization” of the race, the people, the State, the chief; another one against communism. The decision had a clear aim of distinguishing single cases, and excluding Italian Fascism from the lot. Indeed Mussolini’s regime was not mentioned, but it was clear that the Vatican was anxious about possible German influence.¹¹¹ In the summer of 1937, the French Catholics’s annual Social Week was devoted to the “human person in danger”: it strongly condemned totalitarianism and described it as a deadly danger for Christians.¹¹² Nevertheless, Catholic opinion on the Italian case remained divided. While *La Vie Intellectuelle* stated that, “in every form in which it occurs, fascism is idolatry of the State, faith in violence and primacy of politics over spiritual values”,¹¹³ conservative Catholicism continued to draw a thick line between Fascism and

¹⁰⁶ Javier Tusell/Genoveva García Queipo de Llano, *El catolicismo mundial y la guerra de España*, 1993, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid.

¹⁰⁷ Leo V. Kanawada, *Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Diplomacy and American Catholics, Italians, and Jews*, 1982, UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor, p. 49-70.

¹⁰⁸ J. David Valaik, ‘Catholics, Neutrality and the Spanish Embargo, 1937-1939’, *The Journal of American History* 54/1, 1967, p. 78-79.

¹⁰⁹ Valaik, ‘Catholics, Neutrality and the Spanish Embargo’, op. cit., p. 81-82.

¹¹⁰ Hubert Wolf, *Il papa e il diavolo. Il Vaticano e il Terzo Reich*, 2008, Donzelli, Roma, p. 272-276 (1° *Papst & Teufel. Die Archive des Vatikan und das Dritte Reich*, 2008, Beck, München).

¹¹¹ See for example ‘Veritas in charitate’, *L’Osservatore romano*, March 22-23, 1937.

¹¹² Emilio Gentile, *Le religioni della politica. Fra democrazie e totalitarismi*, 2001, Laterza, Roma-Bari, p. 116-119.

¹¹³ Cit. in Crivellin, *Cattolici francesi*, op. cit., p. 93.

Nazism.¹¹⁴ Unfortunately, in the first months of 1938, the already feeble hope that Italian Fascism could influence Nazism made a 180 degree turn in the direction of the opposite menace: it was Hitler who seemed to be influencing Mussolini. The Vatican and much of European episcopacy now had well-founded fears for both a negative German and Italian influence over the institutions of the remaining Catholic authoritarian states. In that spring, a deeply rooted concern for a “totalitarian” danger animated the Vatican discussion about the Francoist *Fuero del trabajo*.¹¹⁵ In Hungary, the Church showed opposition to the birth of a new political party based on the alliance between Catholics and the Arrow Cross: the episcopacy continued to forbid priestly participation in (or support of) the movement, and discouraged the faithful from casting their votes for radical right candidates.¹¹⁶ In Portugal, when a fascist wing emerged inside the regime and proposed permitting only one youth organization and breaking up Catholic Scouts, the Church vetoed this move and imposed a stubborn defender of the Church’s social doctrine as the new director of the State youth organization.¹¹⁷ For the first time, the Argentinian bishops also imperatively condemned the totalitarian State and racism, censured those forms of nationalism that would go “as far as to disregard human person’s rights”, and considered as contrary to Catholic morals the idea that “violence could be a legitimate means to seize power”.¹¹⁸ In other words the attitude of the global Catholic press became less positive towards fascism. After the introduction of Italian racial policies, a series of editorials “dismissed” racial theories “as unscientific and morally ‘completely wrong’”,¹¹⁹ and attacked Fascism.¹²⁰ Argentinian Father Franceschi was now convinced that Mussolini’s Italy was a totalitarian, and hence condemnable, system.¹²¹ The majority of French Catholic press interpreted the fact that Pius XI had left Rome during Hitler’s visit as a sign that an agreement between the Church and fascist regimes was no longer possible.¹²²

¹¹⁴ Angelo Barbera, ‘La Mostra nazionale delle Colonie estive e dell’Assistenza all’infanzia’, *La Civiltà Cattolica* IV, 1937, p. 3-11.

¹¹⁵ Giuliana Di Febo, ‘Vaticano e franchismo: Il *Fuero Del Trabajo* (marzo 1938)’, *Mondo contemporaneo* 4/3, 2008, p. 129-141.

¹¹⁶ Béla Bodó, ‘Do Not Lead Us into (Fascist) Temptation’: The Catholic Church in Interwar Hungary’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8/2, 2007, p. 425, 427.

¹¹⁷ Costa Pinto/Rezola, ‘Political Catholicism’, op. cit., p. 362.

¹¹⁸ Cit. in Zanatta, *Dallo Stato liberale*, op. cit., p. 233.

¹¹⁹ Biondich, ‘Radical Catholicism and Fascism’, op. cit., p. 392.

¹²⁰ Nazzaro, ‘L’atteggiamento della stampa cattolico-moderata americana’, op. cit., p. 67; Zanatta, *Dallo Stato liberale*, op. cit., p. 235; Eloy Gutiérrez, ‘Catholicismo y Fascismo’, op. cit., p. 24.

¹²¹ Zanatta, *Dallo Stato liberale*, op. cit., p. 243.

¹²² Daniel-Jacques Grange, ‘L’image de L’Italie fasciste chez les ‘catholiques de gauche’ français durant les années ‘30’, in: Jean Baptiste Duroselle/Enrico Serra (eds.), *Il vincolo culturale tra Italia e Francia negli anni trenta e quaranta*, 1986, Angeli, Milano, p. 50-82.

Be that as it may, there was no formal rupture from that earlier state of collaboration. Catholic anti-fascist leaders in exile were still struck by “the sheer extent of political support for Mussolini and Franco” and by “philo-fascism among the Catholic communities in Britain and in the USA, which, as a result, were also generally the most ardent supporters of the policies of appeasement and of isolationism”.¹²³ A representative case arose in Canada: in 1938, the Archdiocese of Toronto proposed a demonstration against both fascism and communism, but pressure from the German and Italian congregations convinced the Archbishop to not only revoke his stand on fascism and limit the protest to being only against communism, but also to apologise to German and Italian Catholics, stating that “there certainly never was any intention to condemn any particular form of Fascism now existing”.¹²⁴

In the first part of *The Sword of Honour*, the British Catholic writer Evelyn Waugh perfectly depicted the state of mind many conservative Catholics had experienced at the beginning of the war.¹²⁵ Quite abruptly, things had become very simple. After the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Europe appeared to be divided into two well defined camps: on one side, the anti-Christian States (pagan Nazi Germany and atheist Soviet Russia) that had attacked Catholic Poland – and the Polish defeat was considered a Catholic tragedy¹²⁶ –, on the other, the French and British democracies, which certainly were not without their flaws, but who were certainly less hostile to Christian civilization. The events of May and June 1940 reversed this situation: the problem was now the question of how to interpret the Axis victory, even if the German violation of Dutch and Belgian neutrality did not arouse much sympathy. Astonished, some Catholics began to speak of the Nazis as “dark angels”, “new barbarians” that were accomplishing the providential role of burying the decadent democratic civilization.¹²⁷ “Let us pass to Barbarians” was Mounier’s call.¹²⁸ While this situation could lead to fascism once again being attributed with a providential role in the Catholic final triumph, under the circumstances this was very difficult to envisage. The November 5, 1940 entry in the diary of the Archbishop of Zagreb, Alojzije Cardinal Stepinac, stated: “If Germany wins, there will be appalling terror and the destruction of small nations. If England wins, masons, [and] Jews will remain in power”.¹²⁹ Hence many Catholics assumed an attitude close to

¹²³ Kaiser, ‘Co-Operation of European Catholic Politicians’, op. cit., p. 445.

¹²⁴ Cit. in Maurutto, ‘Private Policing and Surveillance of Catholics’, op. cit., p. 127.

¹²⁵ Evelyn Waugh, *Men at Arms. A Novel*, 1952, Chapman & Hall, London.

¹²⁶ For a Croatian example, see Biondich, ‘Radical Catholicism and Fascism’, op. cit., p. 392.

¹²⁷ Moro, ‘I cattolici Italiani di fronte alla guerra fascista’, op. cit., p. 79.

¹²⁸ Cit. in Deborah Paci, ‘Emmanuel Mounier e il fascismo italiano’, *Mondo contemporaneo* 7/2, 2011, p. 153.

¹²⁹ Cit. in Mark Biondich, ‘Controversies Surrounding the Catholic Church in Wartime Croatia, 1941-1945’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 7/4, 2006, p. 438.

Vatican neutrality, refusing all ideologies.¹³⁰ After Mussolini made the decision to join the war on Hitler's side, in a decision that went against papal opinion, sympathy for Italian Fascism rapidly began to wane. Catholic publications hailed the reunion of traditional, Catholic and authoritarian France with Portugal and Spain, in a sort of league of neutral Catholic States that could anticipate a world free from totalitarianism and liberalism. However, in the face of growing collaboration with the Nazis, praise for Marshal Pétain's soon ended.¹³¹ Even when a clear choice for the Axis was made – such as in the case of the widespread support by clergy and laity for the Croat Ustaša regime –, many misgivings were expressed about the Nazi “New Order”.¹³²

Converging and Diverging

A thesis that is rather widespread among scholars is the viewpoint that any agreement between Catholicism and fascism was based solely on “common enemies”¹³³ such as liberalism, secular democracy, international masonry (and Jews, in the 1930s), feminism, anarchy, and, above all, socialism and communism.¹³⁴ According to this viewpoint, the Catholic-fascist alliance was ‘negative’ rather than ‘positive’. Another perspective instead enumerates the consonances: aspiration to order, discipline, authority and hierarchy, refusal of individualism, pessimistic contempt for men and women as social beings (considering them always as in need of guidance, correction and limitation), lack of confidence in any form of research or discussion and in any attitude that conflicts with a state of obedience and submission, research of an organic unity in a society under the strokes of multiplicity, corporatism as a “third way” between liberalism and communism, criticism of the representative system, policies of ‘ruralism’, fami-

¹³⁰ Zanatta, *Dallo Stato liberale*, op. cit., p. 245.

¹³¹ Richard Francis Crane, ‘La Croix and the Swastika: The Ambiguities of Catholic Responses to the Fall of France’, *The Catholic Historical Review* 90/1, 2004, p. 61. See also Oscar Arnal, ‘The Ambivalent Ralliement of ‘La Croix’’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 31/1, 1980, p. 89-106; John Hellman, ‘The Anti-Democratic Impulse in Catholicism: Jacques Maritain, Yves Simon, and Charles De Gaulle during World War II’, *Journal of Church and State* 33/3, 1991, p. 453-471; Id., *The Knight-Monks of Vichy France: Uriage, 1940-1945*, 1993, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal-Kingston; Renée Bédarida, *Les Catholiques dans la guerre, 1939-1945: Entre Vichy et la Résistance*, 1998, Hachette, Paris; Vesna Drapac, *War and Religion: Catholics in the Churches of Occupied Paris*, 1998, Catholic University of America Press, Washington.

¹³² For Croatia, see Biondich, ‘Controversies Surrounding the Catholic Church’, op. cit., p. 437.

¹³³ See for instance G. Miccoli, ‘La Chiesa e il fascismo’, in: Id., *Tra mito della cristianità e secolarizzazione. Studi sul rapporto chiesa-società nell'età contemporanea*, 1985, Marietti, Casale Monferrato, p. 126.

¹³⁴ With only very few exceptions, the Church equated socialism and communism: Gregory Baum, *Catholics and Canadian Socialism: Political Thought in the Thirties and Forties*, 1980, Paulist Press, New York; Zanatta, *Dallo Stato liberale*, op. cit., p. 92-93. The exception was the Labour Party, because the British (and then the Canadian) Catholic Church declared that its reform tradition and lack of anti-clericalism made it not socialist in the continental sense: Maurutto, ‘Private Policing and Surveillance of Catholics’, op. cit., p. 125.

ly, marriage, birth control, public morality, drive towards spiritual and religious values, nationalism (and even empire). In both cases, historians have to resist the temptation of a simplistic matching of themes and values, because this is one of the main risks in the field of research of fascist-Catholic relations.¹³⁵ In fact, many of the ingredients of the Catholic encounter with fascism were marked by strong ambivalence.

Let us begin with the list of enemies. Communism was the Church's greatest nightmare, and anti-communism was certainly the first element of proximity with fascism.¹³⁶ However, while anti-communism was one of the few non-divisive subjects, Catholics were clearly divided in the evaluation of the means that fascism used in its struggle against communism. Reactionary Catholics considered communism as an irreconcilable, mortal enemy, against which society had the right to defend itself, using repression and force.¹³⁷ A Catholic Argentinian publication maintained that young Catholics had to confront communists "a Dios rogando y con el mazo dando": that is to say, preaching and beating.¹³⁸ At the same time, 'centrist' Catholics such as a fellow Argentinian, Father Franceschi, warned that "Christians" were "not allowed to hate" and that communists needed to be converted.¹³⁹

Anti-Semitic convergence is even more complicated, because Italian Fascism did not become anti-Semitic until the mid-1930s; hence it is difficult to view anti-Jewish attitudes as a central element of the relationship. In the case of many other fascist movements (beginning with Nazism) and after the Italian passage to anti-Semitism, however, the role of the Jewish enemy was not incidental, and many Catholics considered anti-Semitism a clear point of convergence between fascism and Catholic doctrine – Argentinian Catholics, for example, went as far as considering even Hitler's *Mein Kampf* as reliable proof of Jewish Satanism.¹⁴⁰ Nevertheless, many others individuated a clear difference between traditional, religious warnings and the new, unacceptable racial attitudes of the fascist movements, while a democratic minority questioned even the anti-Semitic principle.¹⁴¹

¹³⁵ Daniele Menozzi/Renato Moro, 'Introduzione', in: Daniele Menozzi/Renato Moro (eds.), *Cattolicesimo e totalitarismo. Chiese e culture religiose tra le due guerre mondiali: Italia, Spagna, Francia*, 2004, Morcelliana, Brescia, p. 13.

¹³⁶ Pier Giorgio Zunino, 'Unité de l'occident et lutte contre le communisme: Le Vatican et l'Urss entre les fronts populaires et la défaite de L'Axe', *Revue d'histoire de la deuxième guerre mondiale* 31/124, 1981, p. 19-40.

¹³⁷ For an impressive example, see Samuel Pierce, 'The Political Mobilization of Catholic Women in Spain's Second Republic: The Ceda, 1931-6', *Journal of Contemporary History* 45/1, 2010, p. 87.

¹³⁸ Cit. in Zanatta, *Dallo Stato liberale*, op. cit., p. 164.

¹³⁹ Cit. in Zanatta, *Dallo Stato liberale*, op. cit., p. 164.

¹⁴⁰ Federico Finchelstein, 'The Anti-Freudian Politics of Argentine Fascism: Anti-Semitism, Catholicism, and the Internal Enemy, 1932-1945', *Hispanic American Historical Review* 87/1, 2007, p. 77-110.

¹⁴¹ Renato Moro, *La Chiesa e lo sterminio degli ebrei*, 2002, il Mulino, Bologna, p. 77-85.

The same can be said about anti-secularism. Certainly, the existence of a conflict between Church and State favoured a fascist advance. Fascism claimed to be in line with Catholic principles, proclaiming the will to defend the Church from Liberal anti-clericalism and Communism. This anti-secularist option surely had a determining role in defining favourable guidelines concerning the Mussolini government from 1922 to 1924, even though this was less relevant in the Nazi case. However, fascist movements and regimes, in spite of their pro-Catholic stance, asked the Church to limit itself to the salvation of souls and not to exert any political interference. Thus the issue of Catholic presence in society became the object of a long and difficult contest. The Italian 1931 crisis essentially developed along these premises, with fascists denouncing Catholic Action's "social activity".¹⁴²

Even the Catholic idea of a shared struggle against modernity was not without its contradictions. Surely a widespread apocalyptic mentality stood at the roots of Catholic convergence with fascism: many Catholics perceived the incumbent presence of a dramatic *Kulturkrisis* and looked for a defender of "Christian civilization", which they often identified with fascism. Thus a vision of history based on God's providence made Catholics perceive fascism (and, for a certain period, also National-Socialism) as an instrument for achieving the Church's goals. Fascist systems seemed to offer an historical opportunity just because they appeared as ideal 'vessels', yet without a definite identity and ready to be filled with the century-old greatness, organic unity and universality of the Catholic tradition.¹⁴³ In this way fascism was perceived "as a preamble to the Catholic solution".¹⁴⁴ It is evident that a considerable portion of Catholics did not clearly identify the differences between the authoritarian, traditional movements and regimes and the totalitarian, modern fascist ones. Many Catholics interpreted both phenomena as a single entity, without considering fascist movements and regimes as the product of 'another' modernity. With the evolution of Nazism, with the growingly evident proofs of the existence of a fascist modernism, with the development of secularization even inside fascist regimes, many of the traditional certainties began to disappear.

The analysis of the areas of convergence leads to the same conclusions. The Catholic idea of hierarchy stemmed from the model of ecclesiastical power and remained staunchly different to the militarized hierarchy proposed by fascism. Identifying the corporative ideals of Christian social doctrine with the statist fascist approach was not always easy. The Catholic idea of community

¹⁴² Istituto per la storia dell'Azione cattolica e del movimento cattolico in Italia Paolo VI (ed.), *Chiesa, Azione Cattolica e fascismo nel 193: Atti dell'incontro di studio tenuto a Roma il 12-13 dicembre 1981*, 1983, A.V.E, Roma.

¹⁴³ Luisa Mangoni, *L'interventismo della cultura. Intellettuali e riviste del fascismo*, 1974, Laterza, Roma-Bari, p. 271-272.

¹⁴⁴ Spektorowski, 'The Ideological Origins', op. cit., p. 181.

had a strong organicistic basis that differed deeply from Fascist and Nazi communitarianism.¹⁴⁵ The ‘resurrection’ of the sacred was also ambivalent. Fascisms used a religiously coloured language and imagery, practised rituals and cults, professed creeds, worshipped myths and symbols, compiled catechisms and decalogues.¹⁴⁶ For Catholics, this was at the same time reassuring – fascist regimes and movements attached importance to religion as a source of political legitimization, were engaged in the moral regeneration of society, promised spiritual revolution, and proposed an alliance between their political faith and traditional religion¹⁴⁷ – and preoccupying – the risk either of a sort of hybridization, in which Catholicism was doomed to play “a subsidiary and contextual role”,¹⁴⁸ or even the development of an alternative pagan religion.¹⁴⁹ As for national myth – probably the main area of encounter –, many of the fascist arguments and rhetoric had a definite influence on Catholics.¹⁵⁰ They adhered (and not in an episodic way) to nationalism, and this brought them closer to ‘national fronts’, viewing fascist movements as reasonable experiments in national discipline. In some cases, “nationalist principles outweighed” even “religious considerations, when political interests were at stake”.¹⁵¹ At the same time, only ‘modernist’ Catholicism was open to fascist palingenetic, radical and aggressive nationalism.¹⁵² “National-Catholicism”, which became the ideological nucleus of many authoritarian experiments of the 1920s, and even more so the 1930s (Portugal, Austria, Poland, Spain, Latin America¹⁵³), did not always remain traditional and conservative – it endeavoured to involve the masses –, but perceived religious national identity as a heritage and a destiny that sugges-

¹⁴⁵ Menozzi/Moro, ‘Introduzione’, op. cit., p. 14.

¹⁴⁶ Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*, 1996, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (1° *Il culto del littorio. La sacralizzazione della politica nell’Italia fascista*, 1993, Laterza, Roma-Bari), and Carlo Galeotti, *Mussolini ha sempre ragione. I decaloghi del fascismo*, 2000, Garzanti, Milano.

¹⁴⁷ Gerald Parsons, ‘A National Saint in a Fascist State: Catherine of Siena, ca 1922-1943’, *Journal of Religious History* 32/1, 2008, p. 76-95.

¹⁴⁸ Id., ‘Fascism and Catholicism: A Case Study of the *Sacrario Dei Caduti Fascisti* in the Crypt of San Domenico, Siena’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 42/3, 2007, p. 481.

¹⁴⁹ Renato Moro, ‘Religione del trascendente e religioni politiche. Il cattolicesimo italiano di fronte alla sacralizzazione fascista della politica’, *Mondo contemporaneo* 1/1, 2005, p. 9-67.

¹⁵⁰ Id., ‘Nación, catolicismo y regimen fascista’, in: Javier Tusell/Emilio Gentile/Giuliana Di Febo (eds.), *Fascismo y Franquismo. Cara a cara. Una perspectiva histórica*, 2004, Biblioteca Nueva, Madrid, p. 115-131. See also Nelis, ‘The Clerical Response to a Totalitarian Political Religion’, op. cit., p. 259-260.

¹⁵¹ Biondich, ‘Radical Catholicism and Fascism’, op. cit., p. 395.

¹⁵² Emilio Gentile, *La Grande Italia. Ascesa e declino del mito della nazione nel ventesimo secolo*, 1997, Mondadori, Milano. See also Roger Griffin, ‘Il nucleo palingenetic del’ideologia del ‘fascismo generico’, in: Alessandro Campi (ed.), *Che cos’è il fascismo? Interpretazioni e prospettive di ricerca*, 2003, Ideazione, Roma, p. 97-122.

¹⁵³ See Alfonso Alvarez Bolado, *El experimento del Nacional Catolicismo, 1939-1975*, 1976, Cuadernos para el Diálogo, Madrid; Alfonso Botti, *Nazionalcattolicesimo e Spagna Nuova (1881-1975)*, 1992, Angeli, Milano; Zanatta, *Dallo Stato liberale*, op. cit.

ted a role of mediation and peace.¹⁵⁴ Catholics also felt the suggestive power of fascist imperialism. The idea of Empire evoked political and spiritual unity, and it had an explicitly religious undertone, with its links to consecration and providence. But this was also ambivalent: it could refer to a Christian or providential sacredness (Augustus, Constantine, Charlemagne), but also to a completely secular or, worst, pagan one (Caesar, Nero, Diocletian, Julian the Apostate, Napoleon).¹⁵⁵

All this may be better understood when considered in relation to the “ambivalent relationship” fascism had “with the conservative right”.¹⁵⁶ Fascism attracted conservatives, was anti-liberal, anti-communist, but it was also anti-conservative.¹⁵⁷ If fascist conservative attitudes could favour Catholic support, its anti-conservative features created many difficulties.¹⁵⁸ For example, both Catholics and fascists were anti-feminist, but the fascist model of a “new woman” (socially and politically involved, sexually disinhibited, cultivating physical activities and sports) was definitely different from the Catholic “angel of the home”.¹⁵⁹ Recent research shows that Catholics could accept a moderate ‘positive’ kind of eugenics, but were completely opposed to the way things were going in Germany.¹⁶⁰ Other research shows the existence of a strong convergence in educational models, on the basis of a common idea of “normative

¹⁵⁴ Thorpe, ‘Austrofascism’, op. cit., p. 333.

¹⁵⁵ Renato Moro, ‘Il mito dell’impero in Italia fra universalismo cristiano e totalitarismo’, in: Menozzi/Moro (eds.), *Cattolicesimo e totalitarismo*, op. cit., p. 311-371; Jan Nelis, ‘Un mythe contemporain entre religion et idéologie: la romanité fasciste’, *Euphrosyne* 35, 2007, p. 437-50; Id., ‘Catholicism and the Italian Fascist Myth of *Romanità*: Between Consciousness and Consent’, *Historia Actual Online* 17, 2008, p. 139-46.

¹⁵⁶ Newsinger, ‘Blackshirts, Blueshirts, and the Spanish Civil War’, op. cit., p. 826.

¹⁵⁷ Stanley G. Payne, *Il fascismo 1914/1945. Origini, storia e declino delle dittature che si sono imposte tra le due guerre*, 1997, Newton & Compton, Roma, p. 7 (1° *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*, 1995, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison).

¹⁵⁸ Levy, ‘Fascism, National Socialism and Conservatives’, op. cit., p. 107.

¹⁵⁹ Stefania Bartoloni, ‘Il fascismo femminile e la sua stampa: ‘La Rassegna Femminile Italiana’ (1925-1930)’, *Nuova Donna/Woman/Femme* 21, 1982, p. 143-169; Maria Fraddosio, ‘Le donne e il fascismo: Ricerche e problemi di interpretazione’, *Storia contemporanea* 17/1, 1986, p. 95-135; Laura Gellott/Michael Phayer, ‘Dissenting Voices: Catholic Women in Opposition to Fascism’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 22/1, 1987, p. 91-114; Maria Fraddosio, ‘La donna e la guerra. Aspetti della militanza femminile nel fascismo: Dalla mobilitazione civile alle origini del Saf nella Repubblica Sociale Italiana’, *Storia contemporanea* 20/6, 1989, p. 1105-1181; Cecilia Dau Novelli, *Famiglia e modernizzazione in Italia tra le due guerre*, 1994, Studium, Roma; Maria Fraddosio, ‘The Fallen Hero: The Myth of Mussolini and Fascist Women in the Italian Social Republic (1943-5)’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 31/1, 1996, p. 99-124; Kevin Passmore (ed.), *Women, Gender and Fascism in Europe, 1919-1945*, 2003, Manchester University Press, Manchester; Liviana Gazzetta, *Cattoliche durante il fascismo. Ordine sociale e organizzazioni femminili nelle Venezie*, 2011, Viella, Roma.

¹⁶⁰ Claudia Mantovani, *Rigenerare la società. L’engenetica in Italia dalle origini ottocentesche agli anni trenta*, 2004, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli; Monika Löscher, ‘Eugenics and Catholicism in Interwar Austria’, in: Marius Turda/Paul J. Weindling (eds.), *Blood and Homeland. Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900-1940*, 2007, Central European University Press, Budapest, p. 299-316.

virility”, but that major differences remained, such as concerning the notion of war or violent sports.¹⁶¹ Catholics did not appreciate the fascist systematic resorting to violence.¹⁶² In many cases they asked for moderation, even though violence (as the Hungarian¹⁶³ and the Spanish¹⁶⁴ cases show) does not seem to have been the discriminating factor, justified as it was as an extreme measure. Nevertheless, the Church repeated to fascists – cf. the Argentinian bishops in May 1936 – that no theologian or canonist would have admitted “the resort to violence against a liberal government for the only fact of being such, with the sole intention of establishing a nationalist system”.¹⁶⁵ More delicate was the issue of war itself: even though they were anti-pacifist, and even though many of them justified Mussolini’s (and Hitler’s) revisionism, Catholics frequently criticized the militarization of society (and youth) and the preaching of war as completely wrong solutions to international problems.¹⁶⁶

The real, often neglected consequence of this ambivalent convergence and divergence is that the relationship with fascism changed Catholicism itself. The Church existed within the same mass society that produced fascism and had the necessity of employing the same mass societal mechanisms. The faithful were enmeshed in the myths and values of fascist movements and the Church came to experience how strong the pressure of totalitarian politics could be on the militant. An emblematic case involves the clergy. Fascist movements tried to mobilize the lower level and younger clergy. Their aim was to forge a “national clergy” that would be more devoted to the national cause than to obedience to bishops or to the Vatican, ready to be used at home and abroad for propagandistic reasons.¹⁶⁷ The goal was partially achieved. The Holy See and the national Catholic hierarchies often encountered much difficulty in mas-

¹⁶¹ Alessio Ponzio, ‘Corpo e anima: Sport e modello virile nella formazione dei giovani fascisti e dei giovani cattolici nell’Italia degli anni trenta’, *Mondo contemporaneo* 1/3, 2005, p. 51-104.

¹⁶² See for example Nelis, ‘The Clerical Response’, op. cit., p. 258.

¹⁶³ Bodó, ‘Do Not Lead Us into (Fascist) Temptation’, op. cit., p. 429.

¹⁶⁴ Giuliana Di Febo/Renato Moro, ‘¿Estado católico o estado totalitario? Iglesia, España e Italia (1937-1938)’, in: Juan Avilés Farré (ed.), *Historia, Política y Cultura. Homenaje a Javier Tusell*, 2009, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, Madrid, p. 47-52.

¹⁶⁵ Cit. in Zanatta, *Dallo Stato liberale*, op. cit., p. 163.

¹⁶⁶ Moro, ‘I cattolici italiani di fronte alla guerra fascista’, op. cit.; Id., ‘L’opinione cattolica su pace e guerra durante il fascismo’, in: Mimmo Franzinelli/Riccardo Bottoni (eds.), *Chiesa e guerra. Dalla ‘benedizione delle armi’ alla ‘Pacem in Terris’*, 2005, il Mulino, Bologna, p. 221-319; Id., ‘Die Italienischen Katholiken und der Krieg der ‘Achse’’, in: Lutz Klinkhammer/Amedeo Osti Guerrazzi/Thomas Schlemmer (eds.), *Die ‘Achse’ im Krieg. Politik, Ideologie und Kriegführung, 1939-1945*, 2010, Schönningh, Paderborn-München-Wien-Zürich, p. 273-290.

¹⁶⁷ Cesare Maria De Vecchi di Valcismano to Benito Mussolini, Letter of March 22, 1932, cit. in Sandro Setta, ‘Introduzione’, in: Cesare Maria De Vecchi, *Tra Papa, Duce e Re. Il conflitto tra Chiesa cattolica e Stato fascista nel Diario 1930-1931 del primo ambasciatore del Regno d’Italia presso la Santa Sede* (ed. by Sandro Setta), 1998, Jouvence, Roma, p. 41-43. See also Mimmo Franzinelli, *Il clero del duce, il duce del clero. Il consenso ecclesiastico nelle lettere a Mussolini, 1922-1945*, 1998, La Fiaccola, Ragusa.

tering priests' and monks' political impulses. As early as the 1920s, Sturzo considered this one of the main dangers for the Church.¹⁶⁸ In 1935, when observing the Italian priests and bishops who praised the Italian aggression to Ethiopia in the bellicose terms of a crusade, the depressed Monsignor Domenico Tardini, vice-Secretary for the Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs, denounced this as one of the many damages caused by fascism.¹⁶⁹ Priests were sometimes the first fascist ambassadors among Italian communities in Europe, USA or Latin America.¹⁷⁰ They led the Hlinka movement in Slovakia.¹⁷¹ In Croatia there is evidence that many young priests, especially Franciscans, sided with the Ustaša, shared responsibilities in the government, were its propagandists¹⁷² and were even "implicated in forced conversions and possibly in some killings".¹⁷³ Of course, many other priests continued to live their Christian daily life, considering politics as outside of their mission, while yet another small group developed leftist political inclinations,¹⁷⁴ but the symptom was obvious.

A complex process of defence from (and osmosis and rivalry with) the new religious dimensions of politics promoted by fascism begun.¹⁷⁵ In the age of mass politics and of totalitarianism, the Catholic Church accentuated the features of a total, tremendously tight and all-embracing organization. The Church opposed its own mobilization to the new Fascist and Nazi "total" and "integral" pedagogy of the citizen, proposing itself, in its own way, as a "total horizon", a totalizing sphere. Hence, fascist political religions contributed to the politicization, ideologization and nationalization of Catholic faith itself. As was the case for fascism and communism, Catholicism also offered a project and the promise of giving a new sense to life; it proclaimed the idea that history had a providential guiding role, and proposed an organic conception of the world. In an age in which every truth seemed partial, fragmentary and, in the best case, appeared as an *idée-force*, Catholicism put itself up as offering an extraordinary illumination on the totality of existence, as a synthesis able to conciliate the principal dualisms in society: individuality and sociality, idealism and realism, action and contemplation, life and thought, faith and organization. According

¹⁶⁸ Cit. in Gentile, *Contro Cesare*, op. cit., p. 150.

¹⁶⁹ Lucia Ceci, *Il papa non deve parlare. Chiesa, fascismo e guerra d'Etiopia*, 2010, Laterza, Roma-Bari, p. 139-140.

¹⁷⁰ Peter R. D'Agostino, 'The Triad of Roman Authority: Fascism, the Vatican, and Italian Religious Clergy in the Italian Emigrant Church', *Journal of American Ethnic History* 17/3, 1998, p. 3-37.

¹⁷¹ Yeshayahu Jelinek, 'Clergy and Fascism: The Hlinka Party in Slovakia and the Croatian Ustaša Movement', in: Stein Ugelvik Larsen/Bernt Hagtvet/Jan Petter Myklebust (eds.), *Who Were the Fascists: Social Roots of European Fascism*, 1980, Universitetsforlaget, Bergen, p. 363-378.

¹⁷² Biondich, 'Controversies Surrounding the Catholic Church', op. cit., p. 445-446.

¹⁷³ Biondich, 'Controversies Surrounding the Catholic Church', op. cit., p. 443.

¹⁷⁴ Biondich, 'Controversies Surrounding the Catholic Church', op. cit., p. 446.

¹⁷⁵ Renato Moro, 'Religion and Politics in the Time of Secularization: The Sacralisation of Politics and Politicisation of Religion', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 6/1, 2005, p. 71-86.

to many Catholic militants, a “total” view of Catholicism¹⁷⁶ would steer activists into an “integral formation”, would stress the necessity of “la vita una”, as well as the importance of “a Catholicism without adjectives”.¹⁷⁷ A young enthusiastic Belgian went to the point of writing: “Death to half-Catholics”.¹⁷⁸ Catholics frequently and without visible uneasiness spoke of “Catholic totalitarianism”. In 1934, Monsignor Adriano Bernareggi, bishop of Bergamo and chaplain of the Italian Catholic intellectuals’ movement, observed that, if fascism represented the totalitarian idea “from the social and political point of view”, “from the spiritual point of view”, this very idea was “Catholicism which, although it always had been totalitarian for the essential part, was now again showing itself as such”.¹⁷⁹ Catholic youth organizations began to utilize models that came directly from fascist ‘modernity’. The Croatian Catholic students’ organization, for example, adopted uniforms, emblems, flags, songs, slogans (“Sacrifice, Eucharist, Apostolate”) and a salutation (“God lives!”).¹⁸⁰ Reversing the *Action Française* slogan *politique d’abord*, the new Belgian Catholic Action used the rallying-calls of the *Primauté du Spirituel* or *Catholiques d’abord*.¹⁸¹

Yet it would be completely misleading to speak of a ‘fascistization’ of Catholicism or of the existence of a real ‘Catholic totalitarianism’. The mimesis of words, techniques and attitudes could not change identities. The affirmation of fascism as national and Catholic, the fusion of symbols, the insertion of portions of traditional religious ritual into the new totalitarian fascist religion did not eliminate a subtle dualism in intentions and perspectives, and, in many cases, a definite competition. As Mark Biondich has shown for the Croatian case, new Catholic clericalism “was quite distinct” from fascism, even though it adopted many of the same mobilizing forms. The Catholic movement “possessed a different social constituency” and “articulated a distinct”, even if “closely related”, ideology.¹⁸² “Re-Christianisation” of society was much more important here than nationalism.¹⁸³

A Conclusion

Catholicism played a central role in the seizure of power by the fascist movements: during the crises of the Acerbo law and of the Matteotti murder

¹⁷⁶ Fausto Montanari to Igino Righetti, Letter of March 23, 1930, in Archivio della Presidenza della FUCI, Roma.

¹⁷⁷ Giampietro Dore, *Elogio della vita una*, 1927, Studium, Roma.

¹⁷⁸ Conway, ‘Building the Christian City’, op. cit., p. 130. In Croatia, “radical Catholicism” was a favourite term of the Catholic youth movement: Biondich, ‘Radical Catholicism and Fascism’, op. cit., p. 388.

¹⁷⁹ A. Bernareggi, ‘La moralità della professione’, *Studium* 30/3-4, 1935, p. 180-181.

¹⁸⁰ Biondich, ‘Radical Catholicism and Fascism’, op. cit., p. 388.

¹⁸¹ Conway, ‘Building the Christian City’, op. cit., p. 126.

¹⁸² Biondich, ‘Radical Catholicism and Fascism’, op. cit., p. 383.

¹⁸³ Biondich, ‘Radical Catholicism and Fascism’, op. cit., p. 388.

case in Italy and again in the chain of events that followed the *Reichstag* fire in Germany, Catholic support and parliamentary vote proved decisive for fascist success. The same may be said for the consent given to fascist regimes: Italian *Conciliazione* gave birth to the popular myth of a “fascist and Catholic” nation;¹⁸⁴ Catholic thought greatly contributed to legitimize the rejection of democracy, attacking the faith in liberalism and individualism; Catholic influence was one of the main factors, and perhaps the greatest, for the construction of a favourable image of fascism in many non-fascist countries (USA, Canada, Great Britain, Latin America). In the 1930s the Catholic inclination for fascism was such that in Quebec, South America and the Philippines the Church seemed the “primary source of fascistic politics”¹⁸⁵ and many American intellectuals “increasingly feared that Catholicism might create a disposition amenable to authoritarian rule”.¹⁸⁶

Even though support and appreciation were the norm, Catholic enthusiasm for fascism has often been exaggerated. Generally speaking, Catholics appear to have been neither ardent supporters of fascist movements and regimes nor avowed opponents. Catholic intellectuals such as Luigi Sturzo, Francesco Luigi Ferrari, Fritz Gerlich, Friedrich Muckermann and Jacques Maritain expressed some of the clearer denunciations of the new totalitarian menace, but they were the exception, not the rule; Alois Hudal, Jozef Tiso, Hermann de Vries de Heekelingen, Charles Coughlin, Luigi De’ Rossi dell’Arno, Pasquale Pennisi, and “Hitler’s priests” (Philipp Heuser, Anton Heuberger, and Richard Kleine) were the exception on the side of fanatic praise. The Vatican and the greater part of international Catholicism continued to harbour fears not only of Nazi Germany but also of Fascist Italy, due to their exaggerated nationalism, racism, bellicosity and divinization of the State; but a clear evaluation of fascism was never formulated.¹⁸⁷ While every Catholic knew exactly what communism was, the same did not seem to be true for fascism. When was it that nationalism was “exaggerated”? When did authoritarianism end and totalitarianism begin? Right-wing Catholicism often considered fascism to be a kind of physiological reaction to the excesses of liberal democracy, while ‘centrist’ Catholicism criticized fascism just because it was an heir of liberal regimes, and furthered their inclination towards usurping the role of the Church in favour of the State. Thus, the vast majority of the clergy and of Catholic militants, and even many of those who understood fascist originality (and danger), continued to differentiate between the Italian case and the Ger-

¹⁸⁴ Renato Moro, ‘Cattolicesimo e italianità: Antiprotestantesimo e antisemitismo nell’Italia cattolica’, in: Antonio Acerbi (ed.), *La Chiesa e l’Italia. Per una storia dei loro rapporti negli ultimi due secoli*, 2003, Vita e Pensiero, Milano, p. 307-339.

¹⁸⁵ John T. McGreevy, ‘Thinking on One’s Own’, op. cit., p. 108.

¹⁸⁶ John T. McGreevy, ‘Thinking on One’s Own’, op. cit., p. 107.

¹⁸⁷ Gentile, *Contro Cesare*, op. cit., p. 156.

man one. Both Maritain and Alcide De Gasperi, for example, believed that fascist totalitarianism would have met a definitive obstacle in the careful and alert presence of the Church, and that the Italian situation, precisely for this reason, was completely different from the Russian or German context.¹⁸⁸ If even anti-fascists considered the role of the Church so decisive in keeping fascism under control, it is easy to imagine how many Vatican representatives and Catholics all over the world could think the same and consider Italian Fascism's pagan and anti-Christian features external and secondary, limited to some radical circles and not sufficient to question the reasons for collaboration.¹⁸⁹ Many viewed Italian Fascism's avowed guarantees of the rights and intangibility of the human person as sufficiently firm to override and restrain the totalitarian potential. In addition, both the Vatican and many Catholics were equally distrustful of Western democracies. Above all, almost every Catholic considered communism as forming the greater threat. Thus Catholic criticism of fascism took no part in the democratic protest against fascist systems, with the relevant exception of a minority of anti-fascists. Moreover, although many Catholics condemned fascist ideology or viewed it with suspicion, they placed lasting trust in fascist leadership. In the 1930s, international Catholic public opinion did certainly not regard Hitler (or even Mussolini) as a model politician, focusing rather on Salazar,¹⁹⁰ Dollfuss or De Valera. Catholic press even explicitly criticized the myth of the chief and the cult of personality.¹⁹¹ Nevertheless, the confidence in the wisdom and equilibrium of the leader (in the case of Mussolini, of Franco, but even of Hitler and Pavelić) was an often-repeated argument in Church documents and Catholic newspaper articles. Charismatic mechanisms had been deeply absorbed by Catholics and helped to overcome dark nightmares about regime driven radicalization.

Hence, as the Italian anti-fascist Catholic militant Francesco Luigi Ferrari observed in 1931, Catholic-fascist relations were dominated by a "strange succession of conflicts that never result in an open war, and of accords that never bring complete pacification".¹⁹² The predominant choice among Church hierarchies was that of private distancing, of cautiously crafted diplomatic interventions and criticism; but this never transformed into a public, formal condemnation or withdrawal of the Church's blessings (with the partial exception of some aspects of German National Socialist ideology). In this way, Catholic attitude towards fascism was comprised of fluctuations and divisions; Catholic sympathizers of fascist movements, even of German National So-

¹⁸⁸ Maritain, *Umanesimo integrale*, op. cit., p. 220-221, and Moro, 'Religione del trascendente e religioni politiche', op. cit., p. 43.

¹⁸⁹ Moro, 'Religione del trascendente e religioni politiche', op. cit., p. 62-67.

¹⁹⁰ Costa Pinto/Rezola, 'Political Catholicism', op. cit., p. 357.

¹⁹¹ Moro, 'Religione del trascendente e religioni politiche', op. cit., p. 19-24.

¹⁹² Cit. in Gentile, *Contro Cesare*, op. cit., p. 223.

cialism, could always have the impression that they were being seriously discouraged by the Church. So Catholics formulated a wide range of opinions that went from an “evaluation of fascism as a positive ‘model’ for solving the ‘religious question’ in the contemporary world (with special and obvious attention paid to the Lateran Pacts) to its identification as a negative ‘model’ of a nationalist, imperialist and totalitarian regime”.¹⁹³ The same personalities, journals and newspapers often formulated different judgments at different moments. Even in the many cases of ‘convergence’, ‘support’, ‘collusion’ and ‘hybridization’, there always remained a clear distinction between Catholics and fascist movements. Any identification was avoided: the clergy always urged Catholics to remember that the first requirement was to be Catholics, and then, possibly, fascists. As it has been observed, many “radical Catholics became fascist fellow travellers rather than the genuine article”.¹⁹⁴

In summary, the Catholic relationship with fascism was extremely complex and not devoid of tensions. It was surely much more than “a marriage of convenience” or “of interests”; at the same time, it was much less than “a close alliance”. A few weeks after the signing of the Lateran Pacts, De Gasperi, working and living as a clerk in the Vatican Library after a period of imprisonment by the regime, received the secret observations of a Roman Curia cardinal. The cardinal told him: “They [the Fascists] act as religious people, and we [the Catholics] do not believe that; so we act as philo-Fascists, and they do not believe it”.¹⁹⁵ As fascists tried to “fascisticize” Catholics, Catholics tried to “catholicize” fascists, trying to influence the leaders in order to channel them into a righteous line and avoid deviations and excesses.

The heritage of the Catholic-fascist relationship also appears multifaceted. At first glance, the competition seems to have been lost by the Church: if we examine the role of Catholics, not as supporters, but as active actors inside the Italian and German regimes, it is difficult to deny that it was almost insignificant. But, in the long term, things may take on a different appearance. George L. Mosse observed that in the 1930s, Catholic *néo-thomisme*, stressing the value of the human person in its own way, occupied the place that 19th Century liberalism had left vacant.¹⁹⁶ Even though a growing disposition to definitively steer away from fascism and to embrace the democratic centrism of Maritain’s *Humanisme intégral* is visible among Catholic intellectuals in France, Belgium, Switzerland and even Italy or Brazil after 1937,¹⁹⁷ this process propelled only

¹⁹³ Traniello, ‘Presentazione’, op. cit., p. 8.

¹⁹⁴ Biondich, ‘Radical Catholicism and Fascism’, op. cit., p. 396.

¹⁹⁵ Cit. in ‘Intervista con Maria Romana De Gasperi’, in: D. Sassoli (ed.), *De Gasperi tra politica e storiografia*, 1977, Cinque Lune, Roma, p. 97-98.

¹⁹⁶ Mosse, *La cultura dell’Europa occidentale*, op. cit., p. 392-393.

¹⁹⁷ Ralph Della Cava, ‘Catholicism and Society in Twentieth-Century Brazil’, *Latin American Research Review* 11/2, 1976, p. 30.

minority groups to anti-fascism. However, what is undisputable, is that the criticism of totalitarianism in the name of the human person made Catholicism one of the main moderate and restraining forces that tried to condition fascist regimes and to prevent the transformation of the authoritarian ones into truly fascist entities. Ernst Hanish has suggested that the influence of the Catholic Church in Austria ultimately restrained the regime from becoming more fully “fascist”;¹⁹⁸ the same has been affirmed by Antonio Costa Pinto for Portugal¹⁹⁹ and by Giuliana Di Febo and Santos Julià for Spain.²⁰⁰ After the Second World War, in many countries this moderating effort permitted Catholics to appear to public opinion as a force that was not directly connected either with fascism or with leftist political anti-fascism. The encounter with fascist totalitarianism transformed religious experience, leaving a significant “heritage” to the future Catholic landscape: the development of political “integral” or “total” theologies of support or of opposition to politics, the competition in the models and the forms of mass nationalization, and the strengthening of identity and militant bonds through a politicization of religious rites and symbols.

¹⁹⁸ Ernst Hanish, ‘Der Politische Katholizismus als Ideologische Träger des ‘Austrofaschismus’’, in: Emmerich Tálos/Wolfgang Neugebauer (eds.), *‘Austrofaschismus’: Politik – Ökonomie – Kultur 1933-1938*, 2005, Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, Wien, p. 68-86.

¹⁹⁹ Costa Pinto/Rezola, ‘Political Catholicism’, op. cit., p. 353.

²⁰⁰ Giuliana Di Febo/Santos Julià, *El Franquismo*, 2005, Paidós, Barcelona.

CATHOLICISM AND FASCISM IN INTERWAR IRELAND

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The interwar era saw the collapse of liberal democracy and the rise of anti-democratic authoritarian movements and states throughout much of Europe. Parliamentary or liberal democracy proved especially vulnerable in countries with large Catholic populations and 'successor states' – those states that achieved independence following the Great War. Despite meeting both criteria, the democratic structures of the Irish Free State – established in 1922 following a revolutionary struggle against British rule – proved remarkably resilient: indeed, it was arguably the only successor state to remain fully democratic by 1939.¹ This outcome appears all the more striking given the formation of the state amidst a civil war, a form of conflict that frequently prevented the successful emergence of democracy. This is an article about the dog that didn't bark: why did the kind of authoritarian political movements that flourished in many other parts of interwar Europe attract negligible support in the Irish Free State, and what does this have to tell us about the relationship between Catholicism and authoritarian politics? It begins by surveying the Irish Catholic Church's attitudes to far-right politics in Continental Europe, and assessing how 'official' Catholic attitudes shaped popular perceptions of fascism and clerical authoritarianism within Ireland. It then explores the extent to which Ireland's only significant fascist movement – the Blueshirts – was influenced by, and sought to exploit, Catholicism. It concludes by questioning whether the immense influence of the Catholic Church and Catholic values within Irish political culture and society facilitated or hindered the cause of authoritarian politics in Ireland.

First, it is necessary to outline briefly the relationship between the Church, state and party politics within modern Ireland. Compared to most European societies, the Catholic Church occupied an unusually dominant position within Southern Irish society. The centuries-long history of discrimination against the majority Catholic population by both the British state and the Irish Protestant minority which supported British rule in Ireland invested the Catholic Church with a strong degree of legitimacy among Irish Catholics. The emergence, under the leadership of Daniel O'Connell, of mass democratic

¹ Bill Kissane, *Explaining Irish Democracy*, 2002, University College Dublin Press, Dublin, p. 5.

politics in the 1820s around the demand for 'Catholic emancipation' ensured that, from the outset, popular nationalism in Ireland was intertwined with Catholicism, and that Protestantism and unionism (political support for the Act of Union which underpinned British rule in Ireland) would become synonymous by the late nineteenth century. The Irish Parliamentary Party, which dominated nationalist politics in Ireland from the 1880s until the aftermath of the Easter Rising of 1916, won the support of the Catholic Church by accepting its authority on most social issues of importance to the clergy. While nominally republican, the more militant and separatist Sinn Féin party, which supplanted constitutional nationalism after the Easter Rising, was also characterised by an identification with Catholic values and a deferential attitude to the Catholic Church.

Throughout this period the Catholic Church adopted a pragmatic attitude towards the antagonistic forces of the British state and Irish nationalism, accommodating itself to the nationalist political aspirations of the Catholic population whilst also cooperating with British governments – and exploiting the opportunities offered by the British Empire – to advance its own spiritual and institutional interests. The Church never formally aligned itself with the Irish Party or its separatist rival and, despite its concerns about Sinn Féin's identification with republicanism and violence, it soon reconciled itself to the latter's success in the general election of 1918. The Church did, however, explicitly take sides when Sinn Féin split over the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty which brought the War of Independence to an end by establishing a partitioned Irish Free State within the British Empire rather than an independent republic. Its decision to support the more moderate and popular 'pro-treaty' government (which ultimately prevailed in the Irish Civil War of 1922-23) alienated many 'anti-treaty' republicans. However, by the time Fianna Fáil, a new political party representing those opposed to the Treaty, had won sufficient electoral support to form a government in 1932, the Church had resumed its traditional place above party politics.

The Catholic Church's considerable influence was also strengthened by partition which created a southern Irish state whose population was 93% Catholic. Clerical authority was evident not through confrontations with the pro-treaty (*Cumann na nGaedheal*) and anti-treaty (*Fianna Fáil*) governments of the 1920s and 1930s but rather by the way in which Irish politicians sought to avoid clerical censure by acknowledging the Church's authority in areas such as education, health and welfare. It was also illustrated by the efforts of successive Irish governments to implement legislation incorporating aspects of Catholic values into state legislation, a trend that culminated in 1937 with the enactment of a state constitution that formally recognised the 'special position' of the Catholic Church. Although grey – and, very occasionally, contested – areas in the boundaries between clerical and state authority existed, in few other mo-

dern states did the Catholic Church wield such power or face so little political or intellectual opposition as in independent Ireland.

How did the Catholic Church in Ireland regard fascism in Europe? We know little about the views of individual clerics but, in general, fascism enjoyed a favourable press from Catholic newspapers. Both highbrow Catholic journals (such as *Studies* and the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* which were read by well-educated clergy and lay intellectuals) and the more popular Catholic press regularly praised the economic and political achievements of Mussolini's fascist state. Tensions between the Church and the Italian state, although not ignored, were downplayed. The Catholic press often depicted Italian fascism as a political ideology that was compatible with – or even complementary to – Catholicism: the crudely populist *Catholic Bulletin*, for example, described it as “the spiritual resurgence of an intensely Catholic people”.² In addition, criticism of liberal democracy as a form of government was not unusual within the Catholic press. It was depicted as an English system of government, linked with sectional tensions, liberalism and corruption, and viewed as detrimental to Catholic values. Dr Cornelius Lucey (soon to become Bishop of Cork), for example, described “absolute monarchy or dictatorship” – given the availability of a suitable dictator – as “the ideal system” from a Catholic perspective.³

However, it is important to note some caveats. Relatively few clergy concerned themselves with theoretical debates about the shortcomings of representative democracy, and such debates that did occur were generally concerned more with European developments than democracy in Ireland which was widely acknowledged as a successful and legitimate form of government. There was certainly no consensus in favour of fascism amongst Irish clerics and lay intellectuals. Catholic writers in influential journals such as *Studies* and the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* adopted more nuanced positions: Daniel Binchy, for example, criticised the mistaken view that the Vatican had “blessed” fascism with its 1929 concordat and the “tragic misunderstanding” that had led some Catholics to confuse the corporatist ideas advocated in Pope Pius XI's *Quadragesimo anno* with the “Fascist notion of a Corporative State”.⁴ Few priests or Catholic intellectuals welcomed fascism in an unqualified manner. It was more commonly argued that, although representative democracy was preferable to political systems where the state exercised absolute power, in those countries where democracy had failed fascism was infinitely preferable to communism.

² Romanus, ‘The truth about Irish Fascism’, *Catholic Bulletin*, Nov. 1933, p. 891. Despite its title, the *Catholic Bulletin* was not clerically-owned, but Mussolini also received a favourable press within such influential clerical periodicals as the Jesuits’ *Studies* and the semi-official Catholic Church-organ the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*.

³ Cornelius Lucey, ‘Recent Study in Social Science’, *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, Apr. 1933, p. 376.

⁴ Daniel Binchy, ‘The Papacy in a changing world’, *Studies*, Dec. 1937, p. 647.

Nor did the Catholic Church in Ireland view fascism as a homogenous entity. Nazism, in contrast to Italian fascism, was widely criticised in the Catholic press as a result of its anti-clerical character and its radical claims to state authority over education, morality and religious practice. In contrast, authoritarian and corporatist Catholic politicians were deemed far more acceptable. For example, Fr Edward Coyne, a leading Jesuit intellectual who played a prominent role in clerical debates on European politics, criticised Mussolini but praised the Austrian leader Engelbert Dollfuss (notwithstanding his abolition of parliamentary democracy). Oliveira Salazar, the Portuguese dictator who established a corporate state, was widely championed in the Irish Catholic press as a model politician. In his Lenten pastoral of 1938, Dr Morrisroe, Bishop of Achonry, urged “those who would like to know what the Catholicity of the nation implied” to study Portugal; another prominent Jesuit – writing in the most influential Catholic journal in Ireland – eulogised Salazar as “the Saviour of the Church, the Saviour of the State, the Saviour of his people”.⁵ It would be misleading, however, to suggest that there was a Catholic consensus in favour of corporatism. Although advocates of a political system that reflected Catholic social thought, contributors to *Studies* identified the practical limitations of corporatism, not least the fact that it was highly unlikely to be ever implemented in Ireland, and many felt that such debates distracted from the more pressing need to reform capitalism.⁶

How do we account for these generally positive clerical attitudes to authoritarianism and fascism? Unsurprisingly, the Irish hierarchy took its lead from Rome. Pius XI’s papal encyclical *Quadragesimo anno* (1931) had praised corporatism as a middle way between the extremes of capitalism and totalitarianism, but his public statements had also made clear his preference for right-wing over left-wing varieties of state absolutism.⁷ Many Irish clerics, as Binchy noted, also failed to distinguish between Mussolini’s corporate state (where the state, through vocationally-organised structures, regulated many aspects of society) and Pius’s corporate society (where voluntarist vocational bodies exercised these functions, thereby lessening the role of the state). This

⁵ *Irish Independent*, 28 Feb. 1938; Richard S. Devane, ‘The religious revival under Salazar: religion restored to the schools’, *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* 51, 1938, p. 20, cited in Filipe Ribeiro de Menezes, ‘Investigating Portugal, Salazar and the New State: the work of the Irish Legation in Lisbon, 1942-1945’, *Contemporary European History* 2/2, 2002, p. 393.

⁶ Bryan Fanning, *The quest for modern Ireland: the battle of ideas 1912-1986*, 2008, Irish Academic Press, Dublin, p. 78, 104.

⁷ Pius XI demonstrated some sympathy for Italian fascism and, for a shorter period, Nazism, primarily as a result of their shared opposition to communism. It was not until the anti-clerical excesses of Nazi Germany became more evident that Pius explicitly censured fascism in the encyclical *Mit Brennender Sorge* (1937). His critical stance was tempered by that of his successor Pius XII.

confusion between statist models of corporatism and ‘corporative’ or vocational structures was widespread in this period and not confined to Ireland.⁸

The domestic context, particularly the virulence of anti-communist sentiment in the Irish Free State, also contributed to clerical sympathy for extreme right-wing movements. Clerical anti-communism stemmed from an awareness of the growing threat posed by international communism but also – despite the weakness of socialism and communism in Ireland – genuine fears about communism at home. The clergy pointed to the fate of other traditional ‘Catholic’ countries such as Mexico and Spain to reinforce the need for vigilance, despite the absence of a significant organised communist movement within Ireland. In addition, the continued existence of a revolutionary threat to the Irish state in the form of the anti-treaty Irish Republican Army (I.R.A.) provided a related source of clerical and political alarm. The pro-treaty government’s belief that the I.R.A. had embraced revolutionary socialist politics in 1931 prompted the first joint pastoral by the Catholic hierarchy since the Irish Civil War, an intervention intended to legitimise the government’s draconian efforts to suppress socialist and militant republican organisations within the state. Throughout the 1930s further red scares were encouraged by priests, Catholic action organisations and right-wing intellectuals such as James Hogan whose influential pamphlet, *Could Ireland become communist?*, argued that militant republicanism offered a means by which communism might triumph in Ireland.⁹

How influential were clerical attitudes towards European authoritarianism and fascism among the wider public? The Irish response to the Spanish Civil War provides the most striking example of the importance of Catholicism in framing popular attitudes towards the wider ideological conflict within Europe. In contrast to most European countries, the public response to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in Ireland was overwhelmingly pro-Franco. This consensus was expressed by the national and local press and shared by all major Irish political parties: even the Irish Labour Party and the official labour movement failed to support the Spanish Republic. By the autumn of 1936 the strength of pro-Franco sentiment had resulted in the formation of a volunteer militia, the Irish Brigade, led by General Eoin O’Duffy (leader of the tiny, fascist National Corporate Party), and a popular new movement, the Irish Christian Front, which organised a series of enthusiastic and well-attended rallies throughout the country to demonstrate Irish solidarity with

⁸ Maurice Curtis, *A challenge to democracy. Militant Catholicism in modern Ireland*, 2010, The History Press Ireland, Dublin, p. 117-119.

⁹ James Hogan, *Could Ireland become communist? The facts of the case*, 1935, Cahill & Co, Dublin; Brian Girvin, ‘Nationalism, Catholicism and democracy: Hogan’s intellectual evolution’, in: Donnchadh Ó Corráin (ed.), *James Hogan: revolutionary, historian and political scientist*, 2001, Four Courts Press, Dublin, p. 150-152.

Nationalist Spain.¹⁰ In contrast, the efforts made by marginalised republicans and communists to mobilise public support for the Spanish Republic were unsuccessful, often falling victim to mob violence.

However, popular support for General Franco reflected the perception of the Spanish Civil War as a conflict between Godless communism and Catholicism rather than a political struggle between left and right. It was primarily an emotional response to sensational press coverage of anti-clerical atrocities in the Spanish Republic in Catholic and popular newspapers, as well as the Irish Catholic Church's unambiguous support for the Spanish Nationalists. As early as September 1936, Cardinal MacRory, the primate of all-Ireland, had made clear the Church's position: "There is no room any longer for any doubts as to the issue at stake in the Spanish conflict [...] It is a question of whether Spain will remain as she has been so long, a Christian and Catholic land, or a Bolshevik and anti-God one."¹¹ The depiction of Spain as a holy war was reinforced in the following year's Lenten pastorals which devoted more attention to the threat of communism and the war in Spain than any other contemporary religious or political issue.¹² The stance adopted by the Irish hierarchy ensured that the political complexities of the conflict – such as the democratic legitimacy of the Republican government or the existence of Catholic support for the Republic in the Basque region – were largely ignored, as was the dictatorial and brutal nature of the Francoist regime.

As with its attitude to fascism, the Irish Catholic Church's position on Spain was much less nuanced than that of the Vatican which withheld full support from General Franco until the close of the Spanish Civil War. A pseudonymous article in the Jesuit *Irish Monthly* illustrated how the Spanish conflict reinforced pre-existing Irish attitudes about communism, fascism, and corporatism:

"How often we have heard it said, during the past year, 'Communism and Fascism are twin evils,' or 'I hate Communism and Fascism equally.' No doubt, many who speak thus do so without weighing their words, but if anyone seriously, deliberately tells us that he is equally opposed to these two systems, we may rank him as a Communist forthwith. Any man who puts the two systems on a par does such a wrong to the Right that he is a friend of the Left. What he really means is that he sympathises with the Communist side, and is evading the duty of orthodox persons to support the Right by the ruse of pretending that the Right is wrong. The truth is, of course, that we must support Fascism if it is the alternative to Communism, or else we must stand over the horrors of the Spanish persecution."

¹⁰ Fearghal McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, 1999, Cork University Press, Cork; R. A. Stradling, *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939*, 1999, Mandolin, Manchester.

¹¹ *Irish Independent*, 21 Sept. 1936.

¹² McGarry, *Irish Politics*, op. cit., p. 150.

Asserting his opposition to all forms of dictatorship (including those of Mussolini and Hitler), the author concluded by praising Salazar's "corporative State" as the ideal system from a Catholic view and noting that Franco – "the true friend of the workers, the champion of economic justice and social peace" – had adopted "Salazar's constitution as the ideal for the new Spain".¹³

Although there can be no doubt about the importance of Catholicism in shaping Irish attitudes to the Spanish Civil War, popular support for Franco ultimately owed more to the power of the Church in Ireland and the role played by Catholicism as a marker of Irish national and cultural identity than knowledge of political events in Spain or ideological sympathy for authoritarian politics. Tellingly, the Catholic Church and organised Catholic opinion mobilised support for Franco by interpreting the conflict in an Irish context. Priests, Catholic politicians and Catholic Action advocates seized upon the war as an example of what could be expected if communistic, liberal, secular or foreign influences continued to infiltrate Irish society. As one bishop warned in his Lenten Pastoral:

"As in Spain, a few years ago, there is a wave of liberalism passing over Ireland to-day [...] Who with the example of other countries before his mind will be so rash as to prophesy what the situation may be here in Ireland in ten years time if we pursue the policy of drift".¹⁴

The conflict was opportunistically exploited to advocate greater censorship of "evil literature", to force the Labour Party to renounce its political commitment to a workers' republic and to pursue other reactionary objectives such as the suppression of socialist organisations by the state.

While the popular response to Spain highlighted the importance of Catholicism in mobilising support for authoritarian causes abroad, the failure of the Irish far right to capitalise on this sentiment is equally striking. Despite its success in mobilising public opinion, the Irish Christian Front failed to achieve any of its political objectives, most notably its aim of forcing the Irish government to sever diplomatic links with the Spanish Republic and recognise Franco's regime. It proved equally unsuccessful in securing the implementation of 'Catholic' legislation in Ireland and sustaining itself as either a Catholic Action movement or explicitly Catholic political party.¹⁵ Similarly, in contrast to the far right in Romania, Ireland's only fascist politician of any stature, General Eoin O'Duffy, failed to derive any domestic political benefit from his military

¹³ Hispanista, 'Should Irish Labour favour Franco', *Irish Monthly*, May 1937. Although this article provoked a critical response in the August issue of the same periodical, it expressed a commonly held opinion.

¹⁴ Bishop Daniel Mageean quoted in 'Record of Irish ecclesiastical events for the year 1936', *Irish Catholic Directory and Almanac for 1937*, 1937.

¹⁵ McGarry, *Irish Politics*, op. cit., p. 113-116.

intervention in Spain.¹⁶ Although initially very popular, the appeal of his Irish Brigade rested on popular Catholic anti-communism rather than the fascist objectives of its National Corporate Party organisers, and support for the former did not translate to the latter. Significantly, the role of the Catholic Church was an important factor in the failure of the Irish far right to exploit popular support for Franco for political gain. Despite its unambiguous support for the Spanish Nationalists, most bishops and clergy refused to criticise publicly the Fianna Fáil government's (widely-disliked) non-interventionist foreign policy or endorse the anti-government rhetoric of the Christian Front and Irish Brigade.

The failure of the Irish far right on Spain raises a broader question about Irish political culture: why did a society characterised by illiberal Catholic values fail to produce a clericalist political party? The rapid demise of the only significant authoritarian movement in Irish politics, the Blueshirts, offers some insights.

Like many fascist bodies, the origins of the Blueshirts lay in an ex-soldiers' organisation, the Army Comrades Association (A.C.A.), which was established in February 1932 to defend the interests of retired National Army (i.e. pro-treaty) soldiers. Political support for the A.C.A. grew after the election in the same month of (the anti-treaty) Fianna Fáil party to government. For treatyites, the new administration posed both a political and economic threat. Supporters of the old regime feared the revival of the paramilitary Irish Republican Army (which had supported Fianna Fáil during the election campaign) as well as discrimination by the new government. In economic terms, Fianna Fáil's protectionist and land redistribution policies also threatened Cumann na nGaedheal's prosperous large-farmer electorate. Such fears proved well-founded when the new government rescinded the ban on the I.R.A. (which responded by intensifying its campaign of street violence against pro-treaty politicians), and withheld the payment of land annuities to the United Kingdom government, triggering an 'economic war' which devastated the Irish cattle export trade. Against this background, popular support for the Blueshirts rapidly expanded throughout rural Ireland.

By depicting the new president of the Executive Council, Éamon de Valera, as a potential Kerensky and warning of a return to the civil war violence of 1922-1923, Cumann na nGaedheal politicians (who increasingly identified themselves with the A.C.A.) contributed to the increasingly volatile political atmosphere.¹⁷ The A.C.A. opened its membership to the public and declared its intention to protect opposition meetings from attack, a policy which led to

¹⁶ Judith Keene, *Fighting for Franco: international volunteers in Nationalist Spain during the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39*, 2001, Leicester University Press, London.

¹⁷ Fearghal McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy: a self-made hero*, 2005, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 202-203.

further violence between Blueshirts and I.R.A. supporters. In July 1933, following its adoption of a shirted uniform and raised-arm salute, the A.C.A. was transformed into the National Guard under the militant leadership of General Eoin O'Duffy (who had been recently dismissed as police commissioner by de Valera). The organisation increased its membership to forty thousand, making it one of the largest shirted movements outside the fascist states.

The rapid rise and fall of the Blueshirts can be briefly summarised. Following an attempted parade on the parliament in Dublin, regarded by the government as an attempt to emulate Mussolini's march on Rome, the Blueshirts were banned. The movement responded by merging with the main opposition party, Cumann na nGaedheal, to form a new political party, Fine Gael, under O'Duffy's volatile leadership, with the Blueshirts retaining a semi-autonomous structure as a militant vanguard within the broader party. As elsewhere in Europe where such alliances occurred, it was unclear whether it would be the smaller, more radical, minority or the larger, conservative, element that would prevail within the uneasy political coalition that ensued. Although the government's efforts to suppress the Blueshirts over the next months proved counter-productive, the movement self-destructed under the weight of its own internal divisions in the autumn of 1934. This was primarily due to the tensions between leading members of Cumann na nGaedheal – a conservative party committed to the defence of law and order and parliamentary democracy – and the Blueshirt faction led by O'Duffy who increasingly expressed anti-democratic, irredentist rhetoric and condoned the violent anti-government agitation of rural Blueshirts.

In retrospect, the collapse of this incipient fascist threat was unsurprising. Some elements favourable to the emergence of an authoritarian movement existed in interwar Ireland: a strong tradition of popular nationalism, a socially conservative Catholic ethos, widespread resentment of the limits on Irish sovereignty imposed by the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty, a long tradition of elitist anti-state violence, and a genuine sense of political crisis precipitated by Fianna Fáil's election and the revival of I.R.A. violence. However, the absence of other important factors – a significant communist threat, ethnic tensions, class conflict and economic collapse – combined with a democratic consensus shared by most of the political elite and population on both sides of the Civil War divide ensured the survival of democracy. In addition, the Blueshirts – emerging from a pro-treaty political tradition that was regarded as less nationalistic than its anti-treaty rivals – posed a weak ideological challenge to a republican government which, whatever its failings, was widely regarded as pursuing an assertive nationalist programme. Its cause was also hindered by the destructive influence of O'Duffy, an alcoholic, egotistical and inept leader.

Blueshirt historiography has tended to focus on whether the movement should be regarded as fascist. Reflecting international trends, the initial

consensus that the “Blueshirts had much of the appearance but little enough of the substance of Fascism” has shifted towards a more nuanced approach which locates the movement within a political spectrum spanning from conservative authoritarianism to radical fascism.¹⁸ Drawing on the work of Roger Griffin, Mike Cronin’s contention that a Blueshirt regime – had it won power – would have emulated the para-fascism of Salazar’s Portugal or Franco’s Spain – authoritarian regimes which adopted aspects of fascism in order to defend established elites but did not ultimately seek to radically transform society – seems a persuasive conclusion.¹⁹ But what role did Catholicism – or, more narrowly, Catholic political ideas – play in shaping this threat to the democratic status quo? And to what extent did clerical power and the pervasive Catholicism of the Irish Free State influence the Blueshirts’ efforts to win support?

The policies of the National Guard – as the Blueshirt organisation was known between July 1933 (when O’Duffy assumed its leadership) and September 1933 when its radicalism was tempered by its merger with Cumann na nGaedheal to form Fine Gael – provides the clearest indication of the influence of Catholic political thought on the movement. The National Guard’s constitution combined traditional nationalist aims (such as support for Irish unification) with policies that were new to Irish politics – most notably the adoption of anti-communism and corporatism as core policies. The restriction of membership to citizens of Irish birth or parentage who professed the Christian faith was also unusual. This policy, combined with the constitution’s opposition to ‘alien control and influence in national affairs’, was interpreted by some as evidence of anti-Semitism.²⁰ It was certainly the case that some Blueshirt leaders expressed anti-Semitic sentiments, although such rhetoric had long formed part of broader Catholic and cultural nationalist discourses within Ireland.

What was the inspiration for these policies? O’Duffy brought much to the new movement – a degree of nationalist credibility given his prominent role during the War of Independence, a reputation for organisational brilliance earned during his successful career as guerrilla leader, army general and police commissioner, and considerable public sympathy due to his abrupt dismissal from the police by de Valera – but relatively little in ideological terms. He was an advocate of the corporatism of the Italian fascist state which he – rather unconvincingly – posited as “a historical progression of the Old Gaelic State to the modern ideal”. O’Duffy’s depiction of fascism as a return to a lost spiritual

¹⁸ Maurice Manning, *The Blueshirts*, 2006 (1^o 1970), Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, p. 238; Mike Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish politics*, 1997, Four Courts Press, Dublin, p. 62-68.

¹⁹ Mike Cronin, ‘The Blueshirt movement, 1932-35: Ireland’s fascists?’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 30/2, 1995, p. 311-332; Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, 1991, Frances Pinter, London.

²⁰ Manning, *The Blueshirts*, op. cit., p. 71-73; McGarry, *Eoin O’Duffy*, op. cit., p. 252-254.

perfection rooted in medieval Irish society was an idiosyncratic but unoriginal distortion of prevailing Catholic intellectual currents. The championing of medieval guilds was a fashionable aspect of Catholic thought, particularly following Pius XI's influential *Quadragesimo anno* (1931) which advocated the revival of the guild as a corporatist third way between liberal individualism and communism.

However, the core idea expressed by O'Duffy throughout his fascist political career – the need for a national regeneration based on the repudiation of democracy – was espoused by all varieties of inter-war fascism but rarely by Catholic advocates of corporatism. His belief that European fascism derived from Ireland's Gaelic past – whether sincerely held or not – enabled him to praise the fascist states while denying the accusation that he was slavishly mimicking them. For reasons of chauvinism, egotism and political expediency, European fascist leaders invariably portrayed their own movements as a product of their own country's specific history, culture and destiny: the achievements of the Gaelic era fulfilled the same mythical functions as those of ancient Rome for Italian fascism or the Teutonic age for Nazism. Despite his frequent denials (particularly when leader of Fine Gael), O'Duffy was a committed fascist – as was demonstrated by his political career after the demise of the Blueshirts – but it was an emotional rather than intellectual commitment. There was little in the way of ideological consistency in his speeches and writings. A political opportunist, motivated by self-aggrandisement, he was more preoccupied with remaining the leader of his various movements than their ideological direction. As a result, his fickle politics followed the fashions of the times. Although an admirer of Mussolini's corporate state in the mid-1930s, he had hitched himself to the Nazi bandwagon by the end of the decade.²¹

From the perspective of O'Duffy and his small radical circle of fascistic followers within the Blueshirt leadership, corporatism provided a political philosophy which – as a result of its endorsement by Pope Pius XI – legitimised their anti-democratic ambitions. The extent to which they were aware of the considerable differences between the corporate society advocated by Pius XI and Mussolini's corporate state is not clear but it was evidently the latter statist model that appealed most to the Blueshirt radicals. Policy documents by leading militant Blueshirts indicate that the establishment of corporations following a Fine Gael election victory would facilitate the integration of the Blueshirt movement within the structures of the state (although it is far from clear that Fine Gael's leadership would have approved of this sinister development).²² In short, the most striking aspect of the influence of Catholic political thought on the fascist minority within the Blueshirts was the way in which it supplied an

²¹ McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy*, op. cit.

²² John Regan, *The Irish counter-revolution, 1921-1936*, 1999, Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, p. 352-353.

intellectual justification – or, more cynically, a pretext – for radical anti-democratic objectives for which there was little support, understanding or precedent in Irish politics.²³

Significantly, however, the movement's corporatist agenda – like its shirt and salute – predated O'Duffy's militant leadership: although Catholic corporatist ideas were seized upon by Blueshirt radicals, they did not originate with them. As with most authoritarian movements, the Blueshirts comprised a hardcore minority and a larger, more conservative, faction. It was among the latter that corporatist ideas were first championed. Both within the Blueshirts and wider Irish Catholic intellectual circles, corporatist ideas were strongly identified with two prominent academics – James Hogan and Michael Tierney.²⁴ Founder members of the A.C.A., both men went on to become vice-presidents of Fine Gael following the merger with the Blueshirts. In terms of their social and political background, Hogan, a professor history at University College Cork, and Tierney, a classics professor at University College Dublin, shared much in common. Both can be seen as representative of a reactionary strand of Catholic thought within treatyite politics. They shared a political outlook characterised by strident anti-communism and a genuine conviction that liberal democracy was inadequate to the challenges of modern society.

Although Tierney and Hogan saw the curtailment of parliamentary democracy as a necessary development, neither embraced the principles of fascism or dictatorship. They advocated instead a corporatism which was influenced more by the Catholic social teaching of Pius XI's *Quadragesimo anno* than Mussolini's fascism: they sought a minimal rather than an absolutist state, one that would not seek to control every facet of society or depict itself as the sole expression of the will of the people.²⁵ While both acknowledged the influence of fascism, their ideas were more "heavily influenced by intellectual and ideological currents within Catholicism".²⁶ Irish Catholic journals such as the Jesuits' *Studies* provided a key source of inspiration, as did existing Catholic authoritarian regimes such as those of Dollfuss and Salazar. Whether either man had more than a superficial knowledge of these (repressive, ineffective, and statist) regimes is questionable;²⁷ it seems more likely that – as with the Catholic press in Ireland generally – the idea of a Catholic alternative to liberal democracy and unfettered capitalism that avoided the excesses of fascism proved too attractive a prospect to examine critically.

²³ Mike Cronin, 'Catholicising fascism, fascistising Catholicism? The Blueshirts and the Jesuits in 1930s Ireland', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8/2, 2007, p. 406.

²⁴ Peter Martin, 'The political career of Michael Tierney, 1920-44', *Irish Historical Studies* 37/147, 2011, p. 412-426; Ó Corráin (ed.), *James Hogan*, op. cit.

²⁵ Fanning, *The quest for modern Ireland*, op. cit., p. 103.

²⁶ Cronin, 'Catholicising fascism', op. cit., p. 402.

²⁷ Martin, 'Political Career', op. cit., p. 421.

Though historians usually depict Hogan and Tierney as advocates of a corporatism that was essentially democratic rather than authoritarian,²⁸ such a clear-cut distinction is difficult to sustain, given both the political role models which they drew on, and their own political rhetoric. Both men were openly critical of parliamentary democracy and drew (unfounded) parallels between events in Italy and Ireland. Hogan, for example, insisted that it was “the growing menace of the Communist-I.R.A. that called forth the Blueshirts as inevitably as Communist anarchy called forth the Blackshirts.”²⁹ Advocating the corporate state, he noted that “revolutionary proposals are in the air in every country.”³⁰ Michael Tierney’s propaganda similarly blurred the boundaries between the corporate society and corporate state.³¹ Italian fascism, he wrote, was not a crude dictatorship but a development certain “to be adapted to the needs of every civilised country.”³² Like Hogan, he conceived of corporatism as a radical departure from – rather than a mere reconfiguration of – liberal democracy: “Parliament”, he observed, “is just as un-Irish as the Republic [...] If the Whigs throw Hitler at us, we have a very solid and heavy missile with which to reply.”³³

Why did such figures, prominent members of the treatyite political tradition whose principal achievement was the establishment of democratic government in 1922, embrace authoritarian politics in the 1930s? The influence of Catholic social thought was clearly significant but the political context was also important, not least in explaining the adoption of these ideas within wider treatyite politics. The crisis of conservative or treatyite politics in Ireland between 1932 and 1934 created an opening for corporatist ideas that would otherwise have failed to win mainstream political support. Voted out of power in 1932, Cumann na nGaedheal was again rejected by the electorate in 1933. It was defeated, moreover, by a party which – as a result of its support for anti-

²⁸ Manning, *Blueshirts*, op. cit., p. 220-224; Dermot Keogh, ‘Hogan, communism and the challenge of contemporary history’, in: Ó Corráin (ed.), *James Hogan*, op. cit., p. 75; Cronin, *Blueshirts and Irish politics*, op. cit., p. 50, 65, 82, 94, 98-99.

²⁹ *United Ireland*, 18 Nov. 1933.

³⁰ *United Ireland*, 26 May 1934.

³¹ In his review of a history of the Blueshirts, written several decades later, Tierney implicitly appeared to acknowledge this: “At the time few Irish people had any knowledge of the realities of Mussolini’s movement, which had not yet come to be identified with Nazism. Propaganda about the man who made the trains run on time and ended the earlier Italian mania for continuous strikes, and the rhetoric which cloaked so many failures as well as crimes, made it possible to look to the *Duce* as the bringer of new light in politics and economics. After all, the Vatican Treaty was a recent achievement which made it easy to link *Quadragesimo anno* and *Rerum Novarum* with the so-called corporate state, and it took years, as well as a world war, to enable people to realize how hollow Fascist corporate pretensions in fact were” (*Studies: An Irish Quarterly* 60/239-240, 1971, p. 394).

³² *United Ireland*, 16 Dec. 1933.

³³ *United Ireland*, 24 Mar. 1934.

state violence in the Irish Civil War – treatyites regarded as unfit for government. Many of these politicians regarded the new government's efforts to suppress the Blueshirts as an attack on democracy, leading them to view the government as tyrannical and engage in extremist rhetoric that rejected its legitimacy.

The emergence of a corporatist shirted movement was also a response to the ideological – rather than merely electoral – failure of Cumann na nGaedheal.³⁴ As a result, the radical ideas promoted by Hogan and Tierney won the support of other intellectual treatyite politicians, including former cabinet ministers such as Professor John Marcus O'Sullivan and Desmond FitzGerald. The latter provides another example of the radicalisation of the treatyite elite during this period. Although described by some historians as a champion of Catholic social thought and a defender of the democratic role of the Blueshirts, FitzGerald's writings indicate a more reactionary outlook. De Valera's election crystallised a growing disillusionment with parliamentary democracy and an apparently genuine fear that communism might prevail.³⁵ This pessimism was underpinned by his belief that state intervention – by increasingly raising public expectations that the state could never satisfy – would inexorably lead to communism. Despite his dislike of totalitarian politics, FitzGerald, like other Catholic intellectuals during the 1930s, came to regard fascism as a necessary bulwark against communism (and he was one of a number of parliamentary deputies who would embarrass Cosgrave by wearing his blue shirt in parliament).³⁶ The reactionary ideas of these figures were not representative of the opposition but the lack of any obvious alternative had allowed the corporatist intellectuals and Blueshirt radicals to seize the initiative within treatyite politics.

The appeal of authoritarian political ideas which drew heavily on Catholic social thought should not be seen as a purely opportunistic response to political failure. Tierney and Hogan shared much in common with right-wing Catholic intellectuals and other conservatives elsewhere in Europe, whose writings they were aware of or with whom they corresponded.³⁷ They were genuinely seeking new ways to address the many problems confronting modern society during an era of fear and pessimism. The broader concerns identified by reactionary treatyites – the rise of class politics, the growth of communism, the extension of the role of the state, economic crises, the apparent inability of parliamentary democracy to meet the demands of modern society and the rise of statist forms of government of the left and right – preoccupied Catholic in-

³⁴ John Regan, 'The politics of reaction: the dynamics of treatyite government and policy, 1922-33', *Irish Historical Studies* 30/120, 1997, p. 542-563.

³⁵ *United Irishman*, 10 Sept. 1932; 'Notes on Bolshevism', UCDA P80/1346; FitzGerald to Jacques Maritain, n.d., UCDA P80/1280.

³⁶ McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy*, op. cit., p. 207.

³⁷ Martin, 'Political career', op. cit., p. 421.

tellectuals throughout interwar Europe. As Tierney subsequently acknowledged, it was not until after the Second World War that corporatist or authoritarian solutions to these problems became widely discredited. Consequently, in 1930s Ireland, as in much of Continental Europe, the main threat to parliamentary government came not from the left or from republicanism but from opposing alliances of conservatives, nationalists and the military.³⁸ The Irish experience proved unusual only in the relatively limited political appeal of these ideas within Ireland.

An authoritarian challenge to the state failed to emerge in interwar Ireland for a wide variety of socio-economic, cultural, political and historical reasons.³⁹ There is no reason to regard Catholicism as an important factor in determining this outcome. However, had circumstances been sufficiently different to allow for a serious authoritarian challenge to Irish democracy, such a movement would undoubtedly have been heavily influenced by Catholicism. Whether it would have reflected a genuine effort to reconcile authoritarian political structures with Catholic political ideas or a more cynical attempt to exploit Catholicism as a means of legitimising a reactionary or fascist anti-democratic regime can not be known: both tendencies existed within the Blue-shirt movement. In these circumstances, the attitude adopted by the Catholic Church towards any such movement or regime would have been important in determining its success and legitimacy. The evidence from elsewhere in Europe suggests that many clergy would have had few difficulties reconciling themselves with such a regime.

Paradoxically, in the conditions that prevailed in interwar Ireland, the powerful influence of Catholicism did not benefit the far right which remained a marginal political force. Although the strength of Catholicism ensured that Irish society was, in many respects, illiberal, its political parties remained firmly wedded to liberal democracy. Despite – or, more likely, because of – the power of the Catholic Church, no authoritarian Catholic party emerged within Ireland.⁴⁰ This reflected both the unusually homogenous composition of the state's population, and the dominance of Catholic values within nationalist politics which denied far right politicians the opportunity to mobilise around religious sentiment. Catholic social thought – which sought a middle way between the excesses of laissez-faire capitalism and state socialism – was simply not very relevant to Irish social conditions.⁴¹ The absence of popular support

³⁸ Girvin, 'Nationalism, Catholicism and democracy', op. cit., p. 143-144; Eunan O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland: the Irish state and its enemies since 1922*, 1999, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 112.

³⁹ On the survival of Irish democracy, see Kissane, *Explaining Irish Democracy*, op. cit.

⁴⁰ Ireland and Poland have been identified as the two striking exceptions to the expansion of Catholic politics in 1920s Europe. Martin Conway, *Catholic politics in Europe, 1918-1945*, 1997, Routledge, London, p. 32.

⁴¹ Fanning, *The quest for modern Ireland*, op. cit., p. 223.

for the sort of socialist, secular or liberal politics that would have justified a clericalist party ensured that the Catholic Church was better served by a political system in which all parties deferred to Catholic interests.⁴² Consequently, the Irish hierarchy – which was sufficiently powerful to influence directly government policy – remained deeply suspicious of attempts by lay Catholic action organisations to intervene in Irish politics in pursuit of explicitly Catholic objectives.⁴³

In contrast to much of Europe,⁴⁴ both the strength of popular Catholicism and the actions of the Catholic Church as an institution strengthened parliamentary democracy in interwar Ireland. For example, the incorporation of Catholic values by the state – most notably in de Valera's 1937 Constitution – strengthened its claims to legitimacy (which remained contested by a significant minority of republicans throughout the interwar period). The Catholic Church's opposition to anti-treaty violence and its public endorsement of the legitimacy of the state – as, for example, occurred during the Civil War when republicans were threatened with excommunication – similarly reinforced the authority of the government. The mutually beneficial relationship between Church and state remained more important than ideological differences between rival parties in determining clerical political attitudes. Although the Catholic press in Ireland expressed support for corporatist ideas, and prominent priests and intellectuals praised authoritarian leaders abroad, advocates of authoritarian politics within Ireland secured negligible clerical support (in contrast to their counterparts in countries such as Belgium, Croatia and Spain).⁴⁵ Few senior clerics publicly backed Fine Gael over Fianna Fáil during the Blueshirt crisis, while those who did so were influenced by animus against de Valera dating back to the Civil War and economic rather than ideological concerns.⁴⁶ The authoritarian preferences of clerical and lay intellectuals came a distant second to the *realpolitik* of Church-state relations: as a result popular Catholicism and democratic politics proved complementary rather than antagonistic forces in Catholic Ireland.

⁴² Dermot Keogh/Finin O'Driscoll, 'Ireland', in: Tom Buchanan/Martin Conway (eds.), *Political Catholicism in Europe, 1918-1965*, 1996, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 275-300.

⁴³ Curtis, *A challenge to democracy*, op. cit., p. 207-210

⁴⁴ Conway, *Catholic politics in Europe*, op. cit.

⁴⁵ Cronin, 'Catholicising Fascism', op. cit., p. 401, 404.

⁴⁶ Patrick Murray, *Oracles of God. The Roman Catholic Church and Irish politics, 1922-37*, 2000, University College Dublin Press, Dublin, p. 295-296.

SUGGERIMENTI MISTICHI E CORPORATIVISMO NELL'ESTADO NOVO PORTOGHESE

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Durante la dittatura di António de Oliveira Salazar, in Portogallo, lo Stato e la Chiesa cattolica tornarono a seguire un cammino comune dopo anni di divisione. Fin dai mesi successivi al golpe del 28 maggio 1926, infatti, il clero lusitano e i laici, legati al Centro Católico Português, intensificarono i rapporti con la nuova classe dirigente lusitana. Ciò determinò un graduale rientro dei cattolici nella vita pubblica, dalla quale erano stati emarginati a partire dal 1910, anno della rivoluzione repubblicana. Due furono le modalità essenziali di questa riappropriazione dello spazio pubblico e di quello politico: le grandi manifestazioni religiose, organizzate dal clero, e la propaganda di una dottrina, il corporativismo, che costituirà l'anello di congiunzione per quell'insieme di forze eterogenee che a vario titolo appoggiarono la dittatura fino al 1974.

Seguendo questo schema, in questo saggio verrà analizzata l'origine del più grande centro di culto lusitano, Fatima, e si cercherà di comprendere come, attraverso l'idea corporativa, Salazar sia stato in grado di far collaborare gruppi politici decisamente distanti tra loro, costruendo un regime tutt'altro che invisibile al Vaticano.

Il 13 maggio 2010, 500.000 persone hanno affollato la spianata di Cova da Iria, presso Fatima, per assistere alla messa di papa Benedetto XVI, in occasione dell'anniversario dell'apparizione della Madonna, avvenuta in quel luogo 93 anni prima, il 13 maggio 1917. Joseph Ratzinger è stato il III pontefice a recarsi nella cittadina lusitana, dopo Paolo VI, che partecipò nel 1967 al cinquantenario del miracolo, e Giovanni Paolo II, che legò indissolubilmente il suo nome alla Madonna di Fatima. Quest'ultimo, infatti, il 13 maggio 1981, scampò alle pallottole del terrorista turco Mehmet Ali Ağca, affermando, nei giorni successivi, di essere stato salvato da una "mano materna", la mano della Vergine. Anche in seguito a quest'episodio, Karol Wojtyła si recò a Cova da Iria per ben tre volte: nel 1982, nel 1991 e nel 2000, quando ad accoglierlo furono 400.000 fedeli. Ma come nasce il mito di Fatima? Per rispondere a tale quesito bisogna tornare al 1917. Un anno prima, il 9 marzo 1916, la Germania aveva dichiarato guerra al piccolo Stato iberico, perché, su richiesta del governo inglese, quello lusitano aveva fatto sequestrare delle navi tedesche, che si erano rifugiate nel porto di Lisbona. Nel '17, dunque, il Portogallo si trovava coin-

volto da un anno nella Prima guerra mondiale. Tale partecipazione al conflitto aveva prodotto una certa instabilità politica, tanto che in poco più di 12 mesi si erano succeduti 6 compagini ministeriali, l'ultima delle quali guidata dal leader del Partito democratico, Afonso Costa. Questi era uno dei più agguerriti nemici della Chiesa e del movimento cattolico portoghese. Massone, come gran parte della classe dirigente liberale, Costa, all'indomani della proclamazione della Repubblica, il 5 ottobre 1910, era stato uno dei promotori della legge di separazione tra Stato e Chiesa, un provvedimento non dissimile da quello francese del 1905. Con tale norma lo Stato: aveva smesso di riconoscere il cattolicesimo come religione ufficiale del paese e di ammettere la sottomissione della gerarchia ecclesiastica lusitana al potere di Roma; aveva confiscato i beni della Chiesa e aveva posto sotto la propria vigilanza le associazioni cattoliche; aveva imposto che venisse richiesta un'autorizzazione pubblica per lo svolgimento delle cerimonie religiose e aveva cercato di far diventare i preti sacerdoti di Stato; aveva, poi, proibito ai bambini di svolgere pratiche religiose durante le lezioni scolastiche e aveva istituito il divorzio.¹

Benché i repubblicani parlassero dei loro provvedimenti come volti alla separazione tra Stato e Chiesa, in Portogallo c'era stata una vera e propria integrazione di quest'ultima nel primo. In Portogallo, per citare Eurico Seabra, esisteva “una Chiesa sospetta, in uno Stato vigilante”.² Come spiegava monsignor Giulio Tonti, nunzio apostolico a Lisbona nel 1910, la Chiesa, infatti, da una separazione vera aveva solo da guadagnare, perché avrebbe potuto organizzarsi come meglio credeva. Questa situazione portò i cattolici a criticare i repubblicani e a intraprendere contro di essi una battaglia sotterranea, fatta attraverso la creazione di associazioni e movimenti.³ Tali tensioni religiose si erano mitigate con l'entrata del Portogallo in guerra. I governi di Pimenta de Castro e di António José de Almeida, infatti, avevano allentato la morsa sui cattolici, come si può evincere dal riconoscimento dei cappellani militari, concesso nel dicembre del 1916 e reso effettivo il 18 gennaio del 1917.⁴ Con l'arrivo di Afonso Costa a capo dell'esecutivo il 25 aprile, però, la “guerra religiosa” era ripresa, come testimoniano i reiterati allontanamenti dalle loro sedi del patriarca di Lisbona, Mendes Belo, e del vescovo di Porto, António Barroso.⁵

¹ Cfr. Aldo Albonico, *Breve storia del Portogallo contemporaneo 1890-1976*, 1977, Morano, Napoli, p. 56-57.

² Rui Ramos, *A Segunda Fundação*, vol. 6, José Mattoso (ed.), *História de Portugal*, 1994, Estampa, Lisboa, p. 356.

³ Ramos, *A Segunda Fundação*, vol. 6, op. cit., p. 355-358.

⁴ António R. Amaro, ‘O Imparcial, um jornal de combate (1912-1912)’, in: Jorge Seabra/António R. Amaro/João Paulo Avelas Nunes, *O C.A.D.C. de Coimbra, a Democracia cristã e os inícios do Estado Novo (1905-1934)*, 1995, Faculdade de Letras de Coimbra, Coimbra, p. 137.

⁵ Franco Nogueira, *Salazar. A mocidade e os princípios (1889-1928)*, 2000 (1° 1977), Civilização, Porto, p. 162.

Oltre alla rinnovata crisi religiosa, Costa si trovò a dover far fronte a un'importante crisi economica. Racconta Ribeiro de Meneses che in

“termini produttivi, l'economia portoghese si mostrò incapace di beneficiare della guerra per modernizzarsi, approfittando dell'assenza dell'economia straniera. L'agricoltura continuava a soffrire, come la raccolta del grano giunta ad appena 200.603 tonnellate, un totale basso e per nulla compensato dalle importazioni, ugualmente basse, di 62.343 tonnellate. La produzione del miglio cadde a 260.058 tonnellate e questa diminuzione fu accompagnata da altre come quelle di: vino, riso, patate. Un successo fu registrato solo nell'incremento della produzione d'avena, segale e orzo”.⁶

Secondo Telo alcune industrie, come l'industria mineraria, quella alimentare, quella del legno e quella del cemento, avevano beneficiato della mancanza della concorrenza estera, benché fossero piccole fabbriche. Avevano, invece, sofferto la guerra le aziende che avevano bisogno di materiale d'importazione come quelle: tessili, chimiche e metallurgiche. Mancavano: combustibile, macchinari, e mercato. L'importazione del ferro era scesa da 71361 tonnellate del 1914 a 23970 tonnellate del 1917 e gli oli da 9301 a 6789 ettolitri. Il valore delle importazioni era salito del 14,9% rispetto al periodo anteguerra. C'era stato, perciò, un rialzo dei prezzi, dovuto all'aumento delle materie prime. Solo le industrie, considerate utili allo sforzo bellico, avevano potuto beneficiare degli aiuti statali.⁷ La crisi del 1917 fu segnata anche: dalla mancanza di generi alimentari, dalla crescita del mercato nero, dalla produzione di pane di cattiva qualità. Ramos racconta come, vista la carenza di grano, il governo, pur di non aumentarne il costo, avesse incentivato la vendita di pane indurito o preparato con misture di farine di fava o avena.⁸ La carenza di prodotti alimentari produsse, così, una serie di moti popolari, repressi con violenza dalle forze dell'ordine. Tali circostanze segnarono la fine dell'alleanza tra Partito democratico e popolazione. La più grande manifestazione di protesta, meglio nota come “Rivoluzione della patata”,⁹ ebbe luogo a Lisbona il 19 maggio, e fu la conseguenza dell'aumento del prezzo delle patate: da 0,06 escudos al chilo a 0,14. Il popolo reclamò assaltando i negozi di generi alimentari. Il moto venne represso dall'esercito e dalla Guardia nazionale repubblicana. La calma tornò solo il 23 maggio.¹⁰ Dopo questo evento, il Governo Costa sancì la sospensione

⁶ Filipe Ribeiro de Meneses, *União sagrada e sidonismo. Portugal em guerra (1916-1918)*, 2000, Cosmos, Lisboa, p. 136.

⁷ António J. Telo, *O Sidonismo e o Movimento Operário: Luta de Classes em Portugal, 1917-1917*, 1978, Ulmeiro, Lisboa, p. 66.

⁸ Ramos, *A Segunda Fundação*, vol. 6, op. cit., p. 454.

⁹ Alice Samara, 'O impacto económico e social da Primeira Guerra em Portugal', in: Nuno Severiano Teixeira (coord.), *Portugal e a guerra. Historia das intervenções militares portuguesas nos grandes conflitos mundiais (séc. XIX-XX)*, 1998, Colibri, Lisboa, p. 102.

¹⁰ Cfr. Ribeiro de Meneses, *União sagrada e sidonismo*, op. cit., p. 137.

totale delle garanzie costituzionali nella capitale e nelle zone limitrofe attraverso il Decreto 3150.¹¹ Come ha fatto rivelare efficacemente Malheiro da Silva,

“tra il 1914 e il 1917 si assistette all’ascesa di un nuovo impetuoso movimento di protesta, che agiva non solo attraverso forme di sciopero tradizionali, ma anche attraverso nuovi tipi di lotta, come gli assalti ai treni, ai magazzini dei viveri e ai negozi”.¹²

La repressione, voluta dal governo, fece sì che nel settembre del ‘17 fossero detenuti nelle carceri circa 400 sindacalisti.¹³ Gli arresti fecero seguito sia alla “Rivoluzione della patata” che a una serie di mobilitazioni organizzate, nell’estate dello stesso anno, dai sindacati legati all’Unione operaia nazionale. In luglio, infatti, avevano incrociato le braccia gli operai dell’edilizia civile; in agosto, i dipendenti della Compagnia dell’acqua, mentre a settembre erano entrati in sciopero i lavoratori delle poste e telegrafi. Tali eventi avevano portato alla militarizzazione, da parte del Governo, dei funzionari e anche delle donne, il che significò l’equiparazione di uno scioperante a un disertore.¹⁴

Fu in questo contesto di crisi religiosa ed economica che avvenne il ‘miracolo’ di Fatima. Luís Filipe Torgal racconta un episodio meno conosciuto. Il 10 maggio, un piccolo pastore, chiamato Armando Severino Alves, affermò di aver visto sopra un monte una “Signora vestita di bianco”, che gli sarebbe riapparsa, per dirgli di comunicare agli altri pastori e alle madri dei soldati, che stavano in guerra, di pregare il rosario e votarsi ad ella; in cambio questa promise di “accudire il mondo e placare la guerra”. Tre giorni dopo, i pastorelli Francisco Marto, Jacinta Marto e Lucia dos Santos, nella località di Cova da Iria, presso Fatima, videro la Madonna che rivelò loro tre segreti, i primi due dei quali prevedevano la fine della Prima guerra mondiale e un’altra guerra.

Tale accadimento ridiede vigore alle forze cattoliche in un momento d’estrema difficoltà. Se guardiamo le date è curioso constatare come l’apparizione avvenne a quindici giorni dall’insediamento a capo del governo di Afonso Costa, come accennato, nemico giurato dei cattolici. Nei messaggi ai tre pastorelli, la Madonna chiedeva, affinché la pace tornasse in tutto il mondo, l’esaltazione del culto e la fine delle persecuzioni contro la Chiesa.¹⁵ Se il messaggio possa genericamente apparire destinato a tutta l’umanità, pensando alla situazione lusitana di quei giorni, non possiamo non metterlo in corre-

¹¹ Cfr. António H. de Oliveira Marques, ‘Portugal da Monarquia para a República’, in: Joel Serrão/António H. de Oliveira Marques (coord.), *Nova História de Portugal*, vol. XI, 1991, Presença, Lisboa, p. 716.

¹² Armando Malheiro da Silva, *Sidónio e Sidonismo*, vol. I, *História de uma vida*, 2006, Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, Coimbra, p. 395.

¹³ Ramos, *A Segunda Fundação*, vol. 6, op. cit., p. 456.

¹⁴ Samara, ‘O impacte económico e social da Primeira Guerra em Portugal’, op. cit., p. 102.

¹⁵ Dal sito: www.fatima.org.

lazione con l'azione anticlericale del nuovo governo. Il concetto di pace universale, poi, non dovrebbe essere letto esclusivamente rispetto alle operazioni belliche, ma anche rispetto ai conflitti sociali, che si erano acuiti negli ultimi anni in Portogallo. Infine, appare essenziale constatare come, sulla scia di Fatima, sia stato fondato il più importante partito cattolico lusitano, il Centro Católico Português, che fu la palestra politica del futuro Primo ministro, António Oliveira de Salazar. Questa formazione politica nacque a Braga l'8 Agosto del 1917.¹⁶ Da quel momento, le gerarchie ecclesiastiche lusitane si impegnarono in una serie d'azioni "volte a trasformare Cova da Iria in un frequentato e grandioso santuario nazionale e in seguito internazionale di pellegrinaggio, contraddistinto dalla spiritualità penitenziale e sacramentale".¹⁷ Tra gli artefici di quest'operazione di marketing: Alberto Dinis da Fonseca e il futuro Patriarca di Lisbona, Gonçalves Cerejeira. Il primo, tra il 1918 e il 1926, finanziò e propagandò nel paese il miracolo, organizzando numerosi pellegrinaggi e fondando nel 1922 il giornale *Voz de Fatima*; il secondo concentrò le organizzazioni cattoliche sull'evento, facendo di Fatima il centro della religione portoghese.¹⁸

Ai fini di questo studio è importante concentrarci sulla seconda figura. Gonçalves Cerejeira, infatti, oltre a essere l'uomo che creò il mito di Fatima, fu il patriarca di Lisbona, durante quasi tutto l'Estado Novo, ma soprattutto fu l'amico più intimo di Salazar, con il quale condivise vita accademica e militanza politica. A tal proposito, è curioso notare come, pochi mesi dopo la nomina di Salazar a presidente del Consiglio, il nunzio apostolico in Portogallo, Giovanni Beda, il 5 gennaio del 1933, scrivesse tali parole all'allora Segretario di Stato Eugenio Pacelli:

"In Portogallo abbiamo un governo dittatoriale, che è repubblicano di nome, ed è sostenuto dall'esercito e dagli elementi conservatori e monarchici, ed ha contro di sé i repubblicani quasi tutti anticlericali. Nell'esercito il Salazar viene chiamato 'quel fraterno' per la sua grande e notoria pietà cristiana. Egli è stato compagno di studi, di insegnamento e per così dire di vita del signor Cardinale Cerejeira quando entrambi erano professori a Coimbra. Ora si crede da alcuni e si dice da molti che quanto fa il governo sia suggerito dal Cardinale Patriarca".¹⁹

¹⁶ Manuel Braga da Cruz, *As Origens da Democracia Cristã e o Salazarismo*, 1980, Presença, Lisboa, p. 264.

¹⁷ Cfr. per una visione globale del fenomeno di fatima leggesi Luís F. Torgal, 'A Construção de um santuário mariano Fátima, A Hierarquia da Igreja e os Católicos militantes', in: AA.VV., *A Igreja e O Estado em Portugal. Da primeira República ao limiar do Século XXI*, 2004, Ausência, Vila Nova de Gaia, p. 67-94; Luís F. Torgal, *As 'Aparições de Fátima' – Imagens e Representações*, 2002, Temas e Debates, Lisboa; Vítor Neto, 'A questão religiosa: Estado, Igreja e conflitualidade sócio religiosa', in: Fernando Rosas/Maria F. Rollo (coord.), *História da primeira República portuguesa*, 2009, Tinta da China, Lisboa, p. 142-143.

¹⁸ Cfr. Ramos, *A Segunda Fundação*, vol. 6, op. cit., p. 388-393.

¹⁹ AES, Portogallo 1921-1922, pos. 383-384, fasc. 146, p. 27.

Tale affermazione del nunzio ci potrebbe far sospettare che l'Estado Novo fosse di fatto uno strumento nelle mani del clero lusitano. Invece, pur essendo il cardinale Cerejeira un personaggio molto influente nel paese, bisogna sottolineare come Salazar, una volta al potere, riuscì a mantenersi in equilibrio tra componenti molto differenti: i cattolici del Centro Católico Português, i monarchici dell'Integralismo lusitano, i filofascisti e i repubblicani conservatori. Questi sebbene fossero quasi tutti tendenzialmente cattolici, avevano idee molto diverse su come dovesse essere diretto lo Stato. I cattolici volevano un sistema di "Stato minimo", nel quale il governo fosse, per citare Maurras, il semplice "funzionario della Nazione". Tale concetto era condiviso dagli integralisti, che, però, volevano che il Portogallo diventasse una Monarchia federale, in cui le provincie avessero larghe autonomie, come proposto sempre da *Action française*. I repubblicani conservatori agognavano a una Repubblica presidenziale, mentre i filofascisti volevano imporre un vero e proprio "fascismo di Stato", sul modello dell'Italia mussoliniana. Queste differenze erano venute alla luce già nei primi anni venti e si erano acuite subito dopo il golpe del 28 maggio 1926. A partire da quella data, infatti, si erano susseguite diverse compagini ministeriali, tutte lacerate da guerre intestine tra questi gruppi. Fu solo con l'arrivo di Salazar al ministero delle Finanze prima e alla guida del governo, poi, che venne trovata la quadra del cerchio tra queste differenti anime. Tale sintesi venne costruita attraverso un'altra idea tradizionalmente cattolica: il corporativismo. Se, infatti, la religione ebbe il ruolo di forza unificante per la popolazione lusitana, attraverso le grandi manifestazioni del culto, come appunto quella di Fatima, la dottrina corporativa rappresentò il minimo comune denominatore tra le forze politiche che contribuirono alla nascita dell'Estado Novo. Come ha scritto Fernando Rosas l'Estado Novo fu "un compromesso tra diverse correnti di destra e i vari settori d'interesse [...] a partire dalla base comune del rifiuto del liberalismo ereditato dalla Prima repubblica e dell'apologia di uno Stato [...] forte"; come nota lo stesso Rosas, al centro di questa strategia vi era il cattolicesimo sociale come "base per la politica di attrazione e compromesso tra forze conservatrici voluta da Salazar".²⁰ Tale operazione riuscì, proprio per il significato tanto vago dell'idea corporativa. Nel 1942, Louis Baudin affermò:

"L'esercito dei corporatisti è così disparato che si è portati a pensare che la parola stessa di corporazione assomigli a un'etichetta apposta su un lotto di bottiglie distribuite tra produttori e nelle quali ciascuno versa una bevanda di sua scelta, il consumatore ci deve guardare da vicino".²¹

²⁰ Fernando Rosas, *O Estado Novo*, vol. 7, José Mattoso (ed.), 1994, Estampa, Lisboa, p. 185.

²¹ Louis Baudin, *Le corporatisme, Italie, Portugal, Allemagne, Espagne, France*, 1942, Librairie Générale de Droit et de Jurisprudence, Paris, p. 4-5.

Fu così che i cattolici videro nel corporativismo lusitano la realizzazione della propria idea di politica sociale, così come i fascisti, i monarchici che si ispiravano ad *Action française* e quella frangia conservatrice di repubblicani, che già dal 1910 aveva proposto una riforma dello Stato in senso corporativo. Il corporativismo alla portoghese, infatti, se nella teoria fu debitore della tradizione cattolica, con ampie concessioni alla scuola liberale, nella pratica fu un corporativismo di Stato o, come lo definisce Philippe C. Schmitter, un corporativismo autoritario. Schmitter ha parlato, infatti, di 5 diversi tipi di corporativismo: il paleo-corporativismo, quello dei comuni medievali; il proto-corporativismo, quello applicato nella Germania di Weimar, Svizzera e Svezia negli anni Venti e Trenta; lo pseudo-corporativismo degli Usa del New Deal; il neo corporativismo degli anni Settanta e, appunto, il “corporativismo di Stato” o “corporativismo autoritario”, proprio dei regimi dittatoriali europei a cavallo delle due guerre.²² Un corporativismo di Stato, quello dell' Estado Novo, che, differentemente da quello fascista, nacque da ciò che Maier ha definito il “vecchio corporativismo”, rappresentato “da scrittori che andavano da La Tour du Pin, attorno al 1870, fino a Othmar Spann, mezzo secolo più avanti”, i quali “ritenevano di poter eliminare i danni di un liberismo polverizzato creando una rappresentanza di ordini sociali”.²³ Benché, però, il corporativismo portoghese nascesse come frutto della polemica tra cattolici e liberali anticlericali e non dall'esigenza di un'alternativa alle teorie socialiste, come invece quello fascista,²⁴ esso fu decisamente influenzato da quello italiano, la cui portata ideologica, in terra straniera, come ha sottolineato Gianpasquale Santomassimo, “si espande nel corso degli anni Trenta proprio mentre si restringe e si ridimensiona, in patria, la sua portata pratica”.²⁵

L'influenza da parte della dottrina italiana su quella salazarista è uno degli elementi che ha portato uno dei più autorevoli studiosi del corporativismo lusitano, Manuel de Lucena, a inserire l'Estado Novo nella famiglia dei fascismi.²⁶ Per gli studiosi che si sono occupati di Portogallo, però, non c'è concordanza d'idee su questo punto. Per António Costa Pinto, infatti,

²² Philippe C. Schmitter, ‘Corporativismo’, in: *Enciclopedia delle Scienze Sociali*, vol. II, 1992, Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, Roma, p. 457.

²³ Charles S. Maier, *La rifondazione dell'Europa borghese. Francia, Germania e Italia nel decennio successivo alla prima guerra mondiale*, 1999 (1° 1975), il Mulino, Bologna, p. 33.

²⁴ Maier, *La rifondazione dell'Europa borghese*, op. cit., p. 28.

²⁵ Gianpasquale Santomassimo, *La terza via fascista. Il mito del corporativismo*, 2006, Carocci, Roma, p. 10-11.

²⁶ Manuel De Lucena, *O Regime Salazarista e a sua Evolução*, 1995, Contemporânea, Matosinhos, p. 12.

“il salazarismo, come tutti i regimi autoritari di destra della stessa epoca, si ispirò al largo spettro della ‘terza via’ presente nel panorama europeo dall’inizio del secolo, sintetizzando elementi del cattolicesimo sociale e della destra radicale maurrassiana”.²⁷

Howard J. Wiranda, invece, pensa che quello portoghese sia stato un corporativismo tradizionale, influenzato dalla scuola latino-americana.²⁸ Rui Ramos, nella sua *História de Portugal*, sostiene che il sistema salazarista sia nato dalla tradizione dalle associazioni formate alla fine del XIX secolo.²⁹ Lo stesso Schmitter, uno dei primi studiosi stranieri a occuparsi del problema negli anni Settanta, inserisce quello lusitano nel contesto dei corporativismi di Stato perché “il regime – specialmente durante il tempo di Salazar – era rigidamente tecnocratico e fortemente controllato da un piccolo gruppo che non aveva nessuna intenzione di consultare gli interessi organizzati, e molto meno negoziare con quelli”.³⁰

Studiando il dibattito creatosi intorno alla dottrina corporativa lusitana, è giustificabile chiedersi chi abbia ragione, ma altrettanto giustificabile sembrerebbe rispondere che una parte di verità risieda in tutte le tesi ora esposte, le quali, curiosamente, a livello critico, ripropongono lo stesso identico dibattito che si scatenò in Portogallo dopo la promulgazione dell'Estatuto do Trabalho Nacional e della Costituzione, nel 1933. Dal quel momento, infatti, filofascisti, liberali moderati e cattolici cercarono tutti di dimostrare quanto il modello lusitano fosse più o meno influenzato dal fascismo, dalla dottrina cattolica o da quella liberale, dalla scuola di Rocco e Bottai, piuttosto che da quella di Spann, Le Play o La Tour du Pin, ma anche da Carte costituzionali come quella di Weimar. Un esempio della polemica di quegli anni fu lo scontro, avvenuto nelle aule universitarie, tra José Joaquim Teixeira Ribeiro e Marcelo Caetano, il quale rimproverava il primo di aver riscontrato nella dottrina portoghese più l'influenza fascista che quella cattolica. Tale discrepanza d'idee, fin dai primi anni della dittatura, nasce dal fatto che in Portogallo, come anche d'altronde in altri stati, teoria e pratica corporativa coincisero poco o nulla. A livello teorico, come sottolinea Luís Reis Torgal, sostenitore dell'assioma Estado Novo=“fascismo alla portoghese”, la Costituzione del 1933 diede allo Stato lusitano “una forma repubblicana e in un certo senso legale, in apparenza liberale”.³¹ Infatti, come evidenzia Nuno Estêvão Ferreira, in Portogallo “il

²⁷ António Costa Pinto, *O salazarismo e o fascismo europeu, problemas de interpretação na ciências sociais*, 1992, Estampa, Lisboa, p. 132.

²⁸ Cfr. Howard J. Wiranda, *Corporatism and Development. The Portuguese Experience*, 1977, The University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, p. 2-28.

²⁹ Cfr. Rui Ramos (coord.), *História de Portugal*, 2010 (1° 2009), A Esfera dos Livros, Lisboa, p. 645.

³⁰ P. Schmitter, *Portugal do Autoritarismo à Democracia*, 1999, ICS, Lisboa, p. 13.

³¹ Luís Reis Torgal, *Estados Novos, Estado Novo*, vol. I, 2009, Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, Coimbra, p. 347.

nazionalismo autoritario e corporativo coesiste con la tradizione liberale”,³² lo stesso Estatuto do Trabalho Nacional sembrava, invece, la copia “annacquata” della Carta del lavoro italiana, a causa della forte presenza dei principi corporativi cattolici, che vedevano lo Stato non in funzione di forza motrice, ma piuttosto di “paterno” supervisore delle dinamiche sociali. Uno statuto, insomma, molto vicino alla teoria del “corporativismo puro”, professata dal rumeno Mihail Manoilescu, che tanta fortuna ebbe tra i corporativisti lusitani. A livello teorico appare dunque esplicativa la definizione che ha dato riguardo al tema Brandão de Brito, il quale ha scritto che il corporativismo lusitano è

“una sintesi non solo dei grandi sistemi che lo precedono – capitalismo liberale e socialismo – ma una serie d’idee disparate, che riformulano il capitalismo, che ne combattono gli abusi e cercano di attenuarne gli eccessi. Concretamente nel corporativismo portoghese troviamo gli elementi del capitalismo – riconoscimento del ruolo del capitale, della proprietà e dell’iniziativa privata e di mercato – e la sintesi di altre correnti, anch’esse morigeratrici del capitalismo, dove pontifica la dottrina sociale della Chiesa, oltre al nazionalismo, monarchico e corporativista, con il timbro dell’Integralismo lusitano”.³³

Sul piano pratico, invece, la forte presenza dello Stato in ogni settore “corporativizzato” annichilò tutti i tentativi di autodirezione dell’economia sotto la tutela del governo, avvicinando molto il Portogallo all’ideologia fascista, creando di fatto un corporativismo autoritario. Per esplicitare la contraddizione fra teoria e pratica corporativa appare opportuno citare, infine, ancora Manuel de Lucena il quale afferma:

“Durante il lungo governo di Salazar, è stato spesso confessato che eravamo soggetti a un corporativismo di Stato, ma con la promessa che un giorno avremmo raggiunto un corporativismo d’associazione: integrale piuttosto che parziale, molto meno subordinato [all’esecutivo]”.³⁴

Come accennato in precedenza, tale dibattito tra gli storici rispecchia quello che si sviluppò tra i politici e gli studiosi lusitani all’indomani della promulgazione delle carte fondamentali dell’Estado Novo. E come allora, a nostro avviso, esso viene oggi influenzato dalla volontà, o meno, degli storici di inserire il regime salazarista tra i fascismi. Così, coloro che vedono nella dittatura lusitana un fascismo di tendenza totalitaria, cercano di connotare il corporativismo portoghese come un corporativismo di Stato. Viceversa, coloro che vogliono

³² Nuno Estêvão Ferreira, ‘O corporativismo e as instituições do salazarismo: a Câmara corporativa (1935-1945)’, in: António Costa Pinto/Francisco C. Palomanes Martinho (coord.), *O Corporativismo em Português. Estado, Política e Sociedade no salazarismo e no Vargasismo*, 2008, ICS, Viseu, p. 131.

³³ José M. Brandão de Brito, ‘Corporativismo’, in: Fernando Rosas/José M. Brandão de Brito (coord.), *Dicionário de História do Estado Novo*, 1996, Bertrand, Lisboa, p. 216.

³⁴ De Lucena, ‘O regime Salazarista e a sua Evolução’, op. cit., p. 26.

descriverla come un semplice regime autoritario, cercano nel corporativismo lusitano le tracce della tradizione cattolica. Questa ambiguità di fondo, che ancora oggi regna tra i ricercatori contemporanei, fu voluta, all'epoca, da Salazar stesso per mantenere il potere. Ogni componente che lo sosteneva, infatti, vedendo nel corporativismo quello che voleva, rimaneva legata al governo. Questo sistema funzionò almeno fino alla fine della Seconda guerra mondiale, di fatti, nei primi tredici anni dell'Estado Novo (1932-1945), poche e ininfluenti furono le frange, inserite nel contesto dittatoriale, ostili al modello corporativo salazarista e furono tutte confinate agli estremi. Tra queste: il Nazional Sindacalismo di Rolão Preto.³⁵ Per quanto riguarda i cattolici, invece, voci veramente contrarie al regime corporativo lusitano si cominciarono a levare solo a partire dal 1942 e sfociarono nel 1946 nella critica palese all'Estatuto do Trabalho Nacional. Protagonista di tali critiche fu il gruppo legato al giornale *O Trabalhador* attraverso il suo esponente più autorevole: padre Abel Varzim. Quest'ultimo era l'assistente generale della Lega operaia cattolica.³⁶ Questi era stato, inizialmente, un sostenitore delle riforme sociali salazariste, tanto da entrare a far parte del parlamento nel 1938. Una voce sempre critica, ma inserita nel sistema, almeno fino al 1942, quando le sue osservazioni cominciarono a essere scomode per il regime. Un graduale allontanamento dalla direzione dello Stato passò dalla mancata ricandidatura all'Assemblea nazionale, fino a culminare con l'outing del 5 ottobre 1946, quando Varzim scrisse su *O Trabalhador*:

“L'Estatuto do Trabalho Nacional parte da un grande errore psicologico e sociale, ovvero che non esista una classe operaia ben determinata nella sua cultura e nella sua civilizzazione, e che i membri della classe operaia non siano capaci di governarsi e crescere da soli. L'Estatuto do Trabalho Nacional non riconosce la classe operaia, il suo valore, le sue capacità, la sua immensa ricchezza morale e nazionale. Per questo esistono appena i lavoratori, le entità padronali, le professioni e la nazione. La radice e il fondamento della sua inefficacia sta proprio in ciò. Una classe non cessa di esistere grazie al fatto che la legge non abbia tenuto in conto la sua realtà. Come non cessa di esistere, di muoversi, di avere aspirazioni l'élite che influisce sull'evoluzione della legge non prendendo in considerazione le esigenze della classe lavoratrice. In questo modo si giunge, più che a un divorzio, a una lotta tra lavoratori e élite. La realtà, così, prende il sopravvento. L'Estatuto do Trabalho Nacional non potrà, pertanto, risolvere il problema sociale, né essendo applicato da uomini buoni, né da mediocri”.³⁷

E il Vaticano? Come si pose nei confronti del corporativismo salazarista? Come ha sottolineato Friedrich Engel-Jánosi:

³⁵ Rolão Preto nel 1932 fu il fondatore del Partito nazional-sindacalista, un movimento direttamente ispirato dalle esperienze: nazista e fascista, che chiedeva a Salazar una svolta totalitaria dell'Estado Novo. Questo fu presto messo fuorilegge dal regime. A tale riguardo leggesi: António Costa Pinto, *Os Camisas Azuis*, 1994, Estampa, Lisboa.

³⁶ Cfr. António Cerejo, *Abel Varzim e o seu tempo*, 2005, Multinova, Lisboa, p. 10.

³⁷ *O Trabalhador*, 5 ottobre 1946.

“Ancora più chiari e semplici erano i rapporti col Portogallo, dove, in seguito al rinnovamento cattolico le personalità del Vaticano su su fino al Papa tenevano in grande considerazione il regime di Salazar. Da più di un secolo e mezzo – così ebbe ad esprimersi un vescovo portoghese – il paese non ha conosciuto un governo così ‘amico e fedele’ come l’attuale”.³⁸

Questa benevolenza della Santa sede rispetto al regime di Salazar, appare confermata dal giudizio positivo che venne dall'altra parte del Tevere rispetto all'Estatuto do Trabalho Nacional. Ciò appare dimostrato dall'articolo di Brucculeri pubblicato su la *Civiltà cattolica*, la quale, come ha sottolineato Engel-János, «non è certo da considerare organo officioso del Vaticano come lo è l'*Osservatore romano*; però non ci è noto un solo caso in cui la *Civiltà* – in generale molto più legata alla segreteria di Stato che al generale dei gesuiti – abbia sostenuto un'opinione contraria a quella della Santa Sede»³⁹. Dopo aver fatto un sunto dei capitoli dell'Estatuto do Trabalho Nacional e aver rimarcato l'influenza subita rispetto al corporativismo fascista, Brucculeri scriveva:

“Il merito del legislatore portoghese [è di aver] voluto costruire delle cornici assai ampie dentro le quali si potranno agevolmente inquadrare gli organi corporativi con quelle concrete determinazioni che solo l'esperienza potrà dettare con sicurezza”.⁴⁰

Questo atteggiamento iniziale da parte del Vaticano, rispetto all'Estado Novo, deriva da tre condizioni iniziali. La prima, come abbiamo accennato, risiedeva nel rapporto personale tra Salazar e Cerejeira. La seconda, proprio nel percorso politico di Salazar. Il primo ministro portoghese, infatti, si era formato in seminario. Nell'autunno del 1911, all'indomani della rivoluzione repubblicana del 1910, era giunto a Coimbra per frequentare il corso di laurea in Diritto. C'è da sottolineare che se Lisbona era il centro dell'affermazione liberale, in quegli anni, l'antica capitale lusitana, che fino ad allora non aveva conosciuto le lotte nazionaliste, era diventata uno dei posti preferiti da quanti erano stati emarginati dall'azione politica con l'avvento dei repubblicani. Sembrava quasi che Coimbra si fosse trasformata in luogo di esilio e di riorganizzazione delle forze anti-repubblicane.⁴¹ In tale contesto, Salazar era entrato a far parte del Centro Académico de Democracia Cristã, collaborando alla sua attività politica ed editoriale. In tale ambiente, il futuro dittatore lusitano aveva sviluppato un particolare interesse per l'economia, la finanza e per le politiche sociali, alternando la lettura delle encicliche papali ai testi dei sociologi cattolici francesi. Come scrive il biografo Franco Nogueira:

³⁸ Friedrich Engel-János, *Il Vaticano fra fascismo e nazismo*, 1973, Le Monnier, Firenze, p. 172.

³⁹ Engel-János, *Il Vaticano*, op. cit., p. 80.

⁴⁰ Angelo Brucculeri, 'Il corporativismo in Portogallo', *Civiltà cattolica* 85/III, 1934, p. 14-16.

⁴¹ Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão afferma: "Coimbra soffrì gli effetti delle passioni politiche scatenatesi dopo il 5 ottobre 1910" (Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão, *História de Portugal*, vol. XII, 1993, Verbo, Lisboa, p. 320).

“Gli scritti di La Tour du Pin gli suscitavano riflessioni. E soprattutto quelli di Frédéric Le Play, che comprava con quelli di Desmoulins, nei quali trovava i principi che si armonizzavano con i propositi di Leone XIII, sul piano religioso, con quelli difesi da Charles Maurras, sul piano politico e storico: il principio dell'autorità, che Le Play credeva indispensabile restaurare per il bene della società; quello della solidità della famiglia, come base dell'organizzazione sociale; quello della cooperazione tra operai e padroni con il ristabilimento dell'autorità di questi ultimi, limitata tuttavia agli imperativi morali e legali rispetto a questi; e infine l'educazione, la formazione dello spirito, lo sviluppo sociale che erano più importante della ricchezza e delle forme di governo”.⁴²

Era stato tra i fondatori del Centro Católico Português, di cui nel 1921 era anche diventato deputato.

La terza condizione, per cui il Vaticano sosteneva apertamente l'Estado Novo, derivava dall'esigenza di consolidare la presenza della Chiesa di Roma in Portogallo. 16 anni di Repubblica anticlericale avevano creato un distacco tra la popolazione e la Chiesa. Quindi, bisognava riacquistare terreno, normalizzando il rapporto con il nuovo ordine politico, creatosi dopo il golpe del 28 maggio 1926. Impresa che sembrava tutt'altro che scontata visto che il movimento cattolico, unito al Centro Católico, non aveva sostenuto la rivolta sin dalla prima ora e che a capo dei rivoltosi vi erano personaggi, come lo stesso Presidente della Repubblica, Carmona, i quali avevano propiziato la rivoluzione liberale del 1910 e sancito la fine dei privilegi della Chiesa e il dominio dello Stato sulla religione. A San Pietro era noto come tali figure avessero in mano il potere militare, quindi bisognava usare molta cautela nei rapporti con il piccolo Stato Iberico, facendo anche qualche rilevante concessione. Una di queste fu il mantenimento del regime di separazione tra Stato e Chiesa, che, come già accennato, era stato il motivo principe dei contrasti tra cattolici e repubblicani, all'indomani del 5 ottobre 1910. Per questo, a nostro avviso, il Vaticano tollerò anche le ambiguità di fondo del regime salazarista, ricevendo in cambio ciò che era stato avversato dal fascismo italiano come, per esempio, il riconoscimento sia teorico che pratico dell'Azione cattolica, e, di fatto, l'inserimento delle istituzioni ecclesiastiche nel cuore dello Stato. Ciò ci viene dimostrato anche dalle parole di Paulo Cunha, docente della Facoltà di Diritto dell'Università di Lisbona, il quale poneva la Chiesa sullo stesso piano delle istituzioni nazionali nel contesto della costruzione dello Stato corporativo. Cunha, paragonando il sistema corporativo italiano e quello lusitano scriveva:

“La nozione della corporazione è molto più ampia in Portogallo che in Italia. In Italia, la corporazione è essenzialmente economica; alla sua base ci sono solo interessi economici o materiali. Tra noi, tradizionalmente, la concezione della corporazione è universalista; la corporazione raggruppa non solo gli interessi economici, ma anche quelli sociali, culturali della Nazione. La Chiesa, la misericordia, l'università, le acca-

⁴² Nogueira, *Salazar*, op. cit., p. 71-72.

demie, gli ordini delle professioni liberali devono avere una rappresentanza corporativa. Così il nostro corporativismo è integrale".⁴³

In questo senso, secondo Luís Reis Torgal, la dottrina cattolica fu uno dei cardini di "un totalitarismo alla portoghese",⁴⁴ che Mircea Eliade definiva "una forma cristiana di totalitarismo", basato sull'amore, l'umiltà e il sacrificio, sulla rinuncia e sulla creazione, "costruito non sulle astrazioni ma sulla viva realtà del popolo e sulla sua tradizione".⁴⁵ Di questo totalitarismo lusitano, il perno doveva essere proprio il corporativismo. A nostro avviso, però, proprio la citata differenza tra suggestione teorica e applicazione pratica delle politiche corporative, lasciano ancora molti dubbi sulla stessa natura totalitaria dell'Estado Novo. Dubbi che, come abbiamo più volte sottolineato, furono istillati tra i suoi contemporanei dallo stesso Salazar, con l'intento di mantenersi in equilibrio tra: cattolici, monarchici, filofascisti e liberali. Per non cadere anche noi studiosi in questa insidiosa rete, forse, dovremmo non farci prendere dalla tentazione di voler dare, a quello salazarista, la patente di regime: totalitario o autoritario, fascista o cattolico. Dovremmo invece limitarci a interpretare cosa l'Estado Novo abbia significato per il Portogallo e i portoghesi. In questo modo, liberi da recinti semantici, potremo comprendere con maggior facilità come i miti del culto e la dottrina sociale cattolica abbiano contribuito, nel piccolo Stato iberico, alla creazione di una religione politica che è riuscita a intersecare, meglio che altrove, misticismo e potere.

⁴³ Paulo Cunha, 'Relações entre a cultura jurídica italiana e a cultura jurídica portuguesa', *Estudos Italianos em Portugal*, 1939, p. 36.

⁴⁴ Cfr. Torgal, *Estados Novos. Estado Novo*, vol. I, op. cit., p. 249-288.

⁴⁵ Mircea Eliade in Torgal, *Estados Novos. Estado Novo*, vol. I, op. cit., p. 255.

GOD, FATHERLAND, AUTHORITY: CATHOLIC CHURCH AND IBERIAN FASCISTICISED REGIMES, 1933-45

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Political Catholicism was a major actor in the modernisation process of Spanish and Portuguese post-World War I right-wing movements. Salazar and Franco presented their regimes as being intrinsically Catholic, and Catholics were major partners in the political and social coalitions supporting both dictators. In their struggle against the most radical form of institutionalised anti-clerical Liberalism, such as the Portuguese First Republic (1910-26) and the Spanish Second Republic (1931-39), conservative and extreme-right forces conceded a strategic role to politically-organised Catholics in mass mobilisation and in assembling a wide coalition that could create a solid alternative to Liberal-Democracy (still gradually emerging in the post-World War I political turmoil in Portugal, but clearly matured in that of Spain in the early 1930s) and an increasingly strong working-class movement.

The crisis of the Iberian liberal systems in inter-war Europe is especially interesting to study because of the specific role of the Catholic component of both the political sustaining coalition and the identity of Franco and Salazar's authoritarian regimes: two semi-peripheral cases of Fascist/fascistised regimes that, although only the Francoist regime is relatively well-known, are both systematically included in the study of Fascist movements. Each of these represents an apparently exceptional case: the Spanish Civil War as a case-study for the radicalisation of the non-Fascist Right; Salazarism as an apparent exception, i.e. as a deliberately non-fascistised reactionary regime, in the 'Age of Fascism'.

Portuguese Catholics were politically organised in the *Centro Católico Português* (CCP, 1917-34), a small but influential party that inherited 40 years of an irregular but persistent struggle to create a political movement, which made it very difficult for them to create a place for itself amidst Portuguese con-

¹ I would like to thank Filipe Piedade, who prepared his dissertation *On the road to the Estado Novo and the Third Reich: Hitler's rise to Power seen through Salazarist press (1930-1933)* (Oporto: Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, 2012), for helping me to collect some of the documentary information.

servative and anti-republican forces.² This party was led by Lino Neto, the young António de Oliveira Salazar (1889-1970), head of Government from 1932 to 1968 (after four years as minister of Finance), and his university companion Manuel Gonçalves Cerejeira (1888-1977), Cardinal-Patriarch of Lisbon from 1929 to 1971. They soon became two of the party's central political and intellectual faces, the former having been parliamentary candidate thrice and elected to the House of Deputies once (1921). As was the case with the *Zentrum* in 1933, the CCP was forced to dissolve and almost all of its members were incorporated into the new single Party, the *União Nacional*, created by Salazar in 1930.

Near the end of the decaying Alfonso XIII Monarchy in Spain, political Catholicism failed to modernise, overshadowed by more successful experiments such as the 'Maurismo' and Primo de Rivera's dictatorship (1923-30) – in which, nevertheless, Spanish Catholics naturally blended.³ In this sense, the "Spanish political Catholicism movement has to be confined to the period of the Second Republic"⁴ (1931-36). *Acción Popular* (initially called *Acción Nacional*) thus came to the fore in 1931, headed by Ángel Herrera Oria (1886-1968) and his *Asociación Católica Nacional de Propagandistas*, a strict elitarian Catholic organisation created in 1923 to acquire as much political, academic and institutional power in Spain as it could. Failing in 1931, with the rest of the monarchist right, to effectively oppose the Republican-Socialist coalition that gave birth to the new regime, Spanish Catholics were, nevertheless, able to build up (or rather, to assemble) one of the strongest, most popular and most ephemeral (1933-37) Catholic political parties of the interwar period, the *Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas* (CEDA). Led by José María Gil Robles and, again, inspired by Herrera Oria, CEDA possessed a following of half a million members at its inception in 1933 and won the first national election (November 1933) held soon after. In 1937, some months after Civil War broke out, CEDA merged with the new Francoist single Party, the *Falange Española y de las JONS*. In both the Portuguese and Spanish cases, Catholics shared some common basic ground with the rest of the conservatives – God, Fatherland, family, order, property – although priority was given to a social discourse broadly based on the Church's social doctrine, more directly targeting rural lower classes rather than urban workers, which was thought to compete somehow on the same ground as Socialists (who were especially strong in Spain, but not in Portugal), Anarchists and Communists. This was already an

² See Manuel Braga da Cruz, *As origens da Democracia Cristã e o Salazarismo*, 1980, Editorial Presença/Gabinete de Investigações Sociais, Lisbon.

³ See Alfonso Botti, *Cielo y dinero. El nacionalcatolicismo en España (1881-1975)*, 1992, Alianza, Madrid, and Guy Hermet, *Les catholiques dans l'Espagne franquiste*, 1980, Presses de Sciences Po, Paris.

⁴ Javier Tusell, *Franco y los católicos. La política interior española entre 1945 y 1957*, 1984, Alianza, Madrid, p. 15.

innovative trait for a right-wing discourse on the Iberian post-World War I political reality. Moreover, Catholics, subscribing to the Roman Church's doctrine on how 'accidental' all forms of government are, were especially well placed to call all right-wingers to overcome the permanently disruptive and "obsessive" (as Lino Neto put it) debate on Monarchy/Republic which had been divided for so long between conservatives and reactionaries in both countries. Suffering from internal division themselves, between Catholic Monarchists and those favouring a pragmatic *ralliement* to the Republican regimes – the so-called 'autonomists' in Portugal, and 'neutrals' in Spain –, Catholics became central actors of a coordinated effort to overthrow 'religion hating' Republican regimes with modern right-wing political movements focused on authoritarian rule over inevitable modernisation processes.

From this point of view, the *nationalisme intégral* (*à la* Maurras, even after the Vatican ban on *Action Française*, in 1926) became a significant ideological platform where Catholics and different right-wing movements met, increasingly closer to Fascism, but all fundamentally Monarchist: Portuguese *Integralismo Lusitano* and Spanish *Comunión y Tradición*, early 20th century versions of anti-Liberal 19th century Monarchism (the Portuguese Miguelism and Spanish Carlism), as well as *Acción Española* and *Renovación Española*.

On the other hand, Catholics showed an unparalleled capacity for reactionary mass mobilisation. Although the fall of the two Iberian Republican regimes occurred in two quite different social and political contexts, similarities in the role of Catholics are evident. Degradation of and attacks against the Portuguese First Republic occur in a still immature mass society, where there were almost no mass political organisations. On the right, apart from Anarchist-led unions (*Confederação Geral do Trabalho*), only Catholics showed a significantly efficient ability to rally the Portuguese against a 'Republic of the Godless', mainly during and after Portuguese participation in World War I (1916-18). The so-called Fátima 'apparitions' (May-October 1917) became a very enlightening example of how a significant section of Portuguese society remained untouched by urban secularism. If both authoritarian Republicans (supporters of Sidónio Pais' populist military regime, 1917-18) and extreme-right Monarchists, the *Integralistas*, lost their chance to overthrow the Republic in the crucial years of 1917-19, Catholics kept their social mobilisation capacities intact.

Decisive struggle against the Spanish Second Republic evolved, on the other hand, during an intense fascistisation process in Europe (Germany, Austria, the Baltic States, Bulgaria, etc.). Social and political conflict pushed Catholics, along with the rest of the Right, "to share economic, social and political aims with Fascism".⁵ During the central years of the 'Age of Fascism',

⁵ Paul Preston, *La política de la venganza. El fascismo y el militarismo en la España del siglo XX*, 1997, Ediciones Península, Barcelona, p. 38.

Iberian right-wing Catholics and the Church hierarchy endorsed a very noticeable swing towards a growingly fascist interpretation of the European political context of the post-Soviet Revolution. The Italian Fascist movement, and clearly the post-Lateran 1929 model, was assumed to be the best solution yet to modern State-Church relations. It seemed to propel politically organised right-wing Catholics towards modern varieties of authoritarian preventive solutions against the consolidation of the Soviet regime and of the Communist international movement, with a substantial impact on a workers' movement that was significantly radicalised, both in Portugal and Spain, by a comparatively strong Anarchist leadership.

Nevertheless, they were primarily committed to put an end to Republican regimes that were religiously 'indifferent' or 'hostile' such as the two Iberian Republics. Tension between State and Church rose so high in the 1910s (although it decreased in the 1920s) in Portugal, and in the 1930s in Spain, that politically organised Catholics, and their clergy hierarchy in particular, did not hesitate to provide all its symbolic and ideological paraphernalia to legitimise authoritarian political solutions that would help to revoke what was essential about the Republican secularist policies. Their anti-liberal tradition, surely more visible in the Iberian Peninsula than anywhere else in Western Europe, had not been balanced by any politically relevant Christian-Democratic experience, which could have produced a more or less sincere *ralliement* with the Republican regimes. Their corporative social rhetoric aimed to offer the working classes a Catholic response to Socialist (in Spain) and Anarchist (in both countries) hegemony over the labour movement. However, they were unable to garner any significant social support before the 1930s, and only then in Spain in a liberal-democratic context, through the CEDA, the main right-wing party in the 1933 and 1936 elections, while in Portugal, corporatism had become the State's ideology in a dictatorial context.

In fact, political success of the Iberian Catholics emerged when they, together with most of the right-wing political families, embraced an anti-liberal-democratic project which, far from reproducing 19th century counter-revolutionary and anti-modern discourses, justified the need of a fascistised global solution to the new challenging post-war context of the 20th century. In other words, political Catholicism, in societies where Christian-Democracy, although nominally present amidst Portuguese Catholic elites, had never been a practical political project (as it happened in Germany, Belgium and, for a very short period, inter-war Italy), became effective and went to power only in a clearly authoritarian solution, going through a fascistised process.

To quite a number of authors, nevertheless, Catholicism and Fascism are essentially incompatible. This remains, as is known, a subject of inevitable and permanent dispute, not only since the 1980s, when revisionistic historiography spilled its various theses on the 'Age of Fascism', but already in the 1930s and 40s, i.e. as that special relationship between Catholics and Fascists (and Fascism) pro-

duced such dramatic consequences. Especially for Spain and Portugal, a significant part of international literature assume that Catholics and their Church prevented Francoism and Salazarism to slide into Fascism.

There is, obviously, ample evidence of Catholic objections to ‘totalitarian statolatry’, especially where policies of education and youth were concerned because they obviously represented an obstacle to the Church’s own totalitarian project. For there was a Catholic totalitarian project. Even Juan J. Linz, a classical and solid opponent of the categorisation of the two Iberian dictatorships as ‘fascist’, recently raised “the question if catholic lay movements, with their organizational penetration in society and their ideological integrist concepts, could not be the basis for another type of totalitarianism than fascism”, in clear reference to “those regimes established in countries like [Dollfuss’s] Austria, [Franco’s] Spain and, to some extent, [Salazar’s] Portugal, close to the fascist powers and often competing for support of the same social bases as the fascist movements”. Linz acknowledges that “there was considerable mimetism, to the point that many observers speak of clerico-fascism”, although “the coexistence of the totalitarian ambitions of fascism with the totalitarian potential of national-Catholicism became, from very early on, a factor”, as he always insisted, “in the more authoritarian rather than totalitarian development of the regime”.⁶

Inevitably totalitarianism was, at least conceptually, the Church’s clear target to interfere, or to interfere again, (preferably) with or without the support of the State, in each and every aspect of social life, from education to labour relations, from family to the different forms of sociability. Both Church and State sought to acquire ideological control and censorship instruments and to scrutinise all sorts of cultural practices. Having underwent, in both societies, the hardest process of dispossession of public presence and cultural power of modern times, Catholics, leading both State and Church, looked for a new State/Church alliance, a “mutual insurance society[:] the Church morally supported the State and the State made the Church a ‘Church of power’. [...] Every public mechanism was at the Church’s disposal”⁷: education, health, social affairs, unions, armed forces, propaganda, censorship, single Party, mass organisations... Thus, if the authoritarian State tended towards totalitarianism, it is reasonable to expect, as Linz does, the sharing of totalitarian expectations from both sides of such an alliance.

The Portuguese and Spanish Church had, in fact, some reservations regarding the Fascist totalitarianism when it imposed limits on the activities of

⁶ Juan J. Linz, ‘Fascism, breakdown of democracy, authoritarian and totalitarian regimes: coincidences and distinctions’, *Estudio/Working Paper* 179, October 2002, in http://www.march.es/ceacs/publicaciones/working/archivos/2002_179.pdf (February 2012), p. 27-28.

⁷ Feliciano Blázquez, *La traición de los clérigos en la España de Franco. Crónica de una intolerancia (1936-1975)*, 1991, Editorial Trotta, Madrid, p. 44.

the Catholic Action (*Ação Católica*), as it had in the case of Italy, or when it made enrollment in State youth organisations mandatory to obstruct the activity of the Catholic ones. They were not aiming, naturally, to defend a set of basic rights of association and opinion. On the contrary: catholic hierarchy had spent years fighting against the “secular democracy” that “oppresses man with the imposition of an atheist conception of life” in which the “concept of State, being exercised in the name of many, isn’t therefore less totalitarian since it does not recognise limits to its power and authority, tending to total absorption of the human being”.⁸ Pope Pius XI himself, the leader of the Vatican that is most frequently quoted when Catholicism is opposed to Totalitarianism, recalled in 1930 – and, therefore, before the establishment of the Nazi regime and in a moment of great fluidity in the relations between the Holy See (and the Catholic world in general) and Fascist Italy – to all those interested in this debate that “if there is a totalitarian regime, [...] of fact and law, that is the regime of the Church, since man belongs entirely to the Church”.⁹ In 1940, in his death bed, Isidro Gomá, Cardinal of Toledo, thought he left Spain “‘saturated’ of God and wrapped in ‘divine totalitarianism’ [*totalitarismo divino*]”.¹⁰

In this sense, it is better to discuss “a pluralism of totalitarian projects of different kinds in a competition for power strictly limited by the foundational agreement to bestow upon the rest of society”. To those who discuss the problem in these terms, “the degree of totalitarianism or pluralism of the regime is measured not as much by the relations between the elite members”, obviously leading characters in a competitive process that must have limited the totalitarian capacity of each and every one of them, “as it is by the relationship between the elite and the rest of society”.¹¹ In the same sense, and with a more accurate image, Julián Casanova mentions the “three bureaucracies”, i.e. “the Army, the *Falange* and the Church”, “representing the winners” of the Civil War, who “fought amongst themselves for increased power of their sections”.¹² This does not mean, however, that each one of these ‘bureaucracies’ had not “[exalted] military, fascist and catholic values: order, leadership [*caudillaje*] and religion”.¹³

According to José Pemartín, the powerful high official who held control at the Spanish Ministry for National Education over secondary education from 1937 to 1951, and who was the archetypal National-Catholic, “The Spanish Na-

⁸ ‘Mensagem de Natal de Sua Excelência o Cardeal Patriarca de Lisboa’, *Lumen* V/4, 1941, p. 236.

⁹ Pius XI, quoted in Manuel de Lucena, ‘Salazar, António de Oliveira’, in: António Barreto/Maria Filomena Mónica (eds.), *Dicionário de História de Portugal*, vol. IX, 2000, Figueirinhas, Oporto, p. 318.

¹⁰ Gomá, quoted in Julián Casanova, *La Iglesia de Franco*, 2001, Temas de Hoy, Madrid, p. 270-271.

¹¹ Antonio Francisco Canales Serrano, ‘Iglesia y totalitarismo’, in: Javier Tusell/Susana Sueiro/José María Marín/Marina Casanova (eds.), *Congreso Internacional. El régimen de Franco (1936-1975). Política y relaciones exteriores. Comunicaciones*, vol I, 1993, U.N.E.D., Madrid, p. 521.

¹² Julián Casanova, ‘Una dictadura de cuarenta años’, in: Julián Casanova et al. (eds.), *Morir, matar, sobrevivir. La violencia en la dictadura de Franco*, 2002, Crítica, Barcelona, p. 12.

¹³ Santos Juliá, *Un siglo de España. Política y sociedad*, 1999, Marcial Pons, Madrid, p. 155.

tion is, first and foremost, an historical-ethical being of Catholic substantiality [*sustancialidad*], and it should “pervade in an integral Fascism which will be” – quoting Mussolini – “‘the soul of the soul’, the ‘religion of Religion’ [sic]”.¹⁴ Pemartín (who was a Traditionalist Monarchist, often writing in *Acción Española*) is a good example of how fascistisation of the Spanish political right had progressed so quickly in the previous couple of years. Only four years earlier, “in 1933, [he] still saw Italian and, most of all, German Fascism as lacking any ‘spiritual contents’”...¹⁵

We could expect Juan Linz to have a completely different point of view. A decade ago, early this century and after over 25 years “defining, discussing and documenting at length my use of terms like authoritarian regime, totalitarianism and fascism”, as he addressed his readers, asking them to “read [this essay] in conjunction with my earlier writings”,¹⁶ he restated his assumption that

“non-democratic regimes established by [right-wing movements which remained elitist, generally unable to organize mass support and to gain power] allied with the military and the bureaucracy with the support of powerful economic interests could not develop into totalitarian systems”.

Linz thought it was

“necessary to distinguish the cases of Austria, Portugal and Spain – particularly after 1945 – where the regimes incorporated elements of corporatist authoritarian Catholic thought and made political use of religion, which some of the clerical elements considered an opportunity for ‘religious use of politics.’”

His definition of the new Church/State alliance which emerged during the ‘Age of Fascism’ in a number of European countries may be apprehended in his affirmation of what was the Catholics’ strategy during those years: “They felt that the state could serve to re-Christianise society, giving a privileged position to the Church in public life, education and cultural censorship.” What he called “Conservative authoritarian nationalism in Catholic countries” could make, he thought, “political use of religion and religious institutions to legitimize its rule but not develop a political religion.” Nevertheless, Linz accepts that “religion has been a detriment to absolute power, but in the absence of a transnational centre to define the sacred texts authoritatively, it can serve to legitimize power and a society fully

¹⁴ Pemartín, quote from *Qué es ‘lo nuevo’. Consideraciones sobre el momento español actual*, 1937, Tip. Álvarez y Zambrano, Seville, in: Alejandro Mayordomo (ed.), *Historia de la Educación en España. Textos y documentos*, Tomo V (‘Nacional-Catolicismo y Educación en la España de posguerra’), 1990, Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia/Secretaría General Técnica, Madrid, p. 115, 117.

¹⁵ Pemartín, quote from ‘Vida cultural’, *Acción Española* 39, 1933, p. 295-296, in: Raúl Morodo, *Los orígenes ideológicos del franquismo*: Acción Española, 1985, Alianza Editorial, Madrid, p. 123.

¹⁶ The first of which is ‘Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes’, in: N. Polsby/F. Greenstein (eds.), *Handbook of Political Science*, vol. 3, 1975, Addison Wesley Press, Reading, Mass., p. 175-411.

subject to its principles, intolerant of diversity.” From this point of view, Linz acknowledges that “such a society could represent a new type of theocratic totalitarianism based on the political use of religion or the religious use of politics”,¹⁷ although he points out some national cases other than the two Iberian ones.

All Catholic objections to ‘Totalitarianism’ and ‘Statolatry’, so frequently highlighted by a number of historians (Payne, Tusell, Braga da Cruz, etc.), should, nevertheless, be more systematically read inside their specific historical context. In fact, they may look relevant mainly when the Portuguese ‘Estado Novo’ was being built up (1933-34) and Catholics knew they could use an anti-‘totalitarian’ stance to further their cause, or when the Spanish Falangist pretensions seemed to overpower the Catholics’ (1939-41) – but they are basically absent during the Spanish Civil War and the years of 1940-42, when the Nazis were most successful. *Mit brennender Sorge* (1937), of Pope Pius XI (whom so many Francoists, Catholics obviously included, called the *Papa Rojo*), is not published in the Spanish civil press until after World War II, and before, in 1938, only in some episcopal bulletins. It should be underlined that, although discretely published, it gained no public relevance whatsoever in Portugal. Catholic Spain had not only slid into Fascism, but Catholics holding high ranking positions in the regime also thought that that was the formula of Franco’s *Nuevo Estado*. For Eloy Montero, a very influential Jesuit, when analysing ‘modern States and the new Spain’ in 1939, Fascism was praised as “a manly protest against an absurd Democracy and an empty Liberalism” and, aware of the conflicts between the Vatican and Nazi Germany, he called out that

“we, the Catholics, should not oppose the movement called ‘Fascism’, that was eminently national, we should receive it with love and channel it properly by traditional and Christian paths: it was necessary to harmonise the modern authoritarian trend with our glorious tradition and thus a new State (*Estado Nuevo*) would arise, free of obsolete democratic and liberal traces, embedded in our historical institutions”.¹⁸

Already in 1933, Ledesma Ramos himself, the young National-Syndicalist leader who would merge, in 1933, his organisation with Primo de Rivera’s *Falange*, praised the fact that “a significant part of the Spanish right was ‘fascistising’ itself, at least superficially”¹⁹ already in the early 1930s. In Portugal, after three intense years of scrutinising the Nazis’ rise to power, the Catholic Portuguese daily *Novidades* summed up quite clearly in July 1933, a few months after Hitler got the Catholic *Zentrum* to approve the dictatorial ‘Enabling Act’ in the Reichstag, what should be the Catholic stance before Hitler: “Germany has Bolshevism, the common enemy of Europe, at the door. Against anarchy, Hitler seeks order. And one

¹⁷ Linz, ‘Fascism, breakdown of democracy’, op. cit., p. 1, 29, 58, 60.

¹⁸ Montero quoted in Casanova, ‘Una dictadura de cuarenta años’, op. cit., p. 11.

¹⁹ Stanley G. Payne, *Historia del Fascismo*, 1995, Planeta, Barcelona, p. 331.

cannot deny that the Catholics are defenders of order.”²⁰

Things were a lot clearer seven years later, after the German victory over France. In the summer of 1940, Vicente Gállego, the Catholic editor of the highly representative *Mundo*, a weekly magazine incorporating almost all significant figures of Franco’s regime, wrote what he thought was the community of historical experiences shared by “the peoples that build today, in the diversity of circumstances that qualify each case, their new State”, choosing “authoritarian and national” as the two adjectives to adequately apply to those political experiences. The Spanish process, “with the victory of Franco”, justified, in Gállego’s opinion, that Spain “[should participate] in the world’s New Order”, which, in fact, it “had contributed to create”, as “those universal principles, which shape [that order], included nuances originating from the Spanish themselves, derived from their deep-rooted personality of a ‘unity of destiny’ [*unidad de destino*]”. It is especially significant that a member of the *Asociación Católica Nacional de Propagandistas* would sustain that, unlike

“liberalism, which, to a great extent, lived of copies and remedies[,] the new State does not imitate, because the main advantage of its genuine instrument, the single Party, stands in serving as a mediator between the new State, with its juridical demands, and the people, with the day-to-day realities. [...] So, we repeat, the formula of the single Party is of worldwide acceptance. It provides each people the complete freedom of handling situations according to the impulse of their respective national spirit”.

While a furious dispute between Catholics and Falangists was going on in Madrid in the early years of Franco’s regime, that was exactly, according to Gállego, what had happened with the “positive and powerful originality of the *Falange* [*F.E.T. y de las J.O.N.S.*], deeply encouraged by the Hispanic national spirit, synchronous with Europe’s hour”.²¹

The stigma of the lack of ideological originality of the national experiences of those regimes and political and intellectual movements that, to some extent, saw themselves reflected in the founding characteristics of the Italian Fascist movement, had been, nevertheless, a problem of substantial political dimensions. This stigma persisted at least until the first military successes of the major Fascist powers, not only in the early years of the world war, but also until they helped Franco decisively win the Spanish war, defeated Abyssinia (1936), incorporated Austria into the Reich (1938) or dismantled Czechoslovakia (1938-39). One should pay a lot more attention to this specific chronology: until 1936, before the world realised how Hitler and Mussolini were effectively capable of producing significant changes in the European balance of powers, modern extreme-right regimes and movements were a lot more cautious to establish, or even less to

²⁰ J. Santa Rita, ‘Cartas de Roma. Concordata com a Alemanha’, *Novidades*, 17.7.1933, p. 3.

²¹ Vicente Gállego, ‘El Partido único, consigna universal’, editorial, *Mundo*, 18.8.1940.

claim, similarities or a common ground shared with Fascism and National-Socialism; most of that caution would gradually disappear when German and Italian imperialistic policies became evidently successful. Nevertheless, the Iberian regimes, and all other fascistised ones, were built on a self-evident nationalist discursive platform, and devoted a substantial part of their propaganda efforts to opposing the anti-fascist arguments of the international menace of National-Socialism and Fascism with what they obsessively claimed to be a genuine and original self-proclamation. They assured their regimes were shaped by national realities, which apparently had produced, as Salazar called it, “this thrilling Portuguese case”, an expression which would be repeatedly used at the end of 1934, in one of his first speeches to be broadcast on the radio.²² Four years later, although he reacted against those who were trying to “depict the idealisation or the building of the Portuguese revolutionary process as inferior”, Salazar denied any “political prejudice” to “our political architecture”, describing it as “linked to something universal, because it is human, that is, true everywhere”.²³ Finally, in November 1941, while the German armies and their allies ran triumphant across the Russian plains, Salazar openly underlined what he defined as a “European general line [*linha geral europeia*]” found in the “political, economic and social process of evolution that started years ago in Europe and, though war currently marks this crisis period, it will undoubtedly be confirmed by the German victory”. This, he thought, forced everyone “to recognise that Germany, being closer to that European general line, would have special abilities [*facilidades especiais*] to head that task, if it could regulate itself properly”.²⁴

Salazarists and Francoists, like any other right-wing dictatorships of the ‘Age of Fascism’, were not altogether inclined to accept that their regimes, and even most of their perception of the world, resulted, to an important extent, from what Claudio Pavone described as a process of “transmigration of cultural elements”, particularly a “circulation of Totalitarian ideas”.²⁵ Francoists were, nevertheless, a lot more than their Portuguese counterparts, ready and willing to acknowledge that “when one speaks of Fascism in general terms, one attaches the general meaning of the Italian regime to the word” – which is, altogether, an

²² See Oliveira Salazar, *Discursos e Notas Políticas*, vol. I (1928-1934), 1935, Coimbra Editora, Coimbra, p. 367-388.

²³ Oliveira Salazar, *Discursos e Notas Políticas*, vol. III (1938-1943), 1943, Coimbra Editora, Coimbra, p. 30-32.

²⁴ Salazar to Portuguese minister in Berlin, 30.11.1941, in: Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, *Dez anos de política externa (1936-1947)*, vol. X, 1974, M.N.E./Imprensa Nacional - Casa da Moeda, Lisbon, doc. no. 2646. I discussed these matters in Manuel Loff, *‘O nosso século é fascista!’ O mundo visto por Salazar e Franco (1936-1945)*, 2008, Campo das Letras, Oporto, chapter 6.1 (‘Linha geral europeia’), p. 477-513.

²⁵ Claudio Pavone, ‘Fascismo e dittature: problemi di una definizione’, in: Marcello Flores (ed.), *Nazismo, fascismo, comunismo. Totalitarismi a confronto*, 2000, Paravia Bruno Mondadori Editori, Milan, p. 79-80.

interesting anticipation of Enzo Collotti's approach²⁶ –, “one considers it has the capacity to represent a different concept in each country, or it will cease to be employed accurately”²⁷.

And when they emphasised ‘differences’ and ‘national particularities’, a fundamental ‘originality’ of each national model, Salazarists and Francoists focused permanently on the ‘intrinsic’ and ‘essential’ Catholic character of both Portuguese and Spanish identities, deliberately (and strategically) incorporating the national identity with their own regimes’ historical and ideological significance.²⁸ It became not only the smartest way to avoid international criticism before and mostly after Hitler's international successes, but also to facilitate the Catholics’ integration in coalitions sustaining both dictatorships. Nevertheless, after decades of historiographic discourse insisting on this deliberate strategic ‘Christianisation’ of post-1945 Francoism, Carme Molinero sharply recalls that “falangism contributed [to the regime] in its early stages with ‘a new air of social reform’, which remained its ideological base throughout its historical duration”. In fact, “it was the falangist discourse and organisations that made the regime unique amidst the European political systems after 1945.”²⁹

In fact, once the Portuguese First Republic was overthrown, the link between Catholicism and the *Estado Novo* dictatorship “is not a simple relationship between two independent entities, but rather something ideologically intrinsic to the regime”.³⁰ If it is correct to say that Salazarism, whose supporting coalition included a relevant Republican conservative component, particularly prevalent among the Armed Forces, out of which came the first two Heads of the dictatorship (Presidents Carmona, 1926-51, and Craveiro Lopes, 1951-57), formally kept a separation regime until and even after the signing of the 1940 Concordat,³¹ it is highly disputable to define the ‘Estado Novo’ as a “non-confessional regime”³²: (i) From 1935, Salazar's Constitution prescribed that education was to be “oriented according to the principles of Christian doctrine and

²⁶ See Enzo Collotti, *Fascismo, fascismi*, 1989, R.C.S. Sansoni Editore, Florence.

²⁷ Juan Beneyto, *Genio y Figura del Movimiento*, 1940, Ediciones Afrodísio Aguado, Madrid, p. 122.

²⁸ See Valentim Alexandre, *O roubo das almas. Salazar, a Igreja e os totalitarismos (1930-1939)*, 2006, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, chapter I.1 (‘Salazar: um católico na política’).

²⁹ Carme Molinero, *La captación de las masas. Política social y propaganda en el régimen franquista*, 2005, Cátedra, Madrid, p. 214.

³⁰ Manuel Braga da Cruz, *As origens da Democracia Cristã e o Salazarismo*, 1980, Editorial Presença/Gabinete de Investigações Sociais, Lisbon, p. 17. See also Luís Reis Torgal, *Estados Novos, Estado Novo*, 2009, vol. I, Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, Coimbra, chapter II.3 (‘Estado Novo, Igreja e católicos’).

³¹ Although Irene F. Pimentel (*Cardeal Cerejeira. O Príncipe da Igreja*, 2010, A Esfera dos Livros, Lisbon) and Bruno Cardoso Reis (*Salazar e o Vaticano*, 2006, ICS, Lisbon) outdistance Catholic historian Braga da Cruz in their overestimating external signs of independence between Church and State.

³² Manuel Braga da Cruz, *O Estado Novo e a Igreja Católica*, 1998, Editorial Bizâncio, Lisbon, p. 11.

morals, traditional in the country”,³³ calling the Church back into the conception and implementation of government policies and allowing it to regain control over a wide private sector in secondary education, mostly after the 1936 reforms; (ii) with the Missionary Agreement annex to the Concordat, and the Missionary Statute passed in April 1941, the State granted to the “Portuguese Catholic missions overseas” basically the monopoly of elementary schooling in the colonies, through “significant State financing and absolute political privileges concerning Evangelic, welfare and teaching activities”³⁴; (iii) the Concordat, that Salazar was unable to sign for the first fourteen years of the dictatorship, restored a legally indissoluble religious marriage, revoking one of the first divorce legislations ever passed (1911) in a country with a Catholic majority; (iv) after World War II, the 1951 constitutional reform established Catholicism as “the religion of the Portuguese Nation”, and the reform of 1971 instructed the State to be “conscious of its responsibilities before God”.³⁵

Beyond the explicit and deliberate Catholic indoctrination of mandatory youth organisations of the regime (male and female branches of the *Mocidade Portuguesa*, created in 1936 and 1937), those of women (the *Organização das Mães para a Educação Nacional*, also created in 1936) and the corporative system as a whole,³⁶ the political and cultural spheres in which every form of propaganda and censorship evolved were submitted to strict Catholic criteria, and a relevant number of its agents were openly clergymen. Coherently, although “freedom and inviolability of religious beliefs and practices” (art. 8, § 3) were recognised by the 1933 Constitution, the ‘Estado Novo’ behaved quite arbitrarily against those religious activities considered to be politically ‘suspicious’ and ‘anti-Portuguese’, placing Protestant missionaries and Muslim clerics under surveillance, especially in Portuguese Guinea and Mozambique, or arresting significant numbers of believers of African religious movements, especially Angolan Tocoists and Portuguese Jehova Witnesses; the latter were persecuted and arrested by the political police during the Colonial War “under suspicion of cooperating with the liberation movements [of the Portuguese colonies] and for ‘calling upon the masses to rebel’”.³⁷

³³ Reform of art. 43 of the Political Constitution, Law no. 1910, 23.5.1935.

³⁴ João Paulo, ‘Missões Católicas no Ultramar’, in: Fernando Rosas/J. M. Brandão de Brito (eds.), *Dicionário de História do Estado Novo*, vol. II, 1996, Círculo de Leitores, Lisbon, p. 602-604.

³⁵ Reforms of art. 45 of the Political Constitution, Laws no. 2048, 11.6.1951, and no. 3/71, 16.8.1971, respectively.

³⁶ See Fátima Patriarca, *A questão social no Salazarismo, 1930-1947*, vol. II, 1995, Imprensa Nacional Casa da Moeda, Lisbon, and Maria Inácia Rezola, *O sindicalismo católico no Estado Novo, 1931-1948*, 1999, Editorial Estampa, Lisbon.

³⁷ See Mário Lage, ‘Testemunhas de Jeová’, in: António Barreto/Maria Filomena Mónica (eds.), *Dicionário de História de Portugal*, vol. IX (Supplement P/Z), 2000, Figueirinhas, Oporto, p. 513-514. According to Pedro Pinto, 718 Jehova Witnesses were “sentenced to jail and imprisoned for different periods of time for interrogation and to declare” to the political police between 1961 and 1974 (‘Testemunhas de Jeová. Uma minoria perseguida no Estado Novo’, *História XXIV/48*, 2002, p. 38-45). On Tocoists, see René Pélissier, *La colonie du Minotaure: nationalisme et révoltes en Angola (1926-1961)*,

In both countries, the Church achieved highly positive results for its political projects out of that intimate, though sometimes competitive, relationship with the State, reinforcing its political and institutional weight in a number of aspects. In Portugal, while launching a furious attack against “atheist Communism that threatens Christian civilisation like a universal scourge”, in 1936 the bishops denounced “a wave of paganism [that] invades the world”. Their specific object of criticism was not Nazi *neopaganism* but rather “the insurrection [*insurreição*] of the three sources of human concupiscence [...]: sensuality, pride and greed”; through them, “the impure goddess of the pagan, whose cruelty they proclaim themselves, is already shown in theatres and cinemas, on beaches and spas, in amusement and entertainment celebrations”.³⁸ The Portuguese Church seemed concerned, more than the Spanish, to pretend publicly “to not let itself ever to be tied to the triumphant chariot of the lords of the world”. But, in its typical rhetoric, it claimed its task of “lighting the way through which all will be able to pass, respecting the rights of God and serving the sacred purposes of man”.³⁹

Salazar’s regime, so it seems, shared the prejudices of the Catholic hierarchies, to whom Protestant minorities were leading a “sacrilegious and denationalising [movement] to spread through the sacred Portuguese land”. In April of 1940, the bishops, in a *Pastoral Coletiva*, cried out against the “weed of Protestantism” whose “enterprise” hurt “our Catholic sentiment and our Portuguese pride”, asking themselves:

“In troubled times, where Protestantism divided Europe and soaked it with blood, we kept united in the faith and raised ourselves to the height of glory, now that it is in dissolution and divided in numerous sects, should we watch its invasion idly and in criminal indifference? Never!”

The Church and State shared, fourteen years after the fall of the secularist Republic and in the year of the Concordat, the thesis that “the greatness of Portugal is based in the granular unity of our most faithful (*fidelíssima*) nation”, “so that our homeland won’t die: ‘a single God, a single Christ, a single faith and a single Fatherland’”.⁴⁰

Moreover, Salazar’s regime and its Catholics, as with most of the Western modern right-wingers (and not only them), shared the same basic prejudice against Jews, but nevertheless produced cultural and theoretical discourses that were a lot less aggressive, both socially and legally, than those present in Nazi Germany and its allies, Franco’s Spain included. In front of all the evidence of the genocidal

1978, Éditions Pélissier, Orgeval, p. 173-179.

³⁸ ‘Pastoral colectiva sobre o comunismo e alguns problemas da hora presente’, *Lumen* I/4, 1937, p. 209-226.

³⁹ Cardinal Cerejeira, ‘Mensagem de Natal aos homens de boa vontade’, *Lumen* II/2, 1938, p. 67.

⁴⁰ ‘Pastoral Colectiva do Episcopado Português’ (20.4.1940), *Lumen* IV/6, 1940, p. 349-359.

significance of the deportations developing in Germany and German-occupied countries, known to the Portuguese and Spanish diplomats and sometimes even affecting Jews of Portuguese and Spanish descent (in the Netherlands and in France) or under Portuguese or Spanish protection (in those two countries and Greece), not a single official voice in Lisbon, much less in Madrid, was heard opposing anti-Semitic violence; until 1944, every diplomat and every consul who tried or advised to do so was prevented from taking action, or punished.⁴¹ The whole official attitude of the Portuguese, as well as the Spanish, as Berlin saw it, was that of tacit consent, and even relief, for what was being done to the Jews; some members of the Portuguese regime, and quite a few of the Spanish one, for that matter, even said and wrote that they understood German policies.⁴²

Francoism went a lot further than Salazarism in the legal and political affirmation of Spain's *sustancialidad católica*. Ever since the 1936 *Alzamiento* was set in motion, the self-proclaimed Catholicism of the Francoist coalition was as evident as the enthusiastic and practically unanimous adhesion of the Church's hierarchy, with the striking exception of some of the Basque and Catalan bishops, in what was called a religious 'Crusade' in September 1936. The most qualified representatives of the hierarchy were present in the highest ranks of the institutional architecture Franco began to build in 1942; every single one of the main para-constitutional documents of Franco's regime (the *Leyes Fundamentales*) was explicitly intended to "renew the Catholic Tradition" of the "National State as a totalitarian State",⁴³ describing Spain as "a Catholic State"⁴⁴ who, as "a mark of honour, obeys the Law of God, according to the Holy Roman Catholic Apostolic Church, the only true law, and a faith inseparable from national conscience".⁴⁵ Politically relevant Catholic leaders systematically took control of public education and censorship departments; as early as 1941, a 'Falangist Catholic' such as Arias Salgado was appointed to manage propaganda and press, driving more secular falangists, like Dionisio Ridruejo or Antonio Tovar, away.

As Antonio Canales rightly highlights, there was "a generic agreement

⁴¹ Aristides Sousa Mendes, the Portuguese consul in Bordeaux in 1940, became the best known of these cases. He was punished and expelled from public office after signing almost three thousand visas to refugees, mostly Jewish, fleeing from the Wehrmacht invading France in June 1940 without Salazar's due authorisation (see Rui Afonso, *Injustiça. O caso Sousa Mendes*, 1990, Editorial Caminho, Lisbon, and *Um homem bom. Aristides Sousa Mendes, o Wallenberg português*, 1995, Editorial Caminho, Lisbon). Other consuls were punished by Salazar for the same reason: Lencastre e Menezes (Athens) in 1935, Agenore Magno (Milan) in 1940 and António Archer (Paris) in 1941.

⁴² See Avraham Milgram, *Portugal, Salazar e os judeus*, 2010, Gradiva, Lisbon; Irene Flunser Pimentel (in co-operation with Christa Heinrich), *Judeus em Portugal durante a II Guerra Mundial. Em fuga de Hitler e do Holocausto*, 2006, A Esfera dos Livros, Lisbon; Bernd Rother, *Franco y el Holocausto*, 2005, Marcial Pons, Madrid; Antonio Marquina/Gloria Inés Ospina, *España y los judíos en el siglo XX. La acción exterior*, 1987, Espasa Calpe, Madrid.

⁴³ *Fuero del Trabajo*, 9.3.1938.

⁴⁴ *Ley de Sucesión en la Jefatura del Estado*, 7.6.1947.

⁴⁵ *Ley de Principios del Movimiento Nacional*, 17.5.1958.

[between Church and State] in their will to carry out a radical reconstruction of society which would forever destroy the political and social expectations of the liberal State”.⁴⁶ Feliciano Blázquez calls it “a society of mutual insurance [.] the Church morally supported the State and the State would convert the Church to a ‘Church of power’. All of the State’s resources were available to the ecclesiastical institution”.⁴⁷

All in all, Catholics, especially right-wing politically-organised Catholics, could not have remained untouched by the ideologically overwhelming effects of the ‘Age of Fascism’. They were not at all mere external observers of the international allure of Fascism, which spread throughout Europe. This is true for most of the right-wing, anti-revolutionary and anti-liberal forces, at least, and there is clear evidence that Iberian Catholics, inside Salazar’s and Franco’s regimes, shared a common ground with most of the political Right of the 1930s and 1940s, on which the Eurofascist ‘New Order’ was rooted, although some significant differences existed with the two national movements.

Firstly, they endorsed an authoritarian solution to the crisis of the European liberal system, for which they were actively co-responsible and thought it opened a hugely promising opportunity for a religious rebirth and a political restoration of the Church powers. Also, most of them did not refuse to collaborate with Fascists in the vast coalitions they were a part of, or even to have Fascists leading them to a new type of regime, in which they participated in a competitive attitude, as any of their allies.

Secondly, they completely accepted the logic of the leader’s sacralisation – the *Chefe* (Salazar), the *Caudillo* (Franco)⁴⁸ –, a political and symbolic procedure publicly endorsed by the Church, which was intended to develop a civil political religion, necessarily tailored to the specific characteristics of each of the two Iberian dictators and their regimes, consolidating the cult of the leader with Catholic traditional religious practices, deliberately describing them as unconflicting.

Thirdly, they developed particular forms of compatibility between Catholic traditional values and the political needs of the State, when the latter had already been taken by the authoritarian coalition or, like in the Spanish Civil War, in the process of taking it. This meant, as it is always the case during armed conflicts, to establish a cult of death and violence, naturally a lot more visible in the Spanish case during and after the 1936-39 war. The *¡Viva la muerte!* outcry by general Millán-Astray in 1936 at the University of Salamanca, immediately followed by *¡Muera la inteligencia!*, was absolutely coherent with the

⁴⁶ Canales Serrano, ‘Iglesia y totalitarismo’, op. cit., p. 523-524.

⁴⁷ Blázquez, *La traición de los clérigos*, op. cit., p. 44.

⁴⁸ See Alberto Reig Tapia, *Franco ‘Caudillo’: mito y realidad*, 1996, Tecnos, Madrid, and Laura Zenobi, *La construcción del mito de Franco*, 2011, Cátedra, Madrid.

National-Catholic discourse on the need to ‘cleanse’/‘purify’ Spanish society from ‘Red barbarism’ and ‘folly’ through heavy and merciless repression. On the other side of the Iberian border, research should focus a lot more than it has on the ideological and symbolic effects of the Colonial War (1961-74) and the extremely heavy burden it has imposed on the Portuguese (over 900,000 soldiers drafted and sent to African war fronts, 250,000 others fleeing the country to avoid the military service; 30,000 injured; 10,000 dead; 40,000-120,000 ex-combatants with post-traumatic stress disorder). Needless to say, together with the “militarisation of day-to-day life”, the “massiveness and humiliation, military classification and moral re-education, renunciation and relentlessness” of the Francoist concentrationary universe,⁴⁹ this cult of violence and expiation of the defeated/opposer was especially adequate to provide a common ground for the symbolic power of the Church, Army and State.

Finally, Iberian Catholics revived a clearly tridentine attitude against minorities. They targeted especially religious minoritarian communities, but they were evidently aware of the political, cultural and above all repressive significance of their attitude. Slogans such as the Portuguese ‘one God, one Christ, one faith, one Fatherland’ produced a sinister resonance in a country where thousands of African Tocoists, Muslims and Portuguese Jehovah’s Witnesses were sent to jail for political reasons; in Spain, Franco targeted Jews, bluntly decreeing the 1492 ‘Catholic Monarchs’ (Ferdinand and Isabella) Edict of Expulsion. Anti-semitism (though obviously not genocidal) was widely disseminated in the media and the political discourse, not only during the ‘Age of Fascism’, but also after 1945. Franco himself would recurrently speak out against the ‘Jewish-Mason conspiracy’ (*contubernio judeomasónico*) and what he described as the intrinsically dangerous Jews...⁵⁰

Julián Casanova called our attention towards “that perfect mask, provided [to Franco] by the Church, [of] religion, as a refuge from his tyranny and cruelty”, without which “Franco would have had much more difficulty in keeping his unlimited power”. The question is obviously relevant because “the inestimable blessing and allegiance of the Catholic Church to the [Civil] war [...] allowed a good number of historians, sociologists and political scientists to detach Francoism from historic fascisms”, while, in fact, and “for some time, during and after the war, Fascism and Catholicism had been compatible, both in speech and in daily life, in projects which grew amongst the [Francoist] rebels and in governance and life patterns imposed by the victors”.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Javier Rodrigo, *Cautivos. Campos de concentración en la España franquista, 1936-1947*, Crítica, Barcelona, p. 9, 313.

⁵⁰ Gonzalo Álvarez Chillida, *El Antisemitismo en España. La imagen del judío (1812-2002)*, 2002, Marcial Pons, Madrid, p. 396-401.

⁵¹ Casanova, ‘Una dictadura de cuarenta años’, op. cit., p. 10-11.

Salazarist and Francoist post-1943/44 strategies for survival after the imminent collapse of Nazi-Fascism emphasised a National-Catholic identity in both regimes, pretending it had been, retrospectively, the only significant and legitimate version of the *Estado Novo*'s and the *Nuevo Estado*'s ideologies. That deliberate strategy of the 1940s to rewrite the recent past now became, after over a half-century, consistent with some bizarre and somewhat flimsy thesis of denying any specific ideological substance to Salazarism and Francoism. This thesis emphasises the personal pragmatism of the dictators, depicts their regimes as having been simply made to endure,⁵² and underestimates or depicts them as permanently (deliberately?) defective of most of their prototypical, ideological, and self-defined characteristics, such as Portuguese Corporatism or Spanish Falangism and, in their early stages, explicit Totalitarianism. Two by-products of these interpretations – quite contradictory, by the way – are both an over-estimation of Catholic power in both regimes, and the highly disputable interpretation of the *Estado Novo* as a liberal separation regime between Church and State.

⁵² See Javier Tusell, *La dictadura de Franco*, 1988, Alianza, Madrid, and Filipe Ribeiro de Meneses, *Salazar. Uma biografia política*, 2010, Dom Quixote, Lisbon.

CHIESA E FALANGE DURANTE LA GUERRA CIVILE SPAGNOLA

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Anche i più convinti sostenitori delle differenze esistenti tra il regime spagnolo uscito dalla guerra civile e quello di Mussolini convergono nel considerare la Falange come la formazione politica del paese iberico più prossima al fascismo italiano. In questo senso la si considera anche nel presente saggio, volto a delineare la percezione che ne ebbero gli ambienti ecclesiastici spagnoli e la Santa Sede, il giudizio che ne diedero e l'atteggiamento che assunsero nei suoi confronti, utilizzando quali fonti principali la documentazione dell'Archivio Gomá e dell'Archivio Segreto Vaticano (ASV), in particolare della Nunziatura di Madrid e della Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari (AEC).

Se si escludono lo studio di José Andrés Gallego, particolarmente attento alla figura del sacerdote Fermín Yzurdiaga per quasi un anno alla guida della propaganda falangista, e le pagine che vi ha dedicato Gonzalo Redondo,¹ non esistono specifiche ricerche sul rapporto tra Chiesa e falangismo durante la guerra civile e anche la letteratura dedicata alla Falange e al fascismo spagnolo ha finora trascurato questo aspetto. A essa è comunque necessario attingere per richiamare sommariamente la vicenda e le principali caratteristiche dell'organizzazione politica dalla sua fondazione alla guerra civile e poi durante.²

¹ José Andrés-Gallego, *¿Fascismo o Estado católico? Política, Religión y censura en la España de Franco*, 1997, Encuentro, Madrid; Gonzalo Redondo, *Historia de la Iglesia en España, 1931-1939*, I, *La segunda República (1931-1936)*, 1993, Rialp, Madrid, p. 340-354. Nato a Pamplona nel 1903 e ordinato nel 1926, Fermín Yzurdiaga aveva fondato nell'agosto del 1936 *Arriba España*, poi *Jerarquía: revista negra de la Falange*, che pubblicò quattro numeri tra il 1937 e il '38. Nominato da Franco *Jefe de Prensa y Propaganda* della FET y de las JONS nella primavera del 1937, rimase in carica fino al febbraio del 1938, nonostante la contrarietà del primate che a più riprese intervenne sulle autorità franchiste. Sul periodo immediatamente successivo, invece cfr. Alfonso Lazo, *La Iglesia, la Falange y el fascismo: (un estudio sobre la prensa española de postguerra)*, 1995, Secretariado de publicaciones de la Universidad de Sevilla, Sevilla.

² Manuel Pastor, *Los orígenes del fascismo en España*, 1975, Tucar, Madrid; Sheelagh M. Ellwood, *Prietas las filas: historia de la Falange Española 1933-1983*, 1984, Crítica, Barcelona; Julio Gil Pecharrómán, *José Antonio Primo de Rivera. Retrato de un visionario*, 1996, Temas de hoy, Madrid; José Luis Rodríguez Jiménez, *Historia de la Falange Española de las Jons*, 2000, Alianza, Madrid; L. Casali, *Società di massa, giovani, rivoluzione. Il fascismo di Ramiro Ledesma Ramos*, 2002, Clueb, Bologna; Ismael

Da movimento a partito unico

Il movimento falangista nasce nella prima metà degli anni Trenta in un paese fortemente secolarizzato e in molte regioni persino scristianizzato (secondo autorevoli fonti ecclesiastiche), ma nel quale il cattolicesimo resta un *habitus* culturale e la Chiesa, nonostante le leggi laicizzatrici della Seconda Repubblica, l'istituzione più solida assieme all'esercito. Date queste premesse i falangisti non possono non essere o dirsi cattolici. Lo sono però nel senso che individuano nel cattolicesimo un elemento forte, anzi centrale e fondante, dell'identità nazionale, nel solco di quella tradizione nazionalcattolica che considera cattolicesimo e Spagna come consustanziali.³ È stato giustamente osservato che i fascisti spagnoli furono *ghibellini*, anticlericali, poco vaticanisti, ma senza smettere mai di considerarsi figli della Chiesa.⁴

I primi passi risalgono all'inizio degli anni Trenta con il *Manifesto político de la conquista del Estado* di Ramiro Ledesma Ramos (febbraio 1931) e la nascita della *Junta castellana de Actuación Hispanica* di Onésimo Redondo (9 agosto 1931). Nel 1931 il gruppo di Ledesma si fonde con quello di Redondo: nascono le *Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindacalistas* (JONS). Ledesma Ramos assimila il punto di vista cattolico di Onésimo e nel terzo dei 17 punti programmatici della nuova organizzazione si legge del "massimo rispetto per la tradizione religiosa della nostra stirpe". Il 16 marzo 1933 esce *El Fascio*. Riporta il testo di una conversazione con Ledesma Ramos, che afferma:

"Cómo no vamos a ser católicos? Pues ¿no nos decimos titulares del alma nacional española, que ha dado precisamente al catolicismo lo más entrañable de ella: su salvación histórica y su imperio? La historia de la fe católica en Occidente, su esplendor y sus fatigas, se ha realizado con alma misma de España; es la historia de España. Pero quede bien claro que las JONS aceptan muy poco, se sienten muy poco solidarias de la actuación política de los partidos católicos que hoy existen en España. Viven éstos apartados de la realidad mundial, y al indicar como metas aceptables las conquistas y los equilibrios *belgas*, denuncian un empequeñecimiento intolerable de sus afanes propiamente nacionales, españoles".⁵

Sullo stesso (e unico) numero de *El Fascio*, compare un articolo di José Antonio Primo de Rivera,⁶ che nel frattempo ha abbandonato *Acción Nacional* (per la quale si era presentato a Madrid senza esito nelle elezioni del '31). Nell'ottobre 1933 J.A. Primo de Rivera si reca in visita a Mussolini.⁷ Il 29 ot-

Saz, *Fascismo y franquismo*, 2004, Publicaciones de la Universidad de València, Valencia; Ferran Gallego, *Ramiro Ledesma Ramos y el fascismo español*, 2005, Síntesis, Madrid.

³ Alfonso Botti, *Cielo y dinero. El nacionalcatolicismo en España, 1881-1975*, 2008 (1° 1992), Alianza, Madrid.

⁴ Redondo, *Historia de la Iglesia en España*, op. cit., p. 342.

⁵ 'Qué son las JONS', *El Fascio*, 16 marzo 1933, p. 14-15.

⁶ E. [J.A. Primo de Rivera], 'Hacia un nuevo Estado', *El Fascio*, 16 marzo 1933, p. 2.

⁷ Paul Preston, *Le tre Spagne del '36*, 1999, Corbaccio, Milano, p. 112-114.

tobre 1933 nel teatro madrileno della Comedia nasce la Falange Española. L'ottavo dei punti programmatici si legge che "L'interpretazione cattolica della vita è non solo quella vera, ma è anche storicamente quella spagnola". Più avanti che la ricostruzione della Spagna deve avere un senso cattolico, così pure il nuovo Stato, che al riparo dalle intromissioni concorderà con la Chiesa le protezioni che le sono dovute. Nel febbraio '34, i due minuscoli raggruppamenti si fondono: nasce la *FE y de la Jons*. Tra i punti del manifesto programmatico, il venticinquesimo afferma che il "movimento incorpora il senso cattolico (di gloriosa tradizione e predominante in Spagna) e che la Chiesa e lo Stato concorderanno le rispettive facoltà, senza intromissioni reciproche e attività che inficino la dignità dello Stato o l'integrità nazionale". Il ventisettesimo dichiara che nella lotta per la conquista dello Stato la Falange ridurrà al minimo la collaborazione con forze mantenendo sempre il predominio su di esse. Ipernazionalismo, statalismo, corporativismo, antimarxismo, concezione gerarchica, giovanilismo, antiautonismo sono le principali caratteristiche del movimento sul piano ideologico. Nel gennaio 1935 Ledesma rompe con Primo de Rivera in seguito alla rivoluzione delle Asturie delle cui conseguenze avrebbe voluto approfittare e, nel corso dello stesso anno, pubblica il periodico *La Patria libre e ¿Fascismo en España?* nel quale distingue tra "fascistizzati" (Calvo Sotelo, Primo de Rivera, un settore dell'esercito) e i veri fascisti di cui ci sarebbe bisogno. Nel febbraio del '36 la *FE de la Jons* ha dai 5 ai 7 mila affiliati, ma nelle settimane e mesi successivi ad ingrossare le sue fila concorrono soprattutto militanti dell'organizzazione giovanile della CEDA.⁸ Dopo l'insuccesso elettorale nelle elezioni del 16 febbraio 1936 (circa 40.000 voti e nessun seggio) la Falange viene posta fuori legge e Primo de Rivera incarcerato. Scoppiata la guerra civile e morti i tre leader, dell'organizzazione rimasta acefala prende la guida Manuel Hedilla, che non si mostra capace di superare la crisi di leadership, mentre si accentua l'influenza fascista e nazista a seguito dell'intervento militare italiano e tedesco a sostegno di Franco. In questo quadro cade il decreto di unificazione (19 aprile 1937) che, fortemente voluto da Serrano Suñer nel tentativo di creare il partito unico sul modello italiano e tedesco, unifica la Falange con *Comunión tradicionalista* (carlisti), nel quale è già confluito il minuscolo raggruppamento dei Legionarios de Albiñana,⁹ facendo nascere la *FET y de las Jons* (d'ora in avanti indicata semplicemente come Falange). Unificazione invisiva ai leader dei due movimenti, Hedilla e Manuel Fal Conde, il primo dei quali venne imprigionato, condannato a morte e poi graziato da Franco, mentre il secondo si trovava già esule in Portogallo al momento dell'uni-

⁸ José María Gil Robles, *No fue posible la paz*, 1968, Suramericana, Buenos Aires, p. 687-688.

⁹ Julio Gil Pecharromán, *Sobre España inmortal, sólo Dios. José María Albiñana y el Partido Nacionalista Español (1930-1937)*, 2002, Uned, Madrid.

ficazione.¹⁰ Durante la guerra civile le milizie della Falange operano, secondo Stanley G. Payne, prevalentemente nelle retrovie, tanto che considera più attendibili, se invertiti, i dati forniti da fonte falangista, secondo cui alla fine del '36 erano 50.000 i falangisti al fronte e 30.000 nelle retrovie. Numero che certamente crebbe nei mesi successivi, anche se è da prendere con la cautele del caso l'esistenza all'aprile del '37, di 126.000 falangisti in armi, accreditata sempre da una fonte interna.¹¹

E la Chiesa?

Fin dall'ottobre 1934, un anno dopo la fondazione della Falange, l'arcivescovo di Toledo, in privato, aveva avanzato il sospetto che si trattasse di un movimento laicista, simile al fascismo italiano.¹²

Il 13 agosto 1936, nel primo rapporto a Pacelli, segretario di Stato di Pio XI, il cardinale primate Isidro Gomá segnala che nella Falange, che identifica con il Fascio, e in Renovación Española predomina il *sentimiento patrio*, sebbene nella stragrande maggioranza siano *católicos prácticos*. Aggiunge che a volte ci sarebbe da rimproverare il Fascio per l'eccessiva durezza nella rappresaglia.¹³ Nel secondo rapporto, del 4 settembre, riferisce della compattezza dei volontari (Requetés e Falange), affermando che le differenze tra i due gruppi sono meno accentuate di quanto possa apparire a prima vista, dal momento che entrambi aspirano all'unità cattolica e alla restaurazione della Spagna dei re cattolici. Aggiunge che un possibile scontro potrebbe verificarsi sul piano politico, dal momento che i fascisti sembrano volere un centralismo assoluto, effetto della loro concezione dello Stato, mentre i tradizionalisti hanno nel loro programma la difesa di un sano regionalismo.¹⁴

Nel rapporto che Gomá consegna a Pacelli in occasione della sua visita a Roma nel dicembre del 1936, la Falange viene descritta come un partito di scarso contenuto ideologico, in antitesi con le tendenze della Repubblica, che rivendica il diritto all'esercizio della violenza e al quale si sono affiliati in modo crescente migliaia di "socializzanti", probabilmente per la prevedibile vittoria dei nazionali. Le prospettive future del partito, sono a suo avviso un'incognita, anche perché la fucilazione di Primo de Rivera ha reso acefala l'organizzazione. Gomá preconizza tre possibili scenari. Il primo vedrebbe l'assorbimento dei falangisti più affini nel processo di aggregazione in corso fra tradizionalisti, Reno-

¹⁰ Maximiano García Venero, *Falange en la guerra de España: la unificación y Hedilla*, 1967, Ruedo Ibérico, Paris; Herbert Rutledge Southworth, *Antifalange: estudio crítico de Falange en la guerra de España*, 1967, Ruedo Ibérico, Paris.

¹¹ Stanley G. Payne, *Falange. Historia del fascismo español*, 1986, Sarpe, Madrid, p. 140.

¹² Andrés Gallego, *¿Fascismo o Estado católico?*, op. cit., p. 35.

¹³ J. Andrés-Gallego/A. M. Pazos Rodríguez (eds.), *Archivo Gomá. Documentos de la Guerra Civil*, vol. 1 (*Julio-Diciembre 1936*), 2001, CSIC, Madrid, p. 87.

¹⁴ Andrés-Gallego/Pazos Rodríguez (eds.), *Archivo Gomá*, vol. 1, op. cit., p. 117.

vación Española e ciò che resta della CEDA, che lascerebbe nella Falange solo gli elementi di sinistra del Fascio attuale. Il secondo vedrebbe la creazione di un organismo dirigente di destra, che potrebbe rappresentare l'approdo anche per i giovani dell'Azione cattolica. Osserva tuttavia – ed è questo il terzo scenario – che va conquistando credibilità l'evoluzione verso un fascismo ritagliato secondo il modello tedesco e italiano.

L'8 aprile 1937 Gomá scrive a Pacelli che la Falange ha più di cento mila combattenti nell'esercito. E continua:

“La sua tendenza è imperialista e il suo sentimento predominante quello della forza, che forse è stato spinto fino all'esagerazione in alcune circostanze. Si accentua la sua propensione all'idea cristiana. Conta su varie dozzine di periodici, alcuni dei quali di definita ideologia cattolica”.¹⁵

Ricevuto da Pizzardo il testo della *Mit brennender Sorge*, Gomá gli scrive il 16 aprile che è sicuro che farà del bene nel paese, “dove al riparo di una certa bandiera politica si comincia a disegnare un'ideologia semipagana, che temo fondatamente si vada chiaramente separando del sentimento cattolico così radicato nella nostra Spagna”.¹⁶ Non lo esplicita ma è alla Falange o a settori di essa, che allude.

Nel frattempo, il 5 aprile, Pacelli ha chiesto delucidazioni su inopportune dichiarazioni di Manuel Hedilla, delle quali ha appreso da *Il Messaggero* del 26 marzo.¹⁷ Il 20 aprile Gomá risponde di aver saputo da Franco che tali dichiarazioni erano prive di valore, aggiungendovi considerazioni poco lusinghiere su Hedilla e le sue doti intellettuali e politiche, dicendolo espressione di un gruppo simpatizzante con i nuovi orientamenti dello Stato totalitario che considera minoritari in Spagna. La lettera contiene anche un primo commento al discorso tenuto da Franco in occasione dell'unificazione. Gomá, che pure ne fa una lettura complessivamente tranquillizzante, vi coglie “alcune espressioni che rivelano lo spirito della Falange e le tendenze a quella che chiameremmo mistica fascista”.¹⁸

Solo quattro giorni dopo, il 24 aprile, in un rapporto a Pacelli, il porporato si mostra preoccupato di un eventuale indebolimento della Falange a motivo della pubblicazione in Spagna della *Mit brennender Sorge*. Scrive infatti che in ragione del recente Decreto di unificazione, si sono verificate alcune discrepanze di valutazione tra i diversi gruppi politici (si riferisce alle componenti interne) e che in queste circostanze

¹⁵ J. Andrés-Gallego/A. M. Pazos Rodríguez (eds.), *Archivo Gomá. Documentos de la Guerra Civil*, vol. 5 (*Abril-Mayo 1937*), 2003, CSIC, Madrid, p. 87.

¹⁶ Andrés-Gallego/Pazos Rodríguez (eds.), *Archivo Gomá*, vol. 5, op. cit., p. 161.

¹⁷ Andrés-Gallego/Pazos Rodríguez (eds.), *Archivo Gomá*, vol. 5, op. cit., p. 44-45.

¹⁸ Andrés-Gallego/Pazos Rodríguez (eds.), *Archivo Gomá*, vol. 5, op. cit., p. 189-194.

“L’Enciclica potrebbe servire da pretesto per censurare una delle componenti dell’unione, la Falange Spagnola, di tendenza più o meno hitleriana, con probabile pregiudizio della massima unità che dev’essere la nota predominante negli attuali momenti critici che attraversa la Spagna”.¹⁹

Dov’è evidente che il porporato pospone la diffusione dell’insegnamento del magistero a ragioni di ordine militare e politico. Nello stesso documento riporta le voci secondo cui all’unificazione non sarebbero state estranee pressioni tedesche e osserva che il Decreto ha incorporato il programma della Falange. Ma aggiunge di non ritenere che il decreto sia stato emanato sotto l’influenza straniera.²⁰ Anzi lo giustifica dicendolo motivato dalla necessità di esercitare un maggiore controllo sulla Falange e risolvere le diatribe al suo interno. Scrive che è stato ben accolto (senza insistere sull’eliminazione delle altre componenti politiche: *Renovación Española* e *Acción Popular*) e di confidare sull’azione moderatrice dei tradizionalisti. Ritiene ben orientati (cioè condivisibili) la maggior parte dei 26 punti della Falange, chiosando criticamente i punti 7, 23 e 25. Del punto 7, che premessa la dignità umana, l’integrità e la sua libertà come valori eterni e intangibili, recita che “sólo es de veras libre quien forma parte de una nación fuerte y libre”, osserva che contiene affermazioni che si prestano a dubbi ed errori dottrinali. Del 25 coglie il carattere insidioso dell’ultima parte (che recita “sin que se admita intromisión o actividad alguna que menoscabe la dignidad del Estado o la integridad nacional”). Aggiunge che non è stato incorporato il punto 27 sulla completa egemonia della Falange, che annunciava la conquista dello Stato senza accettare il contributo di altre forze, senza patteggiamenti e solo a condizione che gli alleati accettassero il predominio della Falange.²¹

Il 25 giugno 1937 Gomá cambia opinione scrivendo a Pacelli che appare ogni giorno più evidente che la fusione fu imposta delle due potenze che aiutano militarmente Franco. Anzi, che sarebbe stata una condizione per proseguire l’aiuto. Aggiunge che decreto e fusione sono stati prematuri e che i due gruppi rivaleggiano per il predominio, accentuando le differenze. Osserva che non poteva accadere diversamente per la enorme distanza che li separa sul piano ideologico e per la storia delle due componenti. Nello scontro in atto vede prevalere la Falange per 1) la scelta del suo programma e del suo stesso nome come base comune; 2) il temperamento invasivo dei falangisti, mentre i *Requetés* sarebbero più misurati; 3) l’attività dei dirigenti falangisti più tenaci e meno rispettosi dei tradizionalisti; 4) l’influenza tedesca (di cui occupa poi in un successivo paragrafo); 5) per la debole resistenza dei tradizionalisti. Aggiunge che la morte di Mola, avvenuta il 3 giugno 1937, che pure considera di spirito

¹⁹ Andrés-Gallego/Pazos Rodríguez (eds.), *Archivo Gomá*, vol. 5, op. cit., p. 234.

²⁰ Andrés-Gallego/Pazos Rodríguez (eds.), *Archivo Gomá*, vol. 5, op. cit., p. 235.

²¹ Andrés-Gallego/Pazos Rodríguez (eds.), *Archivo Gomá*, vol. 5, op. cit., p. 237-238.

religioso meno cristiano di Franco, ha privato i tradizionalisti di quella sponda che sarebbe stata loro necessaria per esercitare un peso maggiore. Conclude affermando che gran numero di falangisti (specie del nord) sono di eccellente spirito cristiano, a cui segue una serie di informazioni sull'influenza tedesca.²²

Tralasciando dati di minore importanza inerenti il giudizio ecclesiastico sulla Falange che la documentazione proveniente dall'Archivio Gomá lascia trapelare,²³ anche la lettera collettiva del 1937 (voluta da Franco e redatta dal solo Gomá per orientare il cattolicesimo internazionale che, soprattutto in Francia, ma non solo, aveva trovato autorevoli voci fuori dal coro, sostenitrici della necessità che la Chiesa assumesse una posizione di equidistanza tra i belligeranti, su tutte quelle di Sturzo, Maritain, Mounier, Mauriac, Bernanos, ecc.) contiene un cenno al problema del fascismo. È quello in cui si legge che la Chiesa, “non ha potuto farsi solidale con le linee di condotta, le tendenze o le intenzioni che, nel presente o nell'avvenire, potessero snaturalizzare la nobile fisionomia del movimento nazionale nella sua origine, nelle sue manifestazioni e nei suoi fini”. E più avanti:

“Circa l'avvenire, non possiamo predire quanto accadrà, terminata la lotta. Quello che affermiamo è che la guerra non fu voluta per innalzare uno Stato autocrata sopra una nazione umiliata, ma solo perché risorga lo spirito nazionale con la forza e la libertà cristiana dei tempi antichi. Confidiamo nella prudenza degli uomini di governo, che non vorranno copiare modelli stranieri per la configurazione del futuro Stato spagnolo, ma terranno conto delle esigenze proprie della vita nazionale del solco apertosi dai secoli passati.”

I diffusi e crescenti timori per l'influenza nazista, non riguardano automaticamente anche la Falange. Per quanto venga ritenuta la componente più sensibile alle pressioni tedesche, essa continua a contare sull'apprezzamento ecclesiastico, che la considera in grado di orientarsi ideologicamente in diverso modo. L'esistenza del partito unico, in quanto tale, infatti, non desta preoccupazione di sorta. Nel suo *Catecismo patriótico Español* (1938), per esempio, il domenicano Ignacio G. Menéndez Reigada spiega che siccome i partiti sono espressione artificiale del regime parlamentare, gli spagnoli si organizzeranno politicamente nella Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las JONS che sarà nell'ordine politico l'organizzazione intermedia tra il popolo spagnolo e lo Stato. Il domenicano, in linea perfetta con l'insegnamento di Pio XI, che nel discorso ai rappresentanti della Federazione francese dei sindacati cristiani del settembre del 1938 aveva detto che se c'era “un regime totalitario – totalitario

²² J. Andrés-Gallego/A. M. Pazos Rodríguez (eds.), *Archivo Gomá. Documentos de la Guerra Civil*, vol. 6 (*Junio-Julio 1937*), 2004, CSIC, Madrid, p. 218-226.

²³ Come, per esempio, l'irritazione del cardinale per una circolare del segretario della Falange (AG, 6, p. 176, 262), o come la proposta di riformulazione del punto 25 della Falange, pervenutagli da un religioso (AG, 7, p. 402-405).

di fatto e di diritto —” questo era “il regime della Chiesa, perché l’uomo appartiene totalmente alla Chiesa”, e con l’obiettivo di un “totalitarismo divino” avanzato da Gomá nella pastorale pubblicata alla fine del conflitto, *Lecciones de la guerra y deberes de la paz*,²⁴ affermava poi che “lo Stato spagnolo è totalitario, se si intende in modo retto questa parola”. E distingueva tra uno Stato totalitario marxista, uno totalitario panteista (rappresentato dal nazismo, che pure si astiene dal nominare apertamente per l’aiuto che la Germania hitleriana sta offrendo a Franco), entrambi da respingere, e lo “Stato totalitario cristiano”, descritto come quello che “riconoscendo Dio come fonte di diritti e di doveri e la persona umana come fonte di diritti inalienabili, regola, armonizza e incanala tutti questi diritti privati o collettivi in ordine al bene comune”.²⁵

Il 9 ottobre Antoniutti (Incaricato d’Affari presso il governo di Burgos dal 21 settembre) scrive del colloquio avuto due giorni prima con Franco, nel corso del quale riferisce di aver trattato della “questione scottante della Falange, nella quale sono entrati già elementi poco rassicuranti”. A questo proposito, il rapporto inviato a Pacelli così prosegue:

“Egli mi accennò ai recenti statuti da lui dati a questa organizzazione nazionale, nei quali sono esposti i principi direttivi cattolici cui devono essere ispirate le sue attività. In via confidenziale soggiunse che egli stesso aveva chiesto l’allontanamento del precedente Ambasciatore di Germania [Wilhelm von Faupel] il quale si occupava troppo, e in senso non cattolico, e quindi non spagnolo, delle organizzazioni falangiste. Certe manifestazioni di simpatia per la Germania sono dirette alla Nazione alleata, non al sistema statale da cui è retta. Desidero, soggiunse il Generalissimo, che siano interpretate in questo senso alcune nostre partecipazioni alla vita tedesca. Dobbiamo riconoscere che siamo debitori alla Germania di un grande aiuto in quest’ora difficile della nostra storia nazionale, e non possiamo non tenerne conto”.²⁶

Nel colloquio con Franco e in uno successivo con Sangróniz, del quale si apprende dal rapporto inviato a Pacelli il 16 dicembre dello stesso anno, Antoniutti manifesta preoccupazione per l’invio di falangisti in Germania.²⁷ Ulteriori diffidenze nei riguardi della Falange traspaiono nella gestione del rimpatrio dei bambini baschi evacuati dalle autorità del governo autonomo basco nella primavera del 1937, per sottrarli ai bombardamenti della città, ai rigori dell’imminente occupazione da parte delle truppe franchiste (e, non ultimo, per sottoporre all’attenzione mondiale la peculiare situazione basca), allorquando Chiesa e Falange si contendono la gestione e la ricaduta d’imma-

²⁴ Isidro Gomá (a cura di C. Baile), *Por Dios y por España, 1936-1939*, Rafael Cosulleras, Barcelona, 1940, p. 273.

²⁵ Albino G. Menéndez Reigada, *Catecismo patriótico español*, 1938, Est. Tipogr. de Calatrava, Salamanca. In questa sede si utilizza la terza edizione, del 1939, nella versione pubblicata da H. Ragner (2003, Península, Barcelona.), sulla Falange e lo Stato totalitario cristiano rispettivamente p. 72-74 e 75-80.

²⁶ ASV, Nunziatura di Madrid, b. 968, f. 234.

²⁷ ASV, Nunziatura di Madrid, b. 968, f. 577.

gine del rimpatrio dei fanciulli. A questo riguardo risulta esplicita la nota che Antoniutti invia a Pacelli il 17 novembre 1937 nella quale dopo aver dato notizia dei primi rimpatri, scrive:

“Il rappresentante del Governo per la protezione dei minori esige dai genitori dei fanciulli che ritornano una speciale reclamazione diretta alle autorità dello Stato: senza questa i fanciulli non verrebbero consegnati. Diversi si sono lamentati di questa attitudine poco corretta verso l'ufficio del Rappresentante della S. Sede. Si è giunti al punto, durante la mia assenza, che i fanciulli ritornati in questo tempo hanno figurato sempre, nella Stampa, come richiamati dalla falange, mentre tutte le pratiche pel loro rimpatrio sono state fatte dal mio ufficio”.²⁸

Qualche settimana dopo su *El Diario vasco* compariva un articolo che non lasciava dubbi sulle ipotesi educative riservate alle nuove generazioni:

“la obra educativa de la España de Franco ha de alcanzar a todos los hijos de españoles, y que tiene que ejercitarse, principalmente, sobre las nuevas generaciones, para – según expresión italo-fascista – ‘su formación universitaria y totalitaria’. Como es sabido, dos grandes Estados – Alemania e Italia – van delanteros en la experiencia del régimen totalitario u de sus instituciones específicas, y, por consiguiente, nos ofrecen los primeros modelos del género, que habrán que ser diligente y cuidadosamente estudiados por todos los que quieran seguir por ignuales o parecidas sendas, aun con las consiguientes adaptaciones a las fuerzas y condiciones naturales, morales e históricas peculiares de cada país.”²⁹

Normalizzati i rapporti diplomatici con lo scambio delle credenziali dei rispettivi rappresentanti e insediato Gaetano Cicognani quale nunzio apostolico presso il governo di Burgos, questi invia il 28 agosto 1938 a Pacelli un lungo e dettagliato rapporto sulla situazione politica spagnola. In esso il nunzio si sofferma sulle persistenti divisioni all'interno del partito unico dopo l'unificazione e sulla preminenza della componente falangista. Vi si legge:

“Le idee che ‘F.E.’ svolge tutte di spirito nazista; come pure il tono, sempre deciso, e lo stile, che spesso diventa confuso, specialmente quando si vuole dimostrare la perfetta armonia fra la autentica tradizione spagnuola cattolica e le nuove dottrine”.³⁰

Di seguito descrive sommariamente *Jerarquía* e altre riviste di sport e varietà, poi le pressioni per far fondere le pubblicazioni per i giovani *Pelayos*, d'ispirazione cattolica, con *Flechas*, d'orientamento falangista, poi l'opera di beneficenza e i programmi d'intervento dello Stato in essa, soffermando sull'Auxilio social di Mercedes Snas Bachiller. Trasparente è la preoccupazione del nunzio di mostrare come lo Stato vada sottraendo terreno all'azione della Chiesa e come la

²⁸ ASV, Nunziatura di Madrid, b. 976, f. 535-536.

²⁹ Ramón de Olascoaga, ‘La repatriación de los niños y la educación totalitaria’, *El Diario vasco*, 30 gennaio 1938.

³⁰ ASV, AES, Spagna, IV periodo, Fasc. 336, p.o. 924, f. 43v.

Falange cerchi di penetrare nelle associazioni di maestri e medici cattolici. A questa si salda quella per la propaganda germanica tramite la traduzione di libri che diffondono l'idea che Hitler sia cattolico. Voci che, prosegue il nunzio,

“finiscono per prendere credito per la buona disposizione degli spagnuoli verso la Germania, unita in questo momento tragico alla loro Nazione; ma soprattutto queste voci prendono piede perché non vi è nessun giornale che faccia conoscere, nella sua realtà, la ideologia nazional-socialista e la persecuzione metodica e decisa che Hitler fa alla Chiesa”.³¹

Cicognani non è del tutto convinto della cattolicità della Falange, nonostante le ripetute manifestazioni in tal senso. O per lo meno che sinceramente cattolici siano tutti i falangisti.³² Scrive anzi che il nazionalsocialismo tedesco sta portando nel campo morale “uno spirito di paganesimo che anche qui sta penetrando e trasforma i costumi tradizionali di Spagna”.³³ Allega al rapporto varia documentazione, tra la quale spiccano ritagli di articoli che precisano l'atteggiamento della Falange nei riguardi del razzismo.³⁴

Nei mesi successivi l'emanazione di norme e leggi che andavano a colpire anche le libertà della Chiesa, unitamente ai segnali di avvicinamento alla Germania nazista, il cui culmine fu raggiunto con l'accordo culturale ispano-tedesco del febbraio 1939, allarmarono ulteriormente le autorità ecclesiastiche.³⁵ Ma non in modo uniforme e, anche in questo caso, senza riguardare necessariamente il giudizio sulla Falange. Nel novembre del 1938, per esempio, era giunto sul tavolo del nunzio il regolamento in vigore dal dicembre del 1937 per l'assistenza religiosa alla Falange nella diocesi di Tenerife, retta da quell'Albino G. Menéndez Reigada, già incontrato come autore de *Catecismo patriótico*, nel quale, definita la Falange come istituzione cattolica, si leggeva che la Chiesa e la Falange si amavano, si aiutavano e si servivano mutuamente, pur senza confondersi o invadere mutamente i rispettivi ambiti.³⁶ Più avvertito si mostrava in

³¹ ASV, AES, Spagna, IV periodo, Fasc. 336, p.o. 924, f. 47r.

³² ASV, AES, Spagna, IV periodo, Fasc. 336, p.o. 924, f. 47v.

³³ ASV, AES, Spagna, IV periodo, Fasc. 336, p.o. 924, f. 48r.

³⁴ Fermín Yzardiaga Lorca, 'Salida al encuentro. Falange, Raza y Razzismo', *Arriba España*, 14 agosto 1938, in cui si sostiene che la Falange non può essere razzista per il suo cattolicesimo; posizione ribadita nel successivo 'Cuatro escolios a un artículo sobre racismo', *Arriba España*, 16 agosto 1938, nel quale, escluso che la Falange potesse ammettere il razzismo filosofico e biologico, precisava che, proprio perché non era razzista e non ammetteva i valori del sangue, ma quelli dello spirito, i falangisti erano “essenzialmente, fondamentalmente, nemici degli ebrei”.

³⁵ Antonio Marquina Barrio, *La diplomazia vaticana y la España de Franco (1939-1945)*, 1983, CSIC, Madrid, p. 111-168, 433-448; Alfonso Álvarez Bolado, *Para ganar la guerra, para ganar la paz*, 1996, Universidad de Comillas, Madrid, p. 402-403; ma soprattutto la corrispondenza contenuta in J. Andrés-Gallego/A. M. Pazos Rodríguez (eds.), *Archivo Gomá. Documentos de la Guerra civil*, vol. 13 (*Enero-Marzo 1939*), 2010, CSIC, Madrid, passim.

³⁶ J. Andrés-Gallego/A. M. Pazos Rodríguez (eds.), *Archivo Gomá. Documentos de la Guerra civil*, vol. 12 (*Octubre-Diciembre 1938*), 2009, CSIC, Madrid, p. 206-214.

questo frangente Gomá che prendeva tempo di fronte alla richiesta avanzata dal vice segretario della Falange, Julián Pemartín, di estendere a tutto il territorio nazionale tale regolamento e che esprimeva al nunzio la propria contrarietà alla celebrazione di solenni funerali per J.A. Primo de Rivera, il cui mito, scriveva, era alimentato da settori falangisti e perché attorno al suo nome andava accumulandosi una letteratura tendenziosa “che imita orientamenti stranieri riprovevoli nel cammino politico di uno Stato Cristiano”.³⁷ E del pari avvertita si rilevava la conferenza della provincia ecclesiastica di Zaragoza, il cui documento conclusivo del 18 novembre interdive ai sacerdoti la possibilità di collaborare con la Falange, in quanto “partito di tendenze totalitarie e assorbenti, che in alcune nazioni non rispettano i diritti della Chiesa, né il diritto naturale”.³⁸ Già diverso era l’orientamento del vescovo di Mallorca che riferiva di aver autorizzato sacerdoti proposti dalla Falange come assistenti, come male minore.³⁹

La questione centrale non era tanto l’assistenza religiosa alla Falange e alle organizzazioni ad essa collegate, che non veniva messa in discussione, quanto piuttosto quella di chi dovesse nominare tali assistenti e cappellani. Onde evitare che la Falange procedesse a indicare sacerdoti ideologicamente affini, Gomá insisteva nell’attribuire la nomina agli ordinari. Di qui il caso scoppiato con la nomina, quale assistente della Sezione femminile della Falange, del benedettino Justo Pérez de Urbel, avvenuta al margine dell’autorità ecclesiastica competente.⁴⁰

Riassumendo i pareri pervenuti dalle province ecclesiastiche in vista della Conferenza dei metropolitani, Gomá registrava l’unanime diniego alla possibilità che i sacerdoti potessero iscriversi alla Falange, mentre la collaborazione era da quasi tutti i prelati ammessa, purché su disposizione dell’ordinario e limitata all’ambito ministeriale.⁴¹

Conclusioni

Dalla documentazione disponibile emerge un quadro abbastanza nitido sia della condotta romana, sia del giudizio che i vertici ecclesiastici spagnoli diedero della Falange e dell’atteggiamento che assunsero nei confronti di quest’ultima. L’evidenza di un colpo di stato militare non riuscito e pertanto causa della guerra civile, fu da Gomá contrastata con l’interpretazione fornita alla Santa Sede che si trattava di un movimento civico-militare che aveva sventato un colpo di mano comunista teso ad estirpare la presenza della Chiesa dal paese iberico. Quale articolazione politica del sostegno popolare alla sol-

³⁷ Andrés-Gallego/Pazos Rodríguez (eds.), *Archivo Gomá*, vol. 12, op. cit., p. 282.

³⁸ Andrés-Gallego/Pazos Rodríguez (eds.), *Archivo Gomá*, vol. 12, op. cit., p. 321.

³⁹ Andrés-Gallego/Pazos Rodríguez (eds.), *Archivo Gomá*, vol. 12, op. cit., p. 384.

⁴⁰ Andrés-Gallego/Pazos Rodríguez (eds.), *Archivo Gomá*, vol. 12, op. cit., p. 585, 641-642, 683-684.

⁴¹ Andrés-Gallego/Pazos Rodríguez (eds.), *Archivo Gomá*, vol. 13, op. cit., p. 434.

levazione, la Falange, che Gomá percepiva e raffigurava da subito come fascista. Su quest'ultima Gomá, trasmise inizialmente a Roma valutazioni che, per quanto contenessero spunti critici, offrivano nel complesso un quadro tranquillizzante, in virtù del carattere sostanzialmente cattolico attribuito all'organizzazione. Anche l'eventuale evoluzione della Falange verso modelli tedeschi e italiani, fu inizialmente presentata senza particolari accenti di preoccupazione. A suo avviso, non era la natura fascista dell'organizzazione a costituire problema. L'importante era, come evidenziava più volte, che fosse cattolica. Solo all'indomani della *Mit brennender Sorge* egli sembrò rendersi conto che all'interno della Falange potesse prendere piede un progetto semipagano, ma anche in questo caso ne minimizzò la portata, mentre trasmetteva a Roma un'interpretazione ancora una volta tranquillizzante del discorso tenuto da Franco in occasione dell'unificazione. La lettura dell'enciclica sulle persecuzioni anticattoliche nel Reich tedesco, unita alle richieste di chiarimenti e informazioni da Roma, sembra segnare l'approdo a una consapevolezza maggiore da parte del porporato. Allarmato dal timore con cui la Santa Sede osservava l'evoluzione del quadro politico spagnolo e la crescente influenza nazista, Gomá da una parte se ne servì per insistere affinché la Santa Sede riconoscesse quanto prima il governo di Burgos (facendosi interprete, di fatto, degli interessi di quest'ultimo), dall'altra pose la pubblicazione dell'enciclica proprio per non indebolire la componente Falangista, a sua volta causa dell'indebolimento del partito unico, anche, c'è da supporre, quale interlocutore privilegiato dell'alleato germanico. Interlocutorio, peraltro, è anche il giudizio di Gomá sulla creazione del partito unico, alcuni dei cui punti programmatici si limita a chiosare, e che considera in grado di imbrigliare la componente falangista. Non solo. In un primo momento Gomá tende a destituire di fondamento l'idea che ad ispirare l'unificazione siano stati italiani e tedeschi. Solo a partire dalla fine del giugno 1937, ammettendo che l'unificazione è stata imposta da Italia e Germania, inizia a presentare uno scenario preoccupante circa l'egemonia che la componente falangista starebbe assumendo nei riguardi di quella tradizionalista. Ma anche in questo caso si mostra fiducioso del ruolo di Franco e non rinuncia a segnalare l'"eccellente spirito cristiano" di gran numero di falangisti. Specie nel Nord.

In altre parole Gomá non tace il pericolo di una curvatura progressivamente incompatibile con il cattolicesimo della Falange, ma tende a minimizzarla in vari modi: a) presentando una Falange come composta da cattolici; poi b) dopo l'unificazione, assegnando alla componente tradizionalista il compito di moderare l'altra; c) interpretando (su input di Franco) la presenza e influenza nazista come temporanea e conseguenza dell'aiuto militare tedesco. Gomá (come, d'altra parte la stragrande maggioranza del mondo ecclesiastico italiano e della Curia romana) non reputa il fascismo incompatibile con il cattolicesimo. Di per sé, quindi, non è la caratterizzazione fascista della Falange ad allarmarlo. Il problema sorge quando da Roma giunge il richiamo a prestare

attenzione alla penetrazione ideologica del nazismo, che naturalmente trova nella componente falangista la sponda più permeabile. Detto in altro modo, è l'eventualità che la Falange si nazistizzi a preoccuparlo. E che tale sviluppo snaturi il progetto cattolico per il regime del dopo guerra. Un progetto compatibile con l'esistenza di un partito unico, che lasci però alla Chiesa la massima libertà di manovra sul piano organizzativo e culturale. Non a caso l'allarme è al massimo livello nei riguardi dell'influenza nazista,⁴² così come lo è nei riguardi di quelle iniziative legislative che limitano gli spazi d'azione della Chiesa, delle associazioni e della stampa cattoliche, temi sui quali le autorità ecclesiastiche, sia pure con tutte le cautele del caso, si spingono fino ad aperte (ma naturalmente non pubbliche) manifestazioni di riprovazione. Che però non è dato incontrare (neppure nella corrispondenza privata) di fronte a leggi di altrettanto netto orientamento totalitario, come la *Ley de responsabilidades políticas* del 9 febbraio 1939 (BOE, n. 44, 13 febbraio 1939), che andò a colpire i diritti degli altri. Una legge di carattere retroattivo, che restò in vigore fino al Decreto del 13 aprile 1945, volta a colpire le persone, giuridiche e fisiche, che dal 1° ottobre 1934 al 18 luglio 1936 avevano contribuito a creare o ad aggravare la "sovversione dell'ordine" e di quelle altre che, a partire dalla seconda delle due date, si erano opposte al Movimento Nazionale con atti concreti e con grave passività. Di conseguenza erano posti fuori legge partiti e organizzazioni che avevano fatto parte o che si erano alleate con il Fronte popolare.

In estrema sintesi si può affermare che sia Gomá che la Santa Sede furono consapevoli del carattere composito della Falange, che agirono per accentuarne la curvatura cattolica (pur ostacolando il coinvolgimento del clero in essa, come rivela l'emblematico caso di Fermín Yzardiaga) e allo stesso tempo per ridurre il peso dell'influenza nazista su di essa e sulla società spagnola nel suo complesso. In definitiva se ostacolarono l'evoluzione del regime spagnolo verso un totalitarismo alla tedesca, non altrettanto fecero nei confronti delle tendenze verso un totalitarismo all'italiana, soprattutto finché quest'ultimo fu percepito come compatibile con il cattolicesimo. Nulla escludeva che il "totalitarismo divino" fosse anche fascista, purché quest'ultimo fosse mondato dalla statolatria e dalle venature neopagane che lo configuravano come religione politica.

⁴² Alfonso Botti, 'Santa Sede e influenza nazista in Spagna durante la guerra civile nei documenti dell'Archivio Segreto Vaticano', in: Alberto Guasco/Raffaella Perin (eds.), *Pio XI: Keywords*, 2010, LIT Verlag, Zürich-Berlin, p. 107-129.

LE VATICAN ET LE FASCISME FRANÇAIS 1938-1945

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Quelques jalons d'avant l'agonie de la République française : 1924-1938

Le Vatican, mentor de la droite catholique française, fut étroitement associé aux “deux vagues” de la fascisation de celle-ci, toutes tendances confondues, dans les décennies 1920 puis 1930.¹ Il tint un rôle spécifique éminent dans la “première vague” des années 1920, réaction à la révolution bolchevique et à la crise de reconversion d’après-guerre et témoignage d’admiration pour le modèle italien : au triomphe de ce dernier il avait lui-même sacrifié dès 1921-1922 sa toute récente créature, le parti populaire italien.

C’est lui qui suscita un concurrent fasciste à l’Action française en créant en 1924 la Fédération nationale catholique du général de Castelnau. La ligue de Charles Maurras et Léon Daudet, matrice du fascisme français, ennemie jurée des institutions républicaines, avait été à ce titre sa favorite d’avant Première Guerre mondiale : elle avait constitué le vivier exclusif d’un épiscopat français “de guerre civile” (formule de Louis Canet, catholique gallican conseiller pour les affaires religieuses du Quai d’Orsay de 1920 à 1946), en plein triomphe de l’ultramontanisme. Mais la germanophobie persistante de l’Action française gêna Rome à l’époque où la tactique des “béquilles américaines” et du “pacifisme” spectaculaire du *Zentrum* transforma en champion de la “réconciliation” franco-allemande le parti catholique allemand, un des piliers de la politique de revanche du Reich.

La victoire électorale du Cartel des Gauches, en mai 1924, fournit donc prétexte intérieur à un projet politique antérieur, à visées très extérieures. Le Vatican dota sa nouvelle créature française des effectifs nécessaires en liquidant l’ancienne : il œuvra en à peine plus d’un an, via l’excommunication de l’Action française d’août-septembre 1926, qu’il mit en œuvre à la hache, en France (comme en Belgique), avec une efficacité remarquable. C’est dans ce cadre qu’il assura l’ascension des ultramontains les plus résolus à en découdre avec le régime républicain et les plus dévoués à sa ligne pangermaniste, tel, depuis 1926, l’abbé Emmanuel Suhard. Cet obscur professeur de 52 ans au séminaire de La-

¹ Robert Soucy, *French Fascism, the first wave, 1924-1933*, 1986, Yale University Press, New Haven-London, et Id., *French Fascism, the second wave, 1933-1939*, 1995, Yale University Press, New Haven-London.

val (où il officiait depuis 28 ans) fut, de 1926 à l'été 1928, délégué à Strasbourg aux préparatifs d'un "putsch Lyautey" : pourvue d'un fort contenu "séparatiste", l'entreprise eut pour centre nerveux l'Alsace-Moselle et "pour épine dorsale le clergé des deux provinces". Cette mission, suivie d'autres, lui acquerrait 24 ans plus tard la tête de l'Église de France.

Le Vatican fut aussi lié à la "deuxième vague du fascisme français", plus allemande qu'italienne. Enthousiasmé par la première des trois tentatives putschistes en France, l'opération du 6 février 1934,² Pie XI la salua devant l'évêque d'Orléans, Mgr Courcoux, comme l'indice d'"un redressement remarquable et gros de conséquences sur l'avenir".³ C'est en effet à la faveur de ce premier succès que la synarchie, dirigée par une trentaine de maîtres de l'économie partagés entre la haute banque (Banques Worms et d'Indochine) et l'industrie lourde (Comités des Forges et des houillères), 1^o franchit une étape majeure de son plan de "réforme de l'État" liquidant la République, avec la constitution immédiate du cabinet des décrets-lois Doumergue ; 2^o fixa définitivement le projet de tandem gouvernemental Laval-Pétain (ministres respectifs des Colonies et de la Guerre de Doumergue) qui triompherait grâce à la Défaite. Baudouin, chef de la Banque d'Indochine, et le duo des aspirants au putsch furent d'autant mieux agréés par la Curie qu'ils témoignaient une bienveillance égale aux visées impérialistes de l'Italie et de l'Allemagne.

En février 1938, Baudouin préconisa dans la *Revue de Paris* de "faire face aux réalités" en donnant "leur place au soleil", même coloniale, à "la nouvelle Allemagne et [à] la nouvelle Italie", avec lesquelles il convenait de "reconstruire l'Europe".⁴ Celui que l'ambassadeur Raymond Brugère qualifia en 1944 de maître de "la clientèle boursière de Ciano"⁵ fut "de 1935 à 1940" en permanentes "négociations financières avec l'Italie", avec Ciano et Mussolini, en vue de compromis coloniaux dans la zone éthiopienne et en Afrique du Nord. Le supérieur français des dominicains, profasciste notoire, Martin Gillet, l'introduisit donc aisément, lors d'une de ses virées d'affaires romaines, auprès du secrétaire d'État Pacelli.⁶

² La deuxième fut la tentative de la Cagoule du 17 novembre 1937, la troisième, le putsch sur fond de Défaite organisée de juin-juillet 1940. Voir Annie Lacroix-Riz, *Le Choix de la défaite : les élites françaises dans les années 1930* (avec rappel des années 1920), réédition 2010, Armand Colin, Paris, et Id., *De Munich à Vichy, l'assassinat de la 3^e République, 1938-1940*, 2008, Armand Colin, Paris : sur tous les noms et faits cités ici, index et passim.

³ Lettre de Charles-Roux n° 93, 8 mars 1934, archives du ministère des Affaires étrangères (plus loin 'MAE'), Europe Saint-Siège 1918-1940 (plus loin 'Saint-Siège'), 37.

⁴ 'Les données du problème français', cité par Pertinax (André Géraud), *Les fossoyeurs : défaite militaire de la France, armistice, contre-révolution*, 1943, Éditions de la Maison française, New York, 2 vols., I, p. 246-247.

⁵ Raymond Brugère, *Veni, vidi, Vichy*, 1944, Calmann-Lévy, Paris, p. 18.

⁶ Renseignements généraux de la Préfecture de police (plus loin 'RGPP'), novembre 1960, archives de la Préfecture de police (APP), GA, B 01, Paul Baudouin ; Pertinax, *Fossoyeurs*, op. cit., p.

Le grand banquier synarque avait, au moins depuis janvier 1935, délégué à ces tractations impériales les hommes politiques à la tête de *tous* les cabinets républicains : les 5 et 6, Laval, ministre des Affaires étrangères (successeur de Barthou, après l'assassinat de Marseille, du 9 octobre 1934, auquel il avait été mêlé), fut à Rome son premier émissaire notoire : sa correspondance avec Mussolini de janvier 1935 à janvier 1936 établit formellement qu'il avait laissé à celui-ci "les mains libres en Éthiopie".⁷ L'aval donné par Laval à cette conquête italienne lui valut des flagorneries vaticanes illustrées par le message que Pie XI lui fit début novembre 1935 transmettre par Gillet : "Dites-lui qu'après Dieu nous ne comptons que sur lui [...] et] que sa politique de conciliation a notre entière approbation".⁸ Comme leurs prédécesseurs, Daladier et Reynaud maintinrent la tradition de 1938 à 1940. Pétain partageait avec la quasi-totalité des chefs militaires français l'aveuglement volontaire devant le bellicisme du Reich et le dithyrambe permanent pour l'Italie "alliée de la France". La Curie l'appréciait donc comme Weygand, dévôt "ostentatoire" surnommé "le Tartuffe" de l'État-major,⁹ que Pacelli devenu Pie XII érigea en "fils fervent de l'Église" le 8 juin 1940, à quelques jours de la capitulation et du putsch mêlés.¹⁰

Intégrés à la première ou à la deuxième vague – ou aux deux –, les champions français de la Curie, comme en Belgique, étaient tous passés par le moule clérical, "école libre" incluse. La droite "républicaine" (Fédération républicaine ou Alliance démocratique) les avait promus au rang d'animateurs de ses organisations et d'orateurs privilégiés. Les fascistes français que l'Occupation allemande rendrait célèbres, issus de l'Action française et/ou de la Fédération nationale catholique de Castelnau ou des diverses ligues similaires, étaient souvent simultanément membres ou responsables de ces deux partis riches en élus. Dans la dénonciation des rouges, des juifs, des francs-maçons et de la "peste" de l'école laïque, rien ne distinguait dans l'entre-deux-guerres Marcel Bucard, Philippe Henriot, Xavier Vallat, Ybarnégaray, d'un Robert Schuman, leader de l'Action catholique mosellane, instrument de la dynastie de Wendel (maîtresse

244-249 ; Annie Lacroix-Riz, *Le Vatican, l'Europe et le Reich de la Première Guerre mondiale à la Guerre froide (1914-1955)*, 2010 (2^e), Paris, Armand Colin, index Gillet.

⁷ J'en ai trouvé trace dans maint document (Lacroix-Riz, *Le Choix de la défaite*, op. cit., Id., *Le Vatican, l'Europe et le Reich*, op. cit., et Id., 'Le rôle du Vatican dans la colonisation de l'Afrique (1920-1938) : de la romanisation des Missions à la conquête de l'Éthiopie', *RHMC* 41/1, 1994, p. 29-81, 59-63), mais les documents saisis en 1945 dans la valise de Laval – accusés de réception par Mussolini des 5 et 7 janvier 1935 des lettres de Laval, lettre de Mussolini à Laval du 16 octobre 1935, et échange de lettres Laval-Mussolini-Laval des 22, 25 décembre 1935 et 23 janvier 1936 – sont définitifs, cf. Archives nationales (plus loin 'AN'), 3 W (fonds de la Haute-Cour) 208, Laval.

⁸ Lettre 339 de Charles-Roux, 2 novembre 1935, MAE, Saint-Siège, 37.

⁹ Par le général Sarrail, cf. Pierre Cot, *Le procès de la République*, vol. II, 1944, Éditions de la Maison française, New York, p. 161.

¹⁰ Tél. 480 d'Ormesson, Rome, 8 juin 1940, MAE, Vichy-Europe 1939-1945, 553, relations avec la France, mai 1940-mars 1944.

de la Fédération républicaine). Toutes les ligues, sans perdre leur identité, tendirent au tournant de 1935 – près de six mois avant l’ample mouvement social de 1936 – à se confondre dans la Cagoule ou Comité secret d’action révolutionnaire (CSAR). Divisée en branches civile et militaire – à la tête de la seconde furent portés les chefs militaires retraités et cléricaux Pétain et Weygand –, la Cagoule fut légitimement considérée comme le bras armé ou “l’aile marchante” de la synarchie”.¹¹

L’Église romaine et l’assassinat de la République française, 1938-1940

a) transformation de la France en sacristie et réconciliation avec l’Action Française

Après la conférence de Munich (29-30 septembre 1938), le radical Daladier (président du Conseil depuis avril), partisan déclaré depuis 1933 d’un “gouvernement très fort”,¹² mit en œuvre à marches forcées la “fascisation de la démocratie” : le délégué du Comité des Forges à Berlin (septembre 1931-octobre 1938) puis à Rome (novembre 1938-juin 1940), l’ambassadeur de France André François-Poncet, qui avait fièrement annoncé à Hitler, von Neurath et divers la première étape, avisa avec le même allant l’Axe Rome-Berlin de la seconde, le 5 novembre 1938, à la veille de rejoindre son poste romain.¹³

Le Vatican contribua notablement à ce “Munich intérieur” mis en œuvre une semaine après, via des décrets-lois impitoyables à l’égard du monde du travail, français et étranger, et accéléré par la cuisante défaite subie par la classe ouvrière fin novembre 1938. Il put pratiquer une immixtion exacerbée dans les affaires françaises : maints “républicains” gouvernementaux admettaient l’utilité du cléralisme romain pour transformer radicalement le régime intérieur et faciliter les tractations avec le Reich et l’Italie. Depuis 1936-1937, Rome faisait sans répit tonner ses prélats les plus ultramontains contre “la peste du laïcisme” (Mgr Louis Marmottin, évêque de Saint-Dié).¹⁴ En avril 1938, le nouveau cabinet lui donna un signe explicite d’allégeance en nommant ministre (des Anciens combattants et pensionnés) un représentant ès qualités de l’Église romaine, Auguste Champetier de Ribes. L’écrasement de “la bête noire” ouvrière de la Curie permit d’aller au-delà, avec l’aide empressée de l’ambassadeur

¹¹ Rapport Béteille ‘relations de Pétain avec le CSAR’ joint à sa lettre manuscrite au procureur général Mornet, Paris, 22 juillet 1945 (plus loin ‘rapport Béteille Pétain-CSAR’), Bibliothèque de documentation internationale contemporaine (BDIC), fonds Mornet, II.

¹² Mémoires Neurath RM 1620, 25 novembre, et II SG 3180 Bülow, 5 décembre 1933, *Documents on German Foreign Policy (DGFP)*, C, II, p. 153, 176-177.

¹³ François-Poncet, rapport 9865/5361 Prunas, Paris, 5 novembre 1938, *DDI*, 8^e série, X, p. 380 ; c’est aussi François-Poncet qui avait annoncé à Berlin les plans de “gouvernement très fort” imminent (n. préc.) ; détails, Lacroix-Riz, *Le Choix de la défaite*, op. cit., et Id., *De Munich à Vichy*, op. cit., chap. 2.

¹⁴ Lacroix-Riz, *De Munich à Vichy*, op. cit., chap. 2-3, lettre de Charles-Roux, 20 février 1937, MAE, Papiers d’agents, archives privées, Canet (plus loin ‘Canet’), 31, et Id., *Le Vatican, l’Europe et le Reich*, op. cit., p. 425-426.

de France en poste depuis juin 1932 : François Charles-Roux clamait quotidiennement que la cléricatisation de la France “améliorer[ait] les relations entre la France et le Saint-Siège”. Il obtint au tournant de 1938 du tandem Daladier-Georges Bonnet (ministre des Affaires étrangères) l’octroi “aux missions de ‘la personnalité civile’”, et requit toujours plus.¹⁵

On ne saurait cependant imputer à cet ancien gallican intransigeant, ennemi juré, pendant la Grande Guerre, du nonce à Munich Pacelli, mué en clérical spectaculaire, l’exclusivité d’une tactique qui fut générale : début 1939, le cabinet radical associa tous ses ténors (francs-maçons de haut grade), ministre de l’intérieur Albert Sarraut compris, à “la chasse aux professionnels de l’avortement” qui enchantait la chambre de commerce de Paris, fief de la Confédération générale du patronat français.¹⁶ Aux fêtes de son couronnement, en mars 1939, Pacelli devenu Pie XII put donc sans risques hisser la barre en présentant à Champetier de Ribes, délégué officiel de la France, “trois séries de revendications [...] 1° modification de la loi relative au divorce, 2° modification du régime scolaire, 3° modification du régime religieux”.¹⁷

Simultanément, il mit la dernière main à la réconciliation officielle du Vatican avec l’Action française. Italophile de longue date, ce pilier du fascisme français avait depuis 1934-1935 progressivement abdiqué son anti-germanisme. Le mouvement de Charles Maurras et Léon Daudet était intégré comme toutes les ligues à la Cagoule et nombre de ses têtes s’activaient, autour de Pétain et de Weygand, au plan de liquidation de la République. Il érigeait désormais le Reich en sauveur de la civilisation occidentale, à l’image du corps des officiers – son vivier – ainsi décrit par le journaliste conservateur – antinazi – André Géraud, dit Pertinax : des “émigrés de Coblenz [...] lecteurs de *Gringoire* et de *Je suis partout* et autres feuilles du même genre qui, dans leurs récriminations incessantes contre les Soviétiques et contre Léon Blum, regardaient volontiers Hitler et Mussolini comme des piliers de la société traditionnelle.”¹⁸ Pie XII et son secrétaire d’État Maglione claironnèrent à la mi-juillet 1939 le pardon du Saint-Siège à l’ancienne réprouvée, décision dont la rumeur courait depuis un certain temps : date choisie à dessein au lendemain de la Fête nationale, “sous le régime républicain que l’Action Française couvre journellement d’injures”, commenta Charles-Roux dans un de ses brefs et rares accès de franchise de l’époque. La presse fasciste explicita le sens intérieur *et* extérieur de ces effusions, se gaussant de “toute la clique internationale subversive qui avait salué en Eugène Pacelli le

¹⁵ Lettre 71 de Charles-Roux, Rome, 16 février 1939, Saint-Siège 1918-1940, 41.

¹⁶ Exposé Fernand Boverat, président de l’Alliance nationale contre la dépopulation, ‘hors séance’, 7 février 1939, Archives de la chambre de commerce de Paris, IX, 1 (49), 1939, et Lacroix-Riz, *De Munich à Vichy*, op. cit., p. 104-105.

¹⁷ Note Canet, 19 janvier 1940, Canet, 31, MAE.

¹⁸ Pertinax, *Fossoyeurs*, op. cit., p. 45.

pape antifasciste”, à l’heure où celui-ci clamait son soutien aux revendications allemandes sur la Pologne en général et Dantzig en particulier.¹⁹

b) le rôle du Vatican dans la négociation avec l’Axe Rome-Berlin

À partir de septembre 1939, la Curie poussa d’autant plus aisément l’avantage que la France dirigeante, putschiste ou officiellement “républicaine”, avait besoin de ses services, tant intérieurs qu’extérieurs. Étaient également concernés : 1° les synarcho-cagouleurs, cléricaux sonores, parvenus à la phase ultime de leurs préparatifs du complot intérieur et de la défaite – avec pour chef de file Pétain, ambassadeur factieux nommé depuis mars 1939 auprès de Franco, entouré de la cour qui le rejoindrait à Vichy ; 2° les gouvernants “républicains”, complices passifs ou actifs du “choix de la défaite”, qui recherchaient presque tous une nouvelle “paix” munichoise, désormais aux dépens de la France.

En janvier 1940, en concordance étroite avec “M. Mussolini [, qui] commen[çait] à faire sonner ses éperons” (Canet), Pie XII relança “l’offensive du Saint-Siège” – sur le divorce, l’école et les congrégations – par “des instructions confidentielles à l’épiscopat français”. Il confia la besogne anti-laïque aux ultras, l’archevêque de Reims Emmanuel Suhard compris, et poursuivit “sa critique de la législation française” jusqu’à la défaite, démontrant jusque dans le détail l’inféodation de “la politique pontificale [...] à la politique mussolinienne”. Le Vatican put hardiment marcher vers la transformation de la France en sacristie dans les derniers mois de la dictature de Daladier puis de Reynaud. Ce dernier, président du Conseil depuis le 20 mars 1940, et son ministre des Affaires étrangères officieux, Baudouin, appelé au cabinet le 31, s’empressèrent à la négocier avec lui jusqu’en pleine débâcle, fin mai²⁰ : le prétendu partisan de la “résistance” et de l’alliance anglaise et le banquier, leader du putsch imminent, sollicitaient le truchement romain dans les négociations de “paix”. Aussi intenses avec Madrid qu’avec Rome, ces tractations précédèrent puis accompagnèrent l’invasion de la France dont les dirigeants paralysaient le combat.

De la Drôle de guerre à l’armistice, le nonce à Paris, Valerio Valeri, s’employa quotidiennement à cette mission : habitué des ambassades d’Italie et d’Espagne, il fut l’hôte de presque tous les banquets et mondanités “pacifistes” aux côtés des ambassadeurs (respectifs) Guariglia et Lequerica. Baudouin, enfin ministre des Affaires étrangères en titre dans le cabinet Pétain formé dans la nuit du 16 au 17 juin, le chargea donc, au matin du 17, de prier le gouvernement italien de jouer “l’intermédiaire avec le gouvernement allemand pour la cessa-

¹⁹ Charles-Roux, tél. n° 565, 18, lettre n° 573, 19 juillet 1939, Saint-Siège, 42, et Lacroix-Riz, *Le Vatican, l’Europe et le Reich*, op. cit., p. 486-487.

²⁰ Notes Canet, 19, 21-24 janvier, 23 février, Canet, 31, 3 avril, Canet, 32, 25 mai 1940, MAE, Vichy-Europe, 553, Lacroix-Riz, *Le Vatican, l’Europe et le Reich*, op. cit., p. 508-509, et Id., *De Munich à Vichy*, op. cit., p. 260-267, 275-276, chap. 8.

tion des hostilités et pour demander les conditions de paix”.²¹ À ces tractations hispano-italiennes, le Vatican et le tandem Reynaud-Baudouin avaient depuis avril-mai directement délégué Suhard, archevêque de Reims (depuis décembre 1930). L’assassinat, assuré par la Cagoule “le 10 avril 1940”, du cardinal-archevêque de Paris Verdier (qui déplaisait fort à l’Axe Rome-Berlin), promu le chef des ultras : Suhard avait été “choisi par le CSAR et le Vatican pour prendre la tête de l’Église en France au moment où l’Occupant impos[ait] au pays son ‘Ordre Nouveau’ à l’aide des anciens conjurés des complots avortés de 1928 et de 1934”.

Officiellement nommé le 10 (jour de l’attaque allemande) ou le 11 mai, le successeur de Verdier alla à Madrid sur mandat de Reynaud et Baudouin entre les 15 et 23 mai – France déjà écrasée –, négociateur, notamment avec Serrano-Suñer, chef de la Phalange, ministre de l’Intérieur et beau-frère de Franco, “les conditions de la paix” préparatoires à l’armistice du 22 juin. Régime de Vichy à peine installé, Pie XII pesta sans répit contre “le communisme [...] pour lui [...] l’ennemi public n° 1” et réclama sa créance “intérieure” au nouvel ambassadeur Wladimir d’Ormesson : l’éradication de la laïcité via l’abolition de fait de la loi de Séparation de 1905,²² en si bonne voie depuis 1938.

Caution du régime et collaborationnisme, 1940-1944

Ayant promu les hauts clercs les plus ouvertement profascistes et pronazis, le Vatican en obtint adhésion enthousiaste à son mot d’ordre, général, de collaboration avec le vainqueur allemand. Otto Abetz, ancien pourrisseur de la presse et des milieux politiques français d’avant-guerre devenu “ambassadeur” du Reich, rappela, dès son retour, fin juin 1940, dans Paris occupé, qu’il tenait Suhard pour un des quatre “Français dignes de foi”, auprès notamment de Bonnet et Brinon. Suhard démontra depuis lors que cette confiance était bien placée, entre autres en ouvrant cathédrales de Saint-Denis et de Notre-Dame de Paris aux vainqueurs (Hitler inclus) puis en remettant fin juillet-début août 1940 à l’occupant les dossiers des activités diplomatiques de son prédécesseur assassiné : la livraison de ces pièces s’effectua à l’occasion de “perquisitions” arrangées au siège de l’archevêché.²³ Quand il rendit visite à Abetz pour assurer le Reich des excellents sentiments de la hiérarchie, le 12 décembre

²¹ Tél. 1930 de Stohrer, Madrid, 17 juin 1940, *DGFP*, D, IX, p. 590 ; entrée du 12 mai 1941, APP, Journal de Nicolle, PJ 39, et Albert Kammerer, *La vérité sur l’armistice*, 1945 (2^e complétée), éditions Médicis, Paris, p. 232.

²² Citations, ‘Information’, ‘blanc’ des RG (‘dossiers de la Sûreté nationale’), 30 octobre 1944, APP, GA, S 10, Suhard, rapport RG sur Suhard, 1945, F1 a 3308, AN, et lettre 273 d’Ormesson, 18 juillet 1940, MAE, Vichy-Europe, 553. Détails et sources, Lacroix-Riz, *Le Choix de la défaite*, op. cit., p. 540-555, Id., *De Munich à Vichy*, op. cit., p. 266, 274-276, et Id., *Le Vatican, l’Europe et le Reich*, op. cit., p. 512-513.

²³ Tél., Paris, 25 juin 1940, AN, AJ 40, 879 ; juin-août, détails et sources, Lacroix-Riz, *Le Vatican, l’Europe et le Reich*, op. cit., p. 513-514.

1940 – à la veille de l'éviction de Laval, premier signe d'attention porté par les ministres synarques aux tuteurs de l'avenir, Washington et Londres –, l'archevêque de Paris l'«assur[a] que le clergé français était prêt à agir en faveur d'une collaboration de la France avec l'Allemagne. L'Église [, précisa-t-il,] a donné des instructions en ce sens aux ecclésiastiques français.»²⁴

Tout montra, de 1940 à 1944, que Rome veillait à ce «l'Église [de France] prêt[ât] son aide la plus empressée» à la «dictature militaire» de Vichy – selon l'excellente définition d'Abetz, le 18 décembre 1940²⁵ – et à l'occupant. Suhard agit auprès d'autres collaborationnistes de choc, nombreux dans son entourage direct, tels son coadjuteur Roger Beaussart et le vieux Baudrillart (83 ans en 1942), recteur de l'Institut catholique de Paris. Le cardinal-archevêque de Paris fut avec eux depuis l'été 1940 l'interlocuteur habituel et l'informateur d'Abetz lui-même,²⁶ et des agents de la Gestapo dirigée par Helmut Knochen (en particulier de sa section VI) : Keller, «ancien moine dans un couvent de Bavière», et Reichl, «ancien franc-maçon au 30^e degré, [...] et] ancien agent [de Knochen] au RSHA à Berlin.»²⁷ La Curie avait au printemps 1940 désigné au grand complice des putschistes un successeur à Reims digne de lui, Marmottin, «pétainiste à outrance [...] tout en faveur de la collaboration», surnommé «archevêque des S.S. français» [la Milice du cagoulard Darnand].²⁸

Feltin, archevêque de Bordeaux (depuis 1935), promis par Rome à la succession de Suhard, se signala sous l'Occupation par un collaborationnisme inlassable, affiché notamment par son «action [...] en faveur de la milice et du service du travail obligatoire pour l'Allemagne».²⁹ L'occupant n'avait eu qu'à se féliciter de ses relations avec lui, qui n'avaient jamais donné lieu au «moindre

²⁴ Télégramme 1496 Abetz à Ribbentrop, Paris, 13 décembre 1940, AN, 3 W 347. Cette visite visait aussi à faire «avalier» à Berlin la destitution imminente (du 13) de Laval, fruit des conflits synarchie-Cagoule sur l'avenir.

²⁵ Télégramme 1556 Abetz à Ribbentrop, Paris, 18 décembre 1940, AN, 3 W 347. Sources sur Vichy, Annie Lacroix-Riz, 'L'Église de France et la reconstitution de la droite après la Libération, 1944-1946', in : Gilles Richard/Jacqueline Sainclivier (éds.), *La recomposition des droites en France à la Libération 1944-1948*, 2004, Presses universitaires de Rennes, Rennes, p. 111-124. Les volumes AN, F7 (police générale) 15291 et 15292, Église catholique, attitude politique des évêques et archevêques sous l'Occupation, sont particulièrement riches.

²⁶ Pièce 43, 'Relations d'Abetz avec les milieux religieux', PV d'audition par Bergé et Dauzas, DRG, 26 novembre 1945, AN, F7 15331, Abetz, AN. Lacroix-Riz, *Le Choix de la défaite*, op. cit., et Id., *De Munich à Vichy*, op. cit., index Abetz .

²⁷ Interrogatoires de Knochen à la DST, 27 novembre 1946, AN, F7 15337, Knochen, et à la DRG, 4 janvier 1947, AN, 3W, 358, Interrogatoires et rapports d'Allemands.

²⁸ Fiche s.d. (1944) (par évêque), RG, 5 juillet 1946 (*L'Humanité* d'Alsace), et ce dossier n° 89, F7 15291 ; sur ce collaborationniste de choc, F1 a 3351, 3784 et F7 15292, AN ; Lacroix-Riz, *Le Choix de la défaite*, op. cit., Id., *De Munich à Vichy*, op. cit., et Id., 'Vichy et l'Église catholique', in : Jean-Marc Schiappa (éd.), *Colloque 1848-2008 de l'Institut de recherches et d'études sur l'histoire de la Libre Pensée, Actes 1848*, 2010, IRELP, Paris, p. 160-169.

²⁹ Note pour Coulet, visite à la nonciature, 22 décembre 1945, MAE, Europe Saint-Siège 1944-1960 (Saint-Siège 1944...), vol. 11, dossier général, 12 septembre 1944-septembre 1947.

incident” : une note allemande sur “l’église catholique à Bordeaux et dans le département de la Gironde” fit le point, le 15 mars 1943, sur la “grande loyauté” que Feltin observait depuis l’été 1940, sous couvert de “se restreindre au terrain religieux” : l’avaient attestée, entre autres manifestations publiques, sa “visite de l’exposition ‘L’Allemagne d’aujourd’hui’, l’envoi de son représentant à l’inauguration de l’exposition anti bolcheviste” et, plus généralement, son “intervention positive dans le sens de la propagande antibolchevique”. L’archevêque de Bordeaux, qui avait tant fait pour “améliorer ses relations avec les autorités allemandes d’occupation”,³⁰ figurait, début 1944, sur une liste gaulliste (dont Suhard était curieusement absent) des quatre pires archevêques de France, euphémiquement présentés comme “non résistants”.³¹

Cette ligne fut si générale que des “catholiques français, publicistes, professeurs, syndicalistes chrétiens, fonctionnaires, angoissés par l’attitude actuelle des autorités religieuses responsables et ses conséquences prochaines ou lointaines”, et à l’origine du “témoignage chrétien”, fustigèrent en juin 1942 le haut clergé pour sa “collaboration active, [son] engagement total, [sa] compromission délibérée, proclamée, célébrée” avec un régime incarnant “une réaction sociale et politique destinée à sauver les privilèges et les biens des possédants en pactisant avec l’ennemi.” Cette “note adressée à l’épiscopat” présenta habilement le Vatican comme menacé par le Reich hitlérien,³² l’innocentant donc de ce qui était *la ligne romaine*, appliquée avec ardeur par ses auxiliaires les plus zélés. Ces précautions ultramontaines et le souci de sauver l’avenir empêchèrent efficacement le peuple catholique d’imputer au Vatican le soutien du haut clergé à Vichy et à la collaboration.

L’appui apporté jusqu’au bout au tandem Vichy-occupant s’exprima notamment via la condamnation des résistants (communistes) qualifiés de “terroristes” – condamnation englobant les éléments résistants catholiques de *Témoignage chrétien* ; la non-condamnation du service du travail obligatoire, voire son soutien explicite ; les faveurs octroyées à la Milice, messes, célébration des obsèques, participation aux réunions, etc., parallèles au refus d’envoyer des aumôniers au maquis ; les protestations véhémentes, répétées jusqu’à la Libération, contre les bombardements alliés, sur instruction notoire de Pie XII (le pape, qui n’avait dit mot des bombardements allemands, fustigea sans trêve depuis 1942 le bombardement des villes allemandes puis italiennes).³³ La déclai-

³⁰ AN, AJ 40 (archives du *Militärbefehlshaber in Frankreich* dites du Majestic), 923, Bordeaux.

³¹ Avec de la Villerabel, Aix ; Marmottin, Reims ; Guerry, coadjuteur de l’archevêque de Cambrai, CDD/E.Q/2, source : Closion, (début) 1944, AN, F1 a, 3784, ‘Église catholique’.

³² Note citée, ‘juin 1942’, fiche 6057/ARQ2/1 du BCRA, AN, F1 a, 3784.

³³ Significatifs, les “chefs d’accusation” contre Auvity, évêque de Mende, rapport de renseignements, Paris, 25 février, joint à la lettre SN/Sat (sic) Gal (sic)/1508 du DRG au directeur des cultes et associations (ministère de l’intérieur), Paris, 8 mars 1945, AN, F7, 15291 ; sur l’ensemble, ce vol. et 15292.

ration de l'assemblée des cardinaux et archevêques du 17 février 1944 se borna encore à gémir sur "l'angoisse [générée] dans le cœur des mères" par le service du travail obligatoire, mais n'alla pas jusqu'à "la réprobation" : celle-ci était réservée au "bombardement [allié] des villes ouvertes".³⁴

Témoigna de cette obstination poussée jusqu'au jour de la Libération le célèbre épisode de la célébration par Suhard, le 1^{er} juillet 1944, d'un *Te Deum* à l'hitlérien officiel Philippe Henriot (abattu cinq jours avant). Geste particulièrement audacieux, près d'un mois après le débarquement américain en Normandie, et ce alors même que "les obsèques nationales à Notre-Dame étaient jusque là uniquement célébrées pour les chefs ou anciens chefs de l'État". À cette manifestation spectaculaire en faveur de Vichy et de l'occupant, s'affichèrent les éminences collaborationnistes (Laval et Darnand en tête) et occupantes (Otto Abetz, von Stülpnagel, Oberg, chef des SS, etc.), parmi "environ 7 000 personnes".³⁵

Préparation de la Pax Americana et sauvetage des grands coupables, 1942-1945

Dès 1942, le Vatican, aidé de ses auxiliaires français, prépara aussi l'avenir, celui de la *Pax Americana*. Garante de la poursuite de la croisade anti-soviétique et anticommuniste, l'intégration de la France dans la sphère d'influence américaine rendrait vite à la grande majorité des collaborationnistes français – largement confondus avec les fascistes de l'avant-guerre – la respectabilité écornée par leurs pratiques d'Occupation. La condamnation épiscopale de la déportation de masse des juifs à l'été 1942 intervint dans le cadre des préparatifs d'après-Vichy, alors que se dessinait plus nettement l'inéluctable défaite allemande. Mais elle ne fut à l'évidence pas d'origine romaine : timide, très partielle – limitée à l'extrémité Sud de la zone non occupée –, elle fut promptement étouffée. La lettre pastorale la plus connue, lue le 23 août par l'archevêque de Toulouse Saliège, valut à son auteur les censures du nonce Valerio Valeri : c'est ce qui, selon le préfet et les RG de Haute-Garonne, expliqua la "stricte neutralité" qui suivit le bref éclat de 1942 de l'évêque français considéré comme le plus "résistant". La réprimande lui ôta jusqu'au courage de critiquer le STO et lui donna le même enthousiasme qu'à ses pairs dans la dénonciation véhémement des bombardements alliés barbares.³⁶ Feltin n'avait pas manqué de condamner "l'attitude de l'évêque de Toulouse", un des nombreux signes d'"une grande loyauté" si appréciée des occupants.³⁷

L'urgence de la reconversion grandit avec la victoire militaire soviétique de Stalingrad. Le chef du courant collaborationniste de l'Église de France, Su-

³⁴ MTB/2/35001, déclaration du 17 février 1944, AN, F1 a, 3784.

³⁵ RGPP sans date (après le 26 juin) et 1^{er} juillet 1944, APP, BA 2043, Philippe Henriot.

³⁶ Nombreux courriers, AN, F 7, 15291-15292 ; Jean-Louis Clément, *Mgr Saliège, archevêque de Toulouse, 1929-1956*, 1994, Beauchesne, Paris, chap. 9, 12.

³⁷ Note allemande sur 'l'Église catholique à Bordeaux', 15 mars 1943, AN, AJ 40, 923.

hard, fut une fois de plus choisi comme porte-parole de la grande bourgeoisie catholique française – synarchie et Cagoule mêlées –, aussi alarmée que la Curie par la conjoncture générale. Pie XII s'était volontiers prêté à la mise en place du régime de Vichy en activant les tractations françaises avec l'Axe Rome-Berlin-Madrid. Il s'entremît d'aussi bon gré, à la demande de Suhard, arrivé "à Rome" au tournant de janvier 1943, pour les pourparlers entre les milieux français concernés – cœur du groupe synarcho-cagoulard et de Vichy – et les États-Unis.

L'entreprise était dépourvue de risques : on avait atteint un stade avancé, d'une part, des tentatives américaines, conduites contre de Gaulle depuis 1941, de réaliser "un Vichy sans Vichy" et, d'autre part, des pourparlers secrets en vue d'une paix séparée "occidentale" ou d'un retournement des fronts contre les Soviétiques³⁸ : Pie XII poserait "à Washington", via Myron Taylor, ancien président de l'*US Steel* et "représentant personnel du président auprès du pape" depuis l'été 1939,

"la question suivante : 'si les troupes américaines sont amenées à pénétrer en France, le gouvernement de Washington s'engage-t-il à ce que l'Occupation américaine soit aussi totale que l'Occupation allemande ?' Il s'agit de savoir si l'Occupation américaine ne laissera place à aucune autre occupation étrangère (soviétique). Washington a répondu que les États-Unis se désintéresseraient de la forme future du gouvernement de la France et qu'ils s'engageaient à ne pas laisser le communisme s'installer dans le pays".³⁹

Le retournement des fronts s'avéra pour l'heure impossible, mais les autres objectifs antisoviétiques avancèrent beaucoup plus vite qu'il ne semblait, au bénéfice du fascisme français et de ses pairs. On bornera ici cette vaste œuvre commune au seul sauvetage des criminels de guerre qui mobilisa précocement la Curie, aidée de Washington. Rome prépara activement les opérations depuis 1942, moins d'un après avoir compris que la Wehrmacht ne vaincrait pas l'Armée rouge (le secrétaire des Affaires extraordinaires Domenico Tardini l'admit à son vif regret début septembre 1941)⁴⁰ : c'est entre le printemps et l'été 1942 que fut mise au point la filière argentine de sauvetage-recyclage des criminels de guerre, par l'intermédiaire du fasciste catholique argentin Juan Carlos Goyeneche. Agent direct de l'agent de la Gestapo (SD) Walter Schellenberg, Goyeneche, dont les chefs étaient en "liens étroits" avec Montini et le pape, fut

³⁸ Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, *L'Abîme 1939-1945*, 1982, Paris, Imprimerie nationale, passim, Lacroix-Riz, *Le Vatican, l'Europe et le Reich*, op. cit., p. 558 sqq., Id., *Industriels et banquiers français sous l'Occupation : la collaboration économique avec le Reich et Vichy*, 1999, Armand Colin, Paris, chap. 9, conclusion-épilogue de Lacroix-Riz, Id., *Le Choix de la défaite*, op. cit., Id., *De Munich à Vichy*, op. cit., et Id., 'Quand les Américains voulaient gouverner la France', *Le Monde diplomatique*, mai 2003, p. 19.

³⁹ Note LIBE/9/14, 5 février 1943, AN, F1 a, 3784.

⁴⁰ Lettre de Léon Bérard, Rome-Saint-Siège, 4 septembre 1941, MAE, Vichy-Europe, 551, le Saint-Siège et la politique européenne, juillet 1940-août 1944 (Lacroix-Riz, *Le Vatican, l'Europe et le Reich*, op. cit., p. 531-532).

nommé en mars 1942 “attaché culturel” à l’ambassade d’Argentine au Vatican : sa nomination devait tout au Reich, qui faisait la pluie et le beau temps à Buenos-Aires depuis la fin des années 1930. En mai 1942, l’“attaché culturel” négocia à Paris avec Laval et le chef de la Gestapo Knochen, adjoint d’Oberg, avant d’obtenir de Pie XII et de Maglione, mi-août, une “audience ‘strictement privée’” : les interlocuteurs y convinrent “qu’après l’établissement de la paix, l’Argentine ‘appliquerait généreusement ses lois sur l’immigration, pour encourager [...] les catholiques européens émigrants à [y] rechercher les terres et les capitaux indispensables dans notre pays”⁴¹ Les sources originales françaises confirment l’affirmation d’Uki Goñi, spécialiste de ladite filière, selon laquelle les vocables “catholiques européens” ou “catholiques anticommunistes” – systématiquement utilisés par le monde clérical et “occidental” – désignaient de façon euphémique les seuls “criminels de guerre en fuite”, éléments français inclus.⁴²

Les fascistes français menacés de châtement après-guerre furent certes placés moins haut dans le palmarès américano-vatican (sans négliger la contribution d’autres bonnes volontés, notamment anglaises et françaises) que les criminels de guerre allemands et croates, mais ils y figurèrent en bon rang. Ici comme partout ailleurs en Europe, la Curie, soutenue par les fonds américains, mobilisa au service des bourreaux de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale l’ensemble du clergé. Il ne s’agit pas seulement des réguliers, qui, au su et au vu des Renseignements généraux (ici ceux de Bordeaux, décrivant en novembre 1945, les couvents des régions de Bordeaux et Bayonne), donnaient régulièrement “refuge à des individus ayant collaboré avec l’ennemi du temps de l’occupation et faisant l’objet de recherche”, et “munis[saient] de fausses cartes d’identité” ces “individus ‘protégés’ [... avant de les] achemin[er] sur l’Espagne”, la Belgique ou d’autres contrées accueillantes.⁴³

Les séculiers ne déployèrent pas moins de zèle, avec Suhard pour chef, qui assura la promotion internationale de l’abbé Jean Rodhain après avoir œuvré à son ascension nationale sous l’Occupation. Suhard avait après l’armistice mis ce curé de 40 ans à la tête des “services de l’aumônerie générale” alors créés ; il le recommanda à Laval et l’envoya en février 1943 à Berlin auprès “des services Bruneton et de la mission Scapini” (interlocuteurs du Reich sur le travail forcé des victimes du STO et des prisonniers de guerre français).⁴⁴ Ce clerc,

⁴¹ Uki Goñi, *The real Odessa : how Perón brought the Nazi war criminals to Argentina*, 2003, Granta, London, p. 2-15, 26 sqq., 230, et index Pie XII et Perón.

⁴² Lacroix-Riz, *Le Vatican, l’Europe et le Reich*, op. cit., chap. 11-12, et Id., *L’histoire contemporaine sous influence*, 2004, Le temps des cerises, Pantin, p. 66-69, 81-85.

⁴³ Note d’information des RG de Bordeaux, sans référence, sur ‘L’activité de certains ecclésiastiques bordelais protégeant la fuite de délinquants politiques’, 8 novembre 1945, AN, F7, 15291, etc. (15291-15292).

⁴⁴ Lettres de Suhard à Laval, Paris, 6 février et 10 mars 1943, AN, 3 W, 212, RGPP, 24 août 1943, APP, GA, A 24, archevêché de Paris.

joliment qualifié de “patriote irréprochable” et de rassembleur des Français par l'équipe Rémond de la “commission Touvier” supposée enquêter sur le rôle de l'Église romaine dans le sauvetage des criminels de guerre,⁴⁵ s'acquitta bien de sa mission : maintenir la docilité des captifs tant vis-à-vis du Reich que de Vichy. Il y gagna du galon français et vatican : gratifié le 8 décembre 1943 de la francisque n° 2341, parrainé par deux grands cagouleurs, Jean Jardel et Bernard Ménétreel,⁴⁶ il se signala à l'attention de Pie XII.

Le pape transforma à la Libération son service en “Comité français de l'aumônerie catholique” et le manda “à Rome” fin 1944, en vue d'y “créer [...] le Comité international de l'aumônerie catholique qui étendrait son activité à tous les pays”. Dès avril-mai 1945, le CIAC ou “Secours catholique international”, supposé “fournir assistance aux prisonniers et déportés” – en clair aux criminels de guerre –, fut doté de “fonds importants fournis par le Vatican et [de] subsides officiels” : Rodhain avait alors déjà “effectué diverses missions en Allemagne” en liaison avec les délégués de “la National Catholic Welfare Conference et du War Relief Service” (américains) et avec “la Croix-Rouge” (suisse), fort sensible aux desiderata américains après l'avoir été aux allemands. Les agents du CIAC parcouraient déjà l'Amérique, du Nord au Sud, terres bénies du sauvetage-recyclage des criminels de guerre.⁴⁷

Sous le couvert habituel du combat contre “le péril rouge”, les membres du haut clergé français, notamment cardinaux, qu'ils eussent été vichystes et collaborationnistes sonores ou non – cas rarissime de Tisserant – se vouèrent avec zèle, avec une tendresse particulière pour les criminels français, à la vaste entreprise qui allait mobiliser la Curie pendant au moins une décennie. À Rome même, on assista à une véritable surenchère entre le seul cardinal “résistant” (ou plutôt non collaborationniste) connu, Tisserant, et le fasciste notoire Gillet, supérieur des dominicains jusqu'en septembre 1946, alors remplacé par le candidat favori des intégristes, l'Espagnol Emmanuel Suarez, “d'une remarquable énergie” et “bien en cour auprès de Franco” : Gillet avait d'ailleurs “utilisé” celui qui lui succéderait “pour faire passer en Espagne un certain nombre de pères [français] qui s'étaient compromis durant l'occupation”.⁴⁸ Uki Goñi a dressé de ce dernier un portrait documenté d'exfiltreur : il traitait directement avec l'ambassadeur d'Argentine au Vatican, auquel il rappela, en mai 1946, son rôle dans l'organisation depuis 1945 de la fuite vers l'Argentine de “certains compatriotes qui avaient dû fuir l'Allemagne pour l'Italie”.⁴⁹

Les favoris français de Pie XII montraient au moins autant d'intérêt – synonyme de promotion romaine – pour les criminels de guerre allemands, cro-

⁴⁵ René Rémond (éd.), *Paul Touvier et l'Église*, 1992, Fayard, Paris, p. 112-113.

⁴⁶ Fiche de Rodhain, AN, F 7, 15388, titulaires de la francisque 1940-1944, lettres L-Z.

⁴⁷ Nombreux courriers, avril-mai 1945, AN, F 7, 15291-15292.

⁴⁸ RGSN, X.P. 2, Paris, 27 septembre 1946, AN, F 7, 15292.

⁴⁹ Lettre de Tisserant, 6 mai 1946, citée par Goñi, *The real Odessa*, op. cit., p. 99, et index Tisserant.

ates, etc., tels Suhard et l'évêque de Chartres, Mgr Raoul Harscouët, franquiste de choc et "un des informateurs secrets de la Secrétairerie du Vatican".⁵⁰ L'un et l'autre, parmi nombre de pairs, transformèrent en passoires à Allemands et "Yougoslaves" (Croates) les camps "français" de prisonniers de l'axe sous autorité américaine, en auxiliaires zélés du nonce Roncalli : le futur Jean XXIII, après avoir obtenu du Quai d'Orsay, en août 1945, libre accès à tous les camps, sillonna le pays sous prétexte de dispenser "des paroles de réconfort et d'encouragement d'ordre spirituel" ou de "distribuer des colis aux prisonniers allemands".⁵¹

La France prit donc toute sa part dans cette obsession de maintenir pour l'avenir une solide "réserve" au fascisme (français et international) – selon l'explication fournie en 1951 par le criminel de guerre oustachi Draganovic (grand exécutant, avec le nazi autrichien Hudal, de la mission fixée par l'équipe Pie XII-Montini) à Barbie, qu'il venait de déposer sur le sol argentin.⁵² En témoigna, peut-être plus que tout, l'utilisation précoce et très durable de la Confédération française des Travailleurs chrétiens (CFTC) comme couverture des activités des oustachis "réfugiés" en France (les dossiers classés aux archives de la Préfecture de police courent jusqu'en 1974, mais rien n'indique que la borne ait alors été atteinte).⁵³

L'œuvre n'avait pas souffert du sérieux contentieux accumulé sous l'Occupation entre de Gaulle et la Curie, illustré, en août 1944, par le veto du général contre la présence de Suhard au *Te Deum* de la Libération à Notre-Dame de Paris, si près du scandale des obsèques d'Henriot. La crise, vive en apparence, dura peu. La solution fut amorcée par la certitude cléricale, dès l'automne 1944, du strict maintien des "deux écoles" : la *statu quo* de "l'école libre", crucial pour l'assise de l'Église romaine, fut en effet précocement assuré par la caution de l'évêque de Montauban naguère détesté de la Curie, Mgr Théas, que Pie XII "retourna" lors de son séjour à Rome du 28 octobre au 8 décembre 1944, et par la résignation des chefs de *Témoignage chrétien* à la discipline ultramontaine. Tout fut réglé en moins d'un an, de la renonciation française à l'épuration du clergé à la solution trouvée au conflit diplomatique sur le choix du nonce (avec retrait forcé de Valerio Valeri) et de l'ambassadeur à Rome-Saint-Siège (Jacques Maritain, naguère "bête noire" de Pie XI et du secrétaire d'État Pacelli, qui fit à Rome de la surenchère cléricale).

⁵⁰ X.P. 2, 5 juillet 1945, S.L. IV n° 497/52, 17 avril 1952, dossier 51 (Harscouët), AN, F 7, 15291.

⁵¹ Note n° 7663 direction des Unions (DU), 9, réponse Europe, 11 août 1945 ; visites de Roncalli, novembre, décembre 1945, février, avril-juin, et note DU n° 763, 15 mars 1946, MAE, Allemagne 1944-1960, 22, RGSN, Paris, 8 janvier 1947, AN, F 7, 15292.

⁵² "Il nous faut disposer d'une sorte de réserve sur laquelle nous puissions tirer dans l'avenir", cité par Goñi (d'après Tom Bower, *Klaus Barbie, the butcher of Lyons*, 1984, London, Corgi Books), *The real Odessa*, op. cit., p. 246.

⁵³ Énorme dossier APP, BA 2197, Yougoslavie (et Lacroix-Riz, *Le Vatican, l'Europe et le Reich*, op. cit., chap. 10-11).

Les plus grands coupables échappant au châtement dans cette partie de la zone d'influence américaine comme dans les autres, la "réconciliation" triompha, malgré l'antipathie profonde de la Curie pour la France. Le compromis, perceptible dès 1943, s'imposa en raison du rôle éminent dévolu à l'Église romaine dans la reconstitution à marches forcées de la droite française, toutes forces vichystes confondues, des "modérés" présumés aux fascistes avérés : le retour, après six ans de suppression du droit de vote, de l'impératif catégorique du "*bulletin de vote*" catholique à droite et la priorité anticommuniste dictèrent leur choix à l'État gaulliste et à ses successeurs.⁵⁴ Signe de la tutelle reconquise par le Saint-Siège sur la France, Roncalli osa déclarer dès décembre 1945 au Quai d'Orsay que "le gouvernement aurait intérêt à 'dédouaner' Feltin car il pourrait faire éventuellement un excellent archevêque de Paris".⁵⁵ Feltin, pièce majeure de la vaste "réserve", assura en effet la relève de Suhard, décédé en 1949.

⁵⁴ Lettre de Charles-Roux n° 151, 10 avril 1933, souligné dans le texte, Canet, 36 (sens : Lacroix-Riz, *Le Vatican, l'Europe et le Reich*, op. cit., p. 434-435) ; réhabilitation cléricale, Lacroix-Riz, 'L'Église de France et la reconstitution de la droite', op. cit., passim.

⁵⁵ Note pour Coulet, 22 décembre 1945, MAE, Saint-Siège 1944-1960, 11.

PAUL CLAUDEL, A SINGULAR CASE

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Paul Claudel is one of the major European artists of the twentieth century. Poet, novelist, playwright (one of the most important in Europe during the last century beside Brecht and Beckett), he was also a leading diplomat, inter-war ambassador to Tokyo, Washington, Brussels... and he was, from his ‘conversion’ (1886) to his death (1955), an uncompromising catholic.

The question of Claudel’s relationship to rightwing ideology, in France or abroad, has often been put on the table, usually in a fragmentary way, with reference to such and such a biographical episode, such a phrase, such a character in such a work or piece of a work. The question has often been controversial, if not militant. Some critics try to dress up Claudel as much as possible as a democrat, or, on the contrary, denounce him as a supporter of fascism, for example mentioning his positions at the time of the Spanish Civil War, or his ‘Paroles au Maréchal’ (1940), often called ‘Ode au Maréchal’ – this mistake can be found even on the website of the French Academy. Claudel’s enemies do not always go to the trouble of arguing. For example, in travel notes from Italy in 1951-1953, Sartre writes, without further explaining, about “the turbid goodness of the fascists and of Claudel’s heroes”.¹ The simple presence of the word *and*, without any further explanation, implies a likeness, an affinity. No need to argue or to explain: the kinship of Claudel and fascists is supposed to be evident.

But it is not. Claudel’s positions regarding the different forms of European fascisms, and the different movements that are said to foreshadow them by the end of the nineteenth century, are far from being unequivocal; they can be used to justify very different judgements about him. Claudel, I recall, was born in 1868. Despite a great uncle who was a priest, it is by convention, not by conviction, that his parents gave him (as it happened to most French children in this time) a religious education. He was a teenager under Jules Ferry, i.e. at a time of secularization of education and society. His teachers at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand (especially Auguste Burdeau, a philosophy teacher) were enthusiastic supporters of the republican ideology. In 1885, Claudel attends the funeral of

¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, ‘La Reine Albermarle’, in: Jean-Paul Sartre, *Les Mots et autres écrits autobiographiques*, 2010, Gallimard, Paris, p. 842.

Victor Hugo. On this occasion, the Church of St. Genevieve becomes (one more time) the Panthéon. The cross on top of the building is removed. The atmosphere around Stéphane Mallarmé, to whom Claudel is in some way a disciple, was, as he noted, anti-catholic.

So, it is against his time, against his social environment, and in the middle of a violent controversy, that Claudel, in 1886, was suddenly, as he said, “converted” during the Christmas Vespers at Notre Dame. Actually, things took more time. They took more time, but they went further, since Claudel considered becoming a Benedictine monk. In 1900, this project will fail. Claudel will nevertheless continue to speak of himself as a failed priest.

We are not well documented on his early years: many assumptions, few certainties. As I noted, his great-uncle Nicolas († 1869) was a priest, and we know that his grandfather, Athanase Cerveaux (Nicolas’ brother), was a reader of *L’Univers*, the ultramontane, legitimist, reactionary newspaper of Louis Veuillot.² We also know that the family (his father, his sister Camille) read Drumont’s *La Libre Parole*, an anti-semitic publication. A rightwing family, therefore.

In 1889, he probably supports Boulanger (but Boulanger has found support from both the far right and the far left). Pierre Quillard believes that *Tête d’Or*, Claudel’s first drama (1891), represents “the accession of adventurous louts.”³ Octave Mirbeau sees it as a leftist play: in 1892, during the wave of anarchist bombings in Paris, the drama seems to him a representation of “the merciless battle for future justice”; one can hear clearly, he says, “the call of a fierce prophet claiming throughout the oppressed, angry, enslaved world, the annunciation of the new times.”⁴ There is, however, in *Tête d’Or*, a scene of a coup which is very clearly an anti-democratic charge, and which leaves few doubts about the author’s contempt for parliamentary democracy. ‘Le Tribun du Peuple’ is especially ridiculous. In 1951, the old Claudel himself feels similarities (and they are not welcome) between the fascist leaders and his hero: they are, he says, “his caricature”. “The views of fascism and Nazism are very similar to the position of *Tête d’Or*.” There are many obvious similarities, he insists, “in the ideas of *Tête d’Or* and those of Hitler”;⁵ this is why he refused several times that his drama be performed during the Occupation.

Nevertheless, the way in which he specified these similarities is unexpected: they do not depend (as say most of the critics who also see a convergence with proto-fascism) on the praise of the Chief, neither on the violent attacks against parliamentarism. Rather, it is because, says Claudel, *Tête*

² Paul Claudel, ‘Louis Veuillot’, in: Paul Claudel, *Œuvres en Prose*, 1973, Gallimard, Paris, p. 486.

³ Note in the *Mercur de France*, April 1891. See *Cahiers Paul Claudel* I, 1959, p. 136.

⁴ Letter to Claudel, March 1892, *Cahiers Paul Claudel* I, 1959, p. 147-148.

⁵ Paul Claudel, *Mémoires improvisés*, 1973, Gallimard, Paris, p. 68.

d'Or, as well as totalitarian dictators, claims to kill his past, “he claims that from a second birth he begins, and the world begins with him. [...] This is the basis for life and for the conquest of a man who refuses to take responsibility for a legacy.”⁶ The common feature of his character and a Hitler or a Mussolini, is to pretend “to start from himself.” However, it should be noted that *Tête d'Or* is the story of a failure: a failure, if we follow Claudel’s suggestion and analogy, of this attempt at *tabula rasa*. The hero experiences the totalitarian temptation, which is the temptation of *tabula rasa*, but having experienced it, the drama unveils the misconception it involves. It shows at the same time that this world is “a total way of not being what is”⁷ and that the only kingdom that is worthy is not in this world. One has to test the political temptation to recognize its *hubris* and move to religious belief. In this sense, it is fair to say that *Tête d'Or* is a play about conversion.

Yet the next play, *La Ville* (1893), returns to political issues. It transposes on the theater the anarchist bombings of 1892, for which Claudel did not conceal his sympathy, even in interviews given at the end of his life. This play has again given rise to conflicting interpretations. Jean Amrouche sees it as a “prophetic” drama, that of a “rotten bourgeoisie [...] overwhelmed by the revolt of the proletariat.”⁸ But the interpretation can be oriented quite differently if one focuses on the conclusion, instead of placing emphasis on the character of the anarchist Avare, who is a figure of identification as well as aversion. The last act of this play, with its theocratic utopia, is one of the most reactionary Claudel has ever written. It’s a very strange thing to see a student of the *École libre des sciences politiques* write a daydream so indifferent to any political possibility and social reality.

In 1893, he is appointed consul to New York and Boston. There, he writes another drama, *L'Échange*, where one can find a portrait of an American businessman, Thomas Pollock Nageoire. The character who bears this strange name is not at all a caricature. In a letter of 1895, Claudel writes that he “is horrified by modern civilization”;⁹ but he didn’t “hate” this figure of modernity.

In 1895, however, it is this “horror”, he says, that drives him to China. Gilbert Gadoffre has convincingly shown the convergence between the views of Claudel and those of Eugène Simon, who had himself been consul in China before writing *La Cité chinoise*.¹⁰ This book, inspired by the ideas of Frederic Le Play (which have interested both catholic social theorists, those of the *Action Française*, and some fascist intellectuals) had its heyday around 1885. For Claudel, as for Simon, China is an organic society preserved in the critical ages: an

⁶ Claudel, *Mémoires improvisés*, op. cit., p. 68.

⁷ Paul Claudel, ‘L’Art poétique’, in: Paul Claudel, *Œuvre poétique*, 1973, Gallimard, Paris, p. 184.

⁸ Claudel, *Mémoires improvisés*, op. cit., p. 88.

⁹ Letter to Stéphane Mallarmé, December 24, 1895, *Cahiers Paul Claudel* I, 1959, p. 46.

¹⁰ See Gilbert Gadoffre, *Claudel et l’univers chinois*, 1973, Gallimard, Paris.

anti-western, rural, patriarchal society, all that the modern world has lost.

However, thanks to Philippe Berthelot (son of famous chemist Marcelin Berthelot, and secretary general of the Quai d'Orsay), Claudel continues a successful career in the service of the anticlerical Republic (but anti-clericalism is not for export, and French diplomats are not supposed to stop catholic missions, which contribute to French influence on the other side of the globe). After 14 years in China, Claudel is appointed Consul General to Prague in 1909, before moving to Frankfurt and Hamburg, where he is staying in August 1914, when the war breaks out.

These years immediately before the war are those when Claudel, an artist who is famous only in narrow circles, begins to read his name in the major newspapers, thanks to the success of *L'Annonce faite à Marie*. And he begins to catch the eye of politicians and ideologists too – those from the right wing.

This attention can be seen in the famous inquiry of Agathon (pseudonym of Henri Massis and Alfred de Tarde): *Les jeunes gens d'aujourd'hui*, published in 1912. A whole chapter of this book is written in order to support the claim that a “Catholic revival” is underway among young Frenchmen. And it is precisely in this chapter that Agathon focuses on Claudel. Obviously, he is still “known only by an elite”, but (like other writers that Agathon mentions in the same pages to attest to the existence of a collective movement) this “lyric poet” enjoys “an incomparable prestige among many young people” and has a “positive influence in some conversions.”¹¹ Claudel has become a potential agent of influence.

At this point, however, part of the right remains full of defiance. This is true of Charles Maurras' paper *L'Action Française*, and of its columnist Pierre Lasserre. On April 29, 1911, Lasserre, for both political and literary reasons, blames “Paul Claudel, whose work is admired not only in Germany, but has among our readers a growing number of admirers (and of snobs) of very real quality.”

Some of these “snobs” sent letters of protest. And the next week, Lasserre, who had only recently read Claudel, devoted an entire column to him, full of vehement criticism. Maurras and his disciples are hard-line nationalists who hail “classical and French traditions”. But Claudel is not “classical”, and he suspects “tradition”. Can “order” which Maurras and Lasserre advocate be compatible with the claudelian chaos?¹² In his conclusion, nevertheless, Lasserre sees a possibility that Claudel would be a step on the path to a “classical revival in France.” The following episodes will show that this hope was only wishful thinking; and the hand he offered (while waving a preachy finger) will not be taken by Claudel.

¹¹ Agathon, *Les Jeunes gens d'aujourd'hui*, 1995, Imprimerie Nationale, Paris, p. 108.

¹² *L'Action Française*, May 6, 1911.

But one could have been mistaken. *L'Otage* (1911), to which Lasserre attributes a very special importance, is clearly an anti-revolutionary play; it is reactionary, in the etymological sense. And it is true that the immediate pre-war is the moment when Claudel is the closest to the *Action Française*. In 1908, in his diary, he applauds the Count of Chambord, aspirant to the throne of France,¹³ before quoting favorably Maurras who, he says, would have understood the theory of monarchy.¹⁴ In 1910, he writes to André Suarès:

“You can not understand how I felt at the time of the *inventaires*, when I saw [...] treated like criminals men and women whom I revered like my father and mother, when I saw their goods stolen [...] I agree that Maurras’ bitter controversy appealed to me, maybe not to the best side of my soul, but at least he hates democracy as much as I do, he gives a voice to the furious disgust of a noble heart who feels crushed by cattle, by brute force, by the number.”¹⁵

However, such statements are rare. Above all, they come early, and Claudel will never join the *Action Française*. On the contrary, in the following years there will be growing antipathy between him and Maurras (who hated his books and accused him of writing in a “High German dialect”), incompatibility both literary and political, and finally mutual hatred. Early in 1919, Claudel writes that, as ambassador to Brazil, he has found “the enemies of France to obtain fresh supplies in the columns of *l’Action Française*”.¹⁶ In 1926, he warmly welcomed the condemnation of the *Action française* by the pope. In 1935, Maurras spoke of him as a “prank *poétereau*, pledged by the Republic, protected by P. Berthelot, who, hopping from one subject to another, being a cacographer, a debauchee, a villain, finished by getting a retirement pension as an ambassador.”¹⁷ During the same year, the *poétereau* (also named a “pig” and a “bastard”) is a candidate to the French Academy. Maurras successfully campaigns against him, before being himself elected three years later. At the end of the war in 1944, Claudel was informed that Maurras had denounced him twice to the Gestapo. He asked to testify for the prosecution at his trial: “January 1945. Trial of Ch[arles] Maurras in Lyon who calls me a ‘leporid’¹⁸ and a chameleon (actually, I called him a vil-

¹³ Paul Claudel, *Journal*, vol. I, 1968, Gallimard, Paris, p. 64.

¹⁴ Claudel, *Journal*, vol. I, op. cit., p. 67.

¹⁵ “Vous ne pouvez comprendre ce que j’ai ressenti au moment des inventaires, quand j’ai vu [...] traiter comme des criminels des hommes et des femmes que je vénérerais comme mon père et ma mère, quand j’ai vu voler leurs biens [...] J’avoue que l’âpre polémique de Maurras m’a plu, peut-être non pas par les meilleurs côtés de mon âme, mais du moins il hait autant que moi la démocratie, il donne une voix à ce furieux sentiment de dégoût d’un cœur noble qui se sent écrasé par les bestiaux, par la force brute, par le nombre” (Paul Claudel/André Suarès, *Paul Claudel-André Suarès, Correspondance 1904-1938*, 1951, Gallimard, Paris, p. 160).

¹⁶ Paul Claudel, *Journal*, vol. II, 1969, Gallimard, Paris, p. 497. This is an excerpt of the testimony sent by Claudel to the investigating judge in the Maurras case, October 28, 1944.

¹⁷ *L’Action française*, February 14, 1935, p. 1.

¹⁸ From latin *lepus*, *leporis*: hare: “coward like a hare”.

lain and a parricidal!)”.¹⁹ He refuses to join the Academy as long as Maurras is not excluded.

Between the wars, Claudel has become both a famous writer and a leading diplomat: minister to Brazil in 1917-18, ambassador to Japan in 1921-26, to the United States in 1926-33, he held the most prestigious embassies in the diplomatic service. These senior positions imposed some kind of reserve. However, we know precisely what he thought, through his diplomatic notes, his diary, his private correspondence, and even sometimes through his literary work. He is a close friend of Philippe Berthelot, secretary general of the Foreign Ministry until 1921, then from 1925 to 1932. Together, they implement the foreign policy of the Third Republic, the policy of Briand, for instance, “a man of sense and a good man”, as Claudel writes in 1936,²⁰ although he cannot have forgotten that Briand had voted in 1905 for the law of separation of Church and State... He also shows a true sympathy for Édouard Herriot, who was many times president of the Radical Socialist Party. These three men (Berthelot, Briand, Herriot) are among the main targets of the far-right parties.

Furthermore, there is no doubt concerning his opinions on Hitler and Mussolini. The first time we read the name of Hitler in Claudel’s diary (March 1934), it is in a very short note about *Mein Kampf*, in which Claudel finds “the ugly seed of Luther”.²¹ The same year, in a letter to his son, he harshly condemns the “band of thugs and madmen who rule in Berlin”.²² On numerous occasions, he calls Hitler a demoniac (“as was Luther”).

In 1935, he violently condemns “the abominable assault which Italy, led by a tyrant, has launched against a Christian people”,²³ in Ethiopia. In 1938 he quotes, in his diary, Psalm V, 7 – “The Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man” –, and he comments: “Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin.”²⁴ In August 1939, in a radio statement, he condemns the Nazi-Soviet pact, and identifies these dictatorships as manifestations of paganism.²⁵

However, the same man who protested against the Italian bombings in Ethiopia reacts quite differently at the time of the Spanish Civil War. While there is no ‘Ode to Franco’, as we can read here and there, at the request of José Maria Sert, in May 1937 Claudel wrote a poem ‘To the Spanish martyrs’ where he deplors the “five hundred Catalan churches destroyed.”²⁶ He is a

¹⁹ Claudel, *Journal*, vol. II, op. cit., p. 509. Maurrassian sites on the Internet show that hatred is still alive today.

²⁰ Paul Claudel, *Œuvres en prose*, 1965, Gallimard, Paris, p. 1270.

²¹ Claudel, *Journal*, vol. II, op. cit., p. 53.

²² Quoted in Gérald Antoine, *Paul Claudel ou l'enfer du génie*, 1988, Robert Laffont, Paris, p. 288.

²³ Letter to Baudrillart, quoted in Christopher Flood, *Pensée politique et imagination historique dans l'œuvre de Paul Claudel*, 1991, Annales littéraires de l'université de Besançon, Besançon, p. 224.

²⁴ Claudel, *Journal*, vol. II, op. cit., p. 222.

²⁵ Quoted in Flood, *Pensée politique et imagination historique*, op. cit., p. 242.

²⁶ Paul Claudel, ‘Aux martyrs espagnols’, in: Claudel, *Œuvre poétique*, op. cit., p. 567-572.

member of, and sometimes presides over, different committees that raise funds for the reconstruction of churches and structures destroyed in Nationalist Spain. In his diary, he violently attacks Jacques Madaule, François Mauriac and Jacques Maritain, three catholic writers who have published a “factum on behalf of Basque traitors”²⁷ – the “factum” is the ‘Manifesto for the Basque people’, published after Guernica. Claudel, as a catholic, feels that the Spanish Church is persecuted, and will not consider anything else. That is what determines him, together with the fear of a regime dominated by the Communists, “the cannibals that compose the red party”. In October 1939, he writes in his diary: “The Communists prosecuted as traitors. What are Mr. M. and M. [Maritain and Mauriac] saying, who put their names alongside those of these villains? Had they won, would we have had to accept it, or to do as Franco has done?”²⁸ One can understand that, in his opinion, Franco’s coup was justified. Indeed in his opinion a coup may be rightful. This can be seen in *Tête d’Or*; and it happens again in Spain. Does it mean that one is right to say that Claudel was “consistent with francoism” and to write his name among those of Drieu La Rochelle and Brasillach? I don’t think so: for him, there was no doubt that Franco could help; but francoism as an ideology is worthless.

Let us now turn to the war period. In 1938, Claudel applauded the Munich agreement. In 1939, his diary is violently anti-German and anti-Italian, speaking of “filthy Germany”²⁹ and “filthy Italians”.³⁰ In June 1940, aged 72, he moves to Algiers in an attempt to make himself useful, and he returns “in despair”³¹ on July 1. On July 6, in his diary he assesses the state of France, as a liability (“we are hostages, the men who govern – he means Laval – inspire no confidence”), but also as an asset (“Hope to be freed of universal suffrage and parliamentarism”³²). Moreover, he confides that he likes Pétain’s struggle against alcoholism, applauds his support for catholic schools, and is delighted to have seen “the Republican idol falling apart.” On Christmas Day 1940, he writes a poem ‘Words to the Marshal’, which is often mistakenly called ‘Ode to the Marshal’. His reasons for writing this poem are well known: firstly, Laval had been sacked, on December 13, by Pétain, and Claudel, who had met the Marshal several times to intercede for Paul-Louis Weiller (a Jewish businessman and a friend), had seen this dismissal as a sign of resistance. Secondly, there was talk of a quasi-official tour of his play *l’Annonce faite à Marie*, and the Vichy government was to subsidize the first performance with 50.000 francs, a pro-

²⁷ Claudel, *Journal*, vol. II, op. cit., p. 188.

²⁸ Claudel, *Journal*, vol. II, op. cit., p. 285-286.

²⁹ Claudel, *Journal*, vol. II, op. cit., p. 283.

³⁰ Claudel, *Journal*, vol. II, op. cit., p. 338.

³¹ Claudel, *Journal*, vol. II, op. cit., p. 319.

³² Claudel, *Journal*, vol. II, op. cit., p. 321.

mise renewed in March by Pétain.³³ On May 8, 1941, the poem is read to Pétain at the Casino de Vichy, and Claudel notes in a part of his diary which is also an indictment against the “thugs” (“les crapules”) surrounding the “poor Marshal”,³⁴ that he has had a conversation with Wladimir d’Ormesson, former ambassador to the Holy See, a man very critical of Pius XII, who is seen as shy and “curbed by fascism”, as well as of the staff of the Holy See, “misinformed and incapable, wholly Italian and increasingly absorbed by fascism”.³⁵

In 1940, in his diary Claudel infuriated by the “shameful treaty” with Japan in Indochina, by the bombardment of Gibraltar by French aircraft, by the peace negotiations with Germany (“we give everything. France gives herself up like a whore to her conqueror”³⁶). He is infuriated by a “monstrous” article by Cardinal Baudrillart in *La Croix*, by the “shameful condemnation of Jean Zay” (ex-minister in the Front Populaire government). He adds: “The self-righteous Catholics are definitely disgusting with stupidity and cowardice”.³⁷

In November 1941, after the execution of hostages in Nantes and Bordeaux, he unsuccessfully hopes for Cardinal Gerlier to make a solemn gesture. On December 24, 1941, he himself writes to Chief Rabbi Isaiah Schwartz to protest against the anti-Semitic measures:

“I want to tell you of the disgust, horror, indignation that feel all the good French against the inequities, deprivations, abuses of all kinds which our fellow Jews are currently suffering [...] A Catholic can not forget that Israel is always the eldest son of Promise, as it is now the Elder son of pain”.³⁸

He has come a long way, since the time of the Dreyfus affair...

Is it possible to conclude? Are there one or several principles to govern these judgments and these positions that sometimes seem conflicting to us? Certainly, Claudel, loyal servant of the secular Republic for more than three decades, close to a number of its chiefs, has no Republican feelings. Democracy is for him an “idol” which he probably disdained before meeting the living God. Hostility toward 1789 is rooted in family history (as well as, on the contrary, the revolutionary tradition: Turelure, in the Coûfontaine trilogy, is far from being a wholly unsympathetic character). Authoritarianism does not scare him. A good tyranny is not a scandalous word for him.

However, vis-à-vis Italian Fascism and German Nazism, his hostility, from one end to another, is immediate, unambiguous, violent. Beside Mussolini and Hitler, Claudel writes frequently, until 1941 and then during the Cold War,

³³ Claudel, *Journal*, vol. II, op. cit., p. 350.

³⁴ Claudel, *Journal*, vol. II, op. cit., p. 358.

³⁵ Claudel, *Journal*, vol. II, op. cit., p. 360.

³⁶ Claudel, *Journal*, vol. II, op. cit., p. 334

³⁷ Claudel, *Journal*, vol. II, op. cit., p. 338, 337.

³⁸ Quoted in *Cahiers Paul Claudel* 7, 1968, p. 326.

about Stalin, another face, in his view, of the same totalitarianism. In his writings, this triple aversion is often supported by biblical quotations. Totalitarianism is defined as a sort of Paganism, Protestantism (Luther is akin to Hitler). They are inconsistent, he says, with catholicism. Claudel does not refrain from accusing the French or Roman clergy of weaknesses or complacency toward Hitlerism. During the Dreyfus affair, he himself was sweet on anti-Semitism, but he never agreed to any kind of persecution. During the Occupation, already an old man, he took courageous public positions against them. Racist ideology is in his view incompatible with catholic doctrine.

In this article, I have reviewed statements, often condemned, which contradict the general line I have indicated. But sympathy for Maurras was short-lived and soon turns to hatred; there was never any connection between Claudel and French fascist groups (Croix de Feu, and so on). His views during the Spanish war do not mean Claudel believes in francoist ideology; they point at his rage against the anti-religious persecution perpetrated by the Republicans. The indulgence toward Pétain does not go beyond spring 1941.

There is continuity between Claudel's "conversion", his utopian desire to re-catholicize the modern world, and the counter-revolutionary tradition. This can produce, from time to time, in his public life, in his private or public writings, some limited convergences with Pétain or even Maurras, or a tactical alliance with francoists. But catholic faith is to him the very opposite of an ideology, the vaccine against the temptation of modern ideologies, whether democratic or undemocratic. Compared to the word of the living God, to the poem called the Bible, in the eyes of Claudel the alternative religions invented by the last two centuries are only *bagasse*.

***ARC-EN-CIEL/VANDAAG*: UNE REVUE BELGE D'ORDRE NOUVEAU CATHOLIQUE (1940-1942) ?**

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L'attitude de l'Église catholique belge à l'égard du fascisme, puis du national-socialisme, a été très bien étudiée. Les enquêtes ont examiné le phénomène essentiellement sur le plan politique. En Belgique, le 'focus' s'est concentré sur les ajustements provoqués par la confrontation entre trois types d'institutions : le Saint-Siège, l'Église catholique belge (avec ses subdivisions régionales et linguistiques) et les États fascistes.¹

En revanche, l'évolution des prises de position des intellectuels catholiques est à l'heure actuelle un chantier encore largement en friche. Nous nous concentrerons ici sur le discours tenu par la seule revue catholique d'une certaine teneur intellectuelle qui ait paru pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, *Arc-en-Ciel*, et son pendant flamand *Vandaag*. Par ce biais, nous chercherons à savoir si la domination politique du fascisme pendant la guerre a incité les élites catholiques à produire une nouvelle utopie ou si elles ont simplement aménagé leur discours idéologique. Comment ont-elles perçu l'irruption du concept de nouveauté fasciste alors que la nouveauté constitue un concept clé du message évangélique, à vocation, lui aussi, prophétique ?

Le secours des corps

Pour bien comprendre le but social des revues qui nous intéressent, il faut savoir qu'elles sont nées dans le giron d'une grosse organisation caritative, le Centre d'accueil. Ce dernier a été coulé dans le droit, sous la forme d'une association sans but lucratif (ASBL),² le 27 novembre 1940, par deux femmes et deux hommes issus de la grande bourgeoisie industrielle. La cheville ouvrière de l'association est Élisabeth Pelgrims de Bigard (1905-1987), épouse de l'ingé-

¹ Voir notamment Bruno de Wever, 'Catholicism and fascism in Belgium', in: Matthew Feldman/Marius Turda (eds.), *Clerical fascism in interwar Europe*, 2008, Routledge, New-York-London, p. 131-140.

² Équivalent de l'association Loi de 1901 en droit français. Les membres fondateurs du Centre d'accueil : Élisabeth Pelgrims de Bigard (1905-1987), épouse de l'ingénieur et industriel néerlandais Emmanuel Stulemeyer (1904-?), Christiane Pastur (1906-1944), épouse du négociant Marcel Waucquez (1905-1990), l'avocat chevalier José dit Joe Le Clément de Saint-Marcq (1917-1982) et l'ingénieur agricole baron Michel van der Straten Waillet (1912-1994).

eur et industriel néerlandais Emmanuel Stulemeyer (1904-?), qui dirige avec sa famille la Société belge des bétons.

Dans la famille Pelgrims, l'engagement patriotique est une tradition. Pendant la Première Guerre mondiale, la grand-mère d'Élisabeth, Mathilde-Clémence Dailly-Pelgrims (1855-1925), s'impliqua dans différents réseaux de recrutement de soldats, d'aide aux familles en détresse, de diffusion de journaux clandestins et de correspondance clandestine. Pendant ce temps là, son fils Raymond (1875-1955), le père d'Élisabeth, organisait le ravitaillement des prisonniers français en Allemagne et effectuait des voyages clandestins de Belgique en Angleterre, cependant qu'une de ses usines produisait des pièces pour locomotives, envoyées en Hollande, d'où elles étaient expédiées en Grande-Bretagne. Il lui en coûtera de passer devant le Conseil de guerre (d'où il parvient à s'échapper) et la destruction de son usine.³ Lors de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, c'est donc tout naturellement que sa fille reprend le flambeau.

Sous la devise de 'Calme, Courage, Confiance', le Centre qu'elle dirige avec ses amis vise à "susciter, coordonner et organiser [...] l'aide morale et matérielle aux familles dans la détresse, [...] créer une assistance par le travail, l'éducation et la solidarité".⁴ Le siège social du Centre d'Accueil est établi en plein centre de Bruxelles (9 rue Ducale).

Tout a commencé un peu plus de six mois auparavant : le 10 mai 1940, la Belgique est envahie par l'Allemagne. Plus d'un million de Belges partent sur les chemins de l'Exode en Belgique puis en France : des familles hantées par le souvenir des massacres d'août 1914 abandonnent leurs foyers et fuient devant les troupes allemandes. Dès les premières heures de l'invasion, divers centres d'accueil sont organisés pour aider et canaliser les réfugiés : tantôt, ce sont des centres de la Croix Rouge de Belgique ; tantôt, ce sont les Conférences saint Vincent de Paul.⁵ Ces centres deviennent rapidement des étapes sur les routes de l'Exode. Avant la fin même des hostilités en France, des réfugiés belges dépassés par les blindés allemands refluent vers le Nord dans l'anarchie la plus complète. Aux bords des chemins, des roulantes de la *Wehrmacht* et des points de secours de la *Deutsches Rote Kreuz* distribuent soupe et pain.

Face à cette situation dramatique où les fugitifs s'en remettent trop souvent aux largesses de l'adversaire qui est décidément 'si correct', la réaction s'organise immédiatement afin de maintenir l'unité de la nation et de promouvoir la fierté de la patrie. Tandis que l'ambassade de Belgique à Paris appuie

³ Laurent Potty, *Biographie de Mathilde Clémence Pelgrims-Dailly, conseillère communale de Schaerbeek de 1921 à 1925*, travail de séminaire histoire contemporaine (Eliane Gubin), ULB, 1994 et les Archives de la famille Pelgrims.

⁴ 'Centres d'Accueil, à Bruxelles. Statuts', *Moniteur Belge. Annexes*, 14 décembre 1940, acte 1345, p. 537.

⁵ Jan De Maeyer/Paul Wynants, *De Vincentianen in België 1842-1992/Les Vincentiens en Belgique 1842-1992*, 1992, UPL, Louvain.

de tout son poids les efforts du Centre d'accueil organisé par le Ministère de la Santé publique avec l'aide de la Croix Rouge de Belgique,⁶ des structures d'accueil pour le retour des réfugiés sont créées aux villes frontalières.

Le 11 mai 1940 déjà, face à la carence des pouvoirs publics, la grande bourgeoisie et la noblesse ont commencé d'organiser les secours aux civils qui se ruent vers l'Ouest. Ce sont des hommes et des femmes catholiques, habitués à travailler dans les œuvres caritatives, qui structurent ce mouvement d'aide qui sera rapidement connu du grand public sous le nom de Secours aux Réfugiés ou encore plus simplement de Centre d'Accueil. Le Centre d'Accueil – *Bemiddelings-Centrum* en néerlandais –, dirigé par Nelly Stulemeyer, est destiné à venir en aide aux réfugiés puis aux rapatriés qui veulent réintégrer leurs foyers. Durant l'été 1940, lorsque les hostilités sont terminées, des collaborateurs de l'œuvre de secours parcourent la France pour rapatrier des 'cas particuliers ou urgents' et organiseront des caravanes automobiles bien avant que les autorités n'organisent les trains de rapatriement. Emmanuel Stulemeyer dirigera une de ces colonnes de réfugiés au départ de Toulouse et Christiane Waucquez sera alors l'ambulancière du convoi.⁷ Afin de rassurer les membres des familles écartelées par les vicissitudes de l'Exode, le Centre d'Accueil va publier des listes d'exilés et leur localisation dans un éphémère *Journal des Réfugiés/Het Blad der Vluchtelingen*, dont le premier numéro est tiré à 32.000 exemplaires.

À la fin de l'été, lorsque la plupart des réfugiés seront rentrés, le Centre d'Accueil se consacrera, toujours dans une perspective caritative, à "l'allègement des misères internes de la Belgique".⁸ Cependant, peu à peu, l'organisation des secours est reprise en main par les secrétaires généraux qui créent le Secours d'Hiver.⁹ Le Centre d'Accueil perd donc sa raison d'être. Son esprit est néanmoins repris en main par une antenne de la Croix-Rouge suédoise qui s'ouvre rue Ducale, 9. Quant à Nelly Stulemeyer elle ouvre, au 176 avenue Louise, un Centre d'Accueil pour Étrangers.

Le secours des âmes

Comme l'intégralité de la presse belge, les revues catholiques cessent de paraître dès l'invasion allemande. Très vite, il paraît clair que l'édition doit faire le choix, soit de participer au projet de l'occupant, soit de rejoindre la clandestinité. À l'exception des intellectuels catholiques qui ont choisi de suivre, qui

⁶ 'Communiqué de la Commission pour le rapatriement des Belges réfugiés en France', *Le Journal des Réfugiés = Het Blad der Vluchtelingen* 2, [ca. 30 juin 1940], p. 22.

⁷ Rapport du Centre d'Accueil, 79 Bd Poincaré à Bruxelles, Documents Marcel Waucquez concernant les réfugiés belges en France en 1940, CEGES, AA 941.

⁸ 'Centres d'Accueil, à Bruxelles. Statuts', *Moniteur Belge. Annexes*, 14 décembre 1940, acte 1345, p. 537.

⁹ Hildegard Van Dongen, 'Armoede en hulpverlening tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog', in: R. Coolen (ed.), *1940-1945. Het dagelijkse leven in België*, 1984, R. Coolen (ASLK), Bruxelles, p. 136-153.

le rexisme, qui le nationalisme flamand, dans la voie de la collaboration, les journalistes et hommes de lettres catholiques ‘cassent leur plume’. Leur attitude à l’égard du rexisme est sans équivoque : depuis 1937, d’un point de vue strictement institutionnel, les catholiques font œuvre de péché – de désobéissance grave – en adhérant à l’un des mouvements fascisants belges. Le parti nationaliste flamand, le *Vlaamsch Nationaal Verbond* (VNV), s’il est certes accueillant aux catholiques et en compte beaucoup dans ses rangs, n’est pas du tout considéré comme un parti confessionnel.

Les publications qui paraissent alors doivent être soumises à la censure du *Referat Zeitschrift de la Propaganda Abteilung Belgien* (PA). Celle-ci est un service intégré à la *Militärverwaltung*. Cependant la PA dépendait également du *Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda* (PROMI) du docteur Josef Goebbels (1897-1945). Elle autorise les publications au compte-gouttes et veille à ce qu’il n’y ait que des journaux d’information proallemands. Ainsi, les quotidiens politiques catholiques ne reçoivent pas l’autorisation de paraître à nouveau.

Le 10 octobre 1940, paraît le premier numéro de la revue *Arc-en-Ciel* : *Hebdomadaire Édité par le Centre d’Accueil* qui prend bientôt le sous-titre *Hebdomadaire Illustré Édité par le Centre d’Accueil* alors que le papier à en-tête de la revue porte le sous-titre *Hebdomadaire de la Vie Belge Édité par le Centre d’Accueil*. Une version flamande en langue néerlandaise est encore créée le 31 octobre 1940 sous le titre *Vandaag : Weekblad Uitgegeven door het Bemiddelings-Centrum*. Les deux titres se présentent sous la forme d’un magazine de grand format inspiré des revues à fort tirage de l’époque comme *Vu* (1928), *Life* (1936) et *Match* (1939). Malgré le nombre de photos plus réduit et leur qualité qui est moindre que dans les revues précitées, cette inspiration permet de mesurer les ambitions de l’équipe fondatrice des deux revues belges. L’élégance du graphisme, moderne et aéré, et de la mise en page, laisse conclure que leurs bailleurs de fonds en attendent beaucoup. Ils peuvent surtout compter sur le blanc-seing de l’Église.

Arc-en-Ciel, comme *Vandaag*, ne contient presque pas de publicité. On remarquera bien des pavés comme “Reconstruire ! Oui, mais avec du béton armé...” de la Société Belge des Bétons qui appartient à la famille Stulemeyer, des Ciments de Thieu, de la Banque de la Société Générale de Belgique, des Compagnies Belges Assurances générales ou encore de plus petites annonces pour la méthode Assimil : “L’allemand sans peine” rectifié un peu plus tard en un plus sobre “Langues vivantes en 3 mois chez soi : flamand, allemand, espagnol, anglais, italien”.¹⁰ Ce ne sont toutefois ni la publicité ni les abonnements qui parviennent à équilibrer la trésorerie des revues. Les fonds principaux semblent bien venir de Nelly Stulemeyer.¹¹

¹⁰ *Arc-en-Ciel*, I, 17 octobre 1940, 2, p. 25 et 21 novembre 1940, 7, p. 24.

¹¹ Marie Gevers à Germaine Sneyers, Missembourg, Edegem, 8 janvier 1941, *Fonds Germaine Sneyers*, Archives et Musée de la littérature (AML).

Les collaborateurs d'Arc-en-ciel

Le relevé systématique des signatures, hormis les noms d'enfants qui participent aux pages de *Belle Chance*, les auteurs de poèmes, les pseudonymes flagrants, les écrivains et musiciens décédés, les prénoms et autres initiales, livre le nombre effarant de plus de 150 auteurs. Parmi eux, 13 % appartiennent à la noblesse ou à la haute bourgeoisie qui lui est apparentée. Nous ne distinguons avec certitude que 6,5 % d'ecclésiastiques et 4 % de docteurs que nous supposons être des médecins d'après le contexte des articles, et enfin 12 % de juristes ou de docteurs en droit.

Parmi les noms des fondateurs de l'ASBL, seul celui de Christiane Waucquez-Pastur apparaît au bas d'un article.¹² *Arc-en-Ciel* choisit la formule d'une direction bicéphale pour mener la revue. C'est probablement Nelly Stulemeyer qui engage le premier des deux rédacteurs en chef de la revue, Georges Sion (1913-2001). Docteur en droit de l'Université catholique de Louvain, Sion était depuis 1937 le secrétaire de rédaction de la *Revue Belge*. Il travaillait alors sous la direction de Pierre Goemaere-Jourdain qui avait épousé Suzanne Pelgrims de Bigard (1901-1985), la sœur aînée de Nelly Stulemeyer. A l'automne 1940, Georges Sion devient donc le rédacteur en chef d'*Arc-en-Ciel*, poste qu'il partage alors avec Gustave dit Gussy Jambers (1909-?).¹³

Le reste de la rédaction est assumé, d'une part, par l'intelligentsia catholique, celle qui avant guerre s'exprimait dans les revues d'intérêt général à tendance conservatrice – voire réactionnaire –, *La Revue Générale*, la *Revue Catholique des Idées et des Faits*, *Pour l'Autorité* et *Le Vingtième Siècle*, et d'autre part, par des relations directes du Centre d'Accueil. Nous retrouvons régulièrement la signature de l'avocat et publiciste proluxe Marcel Laloire (1903-1976). Membre de la Commission de Rapatriement, Laloire fait partie du cercle fondateur du Centre d'Accueil. Parmi les rédacteurs les plus assidus d'*Arc-en-Ciel* nous citerons également la romancière Marie Gevers (1883-1975), l'écrivain et critique littéraire Frans Weyergans (1912-1974) et le critique d'art et futur écrivain Stéphane Rey, alias Thomas Owen (1910-2002). Des journalistes de *La Nation Belge* d'avant-guerre rejoignent également la rédaction comme Gérard de Lantsheere (1906-1972) qui y dirigeait les services parisiens, ou l'illustratrice Hélène Scheggia. D'autres viennent du quotidien *La Libre Belgique* qui est désormais suspendu comme par exemple Robert Delmarcelle (1910-1974), et même du *Soir* comme le démocrate-chrétien Désiré Denuit (1905-1987) qui refuse de collaborer au *Soir* "volé". Le magistrat Carlo Bronne (1901-1987) rejoint l'équipe des rédacteurs en janvier 1941 et donne régulièrement des textes historico-

¹² Christiane Waucquez, 'Coin de lumière : le camp de Saussans', *Arc-en-Ciel*, I, 10 octobre 1940, 1, p. 5.

¹³ Marie Gevers à Germaine Sneyers, 8 janvier 1941, *Fonds Germaine Sneyers*, op. cit.

littéraires tandis que le maurassien Hubert Colleye (1883-1972) commence de collaborer à *Arc-en-Ciel* en avril 1941 où il assurera une chronique.

Repenser la Belgique sans politique ?

Par delà les liens qu'*Arc-en-Ciel* doit établir entre l'œuvre caritative et le grand public, la revue s'est vouée "à la tâche d'inventorier, de repenser la Belgique".¹⁴ Mais d'emblée, obéissant au 'contrat' passé avec le *Referat Zeitschrift de la Propaganda Abteilung Belgien*, *Arc-en-Ciel* insiste sur son côté apolitique : "Nous ne ferons pas de politique".¹⁵

Rien *a priori* n'indique l'ancrage catholique d'*Arc-en-Ciel*, si ce n'est un éditorial anonyme recommandant aux lecteurs de suivre la "lumière du Vrai éternel". Par contre, les jeunes rédacteurs en chef s'inscrivent visiblement dans la perspective de l'adresse du roi Léopold III au peuple belge du 28 mai 1940 : "Demain, nous nous remettons au travail avec la ferme volonté de relever la patrie de ses ruines".

Fidèle à cette logique, *Arc-en-Ciel* soutient l'organisation des Volontaires du Travail wallon et publie trois articles y consacrés.¹⁶ L'organisation a été créée par trois jeunes bourgeois catholiques issus du monde du scoutisme et de l'Action catholique dans le but de regrouper les jeunes Belges autour d'une mystique du travail et de maintenir de cette façon une discipline apte à recréer rapidement et efficacement une armée belge de la revanche. Dès la fin juin 1940, ils se mettent au service des Centres d'Accueil. Les idées développées par les Volontaires sont le nationalisme, le patriotisme, l'abolition de la lutte des classes, la communauté supplantant l'individualisme, et la lutte contre le chômage par de grands travaux – en somme, les ingrédients qui forment la quintessence des régimes autoritaires de droite. Clairement donc, ils s'inscrivent dans la perspective de l'Ordre nouveau, sans toutefois sombrer dans la Collaboration : les fondateurs sont en effet trop nationalistes et trop catholiques pour trouver un terrain d'entente avec l'occupant. L'ennemi est et restera le "Boche".¹⁷ En revanche – et c'est important de le noter –, *Vandaag* ne publiera aucun article sur le *Vrijwillige Arbeidsdienst voor Vlaanderen* qui se place dès sa fondation dans une optique collaborationniste.

¹⁴ Georges Sion, 'Entre deux années', *Arc-en-Ciel*, I, 26 décembre 1940, 12, p. 3.

¹⁵ 'Éditorial', *Arc-en-Ciel*, I, 10 octobre 1940, 1, p. 2.

¹⁶ Marc Fontainas, 'Chez les Volontaires du Travail : Malheur aux tièdes !', *Arc-en-Ciel*, I, 7 novembre 1940, 5, p. 8-9 ; Jos. Verhoeven, 'Remèdes au chômage des jeunes', *Arc-en-Ciel*, I, 21 novembre 1940, 7, p. 20, et René Degovin, 'Dans le chemin creux d'Arville : Au camp de Naninne', *Arc-en-Ciel*, I, 9 janvier 1941, 14, p. 20-21.

¹⁷ Jules Gérard-Libois/José Gotovitch, *L'An 40. La Belgique occupée*, 1971, CRISP, Bruxelles, p. 469 ; Francis Balace, 'L'Aventure des Volontaires du Travail', in : Francis Balace (éd.), *1942. Jours de doute*, 1994, Crédit Communal, Bruxelles, p. 45, et Eddy De Bruyne, *Dans l'état de Degrelle. Le Service du Travail wallon 1944-1945 ou De l'usine à la Waffen-SS*, 1994, Foxmaster, Jalhay, p. 68.

Par ailleurs, les idées chères aux plumes conservatrices sont développées sans surprise : corporatisme, opposition à toute idée de luttes des classes, nécessité de revenir aux valeurs traditionnelles de la famille et de la campagne, revalorisation des métiers d'art, supériorité de la structure organique de la ville médiévale et l'histoire nationale et régionale comme ciment patriotique. La revue adopte également un vocabulaire et un ton de l'accommodation avec par exemple l'utilisation des termes 'renationalisation' non loin de "mission sociale de l'artiste" ou encore "nos artistes qui ont de tout temps, vu 'grand, social et national'".¹⁸ Entre les lignes, se décèlent les idéaux d'un 'vichysme-à-la-belge' qui semble s'accommoder un peu vite de la réorganisation continentale.

Se divertir et s'instruire

Arc-en-Ciel veut également divertir ses compatriotes. Des articles sur les voyages et plus particulièrement sur des contrées ensoleillées permettent aux lecteurs d'échapper à la dure réalité du moment. Dans un texte sur le "beau pays de Portugal", Désiré Denuit décrit ainsi le Portugal impérial : "fondé par quelques milliers d'hommes, par le Maure navigateur, le Juif commerçant et le Goth organisateur et chef". Et d'ajouter que l'âme portugaise "demeure vivace et sa claire ardeur, bien conduite, bien disciplinée comme elle l'est actuellement, rendra encore de grands services à l'humanité".¹⁹ Vraisemblablement, a échappé au *Referat Zeitschrift* l'hommage au "Juif commerçant [qui] rendra encore de grands services à l'humanité".

Côté littérature, les rédacteurs en chef privilégient les romans policiers *Zéro*²⁰ de Stanislas-André Steeman et *Le Mystère d'Eaton Square*²¹ de Paul Darlix ; chaque semaine, Marie Gevers offre de courts textes aux lecteurs d'*Arc-en-Ciel* et le romancier Louis-Thomas Jurdant (1909-1982) signe une nouvelle.

Dans *Belle Chance*, les jeunes lecteurs peuvent encore lire de petits poèmes comme par exemple 'Le Couteau' de Fernand Mazade (1861-1939) où le poète facétieux chante : "Le chaperon rouge avait un couteau : / Un petit couteau de la bonne espèce / (Le manche solide et la lame épaisse), / Facile à porter, sans qu'il y paraisse, / Sous une galette, au pli d'un manteau. / [...] / Le chaperon rouge a tué le loup !"²² Cette charmante comptine pour les "Petits Belges" – s'adresse-t-elle seulement aux enfants ? –, replacée dans le contexte de l'Occupation – qui est le loup ? –, fait écho au *Chant des Justiciers* de Calli-

¹⁸ Stéphane Rey, 'Le peintre Henry Mathy', *Arc-en-Ciel*, I, 26 décembre 1940, 12, p. 27, et Id., 'Marie Howet ou l'Ardente Ardenne', *Arc-en-Ciel*, I, 6 février 1941, 18, p. 21.

¹⁹ Désiré Denuit, 'Voyages rêvés : le beau pays de Portugal', *Arc-en-Ciel*, I, 13 février 1941, p. 19.

²⁰ Signalons qu'un groupe de résistance créé dans les premières semaines de l'Occupation s'intitule 'Zéro'.

²¹ Il est piquant de préciser que le siège du gouvernement belge de Londres se situait à Eaton Square dans le quartier de Belgravia.

²² Fernand Mazade, 'Le Couteau', *Arc-en-Ciel*, I, 16 janvier 1941, 15, p. 29.

strate : “Sous le myrte, sous le rameau, / Allons ! cachons notre couteau ! / Harmodios et Aristogiton ont fait ainsi : / Ils ont tué le tyran Hipparque, / Et libéré Athènes !”

Le Putsch’ de l’Action catholique

À la fin du mois d’avril 1941, une partie de la rédaction d’*Arc-en-Ciel* semble affolée par “une nouvelle révolution de palais !”²³ L’une des collaboratrices, Germaine Sneyers, décrit ainsi la situation :

“Vous savez qu’il y a là une Mme Stulemeyer qui veut jouer au dictateur. Tous les huit jours elle s’enjoue pour une nouvelle vedette qu’elle veut imposer à la rédaction et qui le plus souvent ne s’avère pas plus brillante que les autres. Mais cette fois, il paraît que c’est un véritable ‘cheval de Troyes’ qu’on veut introduire dans la place. La nouvelle vedette est Jean Meer²⁴ (de Radio catholique) et derrière lui il y aurait Mgr. Picard (aumônier de l’Action catholique des Hommes), et une collection d’abbé [sic] et d’Acéjibistes... qui veulent tout rénover. [...] Les deux jeunes gens qui étaient à la rédaction et que vous connaissez : Sion et Jambers, ne sont peut-être pas des foudres d’activité, mais ils sont fins, intelligents et d’un commerce très agréable”.

Menaçant de partir, les deux rédacteurs en chef essaient de faire pression sur la grande argentière de la revue et sollicitent Sneyers d’entreprendre Marie Gevers afin d’influencer Nelly Stulemeyer. Mais il ne s’agit pas d’une lubie de la bienfaitrice d’*Arc-en-Ciel* : il s’agit de resserrer les rangs autour de la doctrine catholique et de ne plus laisser la bride à des jeunes gens qui sont tentés par la politique. Les catholiques ont déjà donné à ce petit jeu en 1935-1936 et l’expérience de Rex a coûté fort cher au parti clérical. Ce retour à la doctrine de l’Église et aux encycliques comme *Rerum Novarum* et *Quadragesimo Anno* ne convient pas à tous et Germaine Sneyers – qui assimile un peu vite l’Association Catholique de la Jeunesse Belge et l’Action Catholique des Hommes à la démocratie-chrétienne et au courant ouvriériste chrétien – de s’écrier qu’elle ne tient “pas du tout à verser dans la démocratie chrétienne de la nouvelle direction” et proteste qu’elle se sent “tout aussi révolutionnaire et tout aussi intransigeante que ces prétendus défenseurs de l’Ordre nouveau !” Mais en définitive, le nom de Jean Meer n’apparaîtra pas dans la revue.

Quel ordre nouveau dans la cité chrétienne ?

De cette petite dispute se dégage, nous semble-t-il, une question essentielle : quel ordre nouveau l’intelligentsia catholique veut-elle promouvoir : l’ancien ou le nouveau ? Dans les années 1930, le monde catholique, surtout après la condamnation de l’Action Française, est d’accord pour souhaiter une ‘révolution spirituelle’. Les personnalistes d’*Esprit* comme la revue *L’Ordre Nou-*

²³ Germaine Sneyers à Marie Gevers, 30 avril 1941 (Fonds Marie Gevers, AML FSW 24/104/9).

²⁴ D.S., ‘Portrait d’après nature... Jean Meer’, *Radio-Programmes* 381, 22 janvier 1939, p. 1.

veau de Robert Aron (1898-1975) et Arnaud Dandieu (1897-1933) s'entendent sur un socle idéologique commun qui s'articule autour d'une série de rejets : le rationalisme, le matérialisme, l'individualisme, la société de masse et la dés-humanisation dont elle procède.²⁵ Les débats tournent alors autour des alternatives à proposer ; la 'révolution spirituelle' pouvant recouvrir des réalités fort différentes. En Belgique, une relative harmonie permet toutefois aux différentes tribunes intellectuelles de ne pas se 'rentrer dans les plumes', à l'exception de l'épisode de la Guerre d'Espagne.

Y a-t-il une raison pour que ce plus petit commun dénominateur ait perdu sa fonction réunificatrice pendant la guerre ? Oui, et nous pensons que cette raison est essentiellement sociale. Les intellectuels catholiques belges ont eu beau, jusqu'alors, prêcher pour l'effondrement des classes sociales, ils se sont toujours arrangés pour cultiver un entre soi dans leurs organes de presse. Les animateurs des débats intellectuels se 'commettent' très peu dans les organes de la Jeunesse ouvrière chrétienne (JOC) ou de la Jeunesse Agricole Catholique (JAC). Certains rejettent l'idée même de l'Action catholique puisqu'elle s'appuie sur une stratification sociale qui, en somme, donne raison au concept de lutte des classes. Ce repli social les préservait de l'un des aspects de la démocratie-chrétienne les plus dérangeants : la remise en question des conditions de production du capitalisme et la rencontre efficiente avec la classe ouvrière.²⁶

Il n'est pas interdit de penser que cette dernière question ait effectivement émergé pendant la guerre, à la faveur d'une réelle mise en commun des forces. La guerre, comme la Grande guerre qui l'a précédée, est perçue comme l'occasion de réaliser enfin la rencontre entre frères tant attendue. C'est l'un des leitmotifs d'*Arc-en-Ciel*. De l'idéal à la mise en pratique, il y a un pas que les hommes de lettres catholiques ont parfois des difficultés à franchir. Cependant, la tendance conservatrice semble avoir dû s'effacer au sein d'*Arc-en-ciel* puisque l'hebdomadaire change manifestement d'équipe rédactionnelle dès mai 1941. Pour saluer la nouvelle direction, Louis Picard signe l'éditorial du 15 mai 1941, 'L'Homme qui naît de la guerre'.

Apparaît au devant de la scène rédactionnelle, tant francophone que flamande, un certain Louis Van den Bossche (1888-1979).²⁷ Très discret, parfait bilingue, l'homme est déjà mûr puisqu'il a alors 53 ans. Tertiaire au Carmel, il est l'auteur de nombreux ouvrages de spiritualité. Il a notamment traduit le célèbre *Dieu et les hommes* (1958) du Hollandais Pieter van der Meer de Walcheren (1880-1970), grand ami du philosophe néo-thomiste Jacques Maritain

²⁵ Marc Simard, 'Intellectuels, fascisme et antimodernité dans la France des années trente', *Vingtième Siècle : Revue d'Histoire* 18, 1988, p. 55-76.

²⁶ Cécile Vanderpelen-Diagre, *Écrire en Belgique sous le regard de Dieu. La littérature catholique belge dans l'entre-deux-guerres*, 2004, Complexe-CEGES, Bruxelles.

²⁷ Il se peut que Nelly Stulemeyer garde toutefois une direction bicéphale avec Meer et Van den Bossche à la tête de la revue.

(1882-1973). Il est important de se rappeler que, dans le monde francophone, l'ordre le Carmel s'est distingué dans les années 1930, par la voix des *Études carmélitaines* du père Bruno de Jésus Marie, par un discours anticonformiste et une réflexion très poussée sur les liens entre le dogme catholique et l'idéologie des régimes autoritaires en place.²⁸

Avec la nouvelle rédaction, le concept d'«homme nouveau» fait une entrée fracassante ; c'est le titre de l'éditorial du 1^{er} mai 1941. En couverture, un jeune garçon blond regarde vers le ciel. En fait, l'article fait la publicité d'un ouvrage paru chez Desclée de Brouwer de la main de Louis Van den Bossche, *Demain l'homme*. A vrai dire, l'essai en question ne brille pas par sa singularité. Après avoir retracé l'histoire d'un christianisme qui, depuis l'authenticité des catacombes s'est dévoyé au fil des siècles pour aboutir à la déchristianisation actuelle, il en appelle à l'édification d'une société chrétienne. Rien de bien neuf, donc. À y regarder de plus près, quelques caractéristiques sont cependant à pointer : l'absence de dénonciation d'un système et le refus même d'invoquer les grandes théories politiques (libéralisme, socialisme, communisme, etc.). Ce qui importe à l'auteur, c'est, justement, un recentrement sur l'homme qu'il veut extraire de tout holisme. Nous avons donc affaire à un retour sur le personnalisme chrétien avec une actualisation notable : la disqualification de toute idée de système ; ce à quoi Emmanuel Mounier n'avait pu se résoudre. Par rapport aux autres doctrines d'ordre nouveau, Van den Bossche tient à marquer une différence essentielle : le passé. Il refuse toute idée de rupture dans la ligne du temps, contrairement à la volonté, tant du fascisme que du communisme, voire même du personnalisme chrétien, qui convoquent inlassablement le paradigme révolutionnaire, ne serait-ce que dans une visée allégorique.

“Au cours des années qui suivirent l'autre guerre, il y eut, et il y a encore, un type humain très répandu : celui de l'homme sans foi, – j'entends foi en soi-même, foi dans les institutions et à la racine de tout cela, foi en la réalité vivante, présente et agissante de Dieu. Cet homme croit au mythe de l'ordre nouveau.”²⁹

Au contraire, la prise en compte de la dimension spirituelle de la personne suppose une appréhension de ses racines, de son passé, de son histoire.

Le changement a indéniablement pour conséquence une transformation du discours. La principale est une atténuation très nette des prises de position métapolitiques au profit de longs articles consacrés aux fêtes religieuses, au message évangélique ou encore au commentaire des encycliques. Pour ces questions, la revue n'hésite pas à s'adresser directement à l'archevêché

²⁸ Voir *Les hommes sont-ils égaux ?*, 1939, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris-Bruges. Sur le sujet : Étienne Fouilloux, 'Bruno de Jésus-Marie et les Études carmélitaines (1930-1939)', in : Bernard Hours (éd.), *Carmes et carmélites du XVII^e siècle à nos jours. Actes du colloque de Lyon (25-26 septembre 1997)*, 2001, Cerf, Paris, p. 319-332.

²⁹ Louis Van den Bossche, *Demain l'homme*, 1941, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris-Bruges, p. 8.

pour qu'il lui fournisse les textes.³⁰ Les articles d'histoire n'ont toutefois pas été abandonnés.

Si certains quittent la maison pour des raisons d'amour propre ou pour des désaccords idéologiques, la revue continue à attirer beaucoup d'auteurs. Et pour cause : elle est la seule tribune littéraire non 'embochée' ! Comme le prévoyait Germaine Sneyers, la reprise en main de la revue est accompagnée de l'arrivée d'une 'collection d'abbés' (l'abbé Aloïs Simon, l'abbé Jean Schoonjans).

Si le changement de direction d'*Arc-en-Ciel* avait pour but de rompre avec le projet politique autoritaire et holiste de l'équipe précédente, cela ne l'empêchera pas de publier un article particulièrement favorable au docteur Salazar :

“On ne peut que rendre hommage au Gouvernement fort et éclairé de ce pays équilibré [le Portugal] qui se montre à la hauteur de toutes les circonstances et qui sait utiliser celles-ci de manière à laisser à l'économie nationale des avantages durables”.³¹

Le pays et son régime autoritaire catholique pro-anglais semble alors fasciner certains rédacteurs d'*Arc-en-Ciel* comme de *Vandaag*. Camille van Deyck (1901-1963), qui se distinguera par ailleurs comme membre actif du groupe de sabotage 'G' et par son action au sein du *Boerenbulp*, organisation qui s'occupe, entre autres, de venir en aide aux juifs, écrit un article très élogieux sur Coïmbra.³²

L'esprit patriotique s'exprime en filigrane, par allusions. Ainsi par exemple l'article d'Hubert Colleye sur la restauration de la bibliothèque de l'Université catholique de Louvain dans son édition du 13 novembre 1941,³³ soit deux jours à peine après l'anniversaire de l'Armistice du 11 novembre 1918. Le lecteur belge associe par un réflexe quasi pavlovien la reconstruction avec l'incendie volontaire par l'Armée allemande en août 1914. On imagine l'exaspération du *Referat Zeitschrift* qui voit passer pour la seconde fois, à un an d'intervalle, un article sur le même sujet. Et que dire de la couverture 'Une Vue curieuse de Bruxelles'³⁴ du 6 novembre 1941 qui montre, à moins d'une semaine de l'anniversaire désormais interdit de l'Armistice du 11 novembre, la Colonne du Congrès et la flamme du souvenir ?

Lorsque la revue choisit de publier l'article d'un père jésuite sur le communisme athée le 14 août 1941,³⁵ on peut légitimement se demander à quel jeu

³⁰ Baronne Van der Straeten à l'Archevêché, [s.d.], Archives de l'Archevêché Bruxelles-Malines, *Fonds Cardinal Van Roey*, Deuxième Guerre mondiale.

³¹ Artus, 'Les Difficultés de l'économie portugaise', *Arc-en-Ciel*, I, 17 juillet 1941, 41, p. 8.

³² Dr C. van Deyck, 'Coïmbra: stad vol schoonheid en sereniteit', *Vandaag*, I, 26 december 1940, 9, p. 22-23.

³³ Hubert Colleye, 'La restauration de la bibliothèque de Louvain', *Arc-en-Ciel*, II, 13 novembre 1941, 58, p. 2.

³⁴ 'Une vue curieuse de Bruxelles', *Arc-en-Ciel*, II, 6 novembre 1941, 57, p. 1.

³⁵ A. Muller S.J., 'L'Église et le communisme athée', *Arc-en-Ciel*, I, 14 août 1941, 45, p. 6.

s'amuse la rédaction. En effet, la Légion antibolcheviste Wallonie créée à l'initiative de Rex a quitté en grande pompe Bruxelles le 8 août. Faute d'archives explicites, nous ne saurons malheureusement pas si l'initiative est due à une initiative interne, ou si *Arc-en-Ciel* obtempère à une injonction de la hiérarchie catholique où à un ukase allemand. Toutefois, nous pencherions pour l'hypothèse de l'ukase de la Propaganda Abteilung lorsque nous constatons que même l'hebdomadaire démocrate-chrétien pour enfants, le *Journal de Spirou*, publie un article antibolchevique au début du mois de septembre 1941.³⁶ Dans ses rapports hebdomadaires à Berlin datés des 15 août et 15 septembre 1941, la *Propaganda Abteilung Belgien* insistera d'ailleurs sur les résultats obtenus auprès des périodiques apolitiques en ce qui concerne la publication d'articles antibolchevistes.

Quant à l'antisémitisme, il s'exprime en creux par la voix du journaliste Robert de Vroylande (1907-1944) qui propose une de ses fables aux lecteurs d'*Arc-en-Ciel*³⁷ à l'occasion de la sortie de presses de son livre illustré par Hergé.³⁸ Si cette fable est inoffensive, il n'en est pas de même des "Deux juifs", dont la connotation fortement antisémite suscite le plus grand malaise aujourd'hui. Cependant, les *Fables* n'attirent alors que des éloges...³⁹

Vandaag

Dans les grandes lignes, *Vandaag* est très comparable à *Arc-en-ciel*, tant pour ce qui est des collaborateurs que pour la ligne éditoriale. Quelques différences sont toutefois à signaler. Dans la direction tout d'abord. Un certain mystère entoure la revue flamande du Centre d'Accueil. Ainsi, le nom du rédacteur en chef n'apparaît pas. Et pour cause, la personne qui dirige l'hebdomadaire est une militante anti-nazie notoire, Betsie Hollants. *Vandaag* s'inscrit donc d'emblée sous les auspices de l'action clandestine et de la Résistance.

Régente en langues germaniques, Elisabeth-M.-H. dite Betsie Hollants⁴⁰ (1905-1996) a une longue expérience dans la presse puisqu'elle a été journaliste au *Standaard* et au *Morgenpost*. Engagée dans le mouvement flamand catholique, elle a été la secrétaire du professeur Gustaaf Sap (1886-1940), très investi dans la défense d'un mouvement flamand radical, qu'il défend dans le *Standaard*, dont il est propriétaire depuis 1927 et comme député catholique (1920) et ministre (1932). Betsie Hollants s'intéresse, quant à elle, en outre, à la question basque et aux relations entre juifs et chrétiens. Elle fonde en 1936 avec le professeur

³⁶ Politicus, 'L'Utopie communiste', *Journal de Spirou* 36, 4 septembre 1941, p. 9.

³⁷ Robert de Vroylande, 'La Nouvelle Histoire du lièvre et de la tortue', *Arc-en-Ciel*, I, 18 septembre 1941, 50, p. 9.

³⁸ Robert de Vroylande, *Fables/illustrées* par Hergé, 1941, Styx, Louvain.

³⁹ Hubert Colleye, 'La Vie des Lettres', *Arc-en-Ciel*, II, 9 octobre 1941, 53, p. 9.

⁴⁰ Jan van Impe, 'Hollants, Betsy', *Nieuwe Encyclopedie van de Vlaamse Beweging* II, 1998, Lannoo, Tielt, p. 1459.

Camille van Deyck (1901-1963) le *Katholiek Bureau voor Israël*. Perdant son travail au *Morgenpost* lors de l'invasion allemande, une de ses amies, Babette Stulemeyer-Pelgrims de Bigard, lui demande de devenir la rédactrice en chef de la revue flamande du Centre d'Accueil. Betsie Hollants accepte à la condition que la revue puisse être "flamande, populaire et sociale".⁴¹ Et c'est encore Betsie Hollants qui choisit de baptiser la revue *Vandaag* – Aujourd'hui – pour insister sur la notion du *Hic et Nunc* et de la nécessité de l'action immédiate.⁴²

Betsie Hollants va rapidement orienter le contenu de sa revue vers l'ironie anti-allemande et vers la critique implicite du national-socialisme en acceptant des articles sur les Tziganes, sur les juifs de Palestine ou encore sur les Africains. C'est elle également qui va choisir de publier des couvertures avec des portraits d'Africains.

Toutefois, on peut supposer qu'elle marque son accord lors de la publication, le 28 novembre 1940, de la couverture avec le portrait de l'actrice suédoise Kristina Söderbaum (1912-2001), l'épouse du réalisateur allemand Veit Harlan (1899-1964), l'auteur du film antisémite *Jud Süß* (1940) dans lequel elle tient le rôle principal aux côtés de Ferdinand Marian (1902-1946). La même couverture sera reprise par *Arc-en-Ciel* quelques mois plus tard.⁴³ S'agit-il d'un gage de bonne volonté donné à la *Propaganda Abteilung*? Le problème est que le gage est particulièrement nauséabond puisque le film sort dans les pays occupés au début de l'année 1941.⁴⁴

Outre les articles traduits d'*Arc-en-ciel* et des textes sur des artistes et écrivains flamands, *Vandaag* défend des positions politiques et philosophiques similaires à sa consœur. L'interprétation à donner à certains textes est parfois volontairement ambiguë, tant ils jouent sur les mots et les homologues de situations entre patriotisme, nationalisme et 'résistance'. Ainsi par exemple, le père Leo Senden (1888-1944), doyen d'Hoogstraten, raconte l'histoire d'une mouche parasite et la qualifie de "pire que Hérode", le bourreau des Innocents.⁴⁵ Régulièrement, la revue publie des photographies de monuments religieux avant et après les combats, montrant ainsi les ruines dues à la barbarie de l'invasion de mai 1940. Lorsque ce n'est pas un article montrant de jeunes hommes handicapés au travail qui invite subrepticement le lecteur à penser aux victimes civiles ou militaires des combats. Et quel pied de nez encore que ces hommages au fondateur du scoutisme Lord Robert Baden-Powell (1857-

⁴¹ *La Historia de Betsie Hollants : (Biografie)* (http://goliath.ecnext.com/coms2/gi_01994712201/-La-historia-de-Betsie-Hollants.html, consulté le 28 novembre 2011).

⁴² Jan van Impe, 'Vandaag 1940-1942', *Ex Officina : Nieuwsbrief van de Vrienden van de Universiteitsbibliotheek XIII/2*, 2000, p. 7.

⁴³ *Arc-en-Ciel*, I, 27 mars 1941, 25, p. 1.

⁴⁴ Claude Singer, *Le Juif Süß et la propagande nazie. L'Histoire confisquée*, 2003, Les Belles Lettres, Paris.

⁴⁵ 'Boozer dan Herodes' (Leo Senden, 't Sluipvliegtje Teelas Laeviusculus', *Vandaag*, I, 21 novembre 1940, 4, p. 18).

1941)⁴⁶ et au philosophe d'origine juive Henri Bergson (1859-1941) publié sous le pseudonyme de Philosophus.⁴⁷ L'historien Jan van Impe qui a analysé la revue signale parmi les articles ironiques un papier sur les plantes carnivores en ces temps de rationnement.⁴⁸

Certains auteurs sont plus téméraires. L'abbé H. De Vis présente les Rois Mages et conclut qu'ils sont le symbole parlant de tous les peuples de la terre, Aryens, Sémites et Noirs, qui sont réconciliés dans le Christ.⁴⁹ Le professeur d'ethnologie Frans Olbrechts (1899-1958) publie des articles sur les Amérindiens⁵⁰ et sur les arts africains⁵¹ qui sont pour le moins assez éloignés de l'idéologie nationale-socialiste allemande. Le journaliste Jan Boon (ancien directeur général des émissions flamandes de l'Institut National de Radiodiffusion/Nationaal Instituut voor Radio-Omroep, 1898-1960), qui signe également la chronique littéraire du pseudonyme Jan van Boendale, présente la situation des juifs en Palestine,⁵² tandis qu'un jeune amoureux de la culture tzigane, un certain Jan Yoors (1922-1977), pose la question de savoir si les Tziganes ont une littérature.⁵³

Quelques mois plus tard, *Arc-en-Ciel* publiera également un article sur les Tziganes de la plume de Robert Delmarcelle mais cette fois le ton sera moins amène et rappellera les clichés les plus éculés : "on se demande [...] s'il est possible encore [...] D'opter pour une direction et une patrie à tout carrefour". L'auteur qui avoue avoir fréquenté des campements de nomades ajoute "il [le Tzigane] est illettré comme il respire. Sa crasse est pittoresque, ses femmes sont magnifiques tant qu'elles gardent leurs dents et qu'une avalanche de maternités ne les a point enflées des pieds à la tête ; c'est un artiste du fouet, du vol et du camping ; sa marmaille est éblouissante, son indolence impériale et sa musique, follement sensuelle" avant de le comparer à un pou : "Mais c'est un parasite. Il court sur la civilisation comme sur un crâne mal peigné. Que lui doit l'Europe ? Des démangeaisons, l'inspiration de quelques films idiots. C'est tout".⁵⁴

⁴⁶ 'Bij het heengaan van een groot jeugdviend : Baden-Powell', *Vandaag*, I, 5 december 1940, 6, p. 20.

⁴⁷ Philosophus, 'In Memoriam Henri Bergson (1859-1941)', *Vandaag*, I, 23 januari 1941, 13, p. 18.

⁴⁸ ***, 'Vleschetende planten... en dat in dezen tijd !', *Vandaag*, I, 12 december 1940, 7, p. 10-12, ill.

⁴⁹ Dr H. De Vis, 'Drie koningen', *Vandaag*, I, 2 januari 1941, 10, p. 3.

⁵⁰ Frans Olbrechts, 'Nieuwjaarsgebeden van Indianenstammen', *Vandaag*, I, 2 januari 1941, 10, p. 20-21, ill.

⁵¹ Frans Olbrechts, 'Afrikaansche plastiek in Vlaamsche collecties', *Vandaag*, I, 5 juni 1941, 32, p. 8-9, ill.

⁵² Jan van Boendale, 'Onze letterkundige kroniek : Cheiks, pelgrims en rabbijnen', *Vandaag*, I, 6 februari 1941, 15, p. 4-5.

⁵³ [Jan Yoors], 'Hebben de Zigeuners een Literatuur ?', *Vandaag*, I, 30 januari 1941, 14, p. 14-15, 19.

⁵⁴ Robert Delmarcelle, 'Tziganes ou le mal de la route', *Arc-en-Ciel*, I, 22 mai 1941, 33, p. 5.

Chronique d'une mort... prévisible

Selon Marie Gevers, au printemps 1941, *Arc-en-Ciel* éprouve quelques difficultés de trésorerie : “Elle [Nelly Stulemeyer] m’a dit que le journal coûte plus qu’il ne rapporte, et qu’elle n’est plus en mesure de combler les déficits”.⁵⁵ Il semble toutefois que Nelly Stulemeyer soit parvenue à rétablir les finances d’*Arc-en-Ciel* puisque la publication se poursuit encore quelques mois.

Cependant, tant *Arc-en-Ciel* que *Vandaag* rencontrent une difficulté majeure : la crise du papier. Ainsi, les deux périodiques doivent diminuer le nombre, voire supprimer les pages consacrées à la récréation.⁵⁶ Ainsi, le supplément jeunesse Belle Chance a-t-il déjà disparu en mai 1941 lorsqu’*Arc-en-Ciel* est passé de 32 à 28 pages hebdomadaires ; l’hebdomadaire poursuivra dans cette voie et le nombre de pages chutera bientôt à 24. Par ailleurs, les tirages sont réduits et le nombre d’exemplaires disposés chez les libraires est calculé au plus juste.⁵⁷

À la fin du mois de mars 1941, Betsie Hollants écrit à Jan Boon : “La Censure est ‘irritée’ par le fait que des livres anglais soient recensés et par les allusions aux peuples païens que tu mentionnes dans ton texte car les censeurs se sont sentis visés par ton propos”.⁵⁸ De plus, par leurs agissements, certains rédacteurs commencent d’attirer discrètement l’attention des divers services policiers allemands.

Alors que l’autorisation de publier *Arc-en-Ciel* et *Vandaag* avait été accordée par le *Referat Zeitschrift* à la condition expresse que les revues ne fassent pas de politique, la conjonction de ces trois éléments : pénurie de papier, irritation de la Censure et soupçon de Résistance, mène à l’interdiction des deux revues au début du mois de janvier 1942.⁵⁹ Les deux directrices n’en abandonnent pas pour autant l’action caritative, voire résistante. Élisabeth Stulemeyer devient directrice générale de la Croix jaune et blanche (soins à domicile), fonction qu’elle occupera jusqu’en 1966.⁶⁰ Betsie Hollants est membre de la résistance, aidant notamment des juifs à se cacher. D’une manière significative, la voie de la résistance – à des degrés divers bien entendu – sera choisie par de très nombreux anciens collaborateurs d’*Arc-en-ciel/Vandaag*.

⁵⁵ Marie Gevers à Germaine Sneyers, Missembourg, Edegem, 2 mai 1941, Fonds Germaine Sneyers, op. cit.

⁵⁶ La Rédaction, ‘Arc-en-Ciel vient d’avoir un an’, *Arc-en-Ciel*, II, 9 octobre 1941, 53, p. 3.

⁵⁷ ‘Le Rationnement du papier : Avis important’, *Arc-en-Ciel*, II, 9 octobre 1941, 53, p. 23.

⁵⁸ “Op de censuur waren ze ‘gebelgd’ over het feit, dat Engelsche boeken werden besproken en door de goddelooze volkeren, die in uw tekst worden bedoeld, voelden de censors zich zelf bedoeld” (Jan van Impe, ‘Vandaag 1940-1942’, *Ex Officina* XIII/2, 2000, p. 7).

⁵⁹ Evita Neefs, ‘Voor de lijn was ik niet geschapen. Gewezen hoofdactrice van De Standaard over haar journalistenleven’, *De Standaard*, 15-16 juni 1996.

⁶⁰ Sophie Baré, *Het Wit-gele Kruis. 70 jaar thuis in verpleging aan huis*, 2007, KADOC/WGK, Leuven, p. 67 sqq.

Conclusions

Un rapide coup d'œil sur la publication qui nous a intéressés ici pourrait laisser croire à l'émanation d'un fascisme tempéré par le christianisme, ou l'inverse. Les thèmes privilégiés par le fascisme ne manquent pas : corporatisme, juvénisme, dénonciation de la décadence morale, etc. Mais, à y regarder de plus près, force est de constater que certains thèmes sont absents : la dénonciation de l'autre (l'étranger, l'adversaire politique) et la volonté d'intégrer l'homme dans la collectivité jusqu'à annihiler l'individu. Si dans un premier temps, l'équipe rédactionnelle laissée à elle-même reprend les thèmes d'un maurrassisme à la sauce vichyste, cette seule revue intellectuelle non censurée est bientôt reprise en main par les ténors de l'Action catholique qui s'emploient à la réorienter dans un sens plus spécifiquement catholique. Or, à l'époque, ce 'sens' catholique s'attache, plutôt qu'à définir la cité chrétienne – obsession de l'avant guerre –, à définir l'homme chrétien. On sait que l'une des questions majeures du monde catholique d'après-guerre sera de trouver les moyens politiques de réaliser ce personnalisme.

L'évolution de la revue est symptomatique aussi du traumatisme vécu par le monde catholique dans la deuxième moitié des années 1930. Pour rappel, tant l'Action catholique que le Parti Catholique ont subi les attaques du rexisme et ont failli y laisser leur unité, et leur pouvoir politique. L'expérience fut d'autant plus traumatisante que l'ennemi venait de l'intérieur. Après l'expérience de la condamnation du journal *l'Action française*, cet épisode n'a fait que renforcer la méfiance de l'Église et des autorités catholiques à l'égard de toute organisation politique qui ne soit pas affiliée au Saint-Siège. Ils ont appris que le fameux 'spirituel d'abord' de Jacques Maritain était la meilleure stratégie à adopter contre les remous politiques.

On le sait, en pleine occupation, indépendamment des prises de positions et de l'engagement de certains groupes et personnalités, l'Église ne choisit ni la collaboration ni la résistance, mais demeure dans la zone grise, entre les deux. On aurait tort de vouloir définir cet entre-deux comme un 'juste milieu', un accommodement avec l'un ou l'autre camp. Dans l'entre-deux-guerres, dans un premier temps, l'Église a pu croire que les concordats régleraient ses problèmes temporels. De leur côté, tant le fascisme italien que le national-socialisme allemand et le rexisme belge ont voulu puiser dans les ressources de la croyance religieuse des éléments pour inspirer une croyance en l'État. Religion et politique ont, donc, pour un temps essayé de se renforcer mutuellement. L'échec était évidemment prévisible puisque d'une part les deux institutions en appelaient à une croyance en des autorités différentes et d'autre part, voulaient former une communauté différente : la communauté universelle des chrétiens, versus celle de la nation de l'autre.

Enfin, terminons par ce constat. Contrairement au mythe bien répandu selon lequel les intellectuels auraient 'cassé leur plume' pour ne pas paraître

sous les auspices de la *Propaganda Abteilung*, de nombreux journalistes et auteurs ont continué d'écrire et de publier sous l'Occupation – où tout au moins jusqu'au début de l'Occupation. Il était alors possible de garder une relative indépendance.

L'EMPRISE DU FASCISME SUR L'ENCADREMENT RELIGIEUX DES ÉMIGRÉS ITALIENS EN BELGIQUE

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Le rapport entre catholicisme et fascisme peut – comme toute question historique – être traité à des échelles très diverses. Certains choisiront de faire de ce phénomène un panorama général cherchant, à partir des études de première main, à trouver des tendances globales transcendant les frontières et les décennies. Pour ma part, j'ai au contraire choisi d'aborder ici la question du rapport entre catholicisme et fascisme à travers une étude de cas qui s'apparente à la micro-histoire. En effet, imitant en toute modestie la méthode à laquelle Emmanuel Leroy-Ladurie a donné ses lettres de noblesse avec son mythique 'Montaillou, village occitan', je m'efforcerai d'étudier un seul cas mais qui, selon moi, est représentatif.

Il s'agit de voir quel rapport ont entretenu avec le fascisme la dizaine de missionnaires catholiques¹ envoyés dans l'entre-deux-guerres en Belgique pour encadrer religieusement les émigrés italiens.

Les sources pour approcher leurs actions et leur rapport aux autorités fascistes sont variées. Certains éléments peuvent être trouvés dans les archives italiennes, notamment de la Sûreté² mais surtout des Affaires étrangères où l'on peut voir des lettres adressées par des missionnaires à Mussolini en tant que ministre et les échanges de courrier diplomatique à leur sujet.³

Nous avons aussi quelques exemplaires de la presse que ces missionnaires ont publiée pendant leur séjour en Belgique⁴ mais également des traces de leurs activités et de leurs sympathies politiques à travers la presse belge et la presse fasciste⁵ ou antifasciste⁶ publiée pour ou par les immigrés italiens en Belgique.

¹ Lodovico da Cortiglione, Sebastiano (dit Filippo) De Sanctis, Gustavo Cantini, Gianmaria Del Pra, Alfredo Marchesi, Salvatore Dominici, Padre Barnaba, Don Guidi (ou Ghidi), Don Angioli, Guido Piumatti,... ainsi que les sœurs de Seraing.

² Archivio Centrale di Stato, Pubblica Sicurezza, Roma, désormais A.C.S., P.S.

³ Archivio Storico Ministero Affari Esteri, Roma, désormais A.S.M.A.E.

⁴ *L'Angelo della Missione, L'Amico degli Italiani, Bollettino mensile per gli Italiani di Bruxelles, La Voce del Missionario.*

⁵ *Nuova Italia, L'Eco degli Italiani,...*

⁶ *Bandiera Rossa, Il Riscatto.*

Ces sources peuvent être complétées par les 'Annales parlementaires belges', où quelques interventions concernent ces prêtres,⁷ et par les dossiers disponibles à la Police des étrangers à Bruxelles.⁸ Mais on regrettera à ce propos l'inaccessibilité des dossiers de la Sûreté belge.⁹

Pourquoi des missionnaires italiens en Belgique ?

L'immigration italienne en Belgique est souvent réduite à la vague massive de main-d'œuvre déplacée vers les mines belges à partir des accords italo-belges de 1946. Mais c'est oublier qu'elle est précédée dans l'entre-deux-guerres d'une avant-garde qui, à l'analyse, possède déjà de nombreux points communs avec la migration de l'après-guerre tant quant à sa provenance qu'au type de travail auquel elle est destinée et à sa forte politisation bipolarisée.¹⁰

Les 30.000 Italiens présents en Belgique dans l'entre-deux-guerres forment en nombre, après les Polonais, le deuxième groupe d'étrangers non frontaliers. Toutes les sources convergent à décrire cette immigration largement ouvrière comme très majoritairement antifasciste mais divisée entre anarchistes, socialistes (très minoritaires) et communistes (soit fidèles à Moscou, soit 'bordighistes').

Cette immigration italienne, rebaptisée par le fascisme de l'euphémisme *Italiani all'estero* ('Italiens à l'étranger'), est évidemment un groupe que les autorités fascistes voudraient acquérir à leur cause et qui va donc être un enjeu que se disputent les adversaires et les partisans de Mussolini.

Ces derniers disposent d'importants moyens financiers pour offrir, via les services de l'ambassade et du consulat, une série d'avantages sociaux aux compatriotes qui acceptent d'en profiter : écoles italiennes avec transport et repas gratuits dans toutes les villes où se concentre une importante communauté italienne, cours d'italien dans les plus petites localités, clubs de sport et de loisirs (*Dopolavoro*), dispensaires sanitaires, vacances gratuites en Italie pour les enfants etc. Mais évidemment ces avantages sociaux ont comme contrepartie la nécessaire adhésion au régime et à ses structures politiques, ce qui n'est pas du goût de la majorité des immigrés italiens. Tant les fascistes que les antifascistes constatent donc que la pénétration du fascisme parmi les Italiens de Belgique est très limitée et réservée plutôt aux petits commerçants et aux travailleurs du secteur tertiaire qu'aux ouvriers qui y sont très généralement imperméables.

⁷ Par exemple *Chambre*, 20 novembre 1928, interventions de Brunfaut et Jacquemotte.

⁸ Désormais P.E., sur Filippo De Sanctis et Guido Piumatti.

⁹ Les archives ecclésiastiques (capucins et franciscains italiens, évêchés belges et nonciature à Bruxelles) pourraient aussi s'avérer intéressantes mais je n'ai pas encore eu la possibilité de les consulter.

¹⁰ J'ai développé cette analyse dans un article intitulé 'L'immigration italienne pendant le *'ventennio'*, avant-garde de l'immigration massive du second après-guerre?', in : Michel Dumoulin (éd.), *Italie et Belgique en Europe depuis 1918*, 2008, Institut historique belge de Rome, Bruxelles, p. 237-248.

Face à cet échec, le fascisme va sortir un nouvel atout. S'il ne lui est pas possible d'attirer à lui une large part des immigrés italiens, des religieux italiens pourront, eux, les approcher. La religion leur sera présentée comme un élément d'adhésion nationale, et le fascisme apparaîtra – au contraire de ses adversaires qui lui sont indifférents ou hostiles – comme l'unique défenseur de la religion.

Dès 1923 le prince Ruspoli, interrogé par Rome sur l'opportunité d'envoyer en Belgique des prêtres italiens, écrit à Mussolini, ministre des Affaires étrangères :

“l'envoi de frères italiens à Charleroi pourrait être très utile pour soustraire nos ouvriers qui travaillent dans ces mines de charbon à l'influence des socialistes et communistes, pour autant qu'ils soient choisis parmi les religieux qui ont la pratique ou les dispositions nécessaires pour jouer un rôle aussi délicat”.¹¹

Il conseille donc au gouvernement italien d'envoyer deux ou trois ‘missionnaires’ chargés de cette tâche hautement politique. Ce qui est chose faite dès la fin de 1923.

Qui sont ces missionnaires ?

Traditionnellement la ‘tutelle spirituelle’ des émigrants italiens était confiée à une œuvre spécifique, l'*Opera Bonomelli*, mais on a peu de traces en Belgique des cercles *Fede e patria* qu'elle organisait là où elle s'établissait.¹²

Par contre, les premiers missionnaires envoyés fin 1923 à la demande du gouvernement italien avec la mission, expressément répétée à leur supérieur, de “soustraire nos ouvriers qui travaillent dans ces mines de charbon à l'influence des socialistes et des communistes”,¹³ sont dirigés vers Charleroi, ce qui détermine l'ordre religieux auquel le gouvernement italien va s'adresser. En effet, la présence à Montigny-sur-Sambre d'un couvent de franciscains conditionne le fait que les deux premiers missionnaires envoyés par le gouvernement italien, Gustavo Cantini et Salvatore Dominici, appartiennent à cet ordre.

Lorsqu'en 1924 Gustavo Cantini demande à rentrer en Italie, les autorités fascistes insistent pour qu'au moins l'autre père reste à Charleroi où les ouvriers “resteraient autrement abandonnés à la propagande très active des communistes de ce lieu”.¹⁴

¹¹ A.S.M.A.E., Affari politici, Belgio 1920-24, b. 897, fasc. 1531, 15 octobre 1923, traduction de l'auteur. Dans la farde ‘Affaires politiques Belgique’, il y a un fascicule ‘Missioni e missionari’.

¹² Nicoletta Casano, collaboratrice scientifique au CIERL, a cependant découvert dans les archives vaticanes quelques traces de ces cercles, soutenus par le fascisme et dont le président était Uttini, mais il semble qu'ils n'ont pas pris leur essor.

¹³ A.S.M.A.E., Affari politici, Belgio 1920-24, b. 897, fasc. 1531, 17 décembre 1924, lettre de Giannini au R. P. Pietro Tacchi Venturi, traduction de l'auteur.

¹⁴ A.S.M.A.E., Affari politici, Belgio 1920-24, b. 897, fasc. 1531, 17 décembre 1924, lettre de Giannini au R. P. Pietro Tacchi Venturi, traduction de l'auteur.

Le père Cantini s'adresse à l'ambassadeur d'Italie pour qu'il paie le voyage en Belgique de deux jeunes prêtres italiens, en lui présentant deux arguments :

“Si tratta di Missionari Italiani che vengono all'Estero per occuparsi degli Italiani, facendo opera patriottica e religiosa, e ciò mi sembra un buon titolo per avere il viaggio gratuito ; e d'altra parte siamo qua dietro richiesta pervenuta al nostro Rev. P. Generale, per il tramite del Governo Italiano”.¹⁵

Il s'agit donc bien d'une mission gouvernementale à but politique.

Faisant suite à cette requête, l'ambassadeur d'Italie à Bruxelles demande au début de 1925 à Rome de payer le voyage des deux nouveaux franciscains vers Montignies “in considerazione dei grandi servizi che l'opera dei Padri francescani ha qui svolto e continua a svolgere con vero patriottismo e vera abnegazione a favore dei nostri emigrati”.¹⁶

Un nouveau missionnaire, Gianmaria del Pra, arrive à Montignies le 30 juin 1925 et les 500 frs de son voyage sont remboursés par le budget *Eventuali all'estero* du ministère italien des Affaires étrangères “pour des motifs évidents d'opportunité politique”.¹⁷

C'est en 1925 également qu'un autre prêtre italien est signalé dans les charbonnages du Limbourg. En 1926 le père Guidi exerce, lui, dans la région minière du Centre. En 1927 Sebastiano (dit Filippo) De Sanctis rejoint le couvent de Montignies et en 1928 Secondo (dit Guido) Piumatti arrive à Seraing où il sera assisté par les *Suore delle Poverelle*. L'équipe est complétée par des capucins qui se succèdent dans la zone de Bruxelles-Louvain : Alfredo Marchesi (alias Ilarino da Milano), le père Barnaba, Lodovico da Cortiglionne,... Des missions moins durables ont aussi existé à Anvers et Verviers (Don Angioli).

Le financement des missions

Les archives du Ministère italien nous apportent quelque éclairage sur cette délicate question que nous aborderons à partir du cas exemplatif de Filippo De Sanctis, envoyé au couvent de Montignies-sur-Sambre pour couvrir la région de Charleroi.

En mai 1928 Filippo De Sanctis envoie à Mussolini une lettre recommandée lui demandant de l'argent. En tant que directeur de la mission pour les Italiens émigrés en Belgique, il fait à Mussolini un portrait alarmant de la situation de l'immigration : “I nostri emigrati sono per lo più anarchici, socialisti

¹⁵ A.S.M.A.E., Affari politici, Belgio 1920-24, b. 897, fasc. 1531, décembre 1924, lettre de Gustavo Cantini à l'ambassadeur d'Italie à Bruxelles.

¹⁶ A.S.M.A.E., Affari politici, Belgio 1920-24, b. 897, fasc. 1531, 11 février 1925.

¹⁷ A.S.M.A.E., Affari politici, Belgio 1920-24, b. 897, fasc. 1531, 9 avril 1925 et 28 mai 1925.

e comunisti : qui la Massoneria vive indisturbata, anzi, a casa sua". Le père franciscain assure qu'il défend chaque jour Mussolini contre leurs attaques :

"Non voglio farmi dei meriti, ma sappia Vostra Eccellenza che non passa giorno che io non debba difenderla da mille e mille attacchi [...] Ho bisogno d'incoraggiamento e di aiuto per difendermi, anzi, difendere Vostra Eccellenza, ossia la nostra Italia !"¹⁸

La demande de subsides du père de Montignies à Mussolini (lettre par ailleurs où il est fort peu question de religion !) nous renseigne en outre sur les ressources des missionnaires italiens en Belgique. Le voyage de F. De Sanctis d'Italie en Belgique (300 liras) lui a été payé par un éminent fasciste.¹⁹ Le missionnaire italien est logé et nourri au couvent des franciscains belges de Montignies. Il est en outre titulaire d'une charge de vicaire dans une paroisse belge tenue par les franciscains, charge pour laquelle il est payé par l'État belge. De plus, le père De Sanctis avoue qu'il reçoit des subsides des directions de charbonnages ("i direttori delle varie miniere di carbone, aiutando le 'Missioni' aiutano un po' anche la mia") mais il assure Mussolini qu'il a honte de tendre la main aux patrons belges par fierté nationale.²⁰

La direction générale des Italiens à l'étranger consulte à propos de son cas l'ambassadeur d'Italie à Bruxelles, Durazzo, pour savoir s'il est opportun d'accorder un subside gouvernemental. Durazzo répond à Rome : "Il padre Filippo De Sanctis è un ottimo elemento che svolge in questa zona di Charleroi attiva e benefica opera di assistenza e propaganda nazionale [souligné par moi]".²¹ Sur le conseil de l'ambassadeur, la direction générale des Italiens à l'étranger accorde donc, dans le cadre de la propagande du régime à l'étranger, un subside au père De Sanctis ("nel quadro nei provvedimenti voluti da S.E., il Capo del Governo per la propaganda nazionale all'estero [souligné par moi] e l'assistenza spirituale ai nostri emigrati").²²

Dans d'autres missions italiennes, le prêtre reçoit une aide matérielle directe du charbonnage, comme au Limbourg où il semble bien qu'une voiture lui est octroyée par la patronne du charbonnage de Winterslag en échange de ses bons services.²³ En outre, il peut compter sur des apports financiers supplémentaires car, selon un rapport de la Commission syndicale belge, dans les charbonnages du Limbourg, la Société anonyme de Winterslag emploie comme "agent recruteur un prêtre italien, qui exploite en même temps, par l'inter-

¹⁸ A.S.M.A.E., Affari politici, Belgio, p. 900, fasc. 1566, lettre du 19 mai 1928 à Mussolini.

¹⁹ Augusto Turati (1888-1955).

²⁰ A.S.M.A.E., Affari politici, Belgio, p. 900, fasc. 1566, lettre du 19 mai 1928 à Mussolini.

²¹ A.S.M.A.E., Affari politici, Belgio, p. 900, fasc. 1566, 27 juin 1928.

²² A.S.M.A.E., Affari politici, Belgio, p. 900, fasc. 1566, 16 août 1928.

²³ *Bandiera Rossa* (Drapeau Rouge), 24/25 janvier 1929.

médiaire d'un gérant, une hôtellerie lui louée par le charbonnage".²⁴ Mais généralement les activités de ces missionnaires sont moins commerciales que politico-religieuses.

Religion et politique

Il est évident que les missionnaires italiens envoyés en Belgique dans l'entre-deux-guerres déploient des activités religieuses traditionnelles telles que des messes en italien, des bénédictions, des sermons, des séances de confession, le catéchisme pour les enfants ou leur préparation à la première communion. Mais étant donnée l'extrême politisation en vigueur, même ces actes, qui pourraient être strictement apolitiques, ne le sont pas.

Ainsi le dossier à la Police des étrangers de Filippo De Sanctis²⁵ nous apprend qu'un sermon du franciscain prononcé à l'église de la Cité de Bray en 1934 a déclenché de vives polémiques. Plusieurs rapports de la Sûreté (Charleroi et Mons) lui sont consacrés. Selon le rapport de Mons,²⁶ le prêtre avait attaqué en chaire de vérité la presse socialiste et mis en garde contre elle ses compatriotes, les engageant même à la combattre. Mais l'informateur démentait la version du journal *Le Peuple* qui assurait que le franciscain avait insulté les socialistes belges et qu'il menaçait de faire expulser les Italiens qui ne fréquentaient pas la messe.²⁷ Le quotidien socialiste demandait que des mesures soient prises contre le prêtre italien qui venait "se mêler de la politique belge sous couvert de religion". Une note manuscrite d'un fonctionnaire de la Sûreté figurant dans le dossier de F. De Sanctis relevait que le franciscain s'était "engagé sur un terrain dangereux" et méritait une mise en garde. Mais une autre écriture avait ajouté qu'il valait mieux attirer son attention "sur le danger qu'il y a pour lui de mêler la politique et la religion, par l'intermédiaire de l'Ambassade [souligné par moi] et avec discrétion".

Les 'tournées' des missionnaires dans les localités à fortes concentrations de travailleurs italiens sont – étant donné justement ce lien avec l'Ambassade fasciste – considérées par les antifascistes comme des provocations auxquelles il faut faire face. Ainsi, selon la presse communiste, à Hensies, la séance de confessions en italien avait été dûment annoncée aux Italiens avant Noël mais 'aucun' pénitent ne s'était présenté au *fascista in sottana*. Il est vrai qu'un espèce de 'piquet', semblable à celui des grèves, décourageait les 'jaunes' de s'en approcher.²⁸

²⁴ Charles Suyvoet, 'Rapport sur la main-d'œuvre étrangère', in : *Le problème des migrations ouvrières*, cahier n° 8 mai 1925 de la Commission syndicale de Belgique, 1925, L'Églantine, Bruxelles, p. 59.

²⁵ P.E., A.G.R., 1597.453.

²⁶ 26 novembre 1934.

²⁷ *Le Peuple*, 6 novembre 1934.

²⁸ *Il Riscatto*, 15 décembre 1929 : "Un gruppo di operai sono rimasti in osservazione per lungo tempo senza riuscire ad avere la soddisfazione di conoscere qualche penitente".

Le capucin italien, qui se tient tous les jours de 17 à 21 heures à la disposition d'éventuels pénitents italiens dans l'église de la place du Jeu de Balle à Bruxelles, bien qu'il répète dans son journal que "Chi non fa la S. Pasqua non è un cristiano",²⁹ se plaint du peu d'Italiens de Bruxelles qui font leurs Pâques.³⁰

À Seraing aussi le missionnaire italien confesse ses compatriotes et se déplace dans ce but, à Noël et à Pâques, vers Engis, Saint-Georges, Hermalle, Andenne et Verviers.³¹

Des messes sont dites en italien une fois par mois rue des Capucins à Bruxelles et à Liège, rue Hors-Château à la *cappella delle Suore*.³² Mais, à Liège comme dans la capitale, les missionnaires italiens se plaignent du très faible taux de fréquentation de ces offices où l'on ne voit pas de jeunes³³ et où les femmes elles-mêmes sont rares. Le capucin Lodovico da Cortiglione assure que les Italiens de Bruxelles trouvent toutes les excuses bonnes pour se dispenser de la messe et il les menace d'une punition dans l'au-delà.³⁴

La désaffection religieuse des émigrés italiens en Belgique est constatée par tous les missionnaires : "Non è più un mistero, anche in Italia, sanno oramai come si comporti all'Estero il nostro emigrato in fatto di pratiche religiose [...]". Même les femmes ne vont plus à l'église et ne font même plus leurs Pâques. Les causes en sont selon G. Piumatti : "L'ambiente..., le cattive compagnia, i cattivi giornali, i cinema, i caffè, i balli, il rispetto umano [sic] e soprattutto la mancanza di un buon fondamento nella fede".³⁵

D'autres réunions religieuses sont aussi prévues à Bruxelles, mais seul le catéchisme en italien, préparatoire à la communion, a une réelle continuité. En effet, la préparation à la communion est assez suivie et elle est la seule occasion au cours de laquelle les missionnaires italiens peuvent côtoyer d'assez nombreuses familles italiennes. À Bruxelles par exemple, le capucin italien enseigne le catéchisme, même aux enfants qui ne fréquentent ni l'école italienne ni les écoles catholiques.³⁶

Il est vrai que, si l'on en croit Cavanna, chez les Italiens de Paris tout au moins, une famille qui "ne ferait pas faire la communion à ses gosses, ça n'existe pas. Ou alors, des communistes cent pour cent [...]".³⁷

²⁹ *Bollettino mensile per gli Italiani di Bruxelles e paesi confinanti*, juin 1932.

³⁰ *Bollettino mensile per gli Italiani di Bruxelles e paesi confinanti*, 5 mai 1933.

³¹ *La Voce del Missionario*, décembre 1929.

³² *Bollettino mensile per gli Italiani di Bruxelles e paesi confinanti*, juin 1932 ; *L'Eco degli Italiani*, 30 avril 1935 et 31 mai 1935.

³³ *Bollettino mensile per gli Italiani di Bruxelles e paesi confinanti*, juillet 1932 ; *Angelo della Missione*, septembre-octobre 1931 et autre n° sans date.

³⁴ *Bollettino mensile per gli Italiani di Bruxelles e paesi confinanti*, juillet 1932.

³⁵ *L'Angelo della Missione*, 9 septembre 1932.

³⁶ *Bollettino mensile per gli Italiani di Bruxelles e paesi confinanti*, juin 1932.

³⁷ François Cavanna, *Les Ritals*, 1978, Belfond, Paris, p. 41.

En 1932 le missionnaire de Bruxelles – qui espérait regrouper des enfants italiens dans d'autres quartiers de la capitale – enseignait le catéchisme, rue des Capucins, à vingt-cinq petits immigrés. Il se plaignait de leur manque d'étude. Leurs parents ne leur faisaient pas réciter leurs prières et ne leur communiquaient pas le respect du livre de catéchisme : “Ve n'ha di quelli che hanno già consumato due o tre catechismi senza aver pur imparato il Padre Nostro”. Les petits élèves italiens du capucin ne manquaient cependant pas les cours car, de l'aveu même du missionnaire, ils étaient attirés “da frequenti regalucci che loro vengono distribuiti, consistenti in qualche oggetto sacro e più ancora in caramelle, banane, arance ecc”.³⁸

À Liège, c'est Don Piumatti, aidé des Suore delle Poverelle, qui prépare les enfants italiens de la région à leur première communion collective. Le journal fasciste *L'Eco degl'Italiani* de mai 1935 consacre une page entière à cet événement. Une photo nous montre les vingt-huit enfants en uniforme fasciste de *balilla* et de *piccole italiane*.³⁹ Le consul est présent, et, après la cérémonie, toute l'assemblée se réunit au Dopolavoro du Consulat. Les enfants italiens, préparés par Don Piumatti et les *Suore delle Poverelle*, déclarèrent à la journaliste Maria Busi Bixio que, pendant la cérémonie, ils avaient tous prié pour Mussolini !

Un pèlerinage des Italiens de Belgique est également organisé annuellement dans l'entre-deux-guerres vers l'un des principaux sanctuaires mariaux de Belgique (Notre-Dame de Hal, Montaigu,...).⁴⁰ Il s'agissait d'une excursion en autocar où, pour un prix modique, alternaient les exercices pieux, culturels et divertissants.

En-dehors de ces activités religieuses à proprement parler, les missionnaires italiens visitaient aussi les familles de leurs compatriotes ou, plus précisément, les femmes de leurs compatriotes, “ben inteso nel periodo in cui i mariti sono al lavoro”, ce qui déclenchait l'ire de la presse antifasciste.⁴¹

Les sœurs italiennes de Seraing quant à elles visitaient les Italiens hospitalisés, en compagnie des dames d'œuvres du *fascio* de Liège. Elles distribuaient aux malades italiens des hôpitaux des images pieuses... et le bulletin du *fascio*, “così la Patria e il Cielo portano in un amplesso sereno, conforto e speranza alle generazioni nostre che vivono lontane dalla Patria”.⁴²

La presse des missionnaires véhicule évidemment l'idéologie commune au fascisme et au catholicisme traditionnel de l'époque. Des numéros de cinq

³⁸ *Bollettino mensile per gli Italiani di Bruxelles e paesi confinanti*, juillet 1932.

³⁹ *L'Eco degl'Italiani*, 31 mai 1935, p. 12. Il s'agissait du deuxième grade dans la jeunesse fasciste, après les 'enfants de la Louve'.

⁴⁰ *Bollettino mensile per gli Italiani di Bruxelles e paesi confinanti*, novembre 1932, 5 mai 1933, juillet 1933.

⁴¹ *Drapeau Rouge, Bandiera Rossa*, 26/27 septembre 1927. Le correspondant du journal à Acoz promet que s'il revient “anche nel periodo di lavoro, il ministro di Dio e di Mussolini potrebbe avere la lezione che si merita”.

⁴² *L'Eco degl'Italiani*, 30 janvier 1935, 'Una visita agli ospedali'.

bulletins publiés par des prêtres italiens de Belgique sont parvenus jusqu'à nous. Il s'agit de l'*Amico degli Italiani* (circa 1930), de l'*Angelo della Missione* (1931-1932), du *Bollettino mensile per gli Italiani di Bruxelles e paesi confinanti* (1932-1933), de la *Buona Novella della missione di Seraing* (1939) et de la *Voce del Missionario* (1928). Ils permettent de saisir l'état d'esprit des missionnaires italiens dans l'entre-deux-guerres et sont notamment très révélateurs du discours social qu'ils tiennent aux travailleurs immigrés, leur prêchant la résignation.⁴³ La souffrance sur cette terre est inévitable⁴⁴ et garantit le bonheur dans l'au-delà ; plus on souffre ici-bas, mieux on sera récompensé au ciel.⁴⁵ La mort nivelle par ailleurs toutes les différences sociales et les malheurs de notre siècle ne sont que le châtement de Dieu pour les péchés des hommes.⁴⁶ Les causes de la crise et du chômage sont les péchés des hommes (surtout ceux faits le dimanche !), le niveau de vie trop élevé et les habitudes de luxe qu'ont prises les travailleurs.⁴⁷ Par ailleurs, le petit mensuel publié à Bruxelles par le capucin Lodovico Cortiglione conteste les théories de l'évolution et traite d'ignorants les tenants du darwinisme.⁴⁸

Les mensuels de la mission de Seraing font aussi une large place à des articles moralisateurs et anticommunistes 'prouvant' que sans religion, on devient des assassins. Foissonnent aussi des articles contre le carnaval, la pornographie, le blasphème ou contre les bals aux cours desquels on contracte la tuberculose.⁴⁹ Le *Bollettino* de la mission de Bruxelles rapporte qu'en Espagne, un communiste qui avait juré de tirer cinq coups de revolver au passage de la procession est tombé mort d'une crise cardiaque au moment d'accomplir son acte.⁵⁰

Le *Bollettino mensile* consacre l'intégralité de sa première page de juillet 1932 à l'antéchrist bolchevique qu'il identifie au serpent satanique. Selon le bulletin paroissial, le communisme a déclaré la guerre à Dieu et il faut faire la guerre au communisme. Dans les pays 'laïques' toute licence est donnée à l'anarchie comme aux meurtres.⁵¹ L'athéisme est traité de 'propagande infernale' et le *Bollettino* stigmatise aussi l'enseignement laïque en Belgique⁵² ou ce qu'il appelle le terrorisme antifasciste. À l'occasion de l'attentat de De Rosa contre le

⁴³ *L'Angelo della Missione*, s.d. (octobre 1932 ?).

⁴⁴ *Bollettino mensile per gli Italiani di Bruxelles e paesi confinanti*, 5 mai 1933

⁴⁵ *L'Angelo della Missione*, s.d. (octobre 1932 ?).

⁴⁶ *L'Angelo della Missione*, décembre 1932.

⁴⁷ *L'Angelo della Missione*, janvier 1932.

⁴⁸ *Bollettino mensile per gli Italiani di Bruxelles e paesi confinanti*, juillet 1932.

⁴⁹ Exemples d'articles édifiants dans *L'Angelo della Missione*, septembre-octobre 1931.

⁵⁰ *Bollettino mensile per gli Italiani di Bruxelles e paesi confinanti*, 11 novembre 1932.

⁵¹ *Bollettino mensile per gli Italiani di Bruxelles e paesi confinanti*, juin 1932.

⁵² *Angelo della Missione*, septembre-octobre 1931. Le fait que le missionnaire ait consacré deux colonnes de son bulletin à exhorter les parents italiens à mettre leurs enfants à l'école catholique et à les retirer des écoles laïques, tend à me faire croire qu'à cette époque, les émigrés répugnaient généralement en Belgique, à mettre leurs enfants dans l'enseignement confessionnel. Cf. aussi *Il Ricatto*, 17 février 1929, sur la propagande que faisait G. Piumatti pour les écoles confessionnelles.

prince Umberto, la *Voce del Missionario* élève un vibrant hommage à la Maison de Savoie.⁵³

La presse missionnaire contribue par ailleurs à nous faire comprendre quelles étaient les activités politiques des prêtres italiens envoyés en Belgique pendant le fascisme.

Politique et religion

Si les actes religieux que nous venons de décrire sont politiquement teintés, d'autres activités des missionnaires sont franchement plus politiques que religieuses.

Ainsi, le premier missionnaire italien de Belgique à avoir défrayé la chronique par ses manifestations en faveur du fascisme fut le père Ghidi (ou Guidi) de Péronnes-lez-Binche. À Pâques de l'année 1928 il fait l'achat d'une vingtaine d'uniformes fascistes et fait défiler dans cette tenue les membres de son *circolo cattolico* au cri d'*alalà*.⁵⁴

Le 2 septembre de la même année, à l'occasion de la procession de Binche, le missionnaire défile une nouvelle fois à la tête de ses *sgberri* [trad. : sbires] *armati*. Mais ayant été hué à son passage devant la Maison du Peuple, le *corvo-Duce* et ses chemises noires rentrent à Péronnes par un chemin de campagne.⁵⁵ Le 11 novembre 1928, le père Ghidi – qui la veille de la manifestation du 25 octobre à laquelle participèrent 300 Italiens pour protester contre les diminutions de salaire pratiquées au charbonnage de Ressaix, s'était dépensé inutilement en 'porte à porte' pour convaincre les Italiens d'aller travailler normalement⁵⁶ – récidive. Il défile à la tête d'une quarantaine de chemises noires et cette fois l'affaire va prendre une telle dimension que deux députés l'évoqueront à la Chambre belge.⁵⁷ Le père Ghidi quitte la Belgique en 1929 mais ses successeurs vont être dignes de lui et soutenir aussi très activement le fascisme.

La présence des prêtres italiens aux fêtes et cérémonies fascistes, attestée par la presse tant de gauche que de droite, est déjà une caution en elle-même. Mais si on peut comprendre que – comme c'est le cas à Anvers – le nonce et le consul d'Italie (le 'squadriste' de choc Michele Zimolo) festoient ensemble à l'occasion des accords du Latran,⁵⁸ les prêtres qui vont bénir les étendards des différents *fasci* de Belgique posent un acte qui va au-delà de la diplomatie et qu'on ne peut appeler que politique. Il est vrai que les premiers fanions (*gagliardetti*) des faisceaux italiens en Belgique avaient été bénis en mai

⁵³ Décembre 1929.

⁵⁴ *Il Riscatto*, 20 mai 1928. *Alalà* était le cri de ralliement des fascistes.

⁵⁵ *Il Riscatto*, 30 septembre 1928.

⁵⁶ *Il Riscatto*, novembre 1928.

⁵⁷ *Annales parlementaires-Chambre*, 20 novembre 1928, Brunfaut p. 17 et Jacquemotte p. 20.

⁵⁸ *XX^e siècle*, 24/25 mai 1931. À ce dîner, le nonce porte un toast au bonheur de M. Zimolo et de son épouse.

1924 à Malines, par... le cardinal Mercier en personne. L'illustre prélat belge, à cette occasion, "ha avuto lusinghiere [trad. : flatteuses] parole per il nostro paese e per il Governo fascista".⁵⁹

À Verviers le missionnaire bénit, en présence du consul, le fanion du faisceau local, "ancora sporco di sangue !" ajoute un journal communiste.⁶⁰

À Charleroi en 1930, le père Filippo De Sanctis bénit le drapeau des anciens combattants italiens lors d'une cérémonie organisée par les autorités fascistes et que Mussolini honore d'un télégramme de sympathie.⁶¹ Six ans plus tard, le même prêtre bénira à la suite d'une messe, toujours à Charleroi, l'étendard du *fascio* local.

À Liège Don Guido Piumatti bénit le fanion des jeunesses fascistes au cours d'une cérémonie qui a lieu "nella più grande intimità e nel più perfetto ed austero stile fascista".⁶² C'est lui aussi qui, à l'occasion de la fête de la victoire, prononce au cours d'une messe solennelle, un efficace "discorso di carattere religioso patriottico [sic]", en présence du secrétaire du faisceau, du consul, des *balilla*, *piccole italiane* et 'avangardistes' en uniformes.⁶³ Notons entre parenthèses que ces cérémonies fascistes se déroulent dans des locaux aimablement prêtés par les catholiques belges que ce soit à Verviers,⁶⁴ à Charleroi⁶⁵ ou à Genk.⁶⁶

Pendant un mariage, Don Piumatti fait circuler une liste pour envoyer les enfants dans les camps de jeunesse organisés par le régime fasciste en Italie. Il assiste à leurs départs avec le directoire du *fascio* de Liège.⁶⁷ Lors d'une visite à Tilleur, ce même missionnaire est abordé par un mineur qui lui demande hypocritement s'il doit aimer Mussolini. Selon *Il Riscatto*, la réponse du prêtre est la suivante : "Non come Mussolini ma come superiore e più istruito bisogna amare anche lui". Cette réponse fit évidemment scandale parmi les antifascistes.⁶⁸

Les antifascistes accusent fréquemment les missionnaires d'être des espions. Selon le *Riscatto*, un ouvrier de Tilleur à qui G. Piumatti tendait la main,

⁵⁹ *I fasci italiani all'estero*, n^{os} des 5 juin 1924 et 23 octobre 1924.

⁶⁰ *Il Riscatto*, 5 mai 1929.

⁶¹ *Journal de Liège*, 7 avril 1930. *Bandiera Nera*, avril 1930, qui parle de la "bandiera lorda del sangue di Don Minzoni". Don Minzoni était un prêtre assassiné en Italie par les fascistes (voir plus loin).

⁶² *L'Eco degl'Italiani*, 31 mars 1935.

⁶³ *L'Eco*, 15 novembre 1934.

⁶⁴ *Il Riscatto*, 9 mars 1930, conférence organisée par Don Angiolo sur le fascisme, au cercle catholique Saint-Roch.

⁶⁵ *Nuova Italia*, 7 mai 1936 ; l'inauguration du *fascio* local et la bénédiction de son étendard, le 26 avril 1936, se déroulent "nei locali dell'Istituto S. Luigi gentilmente concessi". Il s'agit de l'Institut Saint-Louis de Montignies-sur-Sambre.

⁶⁶ *Nuova Italia*, 7 mai 1936 ; à Genk le 26 avril 1936, fête fasciste dans la grande salle du patronage catholique "messa graziosamente a nostra disposizione".

⁶⁷ *Il Riscatto*, 11 mai 1930, *I fasci italiani all'estero*, 25 août 1928.

⁶⁸ *Il Riscatto*, 12 août 1928.

lui aurait répondu : “Non diamo la mano a delle spie mussoliniane”.⁶⁹ C'est à cause de cette activité présumée que Don Caravadossi, dont Piumatti distribuait dans la région de Liège des photos dédiées, avait été assassiné en Lorraine.

Aucun document écrit ne me permet, dans l'état actuel de mes recherches, d'avancer que les missionnaires italiens de Belgique étaient effectivement des espions à la solde du consulat fasciste. Le seul élément que j'ai recueilli dans ce sens est une lettre du directeur de la mission de Montignies, Gustavo Cantini, à l'adresse de l'ambassadeur d'Italie à Bruxelles. Dans cette lettre, à en-tête *Opera per l'assistenza degli operai italiani emigrati nel Belgio*, le missionnaire italien annonce au diplomate qu'il a réussi à se procurer un exemplaire du journal subversif *Sindacato Rosso* qu'il lui expédie par courrier séparé. Il ajoute que l'ambassadeur pourra ainsi repérer l'éditeur et qu'il trouvera la “relazione del Congresso tenutosi a Brusselle nel settembre scorso segnata in blu”.⁷⁰

Ce qui est sûr par contre c'est que les missionnaires italiens accordèrent aux autorités fascistes de Belgique un appui qui leur fut précieux à l'occasion de la guerre d'Éthiopie.

Je rappelle qu'en Italie la guerre d'Éthiopie donna lieu à d'étonnantes scènes d'idylle entre le sabre et le goupillon. Avant leur départ les troupes étaient bénies par les évêques dont les sermons exaltaient la mission sacrée. Le cardinal Schuster n'hésita pas à dire, le 28 octobre 1935, en plein dôme de Milan, que cette guerre ouvrait un “nouveau chapitre de l'histoire de l'Église” et que l'armée italienne ouvrait “les portes de l'Éthiopie à la foi catholique”.⁷¹ Alors que les Éthiopiens étaient déjà depuis fort longtemps chrétiens (coptes), la guerre est présentée comme une croisade contre l'Angleterre protestante et maçonnique et le clergé italien invite ses fidèles à aider la patrie en danger en offrant de l'or. Donnant l'exemple, l'Église italienne offre des ex-voto en or et le cardinal de Bologne fait don de sa chaîne épiscopale.⁷² À l'étranger, les émigrés sont également appelés à soutenir l'effort de guerre italien et à résister aux sanctions votées par la Société des Nations contre l'Italie, par des dons. En Belgique des souscriptions sont ouvertes par les fascistes dans ce but et, dès novembre 1935, Don Piumatti y répond par un don personnel de 500 frs.⁷³ C'est lui qui recueille les alliances dans la région de Liège et qui bénit les alliances d'acier, distribuées en remplacement, pour “rendere più evidente il carattere mistico dell'offerta”.⁷⁴ De son côté, le père Filippo De Sanctis s'active

⁶⁹ *Il Riscatto*, 12 août 1928.

⁷⁰ A.S.M.A.E., Affari politici Belgio, 1920-24, b. 897, fasc. 1531, Gustavo Cantini de Montignies sur Sambre à l'ambassadeur d'Italie, décembre 1924.

⁷¹ Cité par Max Gallo, *L'affaire d'Éthiopie aux origines de la guerre mondiale*, 1967, Centurion, Paris, p. 228 sqq.

⁷² Gallo, *L'affaire d'Éthiopie*, op. cit., p. 230.

⁷³ *L'Eco degli Italiani*, novembre 1935, p. 9-10.

⁷⁴ *L'Eco degli Italiani*, mars 1936.

également. Il multiplie, de Bruxelles à Quaregnon, les discours glorifiant l'action du gouvernement italien en Afrique orientale.⁷⁵ Il préside plusieurs cérémonies de remise des alliances en acier. À Charleroi,

“il Cappuccino Padre Filippo De Sanctis, durante la celebrazione della Messa ha illustrato con alte parole il significato di questa fede d'acciaio, simbolo della forza che lega indissolubilmente il popolo italiano, e ricordo indelebile del più grande esempio di nobile sacrificio dato dalle donne italiane al mondo intero”.⁷⁶

À Bruxelles, la cérémonie se déroule le 18 janvier 1936 à la Casa d'Italia, rue de Livourne. Le père De Sanctis

“ha rilevato la profonda significazione della fede come simbolo. La fede d'acciaio è assai più preziosa del cerchietto d'oro perchè essa è anche il simbolo dell'Amore e della Fede nei destini della Patria. Ha terminato dicendo che S. Francesco è stato il primo a portare la parola della fede e della civiltà in Etiopia. Padre De Sanctis ha quindi benedetto le fedeli d'acciaio e gli Italiani presenti”.⁷⁷

Une aide réciproque

On peut se demander quelle aide les fascistes accordent aux missionnaires en retour de leur soutien constant. Tout d'abord la presse fasciste fait de la 'publicité' régulière pour les messes,⁷⁸ mais il est vrai que c'est un peu à titre de réciproque puisque inversement le journal de la mission publie les communiqués du P.N.F. (Parti National Fasciste).⁷⁹

La *Nuova Italia* fait l'éloge de l'œuvre “altamente significativa” qu'exercent dans la région de Seraing Piumatti et les sœurs bénédictines et le journal fasciste vante les initiatives récréatives de la mission où l'on représente “alcune scene patriottico-religiose recitate da piccole italiane”.⁸⁰ Les autorités fascistes appuient aussi la fréquentation des offices religieux italiens, notamment en subordonnant les secours aux mères pauvres à la présentation d'un certificat du missionnaire attestant qu'elles pratiquent régulièrement.⁸¹

Mais l'aide la plus efficace des autorités fascistes aux missionnaires italiens est certainement d'ordre financier. L'école maternelle organisée pour maintenir l'italianité de bambins d'immigrés par G. Piumatti à Seraing par

⁷⁵ A.C.S., Polizia Politica, pacco 21, C 4/4, 4 février 1936.

⁷⁶ *Nuova Italia*, 30 avril 1936.

⁷⁷ *Nuova Italia*, 30 janvier 1936.

⁷⁸ Cf. par exemple *L'Eco degli Italiani*, 30 avril 1935 et 31 mai 1935.

⁷⁹ Cf. par exemple *Angelo della Missione*, 11 novembre 1932.

⁸⁰ *Nuova Italia*, 19 mars 1936.

⁸¹ *Bollettino mensile per gli Italiani di Bruxelles e paesi confinanti*, juillet 1932. À cette condition, et pour autant qu'elles puissent exhiber un certificat de mariage religieux et qu'elles ne soient pas mariées à un Belge, les mères pauvres pouvaient obtenir chez les sœurs salésiennes de la rue Boduognat des pièces de layette confectionnées par le *fascio femminile*.

exemple, reçoit des subsides du *fascio*.⁸² Nous avons vu plus haut comment le père De Sanctis, s'adressant à Mussolini, demanda et obtint un subside supplémentaire pour la mission (son voyage lui ayant déjà été payé par le hiérarque fasciste A. Turati). Les motifs avancés en sa faveur par l'ambassadeur comme par la direction générale des Italiens à l'étranger, sont d'ordre politique et les subsides lui sont accordés en remerciement du travail qu'il effectue en Belgique en faveur du fascisme. Il est tout à fait significatif à ce propos, de comparer la suite donnée à la requête de De Sanctis avec la réponse accordée à une lettre des sœurs dominicaines de Watsa au Congo.⁸³ Ces sœurs italiennes s'étant adressées aux mêmes services à Rome, mais en invoquant seulement l'aide qu'elles apportaient aux malheureux, se virent éconduites car aucune raison politique ne poussait le régime fasciste à encourager leur œuvre, au contraire de celle des missionnaires en Belgique dont la venue avait été voulue par les diplomates italiens et financée par le régime fasciste.

Un engagement sans équivoque

Matteo Sanfilippo, dans son article de synthèse sur le catholicisme des émigrants italiens, parle de heurts (*scontri*) entre les missionnaires, les autorités consulaires et les *fasci* de l'étranger.⁸⁴ Dans le cas belge nous n'avons trouvé que des cas de collaboration entre ces trois pouvoirs qui dans d'autres lieux ont peut-être connu une certaine concurrence.

Ces missionnaires étaient-ils contraints et forcés de soutenir en Belgique les fascistes ? Certes, dans l'extrême polarisation politique qui divisait la colonie italienne une position de parfaite neutralité était difficile à maintenir. Mais, comme le fait judicieusement remarquer A. C. Jemolo,⁸⁵ c'est dans les régions 'rouges' que les prêtres italiens furent les plus favorables au fascisme. Cette constatation établie pour la situation intérieure de l'Italie peut aisément être appliquée à l'émigration. Les zones d'émigration italienne de Belgique, avec leurs noyaux influents de réfugiés antifascistes, constituaient un terrain hostile en principe aux prêtres dans leur acception générale d'avant-guerre. Livrés à ce milieu hostile, les prêtres italiens, déjà prédisposés en faveur du fascisme, ne tentèrent pas de prendre contact avec les masses émigrées. Ils se consacrèrent au petit groupe d'Italiens restés 'patriotiques' et religieux et optèrent franchement en faveur du fascisme.

⁸² *L'Eco degli Italiani*, août-septembre 1935.

⁸³ A.S.M.A.E., Affari politici Belgio, p. 900, fasc. 1566. La mission de Watsa, dans la province orientale de l'ex Congo belge (proche de l'ex-Stanleyville), était liée aux mines de Kilo-Moto et comprenait notamment une église et un couvent. Les sœurs qui y demeuraient encore en 1964 y furent l'objet d'un massacre.

⁸⁴ Matteo Sanfilippo, 'Breve storia del cattolicesimo degli emigranti', in : Alberto Melloni (ed.), *Cristiani d'Italia*, 2011, Enciclopedia italiana, Roma, p. 993.

⁸⁵ Arturo Carlo Jemolo, *L'Église et l'État en Italie du Risorgimento à nos jours*, 1960, Seuil, Paris.

Dans le climat politique de l'entre-deux-guerres il n'est pas d'entre-deux possible, pas d'afascisme mais les choix politiques des missionnaires sont sans ambiguïté. Aucun d'entre eux ne tente de passer pour 'neutraliste', à plus forte raison aucun d'entre eux ne s'essaie à un rapprochement avec les anti-fascistes. Il n'y eut pas en Belgique l'équivalent d'un Don Minzoni en Italie.⁸⁶ Les vieux émigrés que j'ai interrogés ont été unanimes sur ce point : avant-guerre, les missionnaires ne fréquentaient pas les antifascistes, ils ne visitaient que le petit groupe d'Italiens qui leur était favorable. Le prêtre italien était davantage perçu en milieu ouvrier comme fasciste que comme missionnaire. Il ne s'agit pas de cohabitation entre missionnaires et fascisme mais bien de convergences, de collusion, d'hybridation et même de promotion enthousiaste du fascisme par les prêtres. J'aurais aimé trouver en Belgique au moins une exception mais, au terme de cette micro-histoire des missionnaires italiens en Belgique, je dois conclure qu'il n'y en eut pas.

Les éléments nous manquent pour savoir si ces missionnaires envoyés en Belgique étaient justement choisis en Italie en fonction de leurs sympathies politiques et y étaient déjà d'ardents fascistes mais leurs points communs avec le régime de Mussolini sont criants : leur mystique religieuse et leur liturgie complètent celles du fascisme tandis que les unissent des ennemis communs qui ont pour nom la laïcité, le socialisme et le communisme ainsi que l'intégration des émigrés au milieu belge.

Perçus à la fois comme agents du patronat et du fascisme par une immigration italienne en Belgique massivement ouvrière et antifasciste, les missionnaires ne pouvaient que la détourner sinon de la religion, du moins de la pratique du catholicisme. L'occupation de la Belgique ne les fit pas changer de camp. Le cas du père De Sanctis est à ce sujet exemplatif du traitement réservé à la Libération aux propagandistes de Mussolini dont certains vont être bastonnés par les antifascistes italiens de Belgique.

En janvier 1946, le bourgmestre de Péronnes-lez-Binche estimait que pendant l'occupation la propagande fasciste dans sa région avait été dirigée par le père De Sanctis qui se cachait depuis la Libération⁸⁷ et le Commissaire de police de Montignies-sur-Sambre signalait à Bruxelles que ce franciscain avait été affilié au parti fasciste, figurait sur des photos avec des officiers allemands en uniforme lors d'une réception et avait eu durant l'occupation une "activité des plus suspectes".⁸⁸ L'Auditorat militaire le poursuivit pour "propagande en

⁸⁶ Don Giovanni Minzoni, curé d'Argento, martyr de l'antifascisme, assassiné à coups de bâton par des fascistes à Ferrare.

⁸⁷ P.E., lettre du 29 janvier 1946 du bourgmestre Janson à l'administrateur de la P.E.

⁸⁸ P.E., 14 mars 1946, lettre à l'administrateur de la P.E.

faveur de l'ennemi" et le père De Sanctis fut l'objet d'une mesure de déchéance en vertu de la loi sur l'épuration civique...⁸⁹

⁸⁹ P.E., 13 avril 1946 et 18 juin 1946 et question parlementaire du sénateur Fonteyne en date du 6 août 1946.

THE CATHOLIC EPISCOPACY AND THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST STATE

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1936 was a particularly important year in the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church in Germany and the National Socialist regime. This chapter will examine the changing nature of the Church-State relationship in the context of the Spanish Civil War because I believe that one can find evidence that the Catholic Church in Nazi Germany, witnessing the events as they unfolded in Spain, began to hope that there was a chance of finding common ground with Hitler's government. They would both be interested in battling against "atheistic communism".

Some of the most important works written on Catholicism under the Third Reich have not examined this moment in time in Church-State relations.¹ And yet, 1936 was a pivotal moment on the international scene. Civil war had broken out in Spain in July 1936 and governments around the world rushed to declare their neutrality and pledge their non-intervention in the crisis. Behind the scenes, sides were chosen and foreign governments sent advisors, financial assistance, weaponry and soldiers to engage in the fight. I am investigating if the Spanish Civil War helped the German Catholic Church leadership in that they found they could prove their "German-ness" and in so doing, become an acceptable portion of the much-touted *Volksgemeinschaft*. Why would the Catholic episcopacy be looking, in 1936, to move into a closer relationship with Hitler's regime?

Looking at the situation from many different angles, the leaders of the Catholic Church in Germany were very much aware that their Church institutions were embattled. By 1936, the episcopacy could point to the intimidation of priests serving mass, to countless harassments, arrests, interrogations, and even imprisonments of religious men and women.² Add to this frightening pic-

¹ See classic works on German Catholicism such as John S. Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches, 1933-45*, 2001, Regent College Publishing, Vancouver; Ernst C. Helmreich, *The German Churches Under Hitler: Background, Struggle, and Epilogue*, 1979, Wayne State University Press, Detroit; and Gordon Zahn, *German Catholics and Hitler's Wars*, 1962, Dutton and Co., New York.

² See Ulrich von Hehl et al. (eds.), *Priester unter Hitlers Terror. Eine Biographische und Statistische Erhebung*, Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Zeitgeschichte: Reihe A, Bd. 37, 1996 (Matthias-

ture, that 1936 marked a specifically dismal moment for the Catholic Church's public image in Nazi Germany. 1936 brought the opening of the much publicized immorality trials, accusing priests of violating their oaths of celibacy. And there were the scandalous currency trials, featuring nuns accused of smuggling foreign monies in and out of Germany. Newspapers, such as the *Völkischer Beobachter*, also insisted that many Catholic leaders were in league with communist elements, both of whom were said to be trying to foment disruption of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Despite sermons, lectures, articles, and pastorals decrying their faithfulness to the German nation, it seemed as though German Catholics were going to be victims of yet another *Kulturkampf*.

For many of the German Catholic episcopate, this type of persecution was puzzling since the Church had made many efforts to work with the National Socialist regime. They could look back to July 1933 with the signing of the concordat with Rome and make note of their promises to refrain from political engagement. They could also mark the death of the Catholic Center Party in 1933; a party that had been founded on the heels of German unification under Bismarck's first *Kulturkampf*. They had remained cooperative with Hitler despite his passage of laws interfering with procreation (the Law for Hereditary Diseases, and involuntary sterilization laws). They could point to limited Catholic outcries following the cold-blooded murders of prominent Catholic leaders during the 1934 Night of the Long Knives purge. They could show how they had rallied behind Hitler's government to encourage the voters of the Saar to remain with Germany instead of France in 1935. They had not protested vocally against the Nuremberg Laws of September 1935, with the exception of marriage ceremonies between Jews and Catholics.

Time and again, the Church leaders could look to both foreign and domestic events and write to Hitler, reminding him of the Catholic Church's steadfast support and willingness to work with his regime. Yet, Hitler continued to allow the Church to be publicly defamed and internally persecuted. However, with the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, they thought that perhaps now Hitler would recognize the Church as a formidable ally.

On the night of July 17, 1936, a group of military leaders, including General Francisco Franco y Bahamonde, began an armed uprising in Spanish Morocco. Perhaps no one in the Church leadership in Nazi Germany saw any advantage in supporting Franco's side at first. However, evidence suggests the contrary – and not simply in German circles. From the Pope to the metropolitans of Spain, to Church leaders in England, there seems to have been a unified way of thinking about the complex situation unfolding in Spain. This

Grunewald-Verlag, Paderborn) for accounts of priests arrested and terrorized by the Nazi government.

understanding of the conflict would affect the German Catholic leaders' decision-making process as the civil war continued.

In order to understand how and why the Catholic Church reacted as it did during the civil war, it is vital to understand the anticlerical violence that erupted throughout Spain as the civil war spread. Stanley G. Payne, writing in *Franco and Hitler*, claims that the Spanish Civil War was the "most extensive and violent persecution of Catholicism in Western history."³ Overall, almost 7,000 clerics died or were executed: 4,184 secular clergy, 2,365 male regular clergy (those serving in an order or a congregation), and 283 nuns. With these deaths, Spain lost approximately 10 percent of its clergy. Also, along with the general clergy, eleven bishops lost their lives, along with thousands of believers.⁴ The majority of the executions of clergy occurred during the first six months of the war, after which time strictly anticlerical killings ended, especially as Nationalist forces (rebels) gained authority in various regions. The anticlerical violence occurred in different degrees in different areas, depending upon the strength of the Republican forces and the political actions of the clergy. In Barbastro, almost 88 percent of the clergy died or fled during the violence; in Malaga, around 48 percent; and in Madrid, almost 30 percent died or fled.⁵ The loss of such a high percentage of clergy in some parts of Spain not only left faithful Catholics without access to the rites of the Church, but also greatly frightened the Church hierarchy, which had to choose whether to support the Republic or the leaders of the uprising.

Faced with a daunting choice, the hierarchy of Spain now saw that the official, legal government of Spain not only attempted to nullify Church authority through its laws, but also refused to prevent, stop, or punish those who attacked the clergy. They also knew that this uncontrollable violence was not limited to killing and persecutions. Symbols of the Church and the local Church buildings were attacked in the attempt to destroy the power, authority, and presence of the Catholic Church. Thus, not only did clerics lose their lives or their freedom, but the very physical embodiments of the Church also had been destroyed, desecrated, and closed down. The official government did little or

³ Stanley G. Payne, *Franco and Hitler: Spain, Germany and World War II*, 2008, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, p. 13.

⁴ These figures were taken from Jose M. Sanchez, *The Spanish Civil War as Religious Tragedy*, 1987, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, p. 9-11. There is some debate concerning the exact number of clergy killed, but most scholars agree that somewhere between six and seven thousand clergy lost their lives, mostly in the first six months of the war. See also Julio de la Cueva, 'Religious Persecution, Anticlerical Tradition and Revolution: On Atrocities Against the Clergy During the Spanish Civil War', *Journal of Contemporary History* 33/3, 1998, p. 355-369. See also George Esenwein/Adrian Shubert, *Spain at War: The Spanish Civil War in Context, 1931-39*, 1995, Longman Press, New York, p. 131.

⁵ Javier Tusell Genoveva Garcia Queipo de Llano, *El Catolicismo Mundial y la Guerra de Espana*, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid.

nothing to prevent these types of actions, leaving the Church in trouble ideologically and physically.

The Nationalists, led by Franco, portrayed themselves as pro-clerical and pro-Church. Franco fostered this understanding by vowing to the Vatican that he would repeal anticlerical laws and restore religious education, abolish civil marriage, restore the Jesuits, and abolish the divorce laws.⁶ Although Franco's forces fought against a legally established government, his pro-Catholic policies helped convince the Catholic hierarchy and the representatives of the Vatican to support the rebel side, despite the fact that the defense of religion was never given as a reason for the uprising.⁷

On September 14, 1936, Pope Pius XI met with approximately 500 Spanish exiles at Castelgandolfo. At this meeting the Pope contrasted the heroic acts of Christian nationalists with the barbarism of the Republican forces. He prayed that the rebels would be forgiven and he condemned international communism.⁸ From September 1936 till May of 1938, the Vatican issued no further official statements regarding the civil war in Spain. In May of 1938, the Vatican officially recognized the Nationalist government and exchanged representatives with Franco.

The Spanish hierarchy, on the ground, and living through the turmoil and death, took a much firmer stand in support of the rebel forces. The Bishop of Salamanca, Dr. Enrique Pla y Deniel issued a pastoral letter at the end of September 1936 entitled, "The Two Cities". Playing off St. Augustine's City of God/City of Man, the Bishop likened Nationalist-held territory to the heavenly city while the Republican zone was the worldly sector. This pastoral was the first time that the word "crusade" was used to describe Franco's cause.⁹ As pointed out by Payne,

"La Cruzada would eventually become an official synonym for the entire war effort. Catholicism, not fascism, became the main emotional, psychological, and even to some extent ideological support of the Nacionales, contributing greatly to their morale and fighting spirit."¹⁰

The Primate of Spain and Archbishop of Toledo, Cardinal Isidro Goma y Tomas, who functioned as the spokesman for the Church in Spain, viewed the war as a great struggle of those "with God" and those "without God".

⁶ Sanchez, *The Spanish Civil War*, op. cit., p. 126-130.

⁷ Hilari Ragner, *Gunpowder and Incense: The Catholic Church and the Spanish Civil War*, 2007, Routledge Press, New York, p. 40.

⁸ Frederick Hale, 'Fighting Over the Fight in Spain: The Pro-Franco Campaign of Bishop Peter Amigo of Southwark', *Catholic Historical Review* XCI/3, 2005, p. 464. See also Sanchez, *The Spanish Civil War*, op. cit., p. 123.

⁹ Paul Preston, *Franco: A Biography*, 1993, Basic Books, London, p. 184-189.

¹⁰ Payne, *Franco and Hitler*, op. cit., p. 13.

In his influential position, Cardinal Goma tried to demonstrate that supporting the Nationalists meant supporting the Church, the Catholic faith, and God. The most outstanding example of Cardinal Goma's endorsement of the Nationalist cause, came in July 1937 with the publication of the *Carta Colectiva* (Collective Letter). The Collective Letter is the ultimate expression of the Spanish Episcopate's justification of their support of "the Movement", the Nationalist uprising. Written primarily by Cardinal Goma, the Letter was eventually signed by all but a handful of the Spanish archbishops, demonstrating, at the least, that the Spanish hierarchy was in agreement on the basic motivations and concerns in the war.¹¹

Much of the Collective Letter was pastoral in tone, seeking to instruct the listeners in matters of Church teaching and faith, there were also long sections where the Cardinal wrote at length against the Republic. He argued that the Communist revolution, "was, above all, anti-divine", and had produced two tendencies in Spain:

"the spiritual, on the side of the rebels, that took after the defense of order, social peace, traditional civilization and nation, and most ostensibly, in a great sector, for the defense of religion; and on the other part, the materialist, call it Marxist, communist, or anarchist, that wanted to substitute the old civilization of Spain, with all its factors, for the newest 'civilization' of the Russian Soviets."¹²

Goma firmly believed that there were only two sides to the war. No one could be partially supportive of one side and partially supportive of the other, for the two represented diametrically opposed values. On the one hand lay religion, faith, tradition, justice, order and peace; and on the other, revolution, materialism, atheism, and chaos. With only those two options, Goma maintained that the Church could not remain silent and still. They had to take a stand for the salvation of the nation, and this document would be the ultimate expression of their solidarity.

The final section of the Collective Letter contained Goma's thoughts for his international audience. He pleaded with the reader to pray for Spain's wellbeing and for its deliverance from the catastrophe of war. Goma also begged them to help distribute the letter so that more people could know the truth about Spain and the civil war. He declared that the bishops still cared for even those people who fought against the Church and its values. His hope was to bring all of Spain back to the altar of God. The Letter concluded with a call for

¹¹ Rachel Ayers, *Defending the Rebellion: Cardinal Goma y Tomas, The Catholic Church, and the Spanish Civil War*, Master's thesis, BGSU. Advisor: Beth A. Griech-Polelle, May 2005.

¹² Isidro Goma y Tomas, 'Carta Colectiva del Episcopado Espanol', in: Constantino Bayle, S. J. (coord.), *Por Dios y Por Espana: Pastorales-Instrucciones Pastorales y Articulos-Discursos-Mensajes-Apendice, 1936-1939*, 1940, R. Casulleras, Barcelona, p. 571-572.

universal peace. With that, Goma and many of the other leading churchmen of Spain signed their names.¹³

In many respects, Cardinal Goma received the answer to his request that the *Carta Colectiva* be distributed throughout the world. British newspapers such as London's *The Times*, carried titles like: "Renewed Disorders in Spain Churches and Convents Sacked!", "Arson and Rioting in Spain, Churches Burned in Madrid". Catholic weeklies such as *The Catholic Times* and *The Universe* also picked up on these same themes, running articles entitled, "Reds in Spain Burn Seven Churches", "Spanish Bishop Finds a Refuge at Gibraltar. His House set on Fire by Red Mob", "Barcelona under Red Terror", "Bodies of Nuns Dug up and Destroyed", and finally, "If Anti-Reds Fail the End will be Un-speakable".¹⁴

These types of articles did not go unnoticed by readers, particularly Catholic Church leaders in Britain. Perhaps one of the most vocal of British church leaders was Bishop of Southwark, Peter Amigo. By August of 1936, Bishop Amigo had already decided that Moscow was controlling the events taking place in Spain. On a Sunday in August, 1936, the Bishop was in the pulpit addressing approximately 1,000 listeners. His topic of choice for that Sunday: the events in Spain. He asked the parishioners, "are the Nationalists rebels?" And he answered, "If they are rebels, then thank God, I am one." Clearly, Bishop Amigo had made up his mind that, like Cardinal Goma of Spain, there could be only one choice for Catholics: to side with the Nationalist forces. Also, like Cardinal Goma, Amigo believed that the source of Spain's conflict had to do with Russian-inspired communism.¹⁵ In this respect, Bishop Amigo was not alone as other influential Catholic clergymen in England believed likewise.¹⁶ *The South London Press* reported, "The people of Spain who were attacking the Government were not rebels, they are fighting for the Church of God."¹⁷ If this type of imagery was able to be present in England, what type of coverage could one expect to find in Nazi Germany?

Joseph Goebbels, as Minister of Propaganda and Enlightenment, was deeply interested in the events unfolding in Spain. He wrote at least seventy

¹³ Goma y Tomas, 'Carta Colectiva', op. cit., p. 588.

¹⁴ *The Times* (London), March 10, 1936, p. 15; *The Times*, March 11, 1936, p. 16; *The Universe*, LXXVI, no. 3921 (March 6, 1936), p. 1; *The Catholic Times*, LXXVII. No. 3473 (March 20, 1936), p. 1; *The Universe* (July 31, 1936), p. 1; *The Universe* (August 14, 1936), p. 1. See also Hale, 'Fighting Over the Fight in Spain', op. cit., p. 467-468.

¹⁵ Hale, 'Fighting Over the Fight in Spain', op. cit., p. 472.

¹⁶ This is not to say that individual priests were of the same mind. Father Drinkwater of Birmingham denounced the coverage of the war in the Catholic press in 1937. He argued that the press had been overtaken by propaganda and had made uncritical use of atrocity stories. Cited in Tom Buchanan, *Britain and the Spanish Civil War*, 1997, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 181.

¹⁷ 'Catholic Bishop on War in Spain', *The South London Press*, August 21, 1936, p. 3. See also Hale, 'Fighting Over the Fight in Spain', op. cit., p. 473.

entries in his private diary between July 17 and December 31, 1936 regarding the Spanish developments. As the leader of propaganda, Goebbels issued detailed instructions on how the German press should report the civil war. The ministry informed the press that they must not refer to Franco's troops as "rebels" nor refer to the uprising as a coup or rebellion. Furthermore, they instructed reporters to call the Republican side simply "the Bolsheviks" and make no mention of German military involvement. In addition to these instructions, during the September National Socialist Party's Nuremberg Conference, Goebbels spoke publicly about how Europe might possibly never recover its health if Germany allowed international Bolshevism to flourish.¹⁸ Following this, on September 11, 1936, the National Socialist *Völkischer Beobachter* reported that Goebbels described Bolshevism as "pathological criminal nonsense, demonstrably thought up by Jews", and now, under Jewish leadership, it aimed to destroy "civilized European nations" and to create a world dominated by Jews.¹⁹

On September 14, 1936, during the same Congress, Hitler stressed the impending Bolshevistic threat, contrasting the events in Spain with his own accomplishments in Germany, stating,

"What a difference to another country, where Marxism is attempting to gain power. There the cities burn, there the villages sink into debris and rubble. There people don't know each other anymore. Class fights against class, profession against profession, brother destroys brother. We have chosen the other path: Instead of tearing you apart, I have united you."²⁰

By using such manipulative language and vivid imagery, Hitler connected every blow leveled against the Republic to a victory in Nazi Germany's war against the "Jewish-Communist International".

To ensure the success of his government's and party's anti-Bolshevist goals, Goebbels initiated in his ministry a special section simply called Anti-Comintern. By 1937, Department Anti-Comintern had published, *Das Rotbuch über Spanien*. The title page of *Rotbuch* promised pictures, documents and eyewitness accounts of events in the civil war and with a length of over 318 pages, it delivered on its propaganda promises. Even skimming the chapter titles would give a would-be reader a sense of what was about to unfold, including, "Documents of Terror and Degeneracy", "Mass terror", "The Path to Power: Soviet Intervention in Spain". Chapter after chapter comes replete with connections to Jews in Spain and their liberalism or communism, and how they

¹⁸ Zbynek A. B. Zeman, *Nazi Propaganda*, 1964, Oxford University Press, London, p. 94.

¹⁹ Zeman, *Nazi Propaganda*, op. cit., p. 11.

²⁰ Christoph Eykman, "The Spanish Civil War in German Publications during the Nazi Years", in: Luis Costa et al. (eds.), *German and International Perspectives on the Spanish Civil War: The Aesthetics of Partisanship*, 1992, Camden House, Columbia, S.C., p. 168.

were impacting Spanish society (pre-1936). Photos of Jewish artists, authors, political figures are included as are pictures of pornographic, anti-religious, communist magazines published in Spanish (reportedly published by Jews). The *Rotbuch* also contained lists of Catholic Churches destroyed or partially destroyed, Catholic institutional buildings ruined in arson attacks, and as initially promised, eyewitness accounts. As was established earlier in this paper, some of these events did truly take place. What is more debatable, of course, is the identity of those responsible for many of the incidents and their motivation. To the Anti-Comintern office, none of this could be debated. It was clear that Jewish-Bolsheviks, working in league with the Soviet Union, were behind all of the atrocities and, if they were not stopped, then all of Western Civilization would be overrun.²¹

To follow up on the *Rotbuch*, Joseph Goebbels wrote a thirty-six page booklet, *The Truth about Spain*. This booklet became one of Goebbels' best known works in Germany. In this work, the Minister of Propaganda pretended to be an objective agent of truth and reality. He told his German and Spanish readers (it was translated into Spanish and distributed in Spain) that they had to make a straightforward choice of either Bolshevism with its "destruction and anarchy" or authority composed of "order and construction". Goebbels made the link between Bolshevism and Judaism by stating that "the internationality of Bolshevism" was mainly "determined by the Jews. As a Bolshevik the Jew becomes indeed the incarnation of all evil." Goebbels also stressed that this was not a mere struggle for Spain. Rather, he argued that the Jews were preparing this struggle with all their means since the Jews "need it as the introduction for Bolshevik world rule."²²

If Jews were going to rule the world, how would that happen? Goebbels answered that question as well. He repeatedly used phrases that were biologically oriented and dehumanizing. The enemy was turned into a faceless abstraction of evil. Readers were warned that their "health" was threatened by "international carriers of bacilli", "the red plague", the "red Jewish henchmen", "the sons of chaos", and so on. The only cure in Goebbels' mind was Adolf Hitler. "The Führer comes to us as a savior" only he can protect "us from the red inundation."²³ Goebbels had effectively forged a link between Communism and Judaism in Spain. He had also promised that only a man such as Hitler could deliver the world from such a perilous threat.

If Hitler was the only man to cure the apocalyptic struggle occurring in Spain, then many Catholic Church leaders were interested in working with him

²¹ Anti-Komintern (ed.), *Das Rotbuch über Spanien. Bilder – Dokumente – Zeugenaussagen*, 1937, Nibelungen-Verlag, Berlin, passim.

²² Cited in Peter Monteath, 'The Nazi Literature of the Spanish Civil War', in Costa et al. (eds.), *German and International Perspectives*, op. cit., p. 131-132.

²³ Monteath, 'The Nazi Literature', op. cit., p. 133.

in his fight. Hitler and Goebbels had told the German public that defeat of General Franco in Spain would mean the victory of Bolshevism over Europe. How did the German hierarchy respond to the portrayal of events and how did it affect their stance towards Hitler's regime?

In August of 1936, a month after the uprising had begun in Morocco, German church leaders met at Fulda for their annual conference. The discussion of the Spanish Civil War dominated the meetings. Every one of the churchmen present offered to share in the fight against the spread of Bolshevism. To alert German Catholics about this fight, the bishops produced a joint pastoral letter in which they fundamentally accepted the National Socialist presentation of the role of Bolsheviks in the Spanish Civil War and the implications of a Bolshevik victory there. In the letter the episcopacy stated:

"We start from the obvious fact and conviction that Communism and Bolshevism are at present trying with diabolical determination and toughness to advance into the heart of Europe, putting it in grave danger. Therefore, German unity should not be sacrificed to religious antagonism, quarrels, contempt, and struggles. Rather our national power of resistance must be increased and strengthened so that not only may Europe be freed from Bolshevism by us, but also that the whole civilized world may be indebted to us."²⁴

This pastoral letter was not allowed published under the Nazi regime. Despite the call to unity, the letter also contained a weakly worded protest asking Hitler to stop the persecution of the church and its institutions in Germany. The very next month, Hitler made his speech at the Nuremberg Party Rally, and the Pope had his talk with Spanish exiles the same day, prompting this response from the Trier diocese:

"The coincidence that these two great speeches were delivered on the same day and the congruence of their main ideas appear to us as convincing demonstration of what the hour demands; to wit, a sympathetic cooperation of state and church in Germany for the combined fight against the common enemy."²⁵

Continuing in the same vein, the new bishop of Passau, Simon Konrad Landersdorfer, declared at his enthronement ceremony,

"Bolshevism [...] today was the fiercest enemy of the Catholic Church, as events in Soviet Russia, Mexico, and Spain sufficiently proved. If nothing else, the need to repel this mutual foe dictated the harmonious collaboration of Church and State."²⁶

²⁴ Cited in Gerhard Besier, 'Bolshevism and Antisemitism: The Catholic Church in Germany and National Socialist Ideology, 1936-37', *Ecclesiastical History* 43, 1992, p. 451.

²⁵ Guenter Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany*, 1964, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, p. 207.

²⁶ Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany*, op. cit., p. 207.

Through these types of statements, the German church hierarchy seemingly embraced the interpretation of the disaster in Spain, despite many Catholic émigrés who saw the events quite differently.

Some of those dissident Catholic émigrés were at work producing what has come to be called the *Kulturkampf* Letters. Reacting to the coincidence of the Pope meeting with 500 Spanish refugees and Hitler's Nuremberg Party Rally speech, Newsletter 32 remained critical of Pope Pius XI for thinking the National Socialism would be a "brother in arms against Bolshevism".²⁷ For the authors of the newsletters, they had already foreseen the possibility of Church leaders aligning themselves with the National Socialist State, to avoid atrocities like those occurring in Mexico and Spain, stating that the Archbishop of Freiburg-im-Breisau was "deluding himself into believing that National Socialism and Catholicism could collaborate with one another."²⁸

In another letter from September 17, 1936, the author argues that the Catholic Church in Nazi Germany is undergoing persecutions of much the same ilk as what happened in the Soviet Union and in Spain. The author wisely noted, "the *Kulturkampf* will not end until the Church capitulates to the Nazi regime."²⁹ If Catholics in exile from the Third Reich could see this, what did the Church leaders in Germany see?

Because of the growing atmosphere for potential collaboration between Church and State, Nuncio Cesare Orsenigo arranged for Cardinal Michael von Faulhaber, bishop of the archdiocese of Munich and Freising, to have a private meeting with Hitler. On November 4, 1936, Faulhaber traveled to Hitler's mountain retreat near Berchtesgaden. During their encounter, Hitler pulled out all the stops and played the part of the gracious host. He impressed the cardinal immensely by his reasonableness. As a result of this three-hour meeting, the German bishops agreed to mend their disagreements with the National Socialist state (with no mutual promise exacted from the Nazis to stop persecuting Catholics in Germany).

According to Faulhaber's account of the meeting, the atmosphere was quite tense during the first hour. Hitler dominated the conversation. The topic on the agenda was the possibility that Bolshevism would triumph in Spain. Gradually, over the course of the three hours, Faulhaber remarked that there was an easing of tension between the two men. Eventually, this led Hitler to invite

²⁷ Richard Bonney, *Confronting the Nazi War on Christianity. The Kulturkampf Newsletters, 1936-39*, 2009, Peter Lang, New York, p. 106.

²⁸ Richard Bonney, *Kulturkampf Newsletter* 16, June 11, 1936, 'Desecration akin to Atrocities in Spain and Mexico', p. 69.

²⁹ Richard Bonney, *Kulturkampf Newsletter* 32, September 17, 1936, 'The Swastika against Bolshevism: The Outcome of the Nuremberg Nazi Party Congress', p. 109.

the cardinal to dine with him.³⁰ How did the men reach such a congenial conclusion at the end of their day?

Hitler told Faulhaber that religion was critical for the state, for society and for the soldier, stating, “Man cannot exist without belief in God. The soldier who for three or four days lies under intense bombardment needs a religious prop.”³¹ While this is not exactly a ringing endorsement on the value of religion, Hitler told the cardinal that pragmatically speaking, the Church had to join in the fight against Bolshevism or “the Church and Christianity in Europe too are finished. Bolshevism is the mortal enemy of the Church as much as it is of Fascism.”³² In reply, Faulhaber explained that the Church had traditionally and consistently spoken out against the threat of Bolshevism. The cardinal was eager to remind Hitler of the pope’s words against Bolshevism and its dangers. As Gerhard Besier has concluded, at this point, “the Rubicon had been crossed. While the Episcopal conference at Fulda had carefully avoided explicitly accepting the anti-Semitic element in Nazi anti-Bolshevism, it now accepted it, implicitly and tacitly.”³³

Toward the close of the meeting, Hitler argued that his goal was to protect the German people from “congenitally afflicted criminals such as now wreak havoc in Spain”. Faulhaber immediately replied, “The Church, Mr. Chancellor, will not refuse the state the right to keep these pests away from the national community within the framework of moral law.”³⁴ Pleased with this response, Hitler commented:

“Think about all this, Cardinal, and consult with the other leaders of the Church how you can support the great undertaking of National Socialism to prevent the victory of Bolshevism and how you can achieve a peaceful relationship to the state. Either National Socialism and the Church are both victorious or they perish together. Rest assured, I shall do away with all those small things that stand in the way of a harmonious cooperation [...] I do not wish to engage in horse trading. You know that I am opposed to compromises, but let this be a last attempt.”³⁵

Once Cardinal Faulhaber left his meeting with Hitler, he met with leading members of the German hierarchy of cardinals to ask them to warn their parishioners against the errors of communism. On November 25, Faulhaber informed the Bavarian bishops that he had promised Hitler that they would issue a new pastoral letter in which they condemned “Bolshevism which represents the greatest danger for the peace of Europe and the Christian civilization of our

³⁰ Ludwig Volk, S. J. (ed.), *Akten Kardinal Michael Faulhabers, 1917-1945*, vol. 2, 1978, Matthias Grünewald, Mainz, p. 184-194.

³¹ Volk (ed.), *Akten Kardinal Michael Faulhabers*, op.cit., p. 236.

³² Volk (ed.), *Akten Kardinal Michael Faulhabers*, op.cit., p. 207.

³³ Besier, ‘Bolshevism and Antisemitism’, op. cit., p. 453.

³⁴ Besier, ‘Bolshevism and Antisemitism’, op. cit., p. 453.

³⁵ Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany*, op. cit., p. 208.

country”.³⁶ In addition, he stated, the pastoral letter “will once again affirm our loyalty and positive attitude, demanded by the Fourth Commandment, toward today’s form of government and the Führer.” The original timetable set for this announcement was December 13; however, before the bishops released the letter, the German government suppressed it because it made reference to state violations against the Reich-Vatican Concordat.³⁷ Despite this setback, many German bishops “again raised the hope that an alliance could be forged on the basis of a common anti-Communism, which might assist German Catholicism to recognition by the Nazi State.”³⁸ The German episcopacy was not alone in their expectations, as was noted by the *Kulturkampf* Letters author, who stated there were “only rumors that the *Kulturkampf* is coming to an end since Hitler met with Cardinal Faulhaber.”³⁹

Although the *Kulturkampf* did not end, this did not deter Cardinal Faulhaber. He immediately set to work on another draft of the letter that he submitted to the German bishops. On December 24, 1936, Faulhaber sent Hitler a new version of the pastoral letter. In his accompanying letter the Cardinal referred to their November 1936 meeting and spoke of “our agreement”.⁴⁰ Faulhaber made it clear that this new version “will sound like a trumpet, and even abroad they will be unable to ignore this unanimous confession of the German bishops to the Führer and his mission in world history, his defense against Bolshevism.”⁴¹

The German joint hierarchy ordered its priests to read the pastoral letter, entitled, ‘On the Defense Against Bolshevism’, from all their pulpits. The letter was actually to be read January 3, 1937. The text of the letter reveals the extent of the capitulation to Hitler’s wishes:

“Bolshevism has begun its march from Russia to the countries of Europe, especially to our country, and its aim is to overthrow here as everywhere every social system and every system of government, to destroy economic affluence and to annihilate religious life. Russian Bolshevism controls a large number of able-bodied men and raw material in abundance as in no other European nation [...] the fateful hour has come for our nation and for the Christian culture of the Western world [...] the Führer and Chancellor Adolf Hitler saw the march of Bolshevism from afar and turned his mind and energies towards averting this economic danger from the German people and the whole Western world. The German bishops consider it their duty to do their utmost to support the leader of the Reich with every available means in this defense. Since Bolshevism is the mortal enemy of the system of government, since it is primarily the

³⁶ Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany*, op. cit., p. 208.

³⁷ Peter Godman, *Hitler and the Vatican: Inside the Secret Archives that Reveal the New Story of the Nazis and the Church*, 2004, Free Press, New York, p. 128.

³⁸ Gerhard Besier, *The Holy See and Hitler's Germany*, 2007, Palgrave MacMillan, New York, p. 163.

³⁹ Richard Bonney, *Kulturkampf Newsletter* 37, November 9, 1936, ‘Cardinal Faulhaber’s Interview with Hitler’, p. 121.

⁴⁰ Besier, *The Holy See*, op. cit., p. 163.

⁴¹ Besier, *The Holy See*, op. cit., p. 163.

gravedigger of religious culture, and always attacks the servants and sacred places of church life, as the Spanish events recently proved, since it is the question of the survival of church order, so it is clear that support for the struggle against this diabolical power must become an important task of the contemporary Church.”⁴²

Through this letter, Cardinal Faulhaber had lived up to his promise to Hitler. Gone was the assertion that the Catholic Church had always fought the spread of communism. That has been replaced with Hitler’s farsightedness instead. Gone also was the plea to stop the persecutions and intimidations of German Catholics at home. The German Catholic Church now publicly endorsed the German government’s presentation of choices in the Spanish Civil War and confirmed their church’s willingness to fight against the spread of Bolshevism. The obstinate behavior of Hitler’s regime, demanding total subordination to Nazi worldviews, led many in the Catholic episcopacy to narrow their criticisms of National Socialism rather than condemn their own government. In the case of the Spanish Civil War, the choice between Republican forces and Nationalist rebels was presented in such a way that there seemed to be no other alternative but to select Franco’s forces and a potential military dictatorship for Spain.

Many high-ranking German Catholic clergymen wanted to bring the Catholic Church closer to Hitler’s regime as a result of their perception of the Spanish Civil War. In their minds, there could be only one choice, and that choice was to align with whoever supported a potential Franco victory. To them, as to so many other observers in Catholic circles, the victory of the Republican forces would be unthinkable in its consequences for all of Europe. The Spanish Civil War represented an apocalyptic struggle, the “issue is between Christ and antichrist, and the forces of the Evil One are venting their insane rage upon the ministers and servants of God.”⁴³

Since 1933, little by little, Church leadership made choices as to what they could protest and on what issues they needed to remain silent. The events of 1936 regarding Spain, with its tangible bloodshed and anticlerical fury, seemed like an opportunity to defeat the forces of “evil” while simultaneously working to improve cooperation between Church and State in Germany.

⁴² Besier, *The Holy See*, op. cit., p. 454-55.

⁴³ Hale, ‘Fighting Over the Fight in Spain’, op. cit., p. 469.

LUIGI FEDERZONI AND THE CONVERGING AND DIVERGING PARALLELS OF FASCISM AND CATHOLICISM

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In his pioneering work, Emilio Gentile argues that the sacralization of politics is a defining aspect of Italian Fascism.¹ While it is undeniably a fundamental aspect, I argue that this aspect is part of a larger historical process that began with modern conceptions of the nation. It can be found in the liberal, democratic, radical, socialist and Catholic movements that fought against, lost out to, embraced or gave in to Fascism's hegemony over what it meant to be Italian. Thus, the particular struggle between Catholic and Fascist conceptions of the state, society and culture must be viewed within this broader context of the sacralized and sacralizing nature of the modern nation-state since 1789. An analysis of three crucial phases in the public life of Luigi Federzoni, a founder of the Italian Nationalist Party and a member of the government during the *ventennio*, illuminates the complex relationships between Catholicism and Fascism within this larger framework. The case of Federzoni demonstrates how a devout member of the Catholic laity and a Fascist *gerarca*, played a sacralizing role in the Fascist state and Fascism – a task that Gentile attributes primarily to the Catholic hierarchy and one which Michael Mann correctly surmises was done “probably against the majority sentiment of the [*Partito popolare italiano*].”² Furthermore, an analysis of how Catholicism and Fascism converged and diverged through Federzoni's political actions suggests that continuity, rather than rupture, characterizes the relationship between the political classes and Catholicism before, during and after Fascism. Finally, it raises larger comparative questions about Fascism's sacralizing efforts and those of other modern political movements in Italy and elsewhere.

To contextualize the relationship between Fascism and Catholicism, one can begin with Federico Chabod's seminal study *L'Idea di Nazione* in which

¹ E. Gentile, *Il mito dello stato nuovo dall'antigiolittismo al fascismo*, 1982, Laterza, Bari; Id., *Il culto del littorio*, 1993, Laterza, Roma-Bari; Id., *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*, 1996, Harvard University Press, Cambridge; Id., *La religione della politica*, 2001, Laterza, Roma-Bari; Id., *Fascismo*, 2002, Laterza, Roma-Bari; Id., *Politics as Religion*, 2006, Princeton University Press, Princeton; Id., *La Grande Italia*, 2009, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison.

² M. Mann, *Fascists*, 2004, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 127.

he traces changes in conceptions of the nation and the *patria* during the early-modern and modern periods. During a pre-political stage, formulations were defined by perceived commonalities of bloodline, language, religion or customs. In a later political stage, a people's will to belong became an essential ingredient for conceiving a modern nation. Romanticism, and I would add Neo-Classicism for Italy, played an important part in seeking to define "the people" and the *patria* through a distinct spiritual and intellectual patrimony that set them apart from other peoples.³ The nation became increasingly defined in teleological terms – a fundamental attribute first recognized by Ernest Gellner.⁴ As ideas of the nation shifted between cultural and political realms, nation-states emerged whose goal was to create a nation that responded to conceptions of what that nation should be.

François Furet demonstrated how the French Revolution created a "new cultural legitimacy" in which moral categories like "the people" and "the nation" replaced the monarchy.⁵ Lynn Hunt demonstrated how elite and popular symbols were integrated into a new transcendental culture that transformed the individual and the collectivity.⁶ If modern nations became new sacralizing agents of change through the cultural transformations engendered by the French Revolution, national political morality, shaped within Social Darwinist worldviews over the long nineteenth century,⁷ became increasingly defined in absolutist terms of purifying, preserving and protecting a nation and its essential national characters and traditions. Indeed, one can argue that the cultural shifts, analyzed by Chabod, Gellner, Furet, Hunt and Gentile, made possible new modes of political morality. The focus of state activity shifted from the preservation and the liberty of the king's body to those of the body politic. The new conceptions of *le peuple* and *la nation*, like the king's body, which had both religious and secular dimensions, retained a double nature that could be invested and divested with different religious and political meanings

³ F. Chabod, *Idea di nazione*, 1996 (1^o 1967), Laterza, Roma-Bari, p. 22-23, 25, 54-56, 98-110, 117-134; Id., *Italian Foreign Policy*, 1996, Princeton University Press, Princeton, p. 157-164.

⁴ E. Gellner, *Nations and nationalism*, 1983, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, and Id., *Culture, identity, and politics*, 1987, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

⁵ F. Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, 1981, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 103-116, 175-76, 197, 200.

⁶ L. Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*, 1984, University of California Press, Berkeley.

⁷ I use the term 'Social Darwinism' in its wider meaning as the application of metaphors and theories of causation drawn from the natural sciences to understand human action. Cf. P. J. Bowler, *The Eclipse of Darwinism*, 1992, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore-London, p. 69-71; Id., *Theories of Human Evolution: A Century of Debate, 1844-1944*, 1986, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore-London; M. Hawkins, *Social Darwinism in European and American Thought, 1860-1945*, 1987, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 3-4, 6, 17-18.

depending on speakers or writers, audiences, purposes and contexts.⁸ The resulting sacralization of modern nation-states created new political meanings that determined whether actions were moral and no longer simply ethical.⁹

If the modern state laid claim to a sacred quality by claiming to be the embodiment of a transcendental nation, nations and nationalism are polysemic in nature. By this, I mean to build on Gioacchino Volpe's recognition that "various nationalisms" exist at the same time;¹⁰ Eric Hobsbawm's notion of the contested notion of the nation;¹¹ and Peter Fritzsche's thesis that the "ruin" and the melancholy of history play vital roles in the formation of multiple national discourses in the post-French Revolutionary period.¹²

As all scholars recognize, nationalism is a core component of Fascism and it was one fountainhead of Fascism's sacralized nation. Furthermore, like nationalism, Fascism was a contested, polysemic term. Proponents, opponents, and sympathizers asserted their own conceptions of what they thought real Fascism was and is, and how they and others should act "fascistly." At any given time or place, "various Fascisms" existed in the past and still do today among neo-Fascists. While ultimately the charismatic Fascist leader could assert himself as a final authority, one cannot take it for granted that what existed in the mind of the charismatic leader was "real Fascism" or how Fascism was received by party members and the citizenry.¹³ Fascists could think that their own conceptions constituted "real Fascism" even when they were consciously in disagreement with the charismatic figure. In other cases, Fascists and those living under Fascism sought to do what they thought was expected of them. In this

⁸ In the case of Revolutionary France see, among others, Suzanne Desan's case study of the Yonne department in Burgundy: S. Desan, *Reclaiming the Sacred*, 1991, Cornell University Press, Ithaca. For an American example see D. R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*, 1991, Verso, London and Id., *Towards the Abolition of Whiteness*, 1994, Verso, London.

⁹ The modern era is replete with cautionary examples of the dangerous lengths to which this process can lead. Cf. E. Gentile, *Politics as Religion*, 2006, Princeton University Press, Princeton.

¹⁰ Volpe used the term to describe the turn-of-the-twentieth-century debate over the many interpretations of Italy's origins and what the country would have to do to preserve its character: G. Volpe, *Italia moderna*, vol. 3, 1973, Bemporad, Florence, p. 274-313. In the later historiography on nationalism, Benedict Anderson's conception of nationalism was the first to approximate Volpe's notion of "different nationalisms" (B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, rev. ed., 1993, Verso, London). In his study of the emergence of a new right in post-Bismarckian Germany, Geoff Eley provides a more convincing argument than Anderson and one that comes closer to Volpe's understanding of nationalisms: G. Eley, *Reshaping the German Right*, 1980, Yale University Press, New Haven.

¹¹ E. Hobsbawm/T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, 1983, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, and E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, 1990, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

¹² P. Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present*, 2010, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, p. 131-135.

¹³ For the case against an essentialist definition of Fascism see G. Allardyce, 'What Fascism Is Not: Thoughts on the Deflation of a Concept', *American Historical Review* 84/2, 1979, p. 367-388. Perhaps the most satisfactory definition of Fascism is Robert Paxton's behaviorist model: R. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, 2005, Vintage Books, New York, p. 218.

manner Fascism is akin to Nazism according to Ian Kershaw's thesis that Nazism was shaped by both the Nazi leadership and ordinary Germans who thought of themselves as "working toward the *Führer*."¹⁴

Luigi Federzoni is a case in point for Italian Fascism. He was a cultural and political leader whose public career spanned the transformation of Italy from a liberal monarchy to a Fascist dictatorship, to a republic. As a student of Giosuè Carducci and an ardent follower of Gabriele D'Annunzio in his youth, he participated in literary efforts to define Italians and discern their distinct spiritual patrimony. In 1910, he co-founded the Italian Nationalist Association (ANI).¹⁵ In 1912, he oversaw its transformation from a cultural association to a doctrinaire political party. After helping Mussolini come to power, the seasoned Nationalists and the fledgling Fascists merged into a single party. The Nationalists contributed their ideology and political program. Leading ex-Nationalists, most notably Alfredo Rocco and Luigi Federzoni, held key posts.¹⁶ Federzoni was Colonial Minister from 1922 to 1924 and, again, from 1926 to 1928. In the interim, Victor Emanuel III and Mussolini called on him to serve as Interior Minister to rescue Fascism from leftists who opposed Mussolini, on the one hand, and from extremist Fascists who wanted to radicalize Fascism further, on the other.¹⁷ In the 1930s, Federzoni brought his own brand of Fascism to high culture as Director of the *Nuova Antologia*, President of the Senate and President of the Royal Academy. Increasingly unhappy with Mussolini's friendship with Hitler, he remained loyal. When the war turned against Italy, he plotted to remove Mussolini, in his view, to save the nation. After the Duce's arrest, Federzoni went into hiding, escaping into exile with Vatican assistance. Serving as an advisor to Umberto di Savoia, he returned permanently to Italy in 1951, whereupon he published his memoirs and other writings. He died in 1967. If a more thorough discussion of what can be said about Federzoni, Catholicism and Fascism must await my biography of Federzoni (a work in

¹⁴ I. Kershaw, *Hitler*, vol. 1 *1889-1936 Hubris*, 1995, Norton, New York, p. 527-591.

¹⁵ The bibliography on Nationalism is extensive and growing, leaving me room only to cite several important general studies: F. Gaeta, *Il nazionalismo italiano*, 1981 (1° 1965), Laterza, Roma-Bari; F. Perfetti, *Il nazionalismo italiano dalle origini alla fusione col fascismo*, 1977, Cappelli, Bologna; A. D'Orsi (ed.), *I nazionalisti*, 1981, Feltrinelli, Milano; *La cultura italiana tra '800 e '900 e le origini del nazionalismo*, 1981, Olschki, Firenze; E. Gentile, *Il mito dello stato nuovo dall'antigiolittismo al fascismo*, 1982, Laterza, Bari; F. Perfetti, *Il movimento nazionalista in Italia*, 1984, Bonacci, Roma; E. Gentile, *La grande Italia*, 1997, Mondadori, Milano; A. Roccucci, *Roma capitale del nazionalismo*, 2001, F. Angeli, Milano; and E. Papadia, *Nel nome della nazione*, 2006, Archivio Guido Izzi, Roma.

¹⁶ P. Ungari, *Alfredo Rocco e l'ideologia giuridica del fascismo*, 1964, Morcelliana, Brescia; A. Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, 1973, Scribner, New York; S. Battente, *Alfredo Rocco dal nazionalismo al fascismo, 1907-1935*, 2005, F. Angeli, Milano; R. D'Alfonso, *Costruire lo stato forte. Politica, diritto, economia in Alfredo Rocco*, 2004, F. Angeli, Milano.

¹⁷ P. Cannistraro, 'Mussolini's Cultural Revolution: Fascist or Nationalist?', *Journal of Contemporary History* 7/3-4, 1973, p. 115-139; Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, op. cit., and P. Cannistraro, *La fabbrica del consenso*, 1975, Laterza, Bari.

process), three moments in Federzoni's career are indicative of how Fascism and Catholicism converged and diverged within a broader context than just the Fascist Period. These three points are his overtures to Catholics as a Nationalist prior to World War I; his tenure as Interior Minister from 1924 to 1926; and his presidency of the Royal Academy from 1938 to 1943.

The point of departure for Federzoni's overtures to Catholics in 1912-1913 was what Hermut styles as "the crisis of participation" among the political classes and Roberto Vivarelli defines as the "crisis of liberalism," produced by the shift to near universal manhood suffrage prior to World War I.¹⁸ Federzoni's attack on the left during this time was predicated on his assumption that it was connected to a larger transnational political, social, economic and cultural movement, based ideologically, and perhaps even physically, in Republican France. In Italy, this phenomenon manifested itself politically through democrats, Republicans, Radicals, and socialists; and culturally through free-thinking, positivist and Masonic groups.¹⁹ Federzoni was genuinely convinced that these groups were creating their own political religions – to borrow Gentile's term – based on Catholic ritual. He pointed to their use of secular baptismal, marriage and funeral rites to create a "secular religion," (his term) all consciously modeled on the Catholic sacraments.²⁰

Even a cursory survey of material produced by Free Thinkers, Giordano Bruno societies, Masons and national scientific societies in the long nineteenth century bear out how these groups did indeed create their own religious iconography and a consciously sacralized culture with their own saints, morality and transcendence based on invented iron laws of nature, progress and capitalism. Rather than considering these groups as precursors of the sacralization

¹⁸ All translations are my own. Helmut Ullrich coined the term in the title of his study on parliamentary life between 1909 and 1913. He argues that democratic impulses in Italian society caused a crisis for Italian liberalism (H. Ullrich, *La classe politica nella crisi di partecipazione dell'Italia giolittiana 1909-1913*, 1979, Camera dei Deputati, Roma, R. Vivarelli *Il fallimento del liberalismo*, 1981, il Mulino, Bologna).

¹⁹ His association appeared justified since the International Association of Free Thought (founded in Brussels in 1880) had a strong French flavor. The Italian group (founded in 1903) consisted primarily of proponents of the Extreme Left. A year later, when the International Congress of Free Thought met in Rome, membership had risen to 2,500 (Fondo Ghislieri G1:b1/b2 'Congresso Libero Pensiero. Roma 20 settembre 1904 Adesione – rappresentazione', Domus Mazziniana, Pisa (Italy); *Il Congresso di Roma XX-XXIII settembre MCMIV*, 1904, Milano; *Federazione internazionale del libero pensiero, Statuti e Norme per le Sezioni*, 1920, E. Isnenghi, Bergamo).

²⁰ g.d.f. [Federzoni], 'Pretesti. Cerimonie civili', *Il Giornale d'Italia* [hereafter *GdI*] 8/233, August 23, 1908, p. 3, and Giulio de Frenzi [Federzoni], 'Pretesti. Battesimi laici', *GdI* 9/46, February 15, 1909, p. 3. In his treatment of free thinkers, his tone was always caustically sarcastic. For example, in one article he suggested that free thinkers wanted to reform the education of women for everyone but their own future wives, whom they wanted to remain docile, religious creatures who would stay far from the clutches of godless, womanizing, free-thinking men (g.d.f., 'Pretesti. L'unica garanzia', *GdI* 8/225, August 31, 1908, p. 3).

of politics in the modern age, as Gentile suggests,²¹ I would argue that the Masons and affinitive societies were contenders with the Nationalists and later the Fascists in a contested sacralization of politics. They drew inspiration from the French Revolution, but also from the burgeoning fields of biology, chemistry, mathematics and physics, all aimed at constructing both civil religions and political religions.²²

For Federzoni, the assassination of King Carlos of Portugal and his son in 1908, the Italian parliamentary elections of 1909, and the revolt in Spain in October of the same year, together with the Italo-Turkish War and the move to near universal manhood suffrage in Italy led him to connect dots. Seemingly harmless leftist cultural and social groups were uniting with politicians and becoming politically active in the life of the nation-state. Some aimed at transforming Italy into their own cultural, social and political image through revolutionary means, as in Portugal and Spain; others through evolutionary means, as in France. In Italy, nowhere was this threat more apparent than in Rome where Ernesto Nathan, a leading Freemason and Free Thinker, had been elected mayor in 1907 with the support of socialists, radicals, republicans, and left-wing liberals. Federzoni's brand of nationalism was forged as a political religion to fight against this perceived threat.²³ His contribution in creating the ANI must be viewed from the perspective of a cultural war. By 1912, he succeeded in getting the ANI to adopt a political program based on a possible entente with Catholics, on opposition to Socialism and on a condemnation of Freemasonry.

The passage of the suffrage bill had impressed on the Nationalists the need to work harder to establish contacts with the masses. Catholic and Nationalist leaders seemed keen on sounding each other out.²⁴ Catholic moderates

²¹ Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics*, op. cit., p. 16.

²² For the link between positivism and Fascism see D. Gasman, *The Scientific Origins of National Socialism*, 1971, Macdonald, London, and Id., *Haeckel's Monism and the Birth of Fascist Ideology*, 1998, Lang, New York. Federzoni opposed Haeckelian monism, identifying it with the Free Thought movement and socialism. See, for example, g.d.f., 'L'unica garanzia', *GdI* 8/225, August 31, 1908, p. 3. Other Nationalists would take similar strong positions against Haeckel, cf. 'Il fenomeno Fogazzaro', *L'Idea Nazionale* [hereafter *IN*] 1/3, March 15, 1911, p. 3; and Francesco Porro, 'Enrico "La Scienza"', *IN* 3/15, April 10, 1913, p. 3.

²³ He juxtaposed the Roman administration's anticlerical intolerance with the general movement of Italian Catholics towards integration into the nation. As an editor of Sonnino's newspaper, he was careful to couch his support for Catholics as anti-anticlericalism, a position that coincided with Sonnino's own position in parliament. Cf. Giulio De Frenzi, 'Pretesti. Osta', *GdI* 9/149, May 26, 1909, p. 3; H. Ullrich, *Le elezioni del 1913 a Roma*, 1972, Società editrice Dante Alighieri, Milano, p. 10-13; A. Aquarone, *Tre capitali sull'Italia giolittiana*, 1987, il Mulino, Bologna, p. 118-122.

²⁴ The Nationalists expected a positive reception among Catholics. After the separation of the Church and state in France in 1904, Catholics no longer looked to France as the standard-bearer of Catholicism in Africa. Catholic newspapers depicted the Libyan War as a defeat of Giolitti and his Socialist and "Masonic" allies. By 1911, the *Osservatore romano* wrote of Italian colonialism responding to a Catholic civilizing mission in Libya. Moreover, Catholics shared a bias with the

were turned off by the Nationalists' exaltation of war, social Darwinism and worship of the nation-state in a first exchange with the Nationalist leadership in early 1912. The Nationalists, in contrast, were uncomfortable with the Catholic moderates' openness to democracy. Federzoni explored ways to reconcile the Catholic notions of *italianità* with his own brand of nationalism based, above all, on imperialism. But, the Nationalists' ultimate failure in 1912 to win over Catholic moderates demonstrated that imperialism had its limits. The outcome also suggested that Catholic support for the Nationalists might not be forthcoming from progressive Catholic currents, like those represented by Catholic moderates. Nevertheless, it also revealed fertile ground for agreement between Nationalists like Federzoni and Catholics. Conservative Catholics and Federzoni both saw the family as the building block of the state and society. They agreed that although one had a moral duty to the collective well-being, a person's right to property was sacrosanct. In addition, they rejected the notion of class warfare, advocating mixed owner-worker syndicates rather than labor unions. They shared an interest in protecting religious education in public schools and an antipathy towards Socialists, Radicals, Republicans, Free Thinkers and Freemasons. Finally, both believed that Catholics contributed to the life of the nation.²⁵

Federzoni's campaign against Freemasonry in 1912-1913 again reveals convergences with and divergences from Catholicism. In response to a national debate over the Masonry and the officer corps, prompted by the quick promotion of general Gustavo Fara and his very public resignation from the Masons in April, 1913, Federzoni wrote a series of articles in *Idea Nazionale*, the Nationalist Party's official organ, attacking the Masons' negative affect on the armed services.²⁶ When he found a positive response from readers, he expanded his indictment. Despite a lack of philosophical and political cohesion among the Masons,²⁷ he depicted Freemasonry as emblematic of democracy,

Nationalists against Greeks and southern Slavs, though not for the same reasons (L. Ganapini, *Il nazionalismo cattolico*, 1970, Laterza, Bari, p. 184-186, 216-217).

²⁵ For a detailed analysis of the debate and how it shaped Federzoni's brand of nationalism, see P. Arpaia, *Luigi Federzoni and the Italian Nationalist Association: From a cultural conception of Italy to a nationalist political program*, Ph.D. dissertation, 1999, Department of History, Georgetown University, p. 355-369.

²⁶ The articles appeared between April 1913 and February 1914. Fara was promoted to general, despite the fact that many members of the army believed he had not earned the promotion. Upon returning to Italy, Fara was feted as a national hero. Cf. Angelo Del Boca, *Tripoli bel suol d'amore, 1860-1922*, vol. 1, 1986, Laterza, Roma, p. 135-136; F. Cordova, *Agli ordini del serpente verde*, 1990, Bulzoni, Roma, p. 7-10, 61; A. Brogi, 'Gustavo Fara', *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 44, p. 757-59; L. Del Fra, *Sciara Sciat*, 1995, Datanews, Roma. After Fara's resignation, many reassessed his quick promotion and decorations as owing to his membership in the Masons (Cordova, *Agli ordini*, op. cit., p. 7-10, 61; Volpe, *Italia moderna*, vol. 3, op. cit., p. 538).

²⁷ Cordova's argument that Federzoni's anti-Masonic writings were part of a coordinated campaign against the Masons as a "weak link" in a national, democratic and progressive political

radicalism, socialism, positivism, anticlericalism and internationalism. He insisted that these ideas were either outdated or extraneous to Italian culture and thus presented a threat to *italianità*.²⁸ Federzoni next polled leading figures in academia, the army, politics, and literary circles for their opinions which he then published in the Nationalist organ, *Idea nazionale*. All but a handful of over 200 respondents agreed with Federzoni's characterization of the Masons as a secretive group whose "materialist rationalism" and "humanitarian and internationalist ideology" no longer responded to the exigencies of modern life. Newspapers throughout Italy reprinted his articles and the responses, thus giving him a national audience in his efforts to discredit leftists and to win Catholic support for the Nationalist Party.²⁹

In selecting responses from the campaign to reprint, Catholic newspapers chose ones that connected Masonry to Judaism. The important Catholic newspaper, *Il Corriere d'Italia*, reprinted a handful of the responses, giving top billing in June to the revolutionary syndicalist Paolo Orano, who railed against Freemasonry as a Jewish organization bent on destroying Italy.³⁰ This anti-Semitic theme to anti-Masonry can also be found in the Catholic senator Felice Santini's speech before the Senate.³¹ Federzoni, instead, had not made any Jewish connections between Masonry and an anti-Italian cabal in his anti-Masonic crusade, even though it might have won him greater support among Catholics.

alliance is unconvincing (Cordova, *Agli ordini*, op. cit.; Id., *Massoneria e politica in Italia*, 1985, Laterza, Bari). Despite the anticlericalism and the pro-democratic stance of some of its most visible leaders, the Mason's rank and file were not wedded to any one political current. A. A. Mola, *Storia della Massoneria italiana dalle origini ai nostri giorni*, 1992, Bompiani, Milano, p. 225-361, passim. Indeed, it is wrong to speak of "Radical-Masonry" since not all Radicals were Masons, and the younger generation in the early twentieth century was especially bored with the "cultural poverty" of the organization (A. Galante-Garrone, *I radicali in Italia*, 1973, Garzanti, Milano, p. 383-384).

²⁸ This argument bore a close similarity to anti-Masonic writings in *Civiltà Cattolica*, suggesting that Federzoni might have written his articles with an eye to the effect it might have on Vatican circles. Both attacked Freemasonry for its internationalist character and portrayed French Masonry as the mastermind of an international conspiracy to create a supranational atheistic republic. Both identified Masonry with positivism and its use of science against idealism – though the Jesuit newspaper differed by also identifying liberalism with positivism and by defining idealism from a Catholic perspective. Moreover, unlike Federzoni, the Jesuits equated the Masons with the French Revolution and the Risorgimento and focused on demonstrating the heretical nature of the Masons. See 'L'internazionalismo rivoluzionario della massoneria', *Civiltà Cattolica* [hereafter CC] 62/1, 1911, p. 3-21, 404-418; CC 62/2, 1911, p. 273-285, 683-697; CC 62/3, 1911, p. 147-165. See also 'Il XX Settembre. Festa massonica', CC 62/4, 1911, p. 3-13; 'A', 'La Massoneria e il Governo', *Osservatore Romano* [hereafter OR] 53/160, June 11, 1913, p. 1-2 (editorial); 'Cose italiane', CC 64/2, 1913, p. 374.

²⁹ See Arpaia, *Luigi Federzoni*, op. cit., p. 352-414.

³⁰ 'Il "referendum" dell'"Idea nazionale." Tutti contro la massoneria', *Il Corriere d'Italia* 8/219, August 9, 1913, p. 6. The paper's interest in Orano was not limited to his response to the questionnaire. The Catholic daily had previously printed an excerpt from his *La Massoneria dinanzi al socialismo*: 'La ditta di pubblicità Grande Oriente e C.', *Il Corriere d'Italia* 8/155, June 10, 1913, p. 2.

³¹ *Atti Parlamentari. Senato del Regno*. 23rd Legislature, 1909-1913, Camera dei Deputati, Rome, p. 10494-10499.

Indeed, he had fought hard the previous year and had won against attempts by fellow Nationalists to make the ANI anti-Semitic.³² Still, it is important to underline that a convergence on an anti-Masonic stance and a divergence on anti-Semitism existed in 1913 among such disparate groups as Federzoni and the Nationalists, Catholic conservatives like Santini and the *Corriere d'Italia*, and revolutionary syndicalists like Orano.

If Federzoni's position on the Masons marked a convergence with Catholics, it also marked one with Benito Mussolini. At the Socialist Congresses of Reggio Emilia and Ancona in 1913 and 1914, Mussolini used the Masonic question to delegitimize the Reformist Socialists and to derail any possibility of Socialist support for a leftist coalition with Radicals, democratic and left-wing liberals based on democratic ideals, universal suffrage and parliament praxis. While Federzoni used Freemasonry to subvert the right wing of this possible coalition, Mussolini used Freemasonry to undercut the left wing. In addition to considering the Masonic question from the point of view of preserving "Marxist orthodoxy," as De Felice does in his biography of Mussolini, one must also recognize that Mussolini's attempt to thwart a liberal-socialist coalition on the eve of World War I moved him toward Federzoni, his future post-war ally. In the post-war period, once Mussolini abandoned socialism, Federzoni could use opposition to Masonry as a vehicle for a convergence between Fascism and Catholicism.³³

During his parliamentary campaign in 1913, Federzoni's stance on the Masons allowed him to solidify support with anti-democratic elements in Catholic circles, all the while staying clear of Giolitti's efforts to win over Catholics to his center-left vision for Italy. The race in the first electoral district of Rome was a three-way competition among Federzoni, the democratic Radical Scipione Borghese and the Socialist Antonio Campanozzi. For conservative, moderate, liberal and Catholic voters, the choice was reduced to either voting for Federzoni or Borghese. The election quickly took on a national dimension. In a public debate between Borghese and Federzoni, Borghese made a pitch for his own democratic "civil religion" (to use Gentile's term) which encouraged political tolerance and Federzoni's intolerant "political religion" (again, to use Gentile's term) which did not. Political religion got the upper hand over civic religion in 1913. Federzoni beat out Borghese for a run-off with Campanozzi. Catholics and most liberals then voted for Federzoni, while most democrats and Radicals grudgingly cast their votes against him or abstained from voting. The run-off produced an upset: Federzoni unseated Campanozzi.³⁴

³² Arpaia, *Luigi Federzoni*, op. cit., p. 316-319.

³³ R. De Felice, *Mussolini il fascista*, vol. 1, 1995, Einaudi, Torino, p. 118-126, 190-192, 384.

³⁴ Ullrich, *Le elezioni del 1913*, op. cit., passim; Arpaia, *Luigi Federzoni*, op. cit., p. 416-467.

Alberto Aquarone and Renzo De Felice were the first scholars to consider Federzoni's role under Fascism. However, it is more De Felice's work than Aquarone's that established the current interpretation of Federzoni, the *gerarca*. For De Felice, Federzoni was a right-wing contender to Mussolini at crucial time in the regime and a middleman between Mussolini and the crown and between the Duce and the altar. He had never been completely won over to Fascism and was a dogged opponent of the extremist wing, represented by Roberto Farinacci. For Federzoni, the color black was more the color of clerical garb than the Fascist uniform.³⁵ Subsequent work on Federzoni has done little to change this interpretation. He remains a sort of traditional conservative à la Antonio Salazar among the Fascist ranks.³⁶

Without coming to any definite conclusions here about Federzoni's place in Fascism, I will focus instead on preliminary conclusions about Federzoni's role in the sacralization of politics as Interior Minister and as President of the Royal Academy. Although he may have flirted with the idea of joining with conservative Catholics as Interior Minister, once he was sure the armed forces would remain loyal to the Duce, his loyalty was never in doubt. He became a constant thorn in the side of the democratic wing of the *Partito Popolare*. He showed great contempt for Don Luigi Sturzo, referring to the priest in condescending and derogatory terms and had him shadowed by the police.³⁷ He banned public commemorations of Don Giovanni Minzoni, a priest murdered by Fascists in August, 1923. Once it was clear that Giuseppe Donati, the editor of *Il Popolo*, could not be steered away from his democratic allegiances, Federzoni worked actively to get him out of the country to silence him. Together with his able Police Chief Francesco Crispo Moncada and his Undersecretary Attilio Teruzzi, Federzoni would try to exonerate themselves after World War II by claiming that they had really helped Donati out of Italy to save

³⁵ De Felice, *Mussolini il fascista*, vol. 1, op. cit., and Id., *Mussolini il duce*, vol 2, 1974, Einaudi, Torino, p. 309-310, 368.

³⁶ Vittoria, Coccia and Silveri have filled out the contours to De Felice's image of Federzoni, while Annalisa Vittoria and Richard Bosworth have pointed to a darker side: A. Vittoria, 'I diari di Luigi Federzoni, Appunti per una biografia', *Studi storici* 3, 1990, p. 729-760; B. Coccia/U. G. Silveri (eds.) *Federzoni e la storia della destra italiana nella prima metà del Novecento*, 2001, il Mulino, Bologna; A. Capristo, 'Un caso di 'bonifica' libraria antisemita all'Accademia d'Italia', *Quaderni di Storia* 61 2005, p. 201-219; Id., 'L'esclusione degli Ebrei dall'Accademia d'Italia', *Rassegna mensile di Israele* 67/3, 2001, p. 1-36; Id., 'Tullio Levi Cività e l'Accademia d'Italia', *Rassegna mensile di Israele* 69/1, 2003, p. 237-256; R. J. B. Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy: Life under the Dictatorship, 1915-1945*, 2006, Penguin Books, New York, p. 49-50.

³⁷ The first reports from July 1924. See Crispo Moncada to the Prefect of Caserta, Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Ministero dell'Interno, Ufficio Cifra [hereafter ACS MI UC], *Telegramma in partenza* [hereafter TiP], N. 14372, July 4, 1924. One side to this was a question of security. There had been threats on his life. See Vittorio De Marco, *Luigi Sturzo-Emanuela Sturzo. Carteggio*, 2005, Rubbettino, Catanzaro, p. 97, n. 197. This factor is mentioned explicitly in Crispo Moncada to Prefect of Trieste, ACS MI UC, TiP, N. 15470, July 17, 1924.

him from arrest or even death in 1925 – a version seemingly corroborated by two letters from Giuseppe Spartaro and a letter from Ivo Coccia to Sturzo.³⁸ However, the two men could only have repeated what Donati had told them. A letter from Pietro Campilli to Sturzo tells a different story. Campilli wrote that Antonio Anile, the go-between between the Interior Ministry and Donati, had been duped.³⁹

In fact, the idea of the Interior Ministry looking out for Donati does not pass the test of logic. If Federzoni, Crispo Moncada or Teruzzi had been interested in preventing his arrest, any one of them could have countermanded or delayed the order. Moreover, if they had been so worried about his personal safety, they could have taken measures to protect him, as they had done earlier for Sturzo, despite their personal dislike for him. In fact, evidence that did not find its way to the *Fondo Federzoni* tells another story. After Donati fled, Federzoni and Crispo Moncada took great measures to make sure that he did not return and they took even greater measures to prevent his pregnant wife from joining him in exile.⁴⁰ Instead of helping Donati, Federzoni was trying to get rid of a Catholic voice critical of Fascism. This stance was part of a broader policy aimed at silencing newspapers that did not embrace Fascism.⁴¹ Once the *popolari* emerged as members of the opposition, their organ came under attack by the new press laws which sought ultimately to bankrupt opposition newspapers.⁴² *Il*

³⁸ Istituto Don Luigi Sturzo, Fondo Don Luigi Sturzo, BP 294-47 Letter, Giuseppe Spartaro to Don Luigi Sturzo July 12, 1925 and BP 294-8 Letter, Ivo Coccia to Don Luigi Sturzo, June 1925.

³⁹ Istituto Don Luigi Sturzo, Fondo Don Luigi Sturzo, BP 293-65 Letter, Pietro Campilli to Don Luigi Sturzo, June 17, 1925.

⁴⁰ Teruzzi was privy to the meetings in which these matters were discussed. Federzoni first ordered Prefect Rossi of Ravenna to find everything he could about Donati without creating suspicion (ACS MI UC, *Telegramma in arrivo* [hereafter TiA], Prefect Rossi to Federzoni, N. 25870, July 29, 1924; Federzoni to Prefect Venice, ACS MI UC, TiP, N. 16379, July 17, 1924). They then kept Donati from returning to Italy (ACS MI UC, TiP, Crispo Moncada to the Royal Legation in Berne N. 23363, September 26, 1925). They also kept Donati's wife from joining him (Crispo Moncada to the Prefect of Alessandria, ACS MI UC, TiP, N. 2213; Tamaccini to Prefect of Alessandria, ACS MI UC, TiP, N. 4505, February 27, 1926; Crispo Moncada to Prefect of Venice, ACS MI UC, TiP, N. 6478, March 22, 1926; Crispo Moncada to Prefect of Venice, ACS MI UC, TiP, N. 8585, April 16, 1926).

⁴¹ In his telegram to the prefects in which he imparted instructions for the implementation of the July 15, 1923 N. 3299 law and Royal Decree July 11, 1924 No. 1081 on the press, Federzoni was clear that the anti-press laws were not meant solely to be limited to the subversives. He wrote that the purpose of the law would enable the prefects or their delegate to protect public order by stopping attacks by papers belonging to the opposition and the "sovversivi" who were provoking Fascist violence, "così quei giornali più o meno costituzionali che, fatto il presto di idi combattere la politica del Governo, tengono lo spirito pubblico in una preoccupante eccitazione con un linguaggio che uguaglia sovente, per la sua virulenza, quelle della stampa sovversiva..." (Federzoni to the Prefects, ACS MI UC, TiP, N. 15026, N. July 12, 1924)

⁴² The Interior Ministry and the Press Office would use the terms "stampa amica", "stampa partitica amica e fiancheggiatrice", and the "stampa avversaria" to distinguish between the Fascist press and its allies and the opposition press. *Il Popolo* was included among the latter. See ACS MI UC, TiP, N. 3130, February 10, 1925 and ACS MI UC, TiP, N. 10833 P May 15, 1925. Belonging to

Popolo lasted less than a year under the onslaught.⁴³ The Catholic left would find no reprieve under Federzoni.

Giorgio del Vecchio and Renato Moro have already written about the favor Federzoni showed conservative Catholics. But, he used his power to favor the conservative Catholic *Centro nazionale italiano* in many more ways than they have identified.⁴⁴ Federzoni engaged the engines of the state to curtail actions against Catholic organizations and clergy. Within less than a month of becoming Interior Minister, he sent a circular to the prefects ordering them to alert him immediately about the slightest incidents against Catholics, Catholic associations or church property.⁴⁵ He persistently pestered his prefects to look into rumors about imminent attacks on Catholics.⁴⁶ He insisted that the prefects bring Fascists to swift justice for violent acts against Catholics.⁴⁷ He ordered the prefects to make sure the left could no longer use the 20th September celebrations of the fall of papal Rome as an anticlerical holiday.⁴⁸ To counteract these efforts, he encouraged religious celebrations in conjunction with civil festivities, such as Armistice Day, and he ensured that priests would not find themselves forced to choose between civil and religious authority during the silver anniversary of Victor Emanuel III's reign.⁴⁹ In each of these instances, Federzoni sought to bring about a silent reconciliation between the majesty and power of the Church and the majesty and power of the Fascist monarchical state. It is also important to underscore that Federzoni did not act alone or in a

one or the other group could mean the difference between confiscation and permission to publish. See ACS MI UC, TiP, N. 6244, March 21, 1925 in which the prefects of Rome, Turin, Udine, Genoa, Florence, Naples, Palermo, Venice, Bologna and Trieste were told to warn the friendly press not to publish news or comments on Matteotti trial and, instead, "prevenire, e reprimere, a seconda casi, simili pubblicazioni su giornali avversari."

⁴³ Giuseppe Spartaro wrote to Sturzo reporting on the financial damage the confiscations were having on the newspaper's bottom line as early as January 1925 (Istituto Don Luigi Sturzo, Fondo Don Luigi Sturzo, BP 289 4 Letter from Giuseppe Spartaro to Don Luigi Sturzo dated Rome, January 26, 1925). A. Pellizzaro, director of the PPI's organ in Genoa told a similar tale about *Il Cittadino* (Istituto Don Luigi Sturzo, Fondo Don Luigi Sturzo, BP 288 165 Letter from A Pellizzaro to Don Sturzo dated Genoa, January 14, 1925).

⁴⁴ G. del Vecchio, *I cattolici milanesi e la politica*, 1982, Vita e Pensiero, Milano, p. 528; R. Moro, 'Nazionalismo e cattolicesimo', in: Coccia/Silveri (eds.), *Federzoni e la storia*, op. cit., p. 49-112.

⁴⁵ Federzoni to the Prefects, ACS MI UC, TiP, N. 14571, July 6, 1924.

⁴⁶ See for instance, Crispo Moncada's telegram to the prefect of Siena telling him of Federzoni receiving a letter from Archbishop Prospero Scaccia of Siena of fears of an imminent attack by Fascists on Catholic groups (Crispo Moncada to the Prefect of Siena, ACS MI UC, TiP, N. 151 January 3, 1925. Federzoni followed up with his own telegram asking the prefect to take "rigorose misure per impedire qualsiasi azione contro circoli cattolici." (Federzoni to the Prefect of Siena, ACS MI UC, TiP, N. 161 January 3, 1925)

⁴⁷ According to a May 1925 circular, this problem appears to have been recurrent in Romagna and Emilia Federzoni to the Prefects (ACS MI UC, TiP, N. 10305, May 10, 1925).

⁴⁸ Federzoni to the Prefects, ACS MI UC, TiP, N. 19313, September 2, 1924.

⁴⁹ Federzoni to the Prefects, ACS MI UC, TiP, N. 26521, October 29, 1925 and Federzoni to the Prefects, ACS MI UC, TiP, N. 12731, June 5, 1925.

vacuum. He was Mussolini's faithful Interior Minister, and his work was consonant with the policies of the government – a point Federzoni made on several occasions when Catholics singled him out for special praise.⁵⁰

Federzoni used his position to enforce a morality that both converged and diverged with traditional Catholic social attitudes. Indeed, he became an advocate of a Catholic form of Social Darwinism. As Interior Minister, he viewed Catholicism as an important means by which the Fascist state could shape the social organism. The most obvious example is his creation of the *Opera Nazionale Maternità e Infanzia*.⁵¹ An examination of other laws and instructions to his prefects demonstrate a day-to-day dedication to using traditional Catholic morality to discipline society and to create a stronger social organism that goes beyond the protection of motherhood and infants. He ordered his prefects to use morality as a determining factor for the censorship of theatrical and dance performances. He told them to ban newspapers from giving too much detail about violent crimes because they could sow the seed for further perversions in society. When *Il Mattino* printed news of a murdered female corpse, found cut into pieces and stuffed in a trunk, Federzoni made clear that stopping this type of reporting was a matter of the “defense of the national social order.” Next came a ban on publishing photographs of people arrested for “serious crimes” (by which he meant homicides, grand larceny, adultery and the like). In addition to seeking to prevent impulses toward moral turpitude, Federzoni turned on blaspheming, gambling, “alarmist or exaggerated news” of storms, flood and disasters that could “cause unrest and or demoralize the public spirit,” and nudity that offended Catholic moral sensibilities. After speaking out in the Senate against the harmful affect of dance schools on minors, he ordered the prefects to begin raiding and closing down these “dangerous breeding grounds [of] moral infection [of] adolescents.”⁵²

Another aspect of Federzoni's tenure of Interior Minister demonstrates the divergent side to his relationship with Catholicism. Although he doubtlessly was a friend of the Church, he had not changed his views on the relationship between church and state from his days as a Nationalist. His idea remained an inverted form of Thomism. The Church was to function as an arm of the state. Like the Fascist Party, it was to keep order, discipline society and provide it

⁵⁰ See Federzoni to the Prefect of Cuneo, ACS MI UC, TiP, N. 2656, February 3, 1926 and Federzoni to the Prefect of Verona and Turin, ACS MI UC, TiP, N. 2811, February 6, 1926 and ACS MI UC, TiP, N. 2880, February 7, 1926.

⁵¹ M. Minesso, *Stato e infanzia nell'Italia contemporanea*, 2007, il Mulino, Bologna, p. 9-82; M. Monnanni, *Per la protezione della stirpe*, 2005, Sallustiana, Roma; M. Bettini, *Stato e assistenza sociale in Italia*, 2008, Erasmo, Leghorn.

⁵² See the following *Circolare in partenze* in ACS MI UC, N. 2182, January 29, 1925; N. 12286, N. 8246 April 17, 1925; May 31, 1925; N. 16927, July 20, 1925; N. 17090 P July 22, 1925; N. 17916 P July 31, 1925. N. 18537, August 7, 1925; N. 29617, December 4, 1925; N. 31660, December 29, 1925; N. 31815, December 31, 1925.

with a morality that would ensure its health as a social organism. As such, the Church had nothing to fear and everything to gain from the new Fascist state. He reminded Archbishop Carlo Castelli of this relationship in February 1926 in the aftermath of a Fascist attack on a Catholic social club in his dioceses of Fermo. When Castelli wrote to Federzoni, stating that the Church needed to wait for better times, Federzoni angrily fired off a telegram rebuking the archbishop. He reminded the prelate that the Church in Italy was better off than it had ever been and certainly much better off than in “a recent past when the seditious and devious sects, without any efficacious response from the organized Catholic forces, wreaked havoc on every principle of religion, of the fatherland and of social life.”⁵³ Federzoni made a compelling argument. The Fascist sacralized state could do what Catholic groups could not: it could save Catholic Italy from the left and foster its continued growth. The Church would just have to trust the Fascist state.

With his appointment as president of the Royal Academy in 1938, Federzoni reached the apex of Italian cultural institutions. In this third phase of his career, he now emphasized the important role Catholicism played in the millennial history of a Fascist, Italian nation. Perhaps one of the most visible effects of this conception of a Catholic and Fascist nation was his efforts to get the Franciscan priest Giorgio Fishta appointed to the Royal Academy.⁵⁴ He shepherded through legislation allowing an Albanian to belong to the Academy and he had high hopes for Fr. Fishta.⁵⁵ Given Federzoni’s careful oversight of the Academy’s public face, it seems more than likely that he had approved Fr. Fishta’s inaugural address beforehand or even edited it prior to releasing it to the press. In the speech, Fishta echoed the Racial Laws by speaking about the fraternity between the Illyrian and the Latin races. He gave credit to the Duce for having reinvigorated Italy, remarking that the day Mussolini’s efforts had made possible the gift of the Albanian crown to the king-emperor of Italy and Ethiopia, he knew his country had begun its way “on the true path of civilization and of social rebirth: a path forged by the reality of things and not by deception of certain more or less Jewish and Masonic diplomats of the Lon-

⁵³ Archbishop Carlo Castelli to Federzoni, ACS MI UC, TiA, N. 5015, February 17, 1926 and Federzoni to Castelli, ACS MI UC, TiP, N. 3644, February 17, 1926.

⁵⁴ Fishta served from June 16, 1939 until his death on December 30, 1940.

⁵⁵ Zenone Benini, an academician and president of the *Centro Studi per Albania*, appears to have been responsible for nominating Fishta. See Archivio dell’Accademia dei Lincei, Fondo Accademia d’Italia [hereafter AALFAI], Titolo XI, Busta 12 Fascicolo 97 Fishta Giorgio, Letter from Zenone Benini to Luigi Federzoni, June 5, 1939. Federzoni got the legislature to change the Academy’s charter to allow the Albanian citizen to accept the position. In a letter to his friend and fellow academician, Ugo Ojetti, Federzoni emphasized the extraordinary nature of the process for the appointment of Fishta, which in his view could not be used as a precedent. Archivio della Galleria di Arte Moderna e contemporanea, Fondo Ojetti, Fascicolo Carteggio Federzoni, Letter from Luigi Federzoni to Ugo Ojetti, July 6, 1941.

don Conference.” He reminded the audience that Pius XI had called Mussolini, the founder of the Italian empire, “the man of Providence.” And, with a rhetorical slight of hand, Fishta implied that this title meant that an equally providential Mussolini would civilize the rest of the Balkans.⁵⁶ Fishta had lived up to Federzoni’s expectations. He, an Italian-speaking Albanian priest, enunciated a conception of the Catholic Fascist nation and civilizing mission as the Royal Academy under Federzoni.

Fichta’s linking of Jews and Masons, his portrayal of them as beyond the pale of *italianità* and his denunciation of them as enemies of the nation echoed earlier anti-Semitism and anti-Masonic sentiment among Catholics and will appear as nothing new to scholars of anti-Semitism in Italy. When Federzoni joined the Academy in 1938, rather than initiate an anti-Semitic policy, he found an Academy led by anti-Semites. In 1933, its members had demonstrated overt anti-Semitism when they sank the archaeologist Alessandro Della Seta’s candidacy for the Academy because of his religion. The following year, they were much less overt, owing to seemingly positive signals in Mussolini’s attitudes towards Jews, but they still excluded the Jewish mathematician Tullio Levi-Civita. For his part, Federzoni presided over the “bonifica” of the Academy’s libraries and publication – a “land reclamation” that included the expurgation of works written by Jews and Masons.⁵⁷ He also presided over the Organizing Committee for the Volta Conference of 1939 as it intentionally excluded Jewish mathematicians even though committee members realized that their decision would make problematic a meaningful international meeting of mathematicians.⁵⁸ Similarly, the Academy purged the works of Masons and sought to exclude mathematicians who were known Masons from the 1939 conference.⁵⁹ What is remarkable is that we find a strong convergence with conservative Catholic views in Fascism’s premier cultural institution: on the one hand, strident opposition to Masons and Jews as emblematic of an anti-national and dangerous political left, and on the other, a shared vision of Italy as a Catholic Fascist nation.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ The copy of the speech is dated July 3, 1939.

⁵⁷ See Capristo, ‘Un caso di ‘bonifica’ libraria’, op. cit.

⁵⁸ See for instance, AALFAI, Titolo VIII, Busta 41, Fascicolo 51 Matematica contemporanea e sue applicazioni (Congresso Volta 1939), Sottofascicolo 1, Letter from Antonio Bruers (the Vice Chancellor of the Academy) to Francesco Pellati (the Chancellor of the Academy), September 8, 1938.

⁵⁹ AALFAI, Titolo VIII, Busta 41, Fascicolo 51 Matematica contemporanea e sue applicazioni (Congresso Volta 1939), Sottofascicolo 1, Copy letter from Federzoni to Galeazzo Ciano, February 16, 1939.

⁶⁰ The academicians were not alone. For example, in 1938 the *Istituto di Studi Romani* began a magisterial history of Rome by leading scholars. The thirty volumes, each dedicated to a specific topic about *romanità*, created a similar panorama to Federzoni’s vision of Fascist and Catholic Italy: ancient Roman, Catholic Rome and Roman Catholicism (vol. 9-15 and 19), and its apex under Fascism (vol. 16).

A second example of a convergence of a Catholic and Fascist conception of the Italian nation can be found in Federzoni's series of biographies entitled *I grandi italiani*. His original plan was to publish fifty biographies of remarkable Italian men and women from ancient Rome through the present, ending with the Duce, himself. Two popes and five saints figured prominently in the series: popes Gregory VII and Julius II; and saints Benedict, Francis of Assisi, Thomas Aquinas, Catherine of Siena, and the recently canonized Salesian priest Giovanni Bosco. Federzoni took great care in choosing the scholars to write the biographies.⁶¹ However, the war and the fall of Fascism meant that only twenty-seven biographies ever saw the light of day. But, they were considered important and safe enough to be republished after the war – a testament to the enduring nature of Federzoni's enduring conception of the nation and the sacralized nation-state.

In 1904 Giovanni Giolitti famously declared that the church and state were two parallels, a curious metaphor implying that although the two could work together, they could never unite. While Giolitti drew alternately on Catholics and the Extreme Left support to balance each other's electoral power, Federzoni, in contrast, sought a permanent convergence with Catholics against liberals, radicals, democrats and Marxists. Catholics converged in the pre-World War I period with the Nationalists and other groups to defeat the advocates of democracy. Liberal Catholics remained aloof from the Nationalists over divergent conceptions of the state and the nation. The reluctance of left-wing Catholics, in particular, to converge with Nationalism in 1912-13 proved even stronger in 1924 when Federzoni, became Interior Minister. In this second phase, Federzoni diverged even more starkly from center-left Catholics who supported further democratic reform. In contrast, Federzoni's opposition to liberals, radicals, democrats and Marxists and his hostility toward the Catholic left as Interior Minister brought Fascism into convergence with conservative Catholics, the episcopacy and Vatican. In this period prior to the Reconciliation of 1929, Federzoni emerged as a valuable ally and protector of Church. And yet, if we find convergence between Catholics and Federzoni in a vision of Italian society and the state's defense of like-minded Catholics against Fascist and leftist anticlericals, his actions as Interior Minister ultimately dissatisfied the Italian episcopacy and the Vatican. They were not content to play the role of junior partner to the Fascist state. Despite Federzoni's brand of Social Darwinism that offered another opportunity for a Fascist-Catholic convergence, Church leaders preferred to act in tandem. In the 1930s, after Mussolini had eased Federzoni out of the government, it became clear that Federzoni's vision

⁶¹ Federzoni placed the last volume, dedicated to Mussolini, in the safe and capable hands of his friend and ex-Nationalist Ugo D'Andrea, whom he had asked to write the entry for nationalism in the *Enciclopedia italiana*.

of the state-protected Christian family as the building block of the Italian nation had become, under Mussolini, a Fascist vehicle to enforce social and political order and a weapon in the Fascist arsenal of racial struggle. This divergence led to increasing tensions between Pius XI and Mussolini despite the Reconciliation. At the same time, one finds a convergence between Catholics and members of the Fascist cultural establishment like Federzoni. During this third phase in Federzoni's career, when he served as the president of the Royal Academy, that convergence was primarily cultural. This shift from a political to a cultural realm was owing to several factors, not least of which was the fact that Federzoni held critical cultural posts in the 1930s. But, the convergence was also owing to the fact that Catholic critics of Fascism had been silenced. The Catholic and secular left had been driven abroad or underground. Extremist Fascist anticlericals had been co-opted by the regime or silenced. As President of the Royal Academy, Federzoni espoused a cultural vision that saw popes, saints and present-day Catholics and Fascists as integral players in Italy's seemingly unstoppable empire. This Catholic-Fascist convergence in the espousal of a transcendental nation explains why in 1943, when Federzoni came to the conclusion that Fascism was harming the nation, he turned on Mussolini, seeking protection for himself and Italy from the Vatican and the Catholic Church. The decision by the publishing firm UTET to reissue his series "I grandi italiani" after World War II and the fact that the series was placed in public libraries throughout Italy in the post-war period suggest that many intellectuals in republican Italy embraced the cultural convergence that Federzoni had fostered between a variety of Catholicism and a variety of Fascism.

'CAESAR'S ROME' AND 'CHRISTIAN ROME': THE INSTITUTE OF ROMAN STUDIES BETWEEN THE FASCIST REGIME AND THE VATICAN

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In his work on the fascist myth of 'Romanness' or *romanità*, Giovanni Belardelli confirmed that the topic of *romanità* was at the same time "a ground of approaching and encounter between the Catholic Church and fascism", "but also one of inevitable conflict". The spreading of this myth in its catholic-fascist meaning "was one of the main tasks of the Institute of Roman Studies".²

The early historiography has viewed the activities of the Institute of Roman Studies dichotomously, with research demonstrating either its distance from the regime's propaganda³ or its total synergy with fascist political culture.⁴ More recent scholarship on the Institute of Roman Studies is more nuanced. It identifies the institute as being closely aligned to the regime but not *of* the regime, intent at spreading the myth of Rome within a catholic-fascist perspective and elaborating its "modernistic manipulation".⁵ This scholarship no longer considers *romanità* to be a simple propagandistic tool, but identifies it as the cornerstone of the ideological and symbolical fascist universe since the early beginnings,⁶ and as a possible meeting point with the Catholic Church.⁷ Con-

¹ I would like to thank Laura Ciglioni for her help in the translation of this paper.

² Giovanni Belardelli, 'Il mito fascista della romanità', in: Id., *Il Ventennio degli intellettuali. Cultura, politica, ideologia nell'Italia fascista*, 2005, Laterza, Roma-Bari, p. 223-224.

³ Pietro Romanelli/Ottorino Morra, 'Carlo Galassi Paluzzi', *Studi Romani* 20/4, 1972, p. 465-476; Paolo Brezzi, 'L'Istituto Nazionale di Studi Romani', in: Paolo Vian (ed.), *Speculum Mundi. Roma centro internazionale di ricerche umanistiche*, 1992, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, Dipartimento per l'informazione e l'editoria, Roma, p. 707-728.

⁴ Luciano Canfora, *Ideologie del classicismo*, 1980, Einaudi, Torino, p. 78, 93-103.

⁵ Albertina Vittoria, 'L'Istituto di studi romani e il suo fondatore Carlo Galassi Paluzzi dal 1925 al 1944', in: Fernanda Roscetti (ed.), *Il classico nella Roma contemporanea. Mito, modelli, memoria*, vol. II, 2002, Istituto Nazionale di Studi Romani, Roma, p. 507-537; Belardelli, 'Il mito fascista della romanità', op. cit., p. 222-226; Emilio Gentile, *Fascismo di pietra*, 2007, Laterza, Roma-Bari, p. 140-145, 206-208.

⁶ Gentile, *Fascismo di pietra*, op. cit., p. 257-258.

⁷ The historiography on the myth of *romanità* in fascism is quite rich. For recent analyses, see: Belardelli, 'Il mito fascista della romanità', op. cit., p. 206-236; Andrea Giardina/André Vauchez, *Il mito di Roma. Da Carlo Magno a Mussolini*, 2000, Laterza, Roma-Bari, p. 212-296; Marla Stone, *A flexible Rome: Fascism and the cult of romanità*, in: Catharine Edwards (ed.), *Roman Presences. Receptions of Rome in European Culture, 1789-1945*, 1999, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge-New York,

cerning the relationship between the Catholic Church and fascist political religion, Emilio Gentile spoke of syncretism, developed primarily through *romanità*.⁸ Furthermore, in his recent opus *Contro Cesare*, the Italian scholar demonstrated that many European Christians had a clear notion of the totalitarian nature of fascism, as well as of its essential antichristian core. Indeed, together with Nazism and Communism, it was soon to be seen as an extreme manifestation of the modern Antichrist, deifying man and State.⁹

Based on these general considerations, the study of the activities of the Institute of Roman Studies¹⁰ presents itself as point of departure for an analysis of the larger historiographical issue of the relationship between the fascist regime and the catholic world with regard to mass politics, the development of political religions, and the myth of the nation.¹¹

The First Steps of the Institute: 1925-1929

The Institute of Roman Studies was founded in 1925¹² by Carlo Galassi Paluzzi.¹³ *Connoisseur* of *romanità*, intimate with the clerical-moderate circles of *Fides Romana*,¹⁴ Galassi Paluzzi wanted the history of Rome to descend from the ivory tower of academia and open up to a wider public, which was to be educated according to the universal values of Roman civilization.¹⁵ As a means of reaching these goals, in 1926 he created the *Corsi Superiori di Studi Romani* (Higher Courses of Roman Studies).¹⁶ Due to the support of a number of im-

p. 205-220; Romke Visser, 'Fascist Doctrine and the Cult of the Romanità', *Journal of Contemporary History* 27/1, 1992, p. 5-22; Gentile, *Fascismo di pietra*, op. cit.; Jan Nelis, *From ancient to modern: the myth of romanità during the ventennio fascista. The written imprint of Mussolini's cult of the 'Third Rome'*, 2011, Brepols, Bruxelles.

⁸ Emilio Gentile, 'New Idols: Catholicism in the face of Fascist totalitarianism', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 11/2, 2006, p. 147-148.

⁹ Emilio Gentile, *Contro Cesare. Cristianesimo e totalitarismo nell'epoca dei fascismi*, 2010, Feltrinelli, Milano.

¹⁰ For some preliminary considerations, we would like to refer to Donatello Aramini, 'Cultura e storia nei meccanismi del consenso: l'Istituto di studi romani 1925-1944', *Annale di storia regionale* 3/4, 2009, p. 155-178.

¹¹ On this approach, cfr. Renato Moro, 'Nazione, cattolicesimo e regime fascista', *Rivista di storia del cristianesimo* 1/1, 2004, p. 129-130. Cfr. also Guido Formigoni, *L'Italia dei cattolici. Dal Risorgimento a oggi*, 2010, il Mulino, Bologna, p. 105-144.

¹² See the letter sent by Carlo Galassi Paluzzi to Pietro Fedele on March 21, 1925, in: Archivio storico dell'Istituto nazionale di studi romani (henceforth abbreviated as ASINSR), General Affairs, b. 1, f. 2.

¹³ Benedetto Coccia, *Carlo Galassi Paluzzi*, 2000, Istituto nazionale di studi romani, Roma.

¹⁴ Cfr. Domenico Sorrentino, *La Conciliazione e il fascismo cattolico. I tempi e la figura di Egidio Martire*, 1980, Morcelliana, Brescia, p. 70-72.

¹⁵ Coccia, *Carlo Galassi Paluzzi*, op. cit., p. 9-10.

¹⁶ The lectures were given every year by eminent Italian scholars; they were divided in three sections: Caesar's Rome, Christian Rome, Savoy and Fascist Rome. On their organization, see the minutes of the Steering Committee in the meeting of April 12, 1926, in: ASINSR, Book of Minutes of the Steering Committee, vol. I.

portant personalities within the political and cultural world,¹⁷ during the 1920s and, even more so, the 1930s, the Institute of Roman Studies progressively became a structure synergic with the political culture and the imperial ambitions of the fascist regime.¹⁸ Its aim was to promote new studies designed – as affirmed in its Charter – awake in Italians “the historical sense of the function performed by Rome in the world in the unfolding of civilization”.¹⁹ Therefore its aim was to exalt the history and cultural originality of ancient and Christian Rome, its sole heir in the realm of politics, art, culture and spirituality.²⁰ The underlying intention was to demonstrate that the supremacy and universal function of Rome over the centuries was the consequence of the fusion of two elements: the Cross and the Eagle. The fusion of the Rome of the Caesars and the Rome of Peter was the source of the primacy of the Eternal City, a primacy of *culture* and *civilization* which needed to be rediscovered, redeemed and defended against the continuous assaults of modernity and of anti-Roman ideologies such as the Reformation, German criticism, and the Protestant spirit. Since the French Revolution, such anti-Roman ideologies had been the causes of the evils of Western society: individualism, positivism, liberalism, Social Democracy and communism.²¹ According to Galassi Paluzzi, *romanità* meant “order, discipline, balance, hierarchy; Romanness means ordered love for the universal [...]. To lead and restore the Legislation, the Law, that is social order; to bring and spread the Faith, the Gospel, that is the human and divine tool to restore Eternal order”.²² For Galassi Paluzzi, this was a personal mission, because – cf. his speech at the First National Congress of the Institute – the study and the knowledge of Roman and Latin civilization would lead to the understanding of the “inner springs” and the “life-giving sap of our national civilization”.²³

The ‘conciliatory’ component with which Galassi Paluzzi wanted to invest the initiatives of the institution is already manifest in the Institute’s emblem, which showed an eagle at rest with a Christian cross behind. This sym-

¹⁷ Among these should be mentioned: presidents Pietro Fedele, Luigi Federzoni and Vittorio Scialoja; members of the Steering Committee Emilio Bodrero, Giuseppe Ceccarelli, Carlo Cecchelli, Pietro De Francisci, Giulio Quirino Giglioli, Gustavo Giovannoni, Egilberto Martire, Roberto Paribeni, Pio Paschini, and Pietro Tacchi Venturi.

¹⁸ Antonio La Penna, ‘Il culto della romanità nel periodo fascista. La rivista *Roma* e l’Istituto di studi romani’, *Italia contemporanea* 41/4, 1999, p. 619-20; Vittoria, ‘L’Istituto di studi romani’, op. cit., p. 509-512.

¹⁹ ASINSR, General Affairs, b. 1, f. 1. On its duties: Mario Niccoli, ‘Note e commenti’, *Roma* 3/2, 1925, p. 94-95; Carlo Galassi Paluzzi, ‘L’Istituto e i Corsi Superiori di Studi Romani’, *Roma* 4/4, 1926, p. 178-180.

²⁰ *Roma*, the official journal of the Institute edited by Galassi Paluzzi, insisted a lot on this issue.

²¹ Carlo Galassi Paluzzi, ‘Roma e antiroma’, *Roma* 5/10, 1927, p. 437-444.

²² Carlo Galassi Paluzzi, ‘I corsi superiori di studi romani e ciò che si propongono di conseguire’, *Roma* 4/11, 1926, p. 519.

²³ Carlo Galassi Paluzzi, ‘Per un ordinamento nazionale degli studi romani’, *Roma* 6/5, 1928, p. 202-209.

bolized the union, with the image of the imperial eagle as bulwark and defence of Christianity. Galassi Paluzzi's institute explicitly linked pagan Rome to its Christian successor: it was both within Rome, and because of Rome, that Christianity had reached its triumph.²⁴ Furthermore, Galassi Paluzzi added the idea that ancient Rome had been resurrected within fascism²⁵ to the theory of a pagan Rome which had prepared the field for the Christian Rome as well as the idea of their close relationship – typically nationalist interpretations.²⁶

The climate that resulted from the Lateran Pacts, which – according to many Italians – provided the grounds for a rebirth of the nation on the basis of Catholicism,²⁷ gave tremendous impetus to the Institute's projects,²⁸ to its 'conciliatory' intentions.²⁹ The organization of a series of lectures celebrating the second millennium of Virgil's birth³⁰ aptly illustrates this climate.³¹ Indeed during the *bimillenario virgiliano*, Virgil's name and literary achievements were at once fascistized and catholicized.³²

The Lateran Pacts also had repercussions on the Institute's emblem: in April 1929, the Steering Committee approved a project which showed the imperial eagle in the foreground, ready for take-off, flanked by a Christian cross that is almost embraced by the eagle. The emblem was supported by two fasces.³³ Symbolically, the new emblem depicted *romanità* as comprising fascist Rome, which, with its fasces, supported imperial and Christian Rome. Moreover, by embracing the cross while at the point of take-off, the imperial eagle

²⁴ Pietro D'Achiardi, 'Roma e Oriente', *Roma* 4/1, 1926, p. 3-13; Carlo Galassi Paluzzi, 'Contro-riforma e storiografia', *Roma* 3/6, 1925, p. 258-268.

²⁵ Carlo Galassi Paluzzi, 'L'Istituto e i Corsi Superiori di Studi Romani', *Roma* 4/4, 1926, p. 178-180; Id., 'I corsi superiori di studi romani', op. cit., p. 518-520.

²⁶ It is no coincidence that Enrico Corradini had already dealt with the identification between the Roman spirit and the Italian spirit in 'La vita di Roma' (*Roma* 2/1, 1924, p. 1-3).

²⁷ Francesco Traniello, *Religione cattolica e Stato nazionale. Dal Risorgimento al secondo dopoguerra*, 2007, il Mulino, Bologna, p. 242-245. On the interpretations of the myth of *romanità*, cfr. Jan Nelis, 'Catholicism and the Italian Fascist Myth of Romanità: between Consciousness and Consent', *Historia Actual Online* 6/3, 2008, p. 139-146 (<http://www.historia-actual.org>).

²⁸ It also took advantage of the appointment of Federzoni as president (1929-1931), which assured the Institute greater political and cultural influence, as well as support both inside the regime and in the Vatican. On Federzoni, cfr. Benedetto Coccia/Umberto Gentiloni Silveri (eds.), *Federzoni e la storia della destra italiana nella prima metà del Novecento*, 2001, il Mulino, Bologna, (see, above all, Renato Moro, 'Nazionalismo e cattolicesimo', p. 49-112). About the rapprochement between the regime and National-catholic issues in the first half of the 1930s, and specifically concerning the issue of *romanità*, cfr. Gentile, *Fascismo di pietra*, op. cit., p. 137-145.

²⁹ Carlo Galassi Paluzzi, 'La pace di Roma', *Roma* 7/1, 1929, p. 32.

³⁰ [no author], 'I Corsi Superiori di Studi Romani e il *Ciclo Virgiliano*', *Roma* 7/1, 1929, p. 39-41; [no author], 'Attività dell'Istituto di Studi Romani. La celebrazione del bimillenario virgiliano', *Roma* 7/8, 1929, p. 377.

³¹ Luciano Canfora, 'Fascismo e bimillenario della nascita di Virgilio', in: Francesco Della Corte (ed.), *Enciclopedia Virgiliana*, vol. II, 1985, Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, Roma, p. 469-472; Nelis, *From ancient to modern*, op. cit., p. 86-96.

³² AA.VV., *Studi Virgiliani*, vol. I, 1931, Sapienza Editrice, Rome.

³³ Some duplicates can be found in: ASINRSR, General Affairs, b. 1, f. 5.

almost seemed to want to enforce its centrality. The intention of the Institute of Roman Studies using this symbolism was to reinforce what it saw as the true sense of *romanità* in Western civilization; a sense that had now found a new defender and propagator: fascism. The police blocked the change of emblem,³⁴ leaving the Institute with its former emblem which was deemed by some members of the Steering Committee to depict the cross as having “little importance and power”, almost subjugated in a state of “fear to emphasize the symbol of new civilization, on which is grafted the old one, represented by the Roman eagle”.³⁵

The Thirties: a Scientific Laboratory of Ideological Synthesis

During the 1930s, the Institute's activity and presence in Italian cultural life steadily increased. Harboursing outspokenly catholic-nationalfascist tendencies, this institution with Galassi Paluzzi as founder must have appeared very useful to the cultural policies of the fascist regime.³⁶ Consequently, its activities were linked to the strategy of fascistization of cultural institutions (and most particularly those dealing with history), a process that started with the tenth anniversary of the March on Rome in 1932.³⁷ Relations with the Undersecretariate (then Ministry) of Press and Propaganda intensified,³⁸ and public funding grew steadily. An analysis of the Institute's annual budget shows that its average income went from 30.000 lire in 1927 to one million in 1938, reaching 2.800.000 during the war.³⁹ Since 1934, the Institute had extended its sphere of action, because its initiatives were associated with those of the Mi-

³⁴ Only State institutions could have the fasces. See the correspondence between Galassi Paluzzi and Alberto Torri, May 1929 (ASINSR, General Affairs, b. 1, f. 5).

³⁵ Pietro Tacchi Venturi to Carlo Galassi Paluzzi, letter dated May 5, 1929, ASINSR, General Affairs, b. 1, f. 5.

³⁶ See the documentation in: Archivio Centrale dello Stato (henceforth abbreviated as ACS), SPD, CO, folders 509217, 552007, 553717. More particularly, there is a note dating from May 1940, in which Mussolini indicated Galassi Paluzzi as one of the candidates for the position of State Minister (ACS, SPD, CO, f. 552007).

³⁷ Armando Saitta, 'L'organizzazione degli studi storici', in: Brunello Vigezzi (ed.), *Federico Chabod e la 'nuova storiografia' italiana 1919-1950*, 1983, Jaca Book, Milano, p. 511-519; Renzo De Felice, 'Gli storici italiani nel periodo fascista', *Storia contemporanea* 14/4, 1983, p. 741-803; Romano Ugolini, 'L'organizzazione degli studi storici', in: Ester Capuzzo (ed.), *Cento anni di storiografia sul Risorgimento*, 2002, Istituto per la storia del Risorgimento italiano, Roma, p. 85-176; Belardelli, *Il Ventennio degli intellettuali*, op. cit., p. 18-43; Massimo Baioni, *Risorgimento in camicia nera. Studi, istituzioni, musei nell'Italia fascista*, 2006, Carocci, Roma, p. 93-137.

³⁸ See the documentation in: ACS, Ministry of Popular Culture, Cabinet, Grants, b. 207; ASINSR, General Affairs, b. 49, f. 21; b. 122, f. 6-7; b. 125, f. 17.

³⁹ The details of the annual budget of the Institute can be found in: ASINSR, Book of Minutes of the Steering Committee, vols. I-VII.

nistry of Press and Propaganda⁴⁰ and of the Ond,⁴¹ while at the same time creating local sections in Italy and in a number of European capitals.⁴²

We believe that all of this strengthened Galassi Paluzzi's crucial role, being as he was at the basis of the Institute's every initiative. In addition, the *rapprochement* between the Holy See and fascism during the first half of the 1930s likely strengthened his convictions regarding his own viewpoints. Thus the organization of the 1932 Exhibition on Rome in the Eighteenth Century presented itself as the ideal occasion to celebrate the new, unstrained relationship between the Church and fascism. The Exhibition acquired a clear political meaning and a specific ideological dimension⁴³: the Church was promoted as a bulwark against such evils of modernity as liberalism, evolutionism, materialism and "political faiths without a religious faith".⁴⁴ The following year, Galassi Paluzzi invited the Archbishop of Milan, Ildefonso Schuster, to deliver the introductory address at the *Corsi Superiori di Studi Romani* on 'Rome and Romanness', with the clear intention of rectifying a number of deviations and to emphasize the need for *romanità* to be understood as a "deeply spiritual formation of Western civilization; Christianity spread with wonderfully imperial action all over the world".⁴⁵ The invitation was declined, but it nevertheless showed that Galassi Paluzzi intended to exalt the centrality of the Holy See, presenting Italy as a Catholic and fascist nation and re-evaluating the civilizing, universal role of Christian Rome over the centuries; in other words this was a Rome that was not just the heir of pagan Rome, but a Rome that had integrated and improved the imperial role of ancient Rome, whereby also spreading the Christian message all over the world, among the races and generations⁴⁶ (such

⁴⁰ Since 1935, for example, under-secretary Alfieri involved Galassi Paluzzi in a series of radio broadcasts for foreign countries (ASINSR, General Affairs, b. 23, f. 101).

⁴¹ In partnership with Ond, in 1939 the Institute published the series of books 'Roma Mater' (E. Bodrero, *Roma e il Fascismo*; G. Bottai, *Dalla corporazione romana alla corporazione fascista*; F. S. Grazioli, *I grandi condottieri romani*; F. Saponi, *L'arte in Roma dalle origini ai giorni nostri*). See the reports and the contract with the General Office of Ond in: ASINS, Publications, b. 160, f. 1-2.

⁴² In some circumstances, the foundation of local sections of the Institute was ordered by Mussolini, as was the case for the Milan section (Galassi Paluzzi to Osvaldo Sebastiani, letter of September 26, 1934, in: ACS, SPD, CO, f. 509217), inaugurated in 1934, and the Paris section, (not coincidentally) inaugurated in 1935 (Galassi Paluzzi to Sebastiani, letter of September 2, 1935, in: ACS, SPD, CO, f. 509217).

⁴³ Carlo Galassi Paluzzi to Giuseppe Ceccarelli, letter of November 22, 1930, in: ASINSR, General Affairs, b. 77, f. 6.

⁴⁴ Carlo Galassi Paluzzi, 'Roma nell'Ottocento', in: AA.VV., *Mostra di Roma nell'Ottocento*, 1932, Istituto di studi romani, Roma, p. XI-XV; Id., 'Il contributo dell'Istituto di studi romani alla migliore conoscenza di Roma nell'Ottocento e di taluni aspetti del Risorgimento in Roma', paper read at the XXIII Congress of the Institute for the History of the Italian Risorgimento, September 14-15, 1935, in: ASINSR, General Affairs, b. 13, f. 20.

⁴⁵ Carlo Galassi Paluzzi to Cardinal Ildefonso Schuster, letter of November 20, 1933, in: ASINSR, Higher Courses, b. 15, f. 1.

⁴⁶ Carlo Galassi Paluzzi, 'Note e commenti', *Roma* 12/2, 1934, p. 80-81.

as in Papal Common Law⁴⁷). These activities recovered and ideologized the myth of medieval Christianity, as seen from a fascist perspective.⁴⁸

The cultural mission of the Institute reached its apogee in 1935, with the contemporary organization of three cycles of lectures to be held annually at the *Corsi Superiori di Studi Romani*, entitled 'Rome where Christ is Roman', 'Rome center of missionary life', and 'The Romanness of the Saints'. Presented mostly by cardinals, they insisted on a *romanità* that was the fruit of the "universal mission in the name of Catholicism, in an obvious attempt to Christianize the fascist empire in terms of peace and civilization".⁴⁹ When introducing the initiative, Galassi Paluzzi said that the lectures aimed at reviving "the sense of union that happily exists between Church and State, between Homeland and Faith".⁵⁰ Moreover, the regime seemed to acknowledge their importance, agreeing to broadcasting the lectures via radio,⁵¹ whereas the Vatican published them in the *Osservatore Romano*.

The conferences started during the Ethiopian war, with the lecture of cardinal Pacelli, the future pope Pius XII. They mainly insisted on the interpretation of the universal myth of Rome in missionary terms, focusing on Latin-Catholic civilization and spiritual imperialism. The conferences concentrated on the central and decisive role played by the Catholic Church throughout the centuries, a Church that had not only received the legacy of ancient imperial Rome, but had also improved its providential mission, making Rome the "indefectible lighthouse of faith and moral truth".⁵² It was a mission that was fulfilled through everyday work and a constant presence in society,

⁴⁷ ASINSR, General Affairs, b. 77, f. 7. Cfr. Giuseppe Ermini, 'Il Diritto Comune Pontificio e la sua bibliografia', *Roma* 12/2, 1934, p. 57-64; Carlo Calisse, 'Per lo studio del Diritto Comune Pontificio', *Roma* 12/6, 1934, p. 243-252.

⁴⁸ They reminded of the ideas and images asserted by intransigent Catholicism against the "bad fruits" of modern civilization (cfr. Giovanni Miccoli, 'Chiesa e società in Italia fra Ottocento e Novecento: il mito della cristianità', in: Id., *Fra mito della cristianità e secolarizzazione. Studi sul rapporto chiesa-società nell'età contemporanea*, 1985, Marietti, Casale Monferrato, p. 21-92; Daniele Menozzi, *La Chiesa cattolica e la secolarizzazione*, 1993, Einaudi, Torino, p. 14-71; René Rémond, *La secolarizzazione. Religione e società nell'Europa contemporanea*, 1999, Laterza, Roma-Bari, p. 125-134, 221-225, 231-240). See also the cycle of lectures on the general theme of 'Holy Years' held in 1933 (AA.VV., *Gli Anni Santi*, 1934, SEI, Torino) and the documentation in: ASINSR, Publications, b. 35, f. 25.

⁴⁹ Renato Moro, 'Il mito dell'impero in Italia fra universalismo cristiano e totalitarismo', in: Daniele Menozzi/Renato Moro (eds.), *Cattolicesimo e totalitarismo. Chiese e culture religiose tra le due guerre mondiali in Italia, Spagna, Francia*, 2004, Morcelliana, Brescia, p. 351-353; Gentile, *Fascismo di pietra*, op. cit., p. 140.

⁵⁰ See the pamphlet with the program of the lectures, in: ASINSR, Higher Courses, b. 38, f. 24. Cfr. also the letter of Galassi Paluzzi to Eugenio Pacelli, January 4, 1936 in: ASINSR, Higher Courses, b. 38, f. 33.

⁵¹ See the documentation in: ASINSR, Higher Courses, b. 38, f. 27, sf. 'Ministry of Popular Culture' and sf. 'Eiar'.

⁵² Eugenio Pacelli, 'Il sacro destino di Roma', in: AA.VV., *Roma 'onde Cristo è romano'*, 1937, Istituto di Studi Romani, Roma, p. 1-8 (also in *L'Osservatore romano*, February 24-25, 1936).

catalyzed by the Council of Trent,⁵³ through religious institutions,⁵⁴ education of the youth,⁵⁵ martyrs and finally also missionaries who continued, on to the XXth century, to spread the voice of Rome even where it was denied and persecuted.⁵⁶ According to Monsignor Celso Costantini (Secretary of the Sacred Congregation *de Propaganda Fide*), Christian Rome had overcome the limited boundaries of the ancient Empire and beaten the barbarian conqueror, spreading Latin civilization all over the world, whereby transforming it into catholicity,⁵⁷ and becoming the bulwark of civilization.⁵⁸ This viewpoint was the guiding line throughout the lectures on the 'Romanness of the Saints'⁵⁹ and 'Rome center of missionary life',⁶⁰ which exalted the work of missionaries and Christian saints all over the world (starting from Africa, where Italy was now returning⁶¹). The subjects of these lectures⁶² perfectly reflected the present climate of convergence between fascism and Catholicism and the religious interpretation that many Catholic circles gave to the Ethiopian conquest,⁶³ as well as – a consequence of fascist totalitarian pressure –, the ideologization, in a military sense, of the religious language of Italian Catholics and the strong connection between fatherland and faith.⁶⁴ This connection was reinforced by the

⁵³ Pio Paschini, 'I riformatori ortodossi', in: AA.VV., *Roma 'onde Cristo è romano'*, 1937, Istituto di Studi Romani, Roma, p. 49-54.

⁵⁴ Vincenzo La Puma, 'Gli Istituti religiosi della Chiesa romana', in: AA.VV., *Roma 'onde Cristo è romano'*, 1937, Istituto di Studi Romani, Roma, p. 31-36.

⁵⁵ Pietro Tacchi Venturi, 'La vita religiosa di Roma nel Seicento e nel Settecento', in: AA.VV., *Roma 'onde Cristo è romano'*, 1937, Istituto di Studi Romani, Roma, p. 21-27.

⁵⁶ Carlo Salotti, 'La romanità dei santi', in: AA.VV., *Roma 'onde Cristo è romano'*, 1937, Istituto di Studi Romani, Roma, p. 57-62.

⁵⁷ Celso Costantini, 'Roma formatrice di conquistatori di anime', in: AA.VV., *Roma 'onde Cristo è romano'*, 1937, Istituto di Studi Romani, Roma, p. 99-105.

⁵⁸ Giulio Serafini, 'La Chiesa di Roma, maestra di verità eterna, baluardo di civiltà', in: AA.VV., *Roma 'onde Cristo è romano'*, 1937, Istituto di Studi Romani, Roma, p. 107-117.

⁵⁹ Cfr. for example: Carlo Galassi Paluzzi, 'La romanità di S. Filippo Neri'; Pio Paschini, 'S. Gregorio Magno'; Id., 'S. Girolamo'; Pietro Tacchi Venturi, 'S. Ignazio di Loyola' (the typescripts of the lectures can be found in: ASINSR, General Affairs, Publications, b. 309, f. 9); Egidio Martire, 'La romanità di S. Benedetto', *L'Osservatore romano*, February 28, 1936.

⁶⁰ Cfr.: Innocenzo Taurisano, 'I figli del santo atleta in terra d'Africa', in: ASINSR, General Affairs, Publications, b. 309, f. 4.

⁶¹ 'I nuovissimi figli di Roma in Africa in una conferenza dell'on. Egidio Martire', *L'Avvenire d'Italia*, December 19, 1936.

⁶² Father Mario Barbera exalted the fascism which had conquered the most ancient Catholic empire (Mario Barbera, 'I figli di Ignazio di Loyola recano in Africa la luce di Roma', in: ASINSR, Publications, b. 309, f. 4).

⁶³ Cfr. Moro, 'Il mito dell'impero in Italia', op. cit., p. 350-358; Lucia Ceci, *Il papa non deve parlare. Chiesa, fascismo e guerra d'Etiopia*, 2010, Laterza, Roma-Bari, p. 25-26, 67-135.

⁶⁴ Cfr. Fulvio De Giorgi, 'Linguaggi militari e mobilitazione cattolica nell'Italia fascista', *Contemporanea* 6/5, 2002, p. 253-286; Renato Moro, 'Il mondo cattolico tra pace e guerra 1918-1939', *Italia contemporanea* 45/3, 2003, p. 593-602. For example, Jesuit Father Brucculeri argued that the sanctions would have revitalized and reunified National awareness and the political unity of the country, cfr. Jan Nelis, 'The Clerical Response to a Totalitarian Political Religion: *La Civiltà Cattolica* and Italian Fascism', *Journal of Contemporary History* 46/2, 2011, p. 260.

idea of Rome, and it had as its first prerequisite “the ideological primacy of Sacred Rome”.⁶⁵ Cardinal Pacelli was explicit: Rome had become a lighthouse of civilization because it was in its soil, in the catacombs, that popes, priests, believers, virgins had excavated and cemented “the foundations of a new Rome and a new Empire, whose flag will be the labarum of the Cross of Nazareth”.⁶⁶ Not accidentally, in this period of what amounted to a kind of ideological synthesis, Galassi Paluzzi again tried (unsuccessfully) to modify the Institute’s emblem.⁶⁷

Such clear attempts to catholicize fascism – they were repeated each year until 1944⁶⁸ – were joined by other initiatives of the Institute, initiatives in which, on one hand, the discourse on the civilizing mission of Catholicism contained explicit references to fascist *romanità*⁶⁹ and, on the other hand, the importance of ancient Rome and its reincarnation in fascist Italy were exalted.⁷⁰ Generally, these were attempts to reach some kind of compromise, as is exemplified by Galassi Paluzzi’s words during the first cycle of lectures on ‘Rome where Christ is Roman’: sharply criticizing those who “accused of infamy” the conquests of pagan Rome or those of Christian Rome, he stressed the fact that he believed “with Dante, and with the history, that in the plan wanted by Divine Providence these two Romes are two essential and interdependent tools of earthly and eternal health”. Furthermore, he said that “now that the global centrifugal forces [...] have roused a new chaos in the world”, Rome is preparing “for the third time to conquer and to pacify the world”.⁷¹

The dialectical synthesis between fascism and Catholicism was all but unanimously acclaimed. For example, in his lecture for the cycle ‘Rome where Christ is Roman’, Monsignor Francesco Borgongini Duca (Papal Nuncio at the Royal Court of Italy) demonstrated that the universal mission of Christianity was not at all born from the imperial idea of Roman civilization, highlighting the fact that Catholicism had never relied on the Roman Empire, on an Empire

⁶⁵ Andrea Riccardi, *Roma ‘città sacra’? Dalla Conciliazione all’Operazione Sturzo*, 1979, Vita e Pensiero, Milano, p. 32.

⁶⁶ Pacelli, ‘Il sacro destino di Roma’, op. cit., p. 4-5.

⁶⁷ Carlo Galassi Paluzzi to Demostene Rossi, letter of June 14, 1937, and Carlo Galassi Paluzzi to Giuseppe Medici del Vascello, letter of December 9, 1937, in: ASINSR, General Affairs, b. 1, f. 5.

⁶⁸ A list of lectures can be found in: ASINSR, Publications, b. 39, f. 49.

⁶⁹ Roberto Forges Davanzati, ‘Gli italiani all’estero e la Roma ‘onde Cristo è romano’’, in: AA.VV., *Roma ‘onde Cristo è romano’*, op. cit., p. 71-76; Carlo Galassi Paluzzi, ‘Gli studi romani e la romanità dell’Africa’, *Roma* 14/12, 1936, p. 417-424.

⁷⁰ AA.VV., *Africa Romana*, 1935, Hoepli, Milano; AA.VV., *Storia di Roma in XXX volumi. Piano dell’opera*, 1938, Cappelli, Bologna (see above all Giulio Giannelli, *Roma nell’età delle guerre puniche*, 1938, Cappelli, Bologna); Carlo Galassi Paluzzi, ‘Discorso tenuto alla cerimonia celebrativa per la fondazione dell’Impero presso l’Istituto di Studi Romani il 15 maggio 1936’, *Rassegna d’Informazioni dell’Istituto di Studi Romani* 4/17, 1936.

⁷¹ Carlo Galassi Paluzzi, ‘La Roma di Cesare e la Roma ‘onde Cristo è Romano’’, in: AA.VV., *Roma ‘onde Cristo è romano’*, op. cit., p. 39-45.

that was “limited to only one ethnic group” and “maintained by a swarm of spears”. Indeed between them, there had been “a huge war”, which ended with the victory of Christian Rome, fully “universal and eternal”, a Rome that had resisted the corrosive force of time, and that would defeat governments that in the present age acclaimed the atheist State, the “lay Caesar, Chief of religion”, the national Church “serving one flag, paid by a sovereign, with ethnic prejudices or class interests”.⁷² The reference to communism and Nazism is evident. For the publication of the lecture, Galassi Paluzzi asked the Nuncio, without success, to attenuate the dichotomy between pagan and Christian Rome, to avoid “a diminution of the unity of the Roman empire”.⁷³

A second episode of friction occurred between 1937 and 1938, when Galassi Paluzzi had to assign the writing of a book on *Risorgimento* in the series ‘History of Rome’ (a highly politicized initiative).⁷⁴ The book was assigned to Egidberto Martire, who had been a collaborator with the Institute since its foundation and who was one of the leaders of the clerical-fascist component present in the regime.⁷⁵ However, the proposal of Martire led to criticism, coming from Federzoni, Grazioli and Ceccarelli, who pointed at the author’s excessive “clericalism” and at the possibility that he could “mistreat” the history of the *Risorgimento*.⁷⁶ Consequently, they asked to attribute the years 1870-1900 to Martire and to assign the crucial elements of the *Risorgimento* period to Ghisalberti (a historian close to the nationalist approach⁷⁷). This suggestion was scornfully refused by Martire.⁷⁸ In the end, despite the insistence of Galassi Paluzzi, the book was entirely assigned to Ghisalberti.⁷⁹

⁷² Francesco Borgongini Duca, ‘L’universalità del cattolicesimo romano ed il particolarismo nazionalistico del protestantesimo’, in: AA.VV., *Roma ‘onde Cristo è romano’*, op. cit., p. 9-18.

⁷³ See the letters between Galassi Paluzzi and Borgongini Duca dated June 1937, in: ASINSR, Publications, b. 37, f. 34.

⁷⁴ Carlo Galassi Paluzzi, ‘Prefazione’, in: AA.VV., *Storia di Roma*, op. cit., p. 1-8.

⁷⁵ On clerical-fascism, cfr.: Andrea Riccardi, ‘Il clericofascismo’, in: Francesco Malgeri (ed.), *Storia del movimento cattolico in Italia*, vol. IV, *I cattolici dal fascismo alla resistenza*, 1981, Il Poligono, Roma, p. 1-38; Sorrentino, *La Conciliazione e il ‘fascismo cattolico’*, op. cit.; Id., *Egidberto Martire: religione e politica*, 1993, Studium, Roma.

⁷⁶ Martire was opposed to Nazi Germany and he was under police surveillance already since 1937. In 1939, due to his criticism of the regime, he was interned for five years (Sorrentino, *La Conciliazione e il ‘fascismo cattolico’*, op. cit., p. 75-80).

⁷⁷ On this aspect, cfr.: Baioni, *Risorgimento in camicia nera*, op. cit., p. 139-191; Eugenio Di Rienzo, *Storia d’Italia e identità nazionale*, 2006, Le Lettere, Firenze, p. 135-165.

⁷⁸ On this event, see the documentation in: ASINSR, Publications, b. 387, f. 427; b. 460, f. 505; b. 175, f. 23, sf. ‘Martire’.

⁷⁹ Ghisalberti intended to write a book close to the general National-fascist approach of the series. The ‘trickier’ books, in fact, were assigned to scholars close to nationalist cultural circles: to Paribeni went the book on Caesar and Augustus, as well as the book on Costantine; Francesco Coppola (after the refusal of Federzoni and Forges Davanzati) had to write the book on the XXth Century and the roots of fascism (see the documentation in: ASINSR, General Affairs, b. 77, f. 12, and ASINSR, Publications, b. 167-169, b. 173-176).

Galassi Paluzzi's 'conciliatory' aim remained unaltered during the following years, even as relations between the fascist regime and the Holy See progressively deteriorated.⁸⁰ In many ways, it even became more outspoken during the regime's ideological *rapprochement* to Nazism – the episcopacy did not agree unanimously with the pope's judgment⁸¹ –, and it was coupled with a tendency to use more cautious and moderate tones when speaking of Germany.⁸² The simultaneous opening, on September 23, 1937, of the Augustan Exhibition of Romanness and of the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution clearly illustrates this tendency. According to Galassi Paluzzi, the Exhibitions showed the "continuity of the heroic spirit, of the civilization and of the idea of Rome" present in the Italians, regenerated as they were by fascism and its chief.⁸³ Moreover, the Augustan Exhibition was not only dominated by the figure of the Roman Emperor as a prince of peace and a spreader of classic civilization, but it also ended with the triumph of Christianity.⁸⁴ Thus the fascist 'civilizing mission' was "tightly linked to the evangelizing role of the Church and the figure of Augustus overlapped with 'the mask of Constantine'".⁸⁵ As Monsignor Costantini stated in the *Corsi Superiori*, in the final room "the dusk of paganism met and blended with the dawn of Christianity, which did not abandon the mission of human civilization of ancient Rome, but brought to it a new light, spreading a new message of civilization for nineteen centuries".⁸⁶

In 1937 a tendency to show a more aggressive idea of Christianity was increasingly manifest, a Christianity that had triumphed over the Roman empire and imposed itself on Western society.⁸⁷ The intention was clear: reminding the fascist regime that the Catholic Church was the only true world power, whereby fascism would be the secular arm of Christianity in the reconquest of moder-

⁸⁰ Emma Fattorini, *Pio XI, Hitler e Mussolini. La solitudine di un papa*, 2007, Einaudi, Torino, p. 77-88, 104-140; Gentile, *Contro Cesare*, op. cit., p. 395 sqq.; Giovanni Miccoli, *I dilemmi e i silenzi di Pio XII*, 2000, Rizzoli, Milano, p. 150-163. On the anti-Nazi attitude among Catholics: Renato Moro, 'Religione del trascendente e religioni politiche', *Mondo contemporaneo* 1/1, 2005, p. 26-31; Giovanni Sale, *Hitler, la Santa Sede e gli ebrei*, 2004, Jaca Book, Milano, p. 13-114, 127-150.

⁸¹ Cfr. Sale, *Hitler, la Santa Sede e gli ebrei*, op. cit., p. 175-177.

⁸² Carlo Galassi Paluzzi to Emilio Bodrero, letter dated November 25, 1937, in: ASINSR, Publications, b. 53, f. 14.

⁸³ Carlo Galassi Paluzzi, 'Perpetuità di Roma: la Mostra Augustea della Romanità e la Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista', *Roma* 15/10, 1937, p. 353-355; Carlo Galassi Paluzzi, 'Il Convegno Augusteo', *Roma* 16/10, 1938, p. 397-398.

⁸⁴ On these initiatives, see: Belardelli, *Il mito fascista della romanità*, op. cit., p. 225-226; Gentile, *Fascismo di pietra*, op. cit., p. 143-145; Friedemann Scriba, 'Il mito di Roma, l'estetica e gli intellettuali negli anni del consenso: la Mostra augustea della romanità 1937-1938', *Quaderni di storia* 21/41, 1995, p. 67-84; Nelis, *From ancient to modern*, op. cit., p. 104-120.

⁸⁵ Moro, 'Il mito dell'impero in Italia', op. cit., p. 359-360.

⁸⁶ 'Alba missionaria alla Mostra Augustea. S.E. Mons. Costantini agli 'Studi Romani'', *L'Osservatore romano*, January 9, 1938.

⁸⁷ Cfr. Moro, 'Il mito dell'impero in Italia', op. cit., p. 366-370.

nity.⁸⁸ The war in Spain was interpreted in this sense: a just war against bolshevism and modern society,⁸⁹ in defence of a sister nation and of a movement that was generally considered to be closely aligned to the Italian regime.⁹⁰ Similar interpretations were also presented during the second and third cycles of lectures about 'Christian Rome', which also focused on the Church's missionary action and on its universal nature.⁹¹ On that occasion, somebody argued that a conquest pursued "not with the golden eagle of Trajan, but with the labarum of Constantine" was more effective.⁹² Tacchi Venturi, for example, stated that the territorial extension of Caesar's Rome was nothing in comparison to the greatness achieved by Christian Rome over the centuries, a greatness which, unlike empires that had long disappeared, "lasted, lasts and will last unchanging in its doctrine and its morals, smiling at those who hope for its death".⁹³ Monsignor Domenico Tardini, one of the priests closest to the pope at that time,⁹⁴ exalted the victory of Christianity over the "selfishness" of a pagan Rome that was "fecundated" with new "inspirations" and had "no limits of time and space, no distinction of peoples and races".⁹⁵ Once again, Borgongini Duca glorified the "army of Roman heroes", their martyrdom that had started against the bar-

⁸⁸ Silvio Negro, 'Vaticano potenza mondiale', *Roma* 15/10, 1937, p. 382-384.

⁸⁹ m.p., 'La difesa della romanità', *Roma* 15/9, 1937, p. 330-331; Id., 'Sintomi dell'odio anti-romano', *Roma* 15/11, 1937, p. 415-417; Guido Manacorda, 'La nuova Spagna cattolica, imperiale, romana', *Rassegna d'informazioni dell'Istituto di Studi Romani* 8/5, 1940, p. 5. On Catholics and the war in Spain, cfr. Renato Moro, 'Il cattolicesimo internazionale e la guerra civile spagnola', in: Giuliana Di Febo/Claudio Natoli (eds.), *Spagna anni Trenta. Società, cultura, istituzioni*, 1993, Franco Angeli, Milano, p. 268-309; Alfonso Botti, "Guerre di religioni" e 'crociata' nella Spagna del 1936-39', in: Mimmo Franzinelli/Riccardo Bottoni (eds.), *Chiesa e guerra. Dalla 'benedizione delle armi' alla 'Pax in terris'*, 2005, il Mulino, Bologna, p. 357-389; Daniele Menozzi, *Chiesa, pace e guerra nel Novecento. Verso una delegittimazione religiosa dei conflitti*, 2008, il Mulino, Bologna, p. 137-138.

⁹⁰ Cfr. above all Renato Moro, 'L'immagine del franchismo nei cinegiornali e nei documentari dell'Italia fascista', in: Giuliana Di Febo/Renato Moro (eds.), *Fascismo e franchismo. Relazioni, immagini, rappresentazioni*, 2005, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, p. 277-305; Alfonso Botti, 'L'immagine del franchismo nella pubblicistica fascista (1939-1943)', in: Di Febo/Moro (eds.), *Fascismo e franchismo*, op. cit., p. 321-351.

⁹¹ Cfr. for example: Giovanni Battista Tragella, 'Roma centro di attività missionaria in Cina'; Costanzo Bergna, 'I figli di Francesco d'Assisi araldi di fede e di romanità in Africa' (in ASINSR, General Affairs, Publications, b. 309, f. 4); Paolo Boetto, 'L'ideale romano di S. Ignazio', *L'Osservatore romano*, February 1-2, 1937; Vincenzo La Puma, 'Roma e la fonte del diritto canonico', *L'Osservatore romano*, April 26-27, 1937; 'Il Baronio rievocato dall'Em.mo Cardinale Salotti', *L'Osservatore romano*, December 19, 1937; Federico Tedeschini, 'Luce di Roma in terra di Spagna', *L'Osservatore romano*, January 28, 1938; 'Alla presenza di otto Cardinali, l'Em.mo Fumasoni Biondi parla sulla 'propaganda della Fede e l'universalità di Roma', *L'Osservatore romano*, February 20, 1938.

⁹² Alberto Caviglia, 'Roma centro d'azione missionaria nell'America del Sud', *L'Osservatore romano*, March 12, 1938.

⁹³ Pietro Tacchi Venturi, 'Roma propagatrice del Cristianesimo', *L'Osservatore Romano*, March 15-16, 1937.

⁹⁴ Fattorini, *Pio XI, Hitler e Mussolini*, op. cit., passim. Tardini started to criticize Mussolini's politics since 1935, cfr. Gentile, *Contro Cesare*, op. cit., p. 381-383.

⁹⁵ Domenico Tardini, 'S. Tommaso d'Aquino', *L'Osservatore romano*, March 1-2, 1937.

barians and that continued in Europe in present times.⁹⁶ Through the criticism of modernity and of Protestantism,⁹⁷ some lectures delivered an outspokenly anti-communist and anti-Nazi message, by showing how Italian fascism had transformed imperial, Catholic and fascist Italy into a bulwark of Western Christian civilization, far from both the “exclusivism of race and nation” and “humanitarian internationalism”.⁹⁸ In a time in which Catholics in Mexico, Spain and the USSR were being persecuted, in a time also of Nazi ‘paganism’, the Institute’s initiatives began to develop the image of Italy – or, to be precise, of the ‘myth of Catholic Italy’ – as the prototype of the “myth of Christian civilization”, of which the “fascist nation could become the bulwark”.⁹⁹ Much in the same way, in May 1938, the Vth National Congress of Roman Studies on ‘The mission of the Empire of Rome’ focused on the notions of “absorption”, “fusion” and “peace”.¹⁰⁰ As argued by Jesuit Father Barbera, rather, it was thanks to Christianity that Rome had become “really eternal and universal”, merging Christian and Roman civic universalism.¹⁰¹

Toward the War

As was also the case for most of the Catholic world,¹⁰² with the deterioration of the international political situation, the rapprochement to Germany, the increasingly totalitarian thrust and the development of fascism’s political religion, the impression that the regime was steering away from its political line became apparent. As a consequence, Galassi Paluzzi increased his efforts to ideologically underbuild the myth of fascist *romanità*. Hence in 1938, the promulgation of the racial laws didn’t cause any change in the lectures on ‘Christian Rome’ – although some members of the Steering Committee wanted to suppress them.¹⁰³ Moreover, Galassi Paluzzi decided to organize two new cycles of

⁹⁶ Francesco Borgognini Duca, ‘L’eroismo e la Chiesa di Roma’, *L’Osservatore Romano*, January 18-19, 1937.

⁹⁷ Carlo Galassi Paluzzi, ‘La luce di Roma nel secolo dei Lumi’, in: ASINSR, Publications, b. 39, f. 43.

⁹⁸ This is the interpretation given by Father P. Mario Barbera on ‘Civiltà Cattolica’ to the V National Congress of Roman Studies (Mario Barbera, ‘Romanità genuina nell’Istituto di Studi Romani’, *La Civiltà Cattolica* II, 1938, p. 293-303).

⁹⁹ On these interpretations among catholics, cfr. Moro, ‘Nazione, cattolicesimo e regime fascista’, op. cit., p. 144-145. See also Fulvio De Giorgi, ‘La Spagna franchista vista dalla chiesa italiana (1939-1945)’, in: Di Febo/Moro (eds.), *Fascismo e franchismo*, op. cit., p. 420-424.

¹⁰⁰ Carlo Galassi Paluzzi (ed.), *La missione dell’Impero di Roma nella storia della civiltà. Atti del V Congresso Nazionale di Studi Romani*, 1938, Istituto di Studi Romani, Roma.

¹⁰¹ Mario Barbera, ‘Contributo dell’Impero spirituale della Chiesa di Roma alla civiltà’, in: Galassi Paluzzi (ed.), *La missione dell’Impero di Roma*, op. cit., p. 109-118.

¹⁰² See: Moro, ‘Religione del trascendente e religioni politiche’, op. cit., p. 39-62; Gentile, *Contro Cesare*, op. cit., p. 395-432; Nelis, *The Clerical Response to a Totalitarian Political Religion*, op. cit., p. 262-270.

¹⁰³ On May 14, 1938, Galassi Paluzzi answered Giovannoni in the following manner: “It seems to me that if you do not want to fall in the trap of an anti-scientific misunderstanding first, and then

lectures, one concerning the relation between Rome and Judaism,¹⁰⁴ and the other dealing with racism, with the clear intention to show the true significance of Italian racism, and to contrast the biological racism of the journal *Difesa della Razza*.¹⁰⁵ Urged by Bottai, and in line with Italian Catholics' ambivalent attitude on the subject of racism,¹⁰⁶ Galassi Paluzzi had earlier expressed his appreciation for a spiritual racism that orbited around the idea of the superiority of the Latin genius and civilization in Roman Law, in architecture, in the Latin language, in the Renaissance;¹⁰⁷ all these elements were typical expressions of "Roman descent" in which, as Pericle Ducati significantly argued, the physical element is "something that depends on spiritual nature", whereby Italian peoples become Romans through the extension of citizenship and the gift of civilization. Thus the freed slave also "becomes a Roman citizen": "the issue of race in Rome actually becomes an issue of citizenship" and, as the empire grows, "in contact with other peoples the spiritual qualities prevail on physical characteristics", which, in the end, "are not important".¹⁰⁸ In the cycle of lectures on racism, the notions of people, genius and civilization were preferred to the biological notion of race,¹⁰⁹ because they represented the weight and "prestige of a tradition", which showed its superiority on the mores of barbarians

also partisan, it is impossible to leave out of consideration the glories of Christian Rome: when you want to speak about Rome, it is necessary to continue to be interested, as we are doing, not only in Caesar's Rome or Mussolini's Rome, but also in Christian Rome" (ASINSR, General Affairs, b. 5, f. 15).

¹⁰⁴ The cycle was most significantly coordinated by a clergyman, abbot Giuseppe Ricciotti. It is mentioned in a note sent to Italian newspapers and held in: ASINSR, Higher Courses, b. 94, f. 39, sf. 4 'Propaganda'.

¹⁰⁵ It is interesting to observe that all the issues of Interlandi's journal can be found in the Institute's archives and that all of them contain handwritten annotations by Galassi Paluzzi (ASINSR, Higher Courses, b. 94, f. 39). In this context, see Francesco Cassata, *La Difesa della razza. Politica, ideologia e immagine del razzismo fascista*, 2008, Einaudi, Torino.

¹⁰⁶ See: Renato Moro, 'Le premesse dell'atteggiamento cattolico di fronte alla legislazione razziale fascista. Cattolici ed ebrei nell'Italia degli anni venti (1919-1932)', *Storia contemporanea* 19/6, 1988, p. 1030-1034; Id., 'Le Chiese, gli ebrei e la società moderna: l'Italia', in: Mario Toscano (ed.), *Integrazione e identità. L'esperienza ebraica in Germania e Italia dall'illuminismo al fascismo*, 1998, Franco Angeli, Milano, p. 167-182; Renato Moro, 'Pregiudizio religioso e ideologia: antebraismo e anti-protestantesimo nel cattolicesimo italiano tra le due guerre', *Le Carte*, 1998, p. 17-66; Miccoli, *I dilemmi e i silenzi di Pio XII*, op. cit., p. 263-328; Renato Moro, *La Chiesa e lo sterminio degli ebrei*, 2002, il Mulino, Bologna; Giovanni Sale, *Le leggi razziali in Italia e il Vaticano*, 2009, Jaca Book, Milano.

¹⁰⁷ Carlo Galassi Paluzzi to Giuseppe Bottai, letter of August 16, 1938, in: ASINSR, General Affairs, b. 52, f. 30.

¹⁰⁸ Pericle Ducati, *Italia preromana e stirpe italiana*, 1940, Istituto di Studi Romani, Roma, p. 14; Id., *Il concetto di stirpe e civiltà di Roma antica*, 1940, Istituto di Studi Romani, Roma, p. 18, 20-22, 25-28.

¹⁰⁹ It is relevant that Emilio Bodrero, invited by Galassi Paluzzi to give a lecture on "The Renaissance as an imperial revival of Italian race", accepted the proposal, but deleted the word "race" (in the title) and substituted it with "people" (see the letters of November 7 and 24, 1938 in: ASINSR, Higher Courses, b. 94, f. 39, sf. 3).

through their conversion to Roman Christian universality.¹¹⁰ Indeed the strength of the Roman genius did not depend on its purity, but on its unique ability to merge, absorb and transform.¹¹¹

Although evidencing some distress at the current state of fascist politics,¹¹² the lectures on 'Christian Rome' attempted to bridge the gap between Pius XI and the fascist regime.¹¹³ They abandoned the warlike language that had characterized the years 1935-38, instead insisting on notions of pacifism, missionary¹¹⁴ and charitable patriotism,¹¹⁵ and the universal mission of Rome.¹¹⁶ Here we should mention the lectures of Cardinal Domenico Jorio (Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Sacraments) and Monsignor Alfredo Ottaviani (Secretary of the Sacred Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs), both held in 1939. Speaking about ecumenical councils, Jorio re-asserted the idea of Christianity as a unique universal empire, in opposition to Nazism and Communism. In a section of the speech that, most interestingly, Galassi Paluzzi left out of the final publication, Jorio argued:

“against the new attacks from the East or from the North, the Catholic Church is the only institution that embodied internationality; [...] hence its resistance against every

¹¹⁰ Carlo Cecchelli, *Roma segnacolo di reazione della stirpe alle invasioni barbariche*, 1939, Istituto di Studi Romani, Roma, p. 8, 12-26.

¹¹¹ Gustavo Giovannoni, *L'architettura come volontà costruttiva del genio romano e italico*, 1939, Istituto di Studi Romani, Roma, p. 3-22; Salvatore Riccobono, *Il diritto romano indice del genio della stirpe*, 1941, Istituto di Studi Romani, Roma, p. 31-38.

¹¹² Some of these ideas were common in Catholic circles, cfr. Moro, 'Il mondo cattolico tra pace e guerra', op. cit., p. 604-611, 614.

¹¹³ Cfr. Moro, 'Religione del trascendente e religioni politiche', op. cit., p. 49-55; Id., 'Le chiese e la modernità totalitaria', op. cit., p. 439-442; Fattorini, *Pio XI, Hitler e Mussolini*, op. cit., p. 170-228.

¹¹⁴ See the lectures: Egilberto Martire, 'Le Missioni, impero spirituale di Roma'; Alberto Caviglia, 'Roma centro d'azione missionaria nell'America del Sud'; Mario Giardini, 'Roma centro di azione missionaria in Giappone'; Pietro Pisani, 'Roma centro di azione missionaria in India' (cfr. *Rassegna d'informazioni dell'Istituto di Studi Romani* 5/22-23, 1937); Celso Costantini, 'L'Esposizione d'Arte Missionaria al Vaticano e La Mostra Cattolica all'Esposizione universale di Roma' (cfr. *Rassegna d'informazioni dell'Istituto di Studi Romani* 6/24, 1938); Francesco Carminati, 'L'universalità di Roma nell'opera della propagazione della Fede' (cfr. *Rassegna d'informazioni dell'Istituto di Studi Romani* 7/23, 1939); Lazzaro Acquistapace, 'P. Desideri pioniere della luce di Roma nel Tibet' and Giovanni Unzalu Landaburu, 'Roma e le missioni dell'America Latina' (cfr. *Rassegna d'informazioni dell'Istituto di Studi Romani* 8/23-24, 1940).

¹¹⁵ We should mention here the cycle of lectures *The cultural and artistic function of the Fathers Philippines circle* organized in 1938 for the IV centenary of the birth of Cesare Baronio (cfr. *Rassegna d'informazioni dell'Istituto di Studi Romani* 5/22-23, 1937); the following lectures should also be mentioned: Carlo Salotti, 'San Benedetto', and Leonardo Maria Bello, 'San Francesco', both held in 1940 (cfr. *Rassegna d'informazioni dell'Istituto di Studi Romani* 7/23, 1939). Finally, there is also Carlo Salotti, 'Romanità di S. Caterina', held in 1941 (cfr. *Rassegna d'informazioni dell'Istituto di Studi Romani* 8/23-24, 1940).

¹¹⁶ Cfr. Riccardi, *Roma 'città sacra'?*, op. cit., p. 55-56.

historical reversal, against the instinctive and barbaric returns which are a constant threat for more ancient and more complete Nations like ours".¹¹⁷

Presenting his lecture in December, at a time when Europe was already at war, Monsignor Ottaviani, resumed the idea of collaboration between State and Church, as sanctioned by the 1929 Lateran Pacts, and also proposed a political rapprochement between European States in order to create the conditions for a new Monaco agreement.¹¹⁸ Such appeals – and others with a similar purpose¹¹⁹ – aimed at exalting Church universality, opposed to every type of nationalism.¹²⁰ They were made by some of the most important members of the Vatican government, and as such can be considered as expressing the Holy See's viewpoint;¹²¹ indeed they seemed closely aligned with the aims of Galassi Paluzzi,¹²² attempting to herd the regime back towards the path of Catholic restoration.¹²³

If in January 1940 Galassi Paluzzi still appealed "for peace",¹²⁴ as Italy joined the war, faithful to his traditional nationalist conviction – and that of the Institute –, he labeled the armed conflict as pious, legitimate and necessary to defend Roman civilization.¹²⁵ Because "the country was going through a great historical moment", he wished for the Institute to actively support the war.¹²⁶ It had to become a "militia" marching "in the field of battle that has been assigned to us, so that the ancient and eternal truths of Caesar's Rome, of Christian Rome, and of Savoyard and Fascist Rome, will triumph in the new world order".¹²⁷ He reached an agreement with the Ministry of Popular Culture

¹¹⁷ Domenico Jorio, 'La romanità dei concili ecumenici', in: ASINSR, Publications, b. 39, f. 44.

¹¹⁸ Alfredo Ottaviani, 'L'Azione di Roma Cristiana nel Diritto Pubblico', *L'Osservatore romano*, December 31, 1939.

¹¹⁹ Cfr. Carlo Salotti, 'La romanità di S. Benedetto', *L'Avvenire d'Italia*, February 11, 1940; Pietro Fumasoni Biondi, 'Pio XI. Pastore delle genti', *L'Osservatore romano*, January 14, 1940; 'L'Em.mo Jorio esalta agli 'Studi Romani' l'opera di Roma nelle Crociate', *L'Osservatore Romano*, January 19, 1941.

¹²⁰ Mario Barbera, 'Il P. Roberto De Nobili araldo di Roma nell'India', in: ASINSR, Publications, b. 309, f. 4.

¹²¹ Riccardi, *Roma 'città sacra'?*, op. cit., p. 177-207.

¹²² He argued that there were three main pillars of education in the fascist regime: State, Church, and family (Carlo Galassi Paluzzi, *Lo spirito di Roma e del fascismo nella riforma della scuola*, 1939, Istituto di Studi Romani, Roma).

¹²³ Roberto Paribeni, *La famiglia romana*, 1939, Istituto di Studi Romani, Roma; Id., *L'Impero romano*, 1939, Istituto di Studi Romani, Roma. Cfr. also Nicola Turchi, *La religione di Roma antica*, 1939, Cappelli, Bologna, p. 221-231.

¹²⁴ See the meeting of the Steering Committee of January 23, 1940, in: ASINSR, Book of Minutes of the Steering Committee, vol. VI.

¹²⁵ Carlo Galassi Paluzzi, 'Continuità di Roma', *Roma* 18/6, 1940, p. 165-167.

¹²⁶ ASINSR, Book of Minutes of the Steering Committee, vol. VI, meeting of June 25, 1940. During the same meeting, Galassi Paluzzi announced that he had applied to go to war as a volunteer.

¹²⁷ 'S.M. il Re Imperatore inaugura la nuova sede dell'Istituto', *Rassegna d'informazioni dell'Istituto di Studi Romani* 9/15, 1941, p. 2-4. In this speech, remembering the tough beginnings of the Institute, Galassi Paluzzi alluded "to the small room of 8 square metres in which since 1922 we have

to publish a series of propaganda pamphlets which were significantly entitled 'Mare Nostrum', and which would be distributed among workers and soldiers.¹²⁸ Clearly this series aimed at historically legitimizing Mussolini's foreign politics.¹²⁹ Furthermore, Galassi Paluzzi initiated an additional cycle of *Corsi Superiori* lectures, some of which were immediately published under the title 'Rome and the Mediterranean'. In some kind of atemporal conception, they illustrated the continuous, millenarian presence of Rome in Mediterranean countries, thereby once again conveying traditional ideas of nationalism,¹³⁰ incarnated by the presence and the magnificence of ancient Roman ruins,¹³¹ without overlooking the crucial role that Christianity had played in the conservation of Roman civilization.¹³² In addition, a renewed request to modify the emblem, submitted, and accepted, in 1942,¹³³ the same year that the Institute also attained the title of 'Royal Institute',¹³⁴ fully testifies to the orientation that the Institute as headed by Galassi Paluzzi was taking.¹³⁵ This kind of behavior was all but uncommon in the Catholic attitude *vis-à-vis* the war (historians have

elaborated with faith the plan of a work which was partially made". These words alluded to Mussolini's room where the foundations of fascism were laid and, backdating the idea of the foundation of the Institute, linked it to the rise of fascist power. Cfr. also Carlo Galassi Paluzzi, 'XVI anno accademico', *Rassegna d'Informazioni dell'Istituto di Studi Romani* 9/22, 1941, p. 3-5.

¹²⁸ See the memorandum in: ASINSR, Publications, b. 68, f. 12.

¹²⁹ To the series contributed anonymously: Eugenio Giovannetti (*Quel che la Francia deve e non ha dato a Roma e all'Italia*, Istituto di Studi Romani, Roma), Pietro Romanelli (*Africa romana e Tunisia italiana*, Istituto di Studi Romani, Roma), Aristide Calderini (*Roma e l'Egitto, l'Italia e l'Egitto moderno*, Istituto di Studi Romani, Roma), Roberto Paribeni (*Roma ed Ellade, Italia e Grecia*, Istituto di Studi Romani, Roma). In addition, a book that opposed English politics was published (*I moderni cartaginesi*, Istituto di Studi Romani, Roma), whereas a sixth book on Syria and Palestine and written by Pirro Scavizzi was completed but never published, as the Vicariate did not grant permission, probably as it opposed the involvement of a clergyman in a series that was sponsored by the regime and legitimized the war (see the letter of Carlo Galassi Paluzzi to Scavizzi, February 27, 1941, ASINSR, Publications, b. 68, f. 10). All typescripts can be found in: ASINSR, Publications, b. 68, f. 1-10.

¹³⁰ Giulio Quirino Giglioli, *Orme di Roma in Corsica e ricordi della Corsica in Roma*; Pietro Romanelli, *L'Africa Romana*; Domenico Mustilli, *Roma e la sponda illirica*; Francesco Ercole, *Orme di Roma in Malta*.

¹³¹ Aristide Calderini, *Roma e l'Egitto* (for the typescript: ASINSR, Publications, b. 236, f. 2); Amedeo Maiuri, *La Grecia e Roma*; Giulio Quirino Giglioli, *Roma e la Gallia, l'Italia e la Francia*; Francesco Pellati, *La civiltà di Roma in Spagna*; Roberto Paribeni, *Roma e i popoli dell'Asia minore*.

¹³² Giuseppe Ricciotti, *Roma e la Palestina*; Pio Paschini, *Roma e la battaglia di Lepanto*. A list of each lecture is contained in the letter that Galassi Paluzzi sent to Federico Chabod on October 31, 1941, inviting him to give a lecture on *The function and the idea of Rome in the Mediterranean area during the Middle Ages* (ASINSR, Publications, b. 236, f. 1).

¹³³ Cfr. the documentation in: ASINSR, General Affairs, b. 1, f. 5.

¹³⁴ The request was submitted already in December 1939 and was accepted by decree by Vittorio Emanuele III (ASINSR, General Affairs, b. 1, f. 1) on April 27, 1942.

¹³⁵ In January 1942, Galassi Paluzzi asked the Italian ambassador in Berlin to emphasize the participation of the Institute in the Berlin Book Exhibition (ASINSR, General Affairs, b. 24, f. 104).

called it “the undulatory line” of Catholics¹³⁶), part a project of ‘reconstruction’ of Christianity and, after 1941, of the struggle against, bolshevism, Catholicism’s number one enemy.¹³⁷ Thus, in the Institute a diversity of ‘fascist’¹³⁸ and more nuanced positions remained manifest,¹³⁹ some being more oriented towards the exaltation of the Catholic Church and its universal function,¹⁴⁰ some even critical of certain manifestations of fascism present in the Institute – even if fascism or the regime in itself were never criticized. The organization of a series of lectures on ‘Romanness and Germanism’, by professor Guido Manacorda, exemplifies this diversity. Manacorda spoke of an outright antithesis between the Roman-Christian and German civilizations, as the latter was judged “pantheist” and “irrational-primitivistic”.¹⁴¹ Apart from Manacorda, Galassi Paluzzi also published a series of articles in which he criticized the ‘pagan’ biologism of Nazi ideology.¹⁴² Finally, the continuing cycle of lectures on ‘Rome where Christ is Roman’ became increasingly estranged to fascist ideology,¹⁴³ as exemplified for example in a lecture by the pope’s official theologian, Father Mariano Cordovani,¹⁴⁴ who argued that it was impossible to reduce and “mortify” Catholic universalism in any kind of nationalism.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁶ Cfr. Renato Moro, ‘I cattolici italiani di fronte alla guerra fascista’, in: Massimo Pacetti/Massimo Papini/Marisa Saracinelli (eds.), *La cultura della pace dalla resistenza al Patto Atlantico*, 1988, Il lavoro editoriale, Ancona, p. 75-95.

¹³⁷ Menozzi, *Chiesa, pace e guerra nel Novecento*, op. cit., p. 159-168.

¹³⁸ Mario Appellius, ‘Roma nella Nuova Europa’, lecture held on January 19, 1942, in: ASINSR, Publications, b. 412, f. 1.

¹³⁹ Romeo Mezzanotte, ‘San Clemente Maria Hofbauer’, lecture held on January 9, 1942, in the cycle ‘Romanness of the Saints’, in: ASINSR, Publications, b. 309, f. 9 (the author exalted the work of this German saint who worked all his life “for a closer union of his beloved and noble homeland with eternal Rome”).

¹⁴⁰ Roberto Paribeni, *Da Diocleziano alla caduta dell’Impero d’Occidente*, 1941, Cappelli, Bologna, p. 3-5, 327-352.

¹⁴¹ The lecture was held on April 5, 1941 (*Rassegna d’Informazioni dell’Istituto di Studi Romani* 8/22-23, 1940, p. 24 and *Rassegna d’Informazioni dell’Istituto di Studi Romani* 9/12, 1941, p. 7). References can also be found in: Carlo Galassi Paluzzi, *L’attività dell’Istituto di Studi Romani durante l’anno accademico 1940-41–XIX*, 1942, Istituto di Studi Romani, Roma; ASINSR, Book of Minutes of the Steering Committee, vol. VI, meeting of June 18, 1942. The lecture caused a harsh review by *La Vita Italiana*, the journal of the anti-Semitic and pro-Nazi Giovanni Preziosi (Arthos, ‘Romanesimo, germanesimo e il caso Manacorda’, *La Vita Italiana* 29/6, 1941, p. 649-657).

¹⁴² See the three articles by Galassi Paluzzi published in the column *Res Romanae Urbanaeque* (*Roma* 20/6, 1942, p. 260-261; *Roma* 20/12, 1942, p. 516-518; *Roma* 21/8, 1943, p. 303-308).

¹⁴³ Judged negatively by Pavolini because the lectures were not examined and approved in advance by the Ministry of Popular Culture (see the note to the minister of March 7, 1941 in: ACS, Ministry of Popular Culture, Cabinet, General Archive, b. 71), since 1941 the cycle was no longer broadcast via radio, provoking a series of (useless) complaints by Galassi Paluzzi, according to whom this decision could raise “the suspicion of political motivations” (Carlo Galassi Paluzzi to Alessandro Pavolini, letter of August 24, 1941, in: ASINSR, General Affairs, b. 49, f. 21).

¹⁴⁴ In 1939 he vigorously attacked the war (Menozzi, *Chiesa, pace e guerra nel Novecento*, op. cit., p. 145-146).

¹⁴⁵ Mariano Cordovani, ‘Romanità della Chiesa’, *Osservatore Romano*, February 7, 1942.

1942-43: the Primacy of Christian Rome

The deterioration of the national and international situation during the winter of 1942 meant the end of the search for a synthesis between catholic, nationalist and fascist ideologies, and the return of the primacy of Christian Rome, as evidenced by the foundation of the Steering Committee for Christian Rome (January 1943).¹⁴⁶ Comprised of members who were very close to the Vatican,¹⁴⁷ it required the presence of an official officer of the Holy See, Monsignor Celso Costantini, who opined that the Committee's activity was to become "a work of apostolate".¹⁴⁸ It had to "organize every initiative of the Institute pertaining to the Christian aspect of civilization", in order to guarantee homogeneity and "an assured Catholic doctrinal background".¹⁴⁹

In the present climate, Galassi Paluzzi's religiosity was ever more dominant,¹⁵⁰ whereas Pius XII increasingly became a point of reference for the Institute.¹⁵¹ Their interactions became more frequent, and this tendency continued up until the eve of the motion of no confidence of the Great Council against Mussolini, when the president of Institute was received in a private papal hearing.¹⁵² Furthermore, the role of Pius XII was exalted both in the *Corsi*

¹⁴⁶ The original project was elaborated in 1936, but it was abandoned following the will of Pius XI. Among the first initiatives there was a History of the Popes in 48 books, a History of the ideas of Christian Rome, a series on Papal Law, a Vatican Bibliography and a book on Roman churches (Steering Committee for Christian Rome, Minutes of the first meeting, January 20, 1943, in: ASINSR, General Affairs, b. 81, f. 3).

¹⁴⁷ It was composed by: Carlo Cecchelli; Bartolomeo Nogara, General Director of Papal Museums and Galleries; Father Anselmo de Albareda, Prefect of the Vatican Library; Monsignor Pio Paschini, Rector of the Pontifical Lateran University; Monsignor Ernesto Ruffini, Secretary of the Sacred Congregation for Seminaries, and Father Tacchi Venturi (Sacred Congregation for Seminaries).

¹⁴⁸ Steering Committee for Christian Rome, Minutes of the first meeting, January 20, 1943, in: ASINSR, General Affairs, b. 81, f. 3.

¹⁴⁹ Steering Committee for Christian Rome, Minutes of the first meeting, January 20, 1943, in: ASINSR, General Affairs, b. 81, f. 3.

¹⁵⁰ Cfr. the letter, dated July 2, 1942, by Galassi Paluzzi to Giuseppe Bottai, cit. in: Jan Nelis, 'Quand paganisme et catholicisme se rencontrent: quelques observations concernant la nature du mythe de la romanité à l'Istituto di Studi Romani', *Latomus. Revue d'Études Latines* 71/1, 2012, p. 182.

¹⁵¹ For example, in November 1942 Galassi Paluzzi addressed the pope directly, trying to prevent the demolition of St. Lorenzo's church in via della Conciliazione. See the letters between Carlo Galassi Paluzzi, Giuseppe Ceccarelli and Monsignor Giovanni Battista Montini of May 2 and 27 and November 5, 1942, in: ASINSR, General Affairs, b. 30, f. 4.

¹⁵² See the note that Galassi Paluzzi sent to the newspapers, in: ASINSR, General Affairs, b. 20, f. 95.

*Superiori*¹⁵³ and in a publication edited by Galassi Paluzzi entitled *Rome in Pius XII's Speeches*.¹⁵⁴

After the fall of the regime on July 25, 1943, the primacy of Christian Rome was total, with the pope becoming the guardian of an Institute that was opposed to Nazism and to intransigent fascism.¹⁵⁵ On October 12, 1943, in a letter asking Roberto Paribeni for a series of lectures on ancient Rome, Galassi Paluzzi argued that "never as today has it been and is it necessary to draw warning, spur and strength from the high lessons of Caesar's Rome and Christian Rome, so that the new Italy, that wanted to return under the mark of Rome, may in this mark really take a new lease of life through the long and hard labour which has always characterized the work of Rome".¹⁵⁶ These "high lessons" no longer included Savoyard and Fascist Rome. In the last session of the Steering Committee as a president of the Institute of Roman Studies (June 19, 1944), Galassi Paluzzi held a speech in which he summarized the long trajectory of his institute, thanking the Holy See and the pope for their interest in the activities of an Institute which had tried to show the "boundless contribution that ancient and Christian Romanness gave and could still give to every real progress of civilized life".¹⁵⁷

Some Final Considerations

The present paper has reconstructed only a fraction of the initiatives of the Institute of Roman Studies, as well as of its relationship with the political and religious spheres. However, the highlighted episodes are especially significant, primarily because they illustrate that Galassi Paluzzi and his colleagues set out to find common ground, with the Institute acting as a mediator between

¹⁵³ For example in the lectures of Cardinal Ermenegildo Pellegrinetti ('Un Pontefice due volte romano', held on March 26, 1943, *Rassegna d'informazioni dell'Istituto di Studi Romani* 11/6, 1943, p. 7) and of Cardinal Camillo Caccia Dominioni ('L'opera di carità di Pio XII esaltata dal Card. Caccia Dominioni all'Istituto di Studi Romani', *La Nuova Italia*, April 22, 1944).

¹⁵⁴ Carlo Galassi Paluzzi (ed.), *Roma nella parola di Pio XII*, 1943, Istituto di Studi Romani, Roma. This book met with great approval in Vatican circles: cfr. Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani to Carlo Galassi Paluzzi, letter of March 15, 1944, in: ASINSR, Publications, b. 40, f. 60. See also: Monsignor Giovanni Battista Montini to Galassi Paluzzi, letter of February 15, 1944; Cardinal Guglielmo Sallotti to Galassi Paluzzi, letter of February 17, 1944 (ASINSR, Publications, b. 40, f. 60); Giuseppe De Mori, 'Roma nella parola di Pio XII', *L'Avvenire d'Italia*, February 16, 1944.

¹⁵⁵ On the role of Pius XII as *defensor civitatis* and of the bishops as points of reference in Rome and other Italian cities after the fall of the fascist regime and during the Nazi occupation, see: Riccardi, *Roma 'città sacra'?*, op. cit., p. 207-219, 237-262; Id. (ed.), *Pio XII*, 1984, Laterza, Roma-Bari; Moro, 'I cattolici italiani e il 25 luglio', op. cit., p. 981-982, 996-1009; Andrea Riccardi, 'La nazione cattolica', in: Agostino Giovagnoli (ed.), *Interpretazioni della Repubblica*, 1998, il Mulino, Bologna, p. 48-49; Id., *L'inverno più lungo 1943-44: Pio XII, gli ebrei e i nazisti a Roma*, 2008, Laterza, Roma-Bari, p. 308-345.

¹⁵⁶ Carlo Galassi Paluzzi to Roberto Paribeni, letter dated October 12, 1943, in: ASINSR, Higher Courses, b. 165, f. 2.

¹⁵⁷ ASINSR, Book of Minutes of the Steering Committee, vol. VII, meeting of June 19, 1944.

Catholics and fascist political religion.¹⁵⁸ For a long period of time Galassi Paluzzi tried to merge the three notional Romes into a stable and durable whole, eventually finding himself between the regime and the Vatican, who each had their own personal agendas. In a very tangible way, the Institute found itself in a “kind of formal embrace in which each part [fascism and the Holy See] hoped it would have been able to phagocyte, to absorb the other one”,¹⁵⁹ confronted with “an ambitious attempt of totalitarian transformation of Italian Catholicism, to which the Church answered with an equally ambitious effort to catholicize the nation”.¹⁶⁰ Nonetheless, this attempt to achieve a ‘conciliatory synthesis’ for a long period of time represented, in the eyes of many Italians, the objective that Mussolini’s regime *should* have pursued, as it had been seen by many as “the tool to return to a political and social situation that could represent a requirement to create a future society that is effectively hierocratic”.¹⁶¹ Galassi Paluzzi considered the fascist regime as an excellent political solution for Italy, and well able to lead the crusade of the Latin and Catholic West against the barbarian, pagan, atheist East (and North), which had to be civilized by Rome to meet the Catholic and Fascist cause. Secondly, his initiatives showcase the existence, up until the war years, of many currents internal to fascism, currents that merged, split, mingled and united depending on events and situations.¹⁶² The activities of the Institute of Roman Studies demonstrates that many Italian intellectuals, joining forces with moderate positions within fascism (especially those close to Catholicism) as well as with royalists, while relying on the stabilising effect of the Monarchy, believed they could alienate Mussolini from extremist fascism. They believed that the Duce was the only one able to control the neopaganist current in his movement, not least because after all, as Pius XI had said, he was the man sent by Providence.¹⁶³ Thus the initiatives of the Institute of Roman Studies endeavoured to influence and direct the evolution of the Italian totalitarian “experiment”,¹⁶⁴ conveying a specific and powerful image

¹⁵⁸ Nelis, ‘Quand paganisme et catholicisme se rencontrent’, op. cit., p. 192 (Nelis briefly mentions an October 1940 meeting, in the room of the president of the Institute, between Minister of National Education Bottai and Giovanni Battista Montini, the Vatican Secretary of State).

¹⁵⁹ Moro, ‘Religione del trascendente e religioni politiche’, op. cit., p. 67.

¹⁶⁰ Moro, ‘Le chiese e la modernità totalitaria’, op. cit., p. 424.

¹⁶¹ Giovanni Miccoli, ‘La Chiesa e il fascismo’, in: Id., *Fra mito della cristianità e secolarizzazione*, op. cit., p. 112-130.

¹⁶² Several years ago, De Felice noted that the history of fascism during all its years in power showed “not only a variety of positions, tendencies, cultural suggestions, moods, aspirations, vague wishes, but that these were also often very different and sometime incompatible between them” (Renzo De Felice, *Autobiografia del fascismo. Antologia di testi fascisti 1919-1945*, 2007 (1° 1978), Einaudi, Torino, p. 4). A similar interpretation can be found in Pier Giorgio Zunino, *L’ideologia del fascismo. Miti, credenze e valori nella stabilizzazione del regime*, 1985, il Mulino, Bologna, p. 372-374.

¹⁶³ Fattorini, *Pio XI, Hitler e Mussolini*, op. cit., p. 28-31.

¹⁶⁴ Cfr. Emilio Gentile’s definition in *La via italiana al totalitarismo. Il partito e lo Stato nel regime fascista*, 2008, Carocci, Roma, p. 19.

of fascism among intellectuals, scholars and even fascists themselves. In conclusion, the concepts discussed in this paper solidify the theories developed by Renato Moro, according to whom the struggle was not between the Church and the regime, "but between pro-Catholicism and paganism inside the fascist regime": indeed that, even during the war, the various currents within fascism were ready to merge, break apart, blend in again and reassemble in different manners depending on events and circumstances.¹⁶⁵ Only at the very end, the way out of these oscillations and ambivalences, common to Italian Catholics for more than twenty years,¹⁶⁶ was sought outside the regime. Thus it is our opinion that in his numerous attempts to arrive at an ideological synthesis, the president of the Institute of Roman Studies contributed to the process of "nationalization of the Catholic masses" and supported the "politicization and ideologization of religion", phenomena that were typical of the complex relationship between Catholicism and modernity.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Moro, 'Religione del trascendente e religioni politiche', op. cit., p. 66.

¹⁶⁶ Moro, 'Religione del trascendente e religioni politiche', op. cit., p. 62-67.

¹⁶⁷ See: Renato Moro, 'Il 'modernismo buono'. La 'modernizzazione' cattolica tra fascismo e postfascismo come problema storiografico', *Storia contemporanea* 19/4, 1988, p. 625-716; Id., 'La religione e la 'nuova epoca'. Cattolicesimo e modernità tra le due guerre mondiali', in: Alfonso Botti/Rocco Cerrato (eds.), *Il modernismo tra cristianità e secolarizzazione*, 2000, Quattroventi, Urbino, p. 513-573; Renato Moro, 'Religion and Politics in the Time of Secularization: The Sacralization of Politics and Politicization of Religion', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 6/1, 2005, p. 71-86; Daniele Menozzi, 'Cristianesimo e modernità', in: Giovanni Filoramo (ed.), *Le religioni e il mondo moderno*, vol. I, *Il Cristianesimo*, 2008, Einaudi, Torino, p. XXVII-XLVIII.

THE *CENTRO NAZIONALE ITALIANO*: PROFILES AND PROJECTS OF ITALIAN CLERICO-FASCISM (1924-1930)

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Introduction

The *Centro Nazionale Italiano* (CNI) – “Association for socio-political action”, founded in 1924 and dissolved in 1930 – represented probably the most thorough form of Italian Clerico-Fascism of the 1920s. The importance of this Association was first highlighted by De Rosa and Sgarbanti in their studies dedicated to individual Catholic personalities.¹ Subsequently, Pollard and Riccardi analysed the birth and the end of the CNI within the framework of Italian Clerico-Fascism.² However, an overall study on the *Centro Nazionale* has yet to be undertaken.

Thanks to the availability of new sources, this research can now be carried out.³ In addition, recent studies on nationalism have highlighted the importance of the spread of ‘National-Catholicism’ after the First World War. Characterised by the merging of Catholic faith and national ideology, this phenomenon in turn encouraged the *rapprochement* between fascism and Catholicism, providing a perfect springboard for the development of the Clerico-Fascist political programme.

The first document that reveals the birth of a pro-Fascist current among Italian Catholics is traditionally indicated in the open letter of September 18, 1922 sent by eight Catholic senators to the Secretary of the *Partito*

¹ Romeo Sgarbanti, *Ritratto politico di Giovanni Grosoli*, 1955, Cinque Lune, Roma; Gabriele De Rosa, *I conservatori nazionali: biografia di Carlo Santucci*, 1962, Morcelliana, Brescia.

² Giuseppe Ignesti, ‘Centro Nazionale (e Unione Nazionale)’, in: Giorgio Campanini/Francesco Traniello (eds.), *Dizionario Storico del Movimento Cattolico in Italia*, vol. I, t. 2, 1980, Marietti, Genova, p. 198-207; Andrea Riccardi, *Roma città sacra? Dalla Conciliazione all’operazione Sturzo*, 1979, Vita e Pensiero, Milano; John F. Pollard, ‘Catholic Conservatives and Italian fascism: the Clerico-Fascists’, in: M. Blinkhorn (ed.), *Fascists and Conservatives. The Radical Right and Establishment in Twentieth-Century Europe*, 1990, Unwin Hyman, London, p. 31-49.

³ Here I refer mainly to the opening of the Vatican Secret Archives (ASV) from November 2006; they contain materials and collections relative to the Papacy of Pius XI. See also the Crispolti collection in the Santa Maria sopra Minerva Archives (ASMsM, *Crispolti*), for the consultation of which I would like to thank Father Luciano Cinelli OP. I would also like to thank the *Fondazione Pellegrino* for its contributions to this research.

Popolare Italiano (PPI), Luigi Sturzo.⁴ This initiative was aimed at excluding any possibility of an antifascist alliance of the *Partito Popolare* with the Reformist-Socialists – a stance that, as Giorgio Candeloro wrote, was “particularly sensitive to Vatican directives” and which was designed to “prepare the ground” for the ministerial collaboration of the PPI with the Fascists.⁵

As early as 1922, therefore, before the March on Rome and the short-lived participation of the *Partito Popolare* in the first Mussolini government, a current of pro-Fascist Catholics had already emerged, later baptised by Luigi Sturzo as “Clerico-Fascism”.⁶

On June 30, 1923, in order to disavow the antifascist policy of the PPI led by Sturzo, a group of Catholics drew up a *Manifesto dei ‘cattolici nazionali’*. It stated that “[we] proclaim openly and without understated reservations, our attitude towards the Fascist Government. Our agreement must be shown to be complete now”. Furthermore, the *Manifesto* also claimed that the Fascist political plan fully met the moral, ideal, political and social requirements of ‘true’ Catholics.⁷

As a result of Sturzo’s resignation and the expulsion of the Clerico-Fascists from the *Partito Popolare*, a definitive choice was made. In March 1924, a manifesto entitled *Agli elettori!*, signed by 150 Clerico-Fascist figures, explicitly supported the Fascist list of electoral candidates in clear opposition to the PPI.⁸

A dramatic period of evident counter-opposition was therefore opened among Italian Catholics. The Catholic Democrats were part of a PPI by then lined up in opposition to fascism; the National-Catholics (or Clerico-Fascists), on the other hand, collaborated with the Mussolini government. As a consequence, the Clerico-Fascist association *Centro Nazionale Italiano* was inaugurated in Bologna on August 12, 1924. The presentation of the political party took place right in the middle of the parliamentary crisis caused by the kidnapping of

⁴ The letter can be found in Stefano Jacini, *Storia del Partito Popolare Italiano*, 1951, Garzanti, Milano, p. 303. This was afterwards defined by the members of the CNI as a “highly noble example of an almost prophetic sense of responsibility”, and reported in [no author], *L’origine e gli scopi del Centro Nazionale Italiano. Associazione per l’azione politico-sociale*, 1925, Tip. S.A.C.I, Roma, p. 27-31.

⁵ Giorgio Candeloro, *Il movimento cattolico in Italia*, 1955, Editori Riuniti, Roma, p. 447.

⁶ Interview with Luigi Sturzo in *La Stampa*, February 10, 1924. Cfr. Luigi Sturzo, *Popolarismo e fascismo*, 1924, Gobetti, Torino; Id., ‘La politica dei clerico-fascisti’, in: Id., *Pensiero antifascista*, 1925, Gobetti, Torino, p. 7-16.

⁷ “[Our consensus] stems from the fact that Fascism, in the form of the National Government of which this movement is the only authoritative expression, recognizes openly and honours those religious and social values that constitute the basis of every healthy political regime, professing, against antiquated democratic and sectarian ideologies, principles of hierarchical discipline and order in the State, in harmony with the religious and social doctrines always affirmed by the Church”. The *Manifesto* was published in Piero Misciattelli, *Fascisti e cattolici*, 1924, Imperia, Milano, p. 139-141.

⁸ ASMsM, *Crispoliti*, 1924, fasc. aprile 1924, *Agli elettori!* The first signatory of the appeal was Clerico-Fascist Senator Filippo Crispolti, to whom Mussolini sent an expression of his gratitude via his private Secretary. ASMsM, *Crispoliti*, H III 24, Chiavolini’s letter to Crispolti, March 30, 1924.

the Member of Parliament Giacomo Matteotti, at the head office of *L'Avvenire d'Italia* Catholic newspaper.

The Centro Nazionale's platform

The months which preceded the formation of the *Centro Nazionale* were characterized by a certain caution. Among the Clerico-Fascists there was the hope that the *Partito Popolare*, no longer led by Sturzo, could be reconciled with fascism and welcome back the Catholics expelled as a result of their pro-Fascism.⁹ There was also a cautious awaiting of signs from the Holy See.

The correspondence between the Catholic senators Grosoli and Crispolti¹⁰ and the contacts between Crispolti and Mattei-Gentili,¹¹ Under-Secretary to the Faith in the Mussolini cabinet and future President of the CNI, reveal that the plans for a new Clerico-Fascist party had already started in December 1923.

At the centre of their discussion was not so much the problem of democracy and liberty, as the indissoluble and “providential” link between Catholicism and Italy, which found its visible manifestation in the presence of the Pope on Italian territory.¹² According to the Clerico-Fascists, the politics of national exaltation of fascism could only be pro-Catholic, as the most solid national tradition was embodied in the Catholic religion. As a consequence, “true Catholics” could only be pro-Fascists, because its national affirmation would definitely give back to the Catholic faith the place of importance it was due to occupy in the public sphere.

The Clerico-Fascist political plan of the *Centro Nazionale* was founded on this ideological and religious reasoning. Its programme defined its “most important purpose” as the “defence and promotion in the political arena [...] of the religious principle”. Its sympathizers, “persuaded of the need to remain faithful to the Catholic tradition”, criticized the “profound deviation” suffered by the *Partito Popolare*, now siding against fascism.¹³

Attempting a political response alternative to the widespread presence of the PPI, the CNI guaranteed its complete political and parliamentary support

⁹ This also seemed to be the opinion expressed in the letter which Filippo Crispolti wrote to Paolo Mattei-Gentili in view of the foundation of the CNI: ASMsm, *Crispolti*, H III 24, January 8, 1924.

¹⁰ ASMsm, *Crispolti*, H III 10.

¹¹ ASMsm, *Crispolti*, H III 24.

¹² “There is another aspect that, today, due to your [Mussolini’s] work and to Fascism, has come to light: [...] to recognize that Catholicism and the Papacy are such great things of yesterday, today and forever, that our Fatherland must glorify in it; our land has the centre in itself and has thus had healthy influences that see in these sublime powers the highest expression of universal Latinity” (Atti Parlamentari, *Discussioni*, Legislatura XXVII, tornata del 25 giugno 1924, vol. I, p. 107, *Discorso di F. Crispolti*).

¹³ [no author], *L’origine e gli scopi del Centro Nazionale Italiano*, op. cit., p. 5.

(‘flanking support’ or ‘collaborationism’) to fascism. Its desire was to encourage legislative measures that were favourable to the Catholic requests. In order to achieve this result, the Clerico-Fascists Carapelle, Mattei-Gentili, Cavazzoni and Martire committed themselves to positions autonomous from the overall line of the Church. Their ‘political flanking’ proved to be more markedly pro-Fascist than the policies pertaining to the Concordat pursued by the Holy See.

As regards nationalist ideology, the criticism of liberalism and of individualism, along with the Fascist recognition of Italy as a Catholic nation and of Rome as the city at the centre of the world, led some members of the CNI to a very marked exaltation of the nation. Referred to as ‘Catholic nationalism’, this phenomenon was made possible due to the receptiveness of the Catholic Magisterium during and after the First World War towards “just” or “moderate nationalism”.¹⁴ But the nature of Clerico-Fascist ideology was, if possible, even more extreme. This is shown by the tones used, for example, by Carapelle in 1928: “The totalitarian Fascist state is the driving force of the community. To exalt the Nation is to develop the specific energies of the race, accumulated through its history, its language, its art, its virtue”. The Fascist regime, “sum of all the healthy forces of the Nation, declares itself openly Catholic”. Consequently, the deputies of the CNI “are in the majority, are part of it, consider themselves as neither more, nor less, than Fascist deputies”.¹⁵

Alongside this nationalist tendency, there was however also a secondary current, represented by Filippo Crispolti, Giovanni Grosoli and Carlo Santucci, three elderly aristocrats who made particularly influential contributions to the CNI. Originating from the *Opera dei Congressi Cattolici*, from National-Conservatism and from Clerico-Moderatism, they could count on a vast network of friendships and contacts in the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the organized laity. Furthermore, thanks to Crispolti, Grosoli and Santucci, the CNI could also rely on powerful financial means (Banco di Roma), as well as on a large part of the Catholic press (*Corriere d'Italia*, *L'Avvenire d'Italia*, *Il Momento*).

These Catholic *milieus* had never showcased an excessive liking for nationalism; nevertheless, they observed with interest the process of the ‘nationalisation’ of the Catholic faith and the creation of a national political faith, which would evolve towards authoritarianism and totalitarianism under fascism. The convergences with Luigi Federzoni, brought to light by Renato Moro and

¹⁴ Angelo Brucculeri, ‘Patria e patriottismo’, *CC (La Civiltà Cattolica)* IV, 1923, p. 486-496 and I, 1924, p. 10-20. The first references to the subject can be found in ‘Nazionalismo e amor di patria secondo la dottrina cattolica’, *CC I*, 1915, p. 420, and in ‘Le ‘giuste aspirazioni dei popoli’’, *CC II*, 1918, p. 492. Subsequently there is also [Enrico Rosa], ‘Il nazionalismo e le presenti lotte politiche’, *CC I*, 1924, p. 97-108, summary of a lesson held in Milan in 1924 with the title *Il vero e il falso nazionalismo*.

¹⁵ Aristide Carapelle, *Il Centro nazionale italiano: origini, scopi e attività*, 1928, *Corriere d'Italia*, Roma, p. 52, 56, 59.

documented by the exchange of letters with the Nationalist ex-leader, seem to prove this tendency.¹⁶

Santucci, Crispolti and Grosoli seem to have considered the *Centro Nazionale* to be the continuation of the ‘National-Conservatives’ programme. By founding the *Centro Nazionale*, indeed, they actually hoped to create a Conservative Catholic party, right-wing but integrated at the national level.¹⁷ They considered themselves as thinking and acting in “uninterrupted continuity” with the “old and glorious national tradition” of the “conciliatory tendency” in Catholicism. Within fascism it was possible to achieve the dream of the “greatest and purest Catholic souls of our *Risorgimento*”: a “United and Catholic Italy”. In a Fascist Italy, in addition, they considered it possible to overcome the situation of “dramatic dissent” that the liberal period had created “in the national conscience, between the unitarian patriotic feeling and the profoundly Catholic faith of almost the entire Nation”.¹⁸

For this reason, the Clerico-Fascism of these faithful ‘servants of the Holy See’ can appear rather moderate, intended first and foremost to defend the interests of the Church. Hence their appreciation of Fascism was always commensurate with the benefits it could offer to the Catholic cause, for example restoring the public role that religion should have on the national level.

On the other hand, it should also be pointed out that even the more traditionalist Clerico-Fascists never moderated their rather fervid pro-Fascist attitude. Already in the Summer of 1924, Crispolti criticised a preliminary CNI programme drawn up by Mgr. Pucci. He deemed it too timid with regards to article 1 of the Statute of the Reign: the “Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Religion is the only Religion of the State. The other currently existing cults are tolerated in conformity with the law”. In addition, he also considered the defence of the right to private property as too hesitant, and a “special agreement with the monarchy” was also absent. And more than anything else, for Crispolti it was necessary “to take the bull by the horns, to be exact, to affirm above all our support for the [Fascist] Government”.¹⁹

In 1928, Crispolti explained himself in a letter to Luciano Gennari, director of Turin’s *Il Momento*. He justified his pro-Fascism with the pro-Catholic policy of the regime; fascism had effectively ‘invented’ an alternative way in its relations with Catholicism, a policy that was neither that of Catholic integralism

¹⁶ Cfr. Renato Moro, ‘Nazionalismo e cattolicesimo’, in: Benedetto Coccia/Umberto Gentiloni Silveri (eds.), *Federzoni e la Storia della destra italiana nella prima metà del Novecento*, 2001, il Mulino, Bologna, p. 84-85. For the appreciation of Crispolti, see Luigi Federzoni, ‘Il Partito popolare italiano’, in: Id., *Paradossi di ieri*, 1926, Garzanti, Milano, p. 294-296. See also the interesting correspondence between Crispolti and Federzoni in ASMsm, *Crispolti*, H III 7.

¹⁷ See the voluminous correspondence of Crispolti with Carlo Santucci: ASMsm, *Crispolti*, H III

20. Cfr. also De Rosa, *I conservatori nazionali*, op. cit., p. 87-89.

¹⁸ [no author], *L’origine e gli scopi del Centro Nazionale Italiano*, op. cit., p. 12-15.

¹⁹ ASMsm, *Crispolti*, H III 31, Crispolti’s letter to Mgr. Enrico Pucci, August 12, 1924.

nor that of seventeenth century ‘jurisdictionalism’ [“*regalismo*”]. Fascism had contributed in an effective, not instrumental but ideologically coherent way (without “any *do ut des*”), to the full recognition of the Catholic spirit in the life of the nation.²⁰

So there is no ‘sacralisation of the Nation’ to be found in Crispolti. If anything, there is the hope of finding a new reality in nationalism and in the Fascist national restoration: the surpassing of the ‘secularism’ of the liberal-Italian *Risorgimento* and the possibility that fascism and Catholicism could converge.

The Clerico-Fascists and the Holy See

A number of studies have shown how the sharp division between *Azione Cattolica Italiana* (ACI) and the *Partito Popolare* desired by Pius XI caused the abandonment of the PPI, perhaps not unintentionally. The PPI had never been truly appreciated by the Holy See, mainly because of its non-denominationalism. The opening of the Vatican Archives has brought to light an impressive documentation enabling us to thoroughly analyse the Vatican stance on Catholic Democrats and the PPI on one side and on Clerico-Fascism and the CNI on the other.

Despite the striking series of acts of aggression against Catholic militants, of assaults on associations, political assassinations – always reported in the Catholic press – the leaders of *Azione Cattolica* seemed to hope for a ‘legal’ evolution of fascism.²¹ As far as the Vatican was concerned, there was also the will to reach an agreement with the regime, even if that meant sacrificing the *Partito Popolare*.

During the 1924 electoral campaign, the Secretary of State did not limit himself to asking the clergy, as he had done in the past, to keep to the “rules of the strictest caution, avoiding attitudes that would encourage any political party, whatever its name may be”, thereby keeping *Azione Cattolica* “outside and beyond any party”.²² Now he also ordered priests to stop “collaborating with party newspapers of any kind”.²³ This was a measure which, as Card. Pompili

²⁰ ASMsM, *Crispolti*, H III 24, Crispolti’s letter to Luciano Gennari, December 19, 1928. The definitive draft of the article and a handwritten version with several corrections are kept in the ASMsM. The correspondence with Gennari contains the requests and reactions to Crispolti’s intervention, cfr. ASMsM, *Crispolti*, H III 9.

²¹ ASV, AES (Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Italia, IV periodo), 607 bis I (PO), 35, 4, Circular of Luigi Colombo, General President of the ACI, July 26, 1923.

²² ASV, AES, 617 (PO), 50, 28-42, Circular of February 10, 1924 of the Holy Congregation of Religious people to the Rev.mi General Superiors.

²³ ASV, AES, 48, Circular n°. 35000 of card. Gasparri to the Italian episcopacy, September 23, 1924.

observed,²⁴ concerned as much Mgr. Pucci, collaborator of the Clerico-Fascist *Corriere d'Italia*, as Rev. Giulio de' Rossi, head of the PPI's Press Office. In reality, the intention was to silence Luigi Sturzo, who continued to write for *Il Popolo* while in exile, as well as a large number of parish priests who contributed to the publication of a series of local pro-*popolare* periodicals. The prohibition explicitly targeted pro-*popolare* organs; for example, the Holy See intervened directly against the newspaper *Parte Guelfa*.²⁵ The rule did not apply to Mgr. Pucci, however, whose collaboration with pro-Fascist newspapers may even have been encouraged by the Secretary of State;²⁶ it is certain in any case that Mgr. Pucci continued to write under a pseudonym in *Corriere d'Italia*, directed by CNI president Mattei-Gentili.

The difficulties in getting Catholic movements to follow such guidelines were documented by a number of Ecclesiastical Assistants, as can be seen for example in a memorandum sent to the Holy See in 1925.²⁷ The difficulty was particularly evident in the *Gioventù Cattolica Italiana* (GCI), as has been documented in a detailed report that was directly commissioned by Pius XI.²⁸ In this report, CGI militants in Turin openly accused their Roman leaders of pro-Fascism and of attraction to the *Centro Nazionale*, while their local associations were victimised by bloody Fascist assaults.²⁹

The quoted report states furthermore that “almost all the Catholic youth and their AA.EE. [Ecclesiastical Assistants] are *popolare* antifascists. Those who adhere to the *Centro Nazionale* and support the Fascist movement are very few. The majority militates resolutely in the opposition”. And what is more, “most of the youth and of their Ecclesiastical Assistants are not only pro-

²⁴ ASV, AES, 59, September 16, 1924. Card. Pompili, vicar of Rome, ordered them to “resign as soon as possible from the political parties” and “immediately cease editing” the newspapers with which they were collaborating.

²⁵ On August 27, 1925, the leaders of the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Agostino Gemelli and Francesco Olgiati, wrote a long letter to Card. Gasparri stating that *Parte Guelfa* demonstrated “an orientation absolutely contrary to the one given by you” (ASV, AES, 637 (PO), 69, 22-26). The condemnation of *Parte Guelfa* can be found in OR (*L'Osservatore Romano*), August 27, 1925.

²⁶ On August 8, 1923, an informative sheet of the Secretary of State brought the news of the creation in Rome of the newspaper *Corriere Italiano*, organ “of the Fascist Party, which is developing with exceptional means. [...] I have been assured that Mgr. PUCCI has been appointed for the Vatican news” (ASV, AES, 581 (PO), 23, 7).

²⁷ ASV, AES, 607 bis I (PO), 32, 45-48, *Azione cattolica e azione politica* [1925]: “3 – The clergy, in its very majority, especially the young clergy and that of the rural areas, also has a very favourable attitude towards the Partito Popolare: and it cannot understand how, while from 1918 to 1921 it was put under pressure by the same Diocesan Authority in favour of the P.P., especially during elections, it must now abstain from any sort of even indirect support; it considers this attitude to be an effect of fear, of favour for the present [Fascist] Government”.

²⁸ ASV, AES, 607 bis I (PO), 35, 41-64, *Alcune osservazioni intorno alla G.C.I.*

²⁹ ASV, AES, 581 (PO), 25, 68. The text of the protest was published in *Il Giovane Piemonte* (the newspaper of the GCI in Turin), July 19, 1925.

popolare but have an extremist – as they say – spirit and a mentality, of the type, more or less, of the writers of *Parte Guelfa*’.³⁰

This reality, described in detail in the long and unedited report, necessitated integral changes. Widespread renewal of the ACI led to a perfectly disciplined organization under leadership obedient to the line imposed by the Pope. In the reports of ACI’s top leaders, instances of direct and indirect criticism of the *Partito Popolare* became gradually more explicit. At the same time, satisfaction with the contents published by the *Centro Nazionale*’s newspapers was increasingly expressed. These newspapers were seen as “having, on some occasions, ‘rightly’ fought against the Directives of the *Partito Popolare*”.³¹

The Vatican’s approach towards the Clerico-Fascist formation of the *Centro Nazionale* was completely different. According to its sympathizers, the CNI enjoyed direct or indirect support of a number of important members of the Roman Curia. Their correspondence,³² as well as the role of Mgr. Pucci in the development of the *Centro Nazionale*’s platform, seems to confirm this thesis, which is also generally accepted by the early historiography of this Catholic movement.³³

Following its traditional *modus operandi*, *La Civiltà Cattolica* showed itself rather cautious. However, the fact that in 1924 it would publish, in full, the *Programma del Centro Nazionale* – which in the past it had only done for the *Programma del Partito Popolare* –, demonstrates that the CNI was considered as an autonomous political reality, at the same level as the PPI.³⁴ In hindsight, the impartial attitude *vis-à-vis* the *Centro Nazionale* and the *Partito Popolare* seems quite questionable, especially when one considers that the difference between the two boiled down, according to the Jesuit journal, to a mere difference of ‘political tactics’ or of ‘politics of alliances’. Thus *La Civiltà Cattolica* indicated its reluctance to comprehend the basic and substantial programmatic differences that could motivate support or opposition to the Mussolini government.³⁵ Last but not least, such an acritical attitude is in stark contrast with the vehement way in which, in the subsequent issue, the *Partito Popolare* was reprimanded following

³⁰ ASV, AES, 607 bis I (PO), 35, 41-64, *Alcune osservazioni intorno alla G.C.I.*

³¹ “For the liking of the *Partito Popolare* that most of the Catholics still conserve today, the sad consequences within *Azione Cattolica* are evident: coldness and even hostility towards *Azione Cattolica*, distrust towards its leaders” (ASV, AES, 607 bis I (PO), 32, 45-48, *Azione cattolica e azione politica*, [1925]).

³² Cfr. ASMsm, *Crispolti*, H III 10, for the correspondence between Filippo Crispolti and Giovanni Grosoli; cfr. also Gian Ludovico Massetti-Zannini/Antonio Fappani, *Giovanni Maria Longinotti*, 1970, Cedoc, Brescia, p. 235.

³³ Cfr. Sgarbanti, *Ritratto politico di Giovanni Grosoli*, op. cit., p. 187, n. 26: Grosoli would decide to join it “after having had an encouraging response from Card. Gasparri to whom he had turned for advice”. Cfr. also Carlo Arturo Jemolo, *Chiesa e Stato in Italia negli ultimi cento anni*, 1949, Einaudi, Torino, p. 608-609.

³⁴ ‘Cose Italiane’, CC III, 1924, p. 467-469.

³⁵ ‘Cose Italiane’, CC III, 1923, p. 370.

the prospect of an antifascist government suggested by Reformist-Socialist leader Turati and not excluded by the new leader of the *Partito Popolare*, Alcide De Gasperi.³⁶ Tellingly, instead, the participation of the National-Catholics in the Mussolini government was not condemned.

The existing documentation confirms the thesis that the foundation of the CNI was an autonomous process, with no direct support from the Holy See. However, without doubt several prelates of the Roman Curia and important bishops seemed clearly appreciative of the initiative. The cases of Mgr. Fogar, archbishop of Trieste and Mgr. Curi, archbishop of Bari, were particularly striking,³⁷ while from the city of Naples, an otherwise unknown priest reported to Card. Gasparri that the local archbishop Ascalesi had

“received the Directive Council of the *Centro Nazionale* of Naples, to whom he expressed his wishes for the fulfilment of the programme of this political party. Leaving aside any consideration regarding the absence of conformity to Christian principles of the activity of a party like the *Centro Nazionale*, which tried to scale the political unity of Italian Catholics and turn them into servants of the dictator, daily and increasingly displaying its devotion to a regime of complete, overwhelming power, and leaving aside the unauthorized use, for any political party, of the denomination ‘Catholic’, in which the *Centro Nazionale*, despite numerous warnings, persists, does it seem to E.V. Rev.ma [Card. Gasparri] that S.E. Ascalesi’s behaviour resembles an attitude of ‘not doing politics?’”³⁸

Some distrust arises

The action of the Clerico-Fascists was important for the regime in order to obtain consensus in influential Catholic circles. Even so, it also met

³⁶ Cfr. Enrico Rosa, ‘La parte dei cattolici e la divisione dei partiti’, *CC III*, 1924, p. 297-315; Id., ‘L’eco del nostro articolo su la parte dei cattolici e la divisione dei partiti’, *CC III*, 1924, p. 481-494. The articles were commissioned, reviewed and corrected by card. Gasparri and by the Pope himself, as is demonstrated by the many schemes and draft corrections that are kept in ASV, AES, 581 (PO), 23, 64-87 and in ASV, AES, 581 (PO), 25, 43-52. Regarding the editorial process, cfr. Giovanni Sale, *Fascismo e Vaticano prima della conciliazione*, 2007, Jaca Book, Milano, p. 169-182. Cfr. the interview with Filippo Turati in *Il Popolo*, July 1, 1924 and the interview with Alcide De Gasperi in *Corriere della Sera*, July 16, 1924. See also Egilberto Martire, ‘I cattolici e il discorso di De Gasperi’, *Critica Fascista*, August 1, 1924; Gino Sergi, ‘Le vane scuse’, in: Bruno Malinverni (ed.), *Civitas: antologia degli scritti più significativi apparsi dal 1919 al 1925 sulla rivista Civitas fondata e diretta da Filippo Meda*, 1963, Cinque Lune, Roma; *Critica Fascista*, October 1, 1924. Pius XI himself intervened harshly on September 8, 1924 to exclude an antifascist alliance between the *Partito Popolare* and the Socialists: ASV, AES, 607 bis I (PO), 33, 62-65, ‘Parole pronunciate dal Santo Padre ad un gruppo di giovani Universitari cattolici il giorno 8 settembre 1924’ (published in *CC III*, 1924, p. 492-494).

³⁷ ASV, AES, 617 (PO), 51; ASV, AES, 581 (PO), 26.

³⁸ ASV, AES, 611 (PO), 51 47, 60. The archbishop, so maintained the accuser, had publicly stated that “it was necessary to attribute the rise of the present regime to the intervention of Divine Providence” and tolerated that “some priests wore the Fascist badge on their garments”.

with opposition, for example from radical and revolutionary Fascists such as Farinacci and from Catholics of a more violent nationalist profession.³⁹

In addition, there were signs of hostility in Catholic Integralist circles.⁴⁰ Mgr. Benigni and the magazine *Fede e Ragione*, indeed, intended to bring about a total Catholic restoration, even in temporal aspects. For Catholic Integralists, the agreement with the regime could not be based on political ('collaborationism') or ideological grounds ('nationalism') but only on religious ones (*instaurare omnia in Christo*). To *Fede e Ragione*, the CNI was the fruit of political opportunism,⁴¹ the consequence of the same errors that had occurred in the case of the PPI.⁴² As a consequence, according to Catholic Integralists "only liberals can be members of this *Centro Nazionale* [...]. True Catholics will always be distant from both Grosoli's *Centro* [*Nazionale*] and Don Sturzo's *Partito* [*Popolare*], because Catholic principles are rejected, emptied and crushed in both organizations."⁴³

CNI exponents maintained cordial relations with Fascists coming from moderate nationalism such as Federzoni, as well as with *gerarchi* such as Italo Balbo, who combined his Catholic faith with a sincere belief in the 'political religion' of fascism.⁴⁴ However they carefully avoided any form of 'sacralisation of the Nation', nor did they conceive of fascism as a 'political religion' – at least when this was seen as an alternative or in opposition to Catholicism.

Emilio Gentile, who has provided the best critical introduction on the subject, rightly insisted that Catholicism and Fascist political religiosity were not necessarily in opposition to one another, even when fascism took the shape of a full-blown 'totalitarian religion'.⁴⁵ That being said, the Church was anything but reassured by the idea of a double faithfulness, i.e., to God and to politics, especially when the latter variant became a direct competitor both on speculative grounds and at the level of the control of the masses. In this context, the

³⁹ Giulio dell'Arno de' Rossi, *Centro Nazionale e Fascismo*, 1927, Loescher, Roma.

⁴⁰ Silvio Tramontin, 'La formazione dell'ala destra nel partito popolare italiano', in: G. Rossini (ed.), *Modernismo, fascismo, comunismo. Aspetti e figure della cultura e della politica dei cattolici nel '900*, 1972, il Mulino, Bologna; Pier Giorgio Zunino, 'Chiesa e stato nei rapporti tra *Civiltà cattolica* e Partito Popolare alla luce di nuovi documenti', *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa* 2, 1973, p. 1-42; G. Sale, *Popolari e Destra cattolica al tempo di Benedetto XV (1919-1922)*, 2006, Jaca Book, Milano.

⁴¹ *Fede e Ragione*, November 2, 1924.

⁴² *Fede e Ragione*, September 6, 1925.

⁴³ FER, 'Dopo il discorso del Santo Padre agli Universitari Cattolici. Esempio del modo col quale si deforma la parola del Papa', *Fede e Ragione*, September 21, 1924.

⁴⁴ Cfr. Emilio Gentile, *Il culto del littorio. La sacralizzazione della politica nell'Italia fascista*, 2001, Laterza, Roma-Bari, p. 124-125.

⁴⁵ Emilio Gentile, *Le religioni della politica. Fra democrazie e totalitarismi*, 2001, Laterza, Roma-Bari; Id., *Contro Cesare. Cristianesimo e totalitarismo nell'epoca dei fascismi*, 2010, Feltrinelli, Milano.

rebellion of a number of Clerico-Fascists against Fascists insisting on the ‘pagan’ nature of Fascist imperialism seems highly illustrative.⁴⁶

The Clerico-Fascists’ opposition to the “dominant fashion of these days, State-worship [*statolatria*]” is a representative episode of this. Here the target was the State conceived as non-denominational, i.e., fascism as determined by its idealistic-liberal origins. Senator Filippo Crispolti was particularly active at this level, authoring a series of articles against *statolatria*, rather abruptly ending on the eve of the *Conciliazione*.⁴⁷ Also on this subject, some vehement polemics arose in the pages of *L’Osservatore Romano*, *La Civiltà Cattolica*, *L’Avvenire d’Italia* and *Il Popolo d’Italia*, at times resembling a kind of religious warfare.⁴⁸

Regarding this question, the Crispolti-Mattei-Gentili correspondence aptly illustrates how the Under-Secretary was quite alarmed at the direction the heated discussions were taking. These debates reflected a climate of tense relations between the regime and the Holy See that was far from what the Clerico-Fascists had hoped for.⁴⁹

Already some months earlier, the Clerico-Fascists had to acknowledge the failure of the proposed reform of civil ecclesiastical legislation. Pius XI indeed clamorously disavowed a reform with which Mattei-Gentili, president of the CNI, had associated his personal political authority.⁵⁰ Further incomprehension arose when, in December 1926, the Pope repudiated *Action Française*. The Clerico-Fascist press dedicated only a few lines to the issue; its embarrassed silence indicated that it “did not really understand the condemnation of a movement that was close to fascism”.⁵¹

In 1927, there was also an escalation of the clash between the Fascist youth movement *Balilla* and the *Esploratori Cattolici*, following the Fascist prohibition on the establishment of new Catholic associations and the dissolution of

⁴⁶ Cfr. the polemic that arose between: Julius Evola, ‘Il fascismo quale volontà di impero e il cristianesimo’, *Critica Fascista*, December 15, 1927; Filippo Crispolti, ‘Velleità pagane in un Fascismo immaginario’, *Il Momento*, January 12, 1928; *Il Cittadino*, January 14, 1928; *La Voce di Bergamo*, January 18, 1928; Julius Evola, *Imperialismo pagano, Il fascismo dinanzi al pericolo euro-cristiano*, 1928, Atanor, Todi-Roma. On the subject of imperialism, cfr. Renato Moro, ‘Il mito dell’Impero in Italia fra universalismo cristiano e totalitarismo’, in: Daniele Menozzi/Renato Moro (eds.), *Cattolicesimo e totalitarismo: chiese e culture religiose tra le due guerre mondiali: Italia, Spagna, Francia*, 2004, Morcelliana, Brescia, p. 313-372.

⁴⁷ Filippo Crispolti, ‘La realtà del Regime e le astrazioni dei filosofi’, *Corriere d’Italia*, January 27, 1927; Id., ‘Un equivoco pericoloso’, *Il Momento*, January 31, 1929.

⁴⁸ Cfr. Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il fascista. L’Organizzazione dello Stato fascista (1925-1929)*, 1995, Einaudi, Torino, p. 399-412.

⁴⁹ ASMsM, *Crispolti*, H III 13, Paolo Mattei-Gentili’s letter to Filippo Crispolti, January 18, 1927. Mattei-Gentili invited Crispolti to write an article to reassure the Vatican and deny that the secular thought of Giovanni Gentile was shared by the Fascist authorities.

⁵⁰ For the role played by Mattei-Gentili, for the procedures of the work and for the reasons for the papal recantation, cfr. Sale, *Fascismo e Vaticano*, op. cit., p. 275-309, 405-430.

⁵¹ Marc Agostino, *Le pape Pie XI et l’opinion (1922-1939)*, 1991, Ecole Française de Rome, Roma, p. 313-317.

existing ones in communities with less than 20,000 inhabitants. Once again, the Holy See “in this particular circumstance did not consider that it had to go further than reporting the abuse”;⁵² once more it was confronted with the totalitarian drive of the regime, which, especially in the field of education, did not leave much breathing space.⁵³ Such incidents reveal how delicate the position of the *Centro Nazionale* had by now become. Confronted with a regime that radically reduced basic civil and political liberties even for Catholic Associations, the CNI risked being reduced to a mere association of henchmen of the regime, at least in the eyes of public opinion.

The documentation contained in the Vatican Archives that was recently made available – in particular the documents relative to *Azione Cattolica* – allows for further analysis of the conflict. These sources illustrate the local character of the competition between a Catholic movement that had not yet become Fascist on one hand and a small number of Clerico-Fascist clubs on the other hand; a competition that led to numerous complaints, mutual accusations and denunciations.

In this context, the General Secretary of ACI, Mgr. Roveda, noted that

“in the greatest majority of organized Catholics (I refer especially to the north of Italy), there exists a very profound aversion for men and journalists of the *Centro Nazionale*, and this to such an extent that they don’t want to consider them as Catholics, as they are guilty of supporting a government that persecutes *Azione Cattolica*”.⁵⁴

From Foligno, Turin, Brescia, Bergamo and Verona, as well as from many dioceses in the Veneto region, the bishops’ informative sheets and various reports of other individuals, whether lay or ecclesiastical personnel, show the picture of a highly tense Catholic reality, at least during the 1920s. Directly referring to this situation, Mgr. Roveda, Ecclesiastical Assistant of the GCI, wrote to Mgr. Pizzardo, General Assistant of ACI, in December 1926, regarding the diocese of Turin:

“*Azione Cattolica* proceeds with its work: more than from the Fascists, it meets with opposition coming from Catholics who adhere to the *Centro Nazionale*; they shed a bad light on it [the ACI] and want to make it seem contaminated with *popolarismo*”.⁵⁵

Such local episodes reveal the existence of misunderstandings and widespread hostility, episodes that in some cases put the Diocesan authorities in

⁵² Guglielmo Pireddu, ‘Padre Enrico Rosa ed il fascismo (1919-1931)’, *Rassegna di Teologia* 5, 2000, p. 679-699. Cfr. [Enrico Rosa], ‘I diritti della Chiesa su l’educazione dei giovani’, *CC I*, 1927, p. 201.

⁵³ During this conflict, the mediation of Mattei-Gentili and Mgr. Pucci played a decisive role; cfr. ASV, AES, 667 (PO), 101 and ASV, AES, 667 N° 4 (PO), 123.

⁵⁴ ASV, AES, 630a (PO), 64, 21-22, November 11, 1926.

⁵⁵ ASV, AES, 630a (PO), 64.

great difficulty. On the contrary local Clerico-Fascists or sections of the *Centro Nazionale* were not displeased by, and were often accused of approving, the shutdown of pro-*popolare* newspapers, assaults on *Gioventù Cattolica* clubs and even some episodes of violence, especially when pro-*popolare* priests or laymen that had been members of the *Partito Popolare* were concerned.

The hostility of the Clerico-Fascists towards former *popolare* elements, which often spilled over into actions by informants and in polemics in the local diocesan press, was an easy picklock for the repressive system of the regime.⁵⁶ This made the clerical apparatus vulnerable as well as undermining the internal cohesion and solidity of the Catholic movement, increasingly necessary in 1926 when violence against Catholic associations continued unabatedly.

This probably explains why in many circumstances a 'pro-Fascism' that was without any doubt prevalent in some clerical authorities could co-exist, even in the Vatican, with a growing perplexity towards the political practicalities of 'Clerico-Fascism'.⁵⁷ Existing documentation shows how Vatican distrust of Clerico-Fascism and of the *Centro Nazionale* was not motivated by any kind of antifascist or democratic thrust among Church authorities. If anything this distrust was motivated by reasons of self-protection and self-defence, both of the Church authorities themselves and of *Azione Cattolica*.

With the regime having consolidated itself and the *popolare* movement liquidated, there were no reasons left to justify divisions of a political nature between Catholics. However, in the Vatican the fear increased that the *Centro Nazionale* would emulate the regime's politics in many delicate areas, even regarding the issue of the Concordat, crucial to Church. As will be seen, the latter institution could not but react.

The reasons for the Papal disavowal

On March 18, 1928 the *Centro Nazionale* held a National Congress right in Rome's city centre, on *Campidoglio*. At this occasion, deputy Egilberto Martire gave a long, heated and markedly pro-Fascist speech. Following Martire's discourse, Mussolini congratulated the *Centro Nazionale*, whose 'flanking support' of the regime had shown that, with "virile optimism", it would be possible to reach a swift resolution to the 'Roman Question'.⁵⁸ Obviously the Duce, by stressing Clerico-Fascist support for his government, intended to force the

⁵⁶ ASV, AES, 667 N° 4 (PO), 123, Mgr. Imberti to the Secretary of State, December 6, 1927; ASV, AES, 630a (PO), 64, letter of Mgr. Roveda to Mgr. Pizzardo, December 1, 1926.

⁵⁷ Regarding the imperfect coincidence of *Clerico-Fascism* and *pro-Fascism*, cfr. Andrea Riccardi, 'Clericofascismo', in: Campanini/Traniello (eds.), *Dizionario Storico del Movimento Cattolico in Italia*, vol. I, t. 1, op. cit., p. 79-83.

⁵⁸ Sgarbanti, *Ritratto politico di Giovanni Grosoli*, op. cit., p. 195-197; 'I Cattolici del Centro Nazionale riaffermano in Campidoglio la fede operosa nella grandezza religiosa e civile dell'Italia fascista', *Corriere d'Italia*, March 29, 1928; 'La parola del Duce ai cattolici del Centro Nazionale', *Corriere d'Italia*, March 21, 1928.

hand of the Holy See and push for a conclusion to ongoing negotiations for the Concordat. However, the Vatican did not agree that the time had come just yet.

Thus on March 25, 1928, in a speech to the Diocesan Committee of ACI, the Pope delivered a very straightforward message in which he did not deny “what good has been done” by fascism, but in which he also recalled “the difficulties, the oppressions, the hindrances, the obscure and patent threats and real hostilities” against *Azione Cattolica*. He noted that, during the CNI Congress, the Clerico-Fascists had invited the Duce but had not requested an audience by the Pope. Furthermore, he also spoke of how “erroneous and dangerous” Martire’s theory on the distinction between “religious politics” and “ecclesiastical politics” was. And, above all, he warned against easy enthusiasm regarding a resolution of the ‘Roman Question’: to put at the same level, as Martire had done, the rights of the “plundered Holy See” with those of the “plundering State”, he said, “confirms and shows the admitted absence of any competence whatsoever”.⁵⁹

Such a harsh reaction must be read in relation to the course the negotiations for the Concordat and Lateran Treaty were taking. It is in fact not by chance that in the Vatican Archives the references to the CNI Congress at the *Campidoglio* are contained in the files relating to the negotiations for the Concordat.⁶⁰ In March 1928, the secret negotiations were at a serious impasse concerning the issue of the territory that would be conceded to the future Vatican State. In this context, the tendency of the CNI to develop its own discourse – independent from that of the Vatican and openly supportive of the Government’s policies – went against the policies that Pius XI had pursued ever since his election to the Papal throne. According to Mgr. Borgoncini-Duca, the CNI Congress had been “a huge incident” and had led to “new difficulties” in the negotiation process.⁶¹ Therefore the condemnation of the CNI was necessary in order to confirm that the Holy See was the sole interlocutor of the regime when it came to discussing religious and ecclesiastical policies.

That being said, the Pope did not deny but rather reaffirmed the existence of that close link between Catholicism and the Italian nation that the *Centro Nazionale* had posited as the basis of its programme. Yet, he also asserted that he definitely did not intend to delegate any political responsibilities to exponents of the *Centro Nazionale*.

The papal condemnation of the *Centro Nazionale* took the Clerico-Fascists by surprise.⁶² Their newspapers, first and foremost *Corriere d'Italia*, repor-

⁵⁹ OR, March 26-27, 1928.

⁶⁰ ASV, AES, 702 (PO), VII, vol. II, 30-35.

⁶¹ ASV, AES, 702 (PO), VII, vol. II, 3-4.

⁶² Martire’s report, the reactions of the Pope, of *Azione Cattolica* and of *L'Osservatore Romano* can be found in Guido De Luca, *Il Papato e l'Italia si concilieranno, Documenti e polemiche*, 1928, Modernissima, Roma. For Martire’s position, cfr. Egidilberto Martire, “Stato Etico’ e Chiesa’, *Critica Fas-*

ted the papal disavowal without any comments. To their own embarrassment, in some cases they even had to adjust their former appraisal of Martire's speech and stress their loyalty to the Pope.

A March 28-29 press release by the CNI clarified the *Centro's* position, stating that an attitude of "full and undisputed respect for the Supreme Religious Authority" would be adopted.⁶³ However, *L'Osservatore Romano* reacted by means of a short article which referred to the CNI's answer as "unpleasant" and "distressing"; furthermore, according to *L'Osservatore*, it did "not contain any clarifications at all regarding the points on which the remarks and reflections of the Pope's speech were based".⁶⁴

Within the space of a few months, the final curtain dropped for the CNI and it immediately ceased all of its activities after its 1928 Congress. It was officially dissolved in 1930.⁶⁵

The condemnation of the *Centro Nazionale* and the fate of the Clerico-Fascist programme – which, as has been shown, was initially looked upon with great interest by the Vatican – do not imply that Fascism in itself was condemned nor that the possibility of an understanding between Church and Fascism was excluded. On the contrary, the 1929 *Conciliazione* quite quickly showed that the enthusiasm of the exiled Sturzo and Ferrari at the condemnation of the *Centro Nazionale* was premature.⁶⁶ Indeed, what the Holy See wanted to show was that it would not tolerate any interference in its negotiations with the regime and that it intended to take on the personal management of these.

This strategy strengthened the position of clerical authorities and reunited the ranks of *Azione Cattolica* under the guidance of Pius XI. However, in so doing, the Holy See was also exposed to the fluctuations of Italian political life. The responsibilities and the possible repercussions would have a direct impact on the Church's institutions. In the next decade, the experience of the 1931 *Azione Cattolica* crisis and the volatile relations of the Church with the 'Man whom Providence has sent us' would show Pope Ratti the advantages, but also the risks, that his 'political' choices would entail.

cista, November 15, 1928; Id., 'Centro Nazionale e Regime', *Critica Fascista*, April 15, 1928. Finally, for the official Fascist position, see A. [Arnaldo Mussolini], 'Politica e religione', *Il Popolo d'Italia*, March 29, 1928.

⁶³ 'Una dichiarazione del Centro Nazionale dopo il discorso del Papa alla Giunta Diocesana', *Il Popolo di Roma*, March 28-29, 1928.

⁶⁴ 'Dopo il discorso del Santo Padre alla Giunta Diocesana', *OR*, March 31, 1928.

⁶⁵ Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Ministero degli interni, *Polizia Politica*, b. 101, fasc. 11, *Centro Cattolico*.

⁶⁶ 'Centre Catholique', *L'Observateur*, March 27, 1928, p. 10-11.

ITALIAN CATHOLIC OPINION AND THE ADVENT OF FASCISM: 'L'AVVENIRE D'ITALIA'

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The present paper focuses on the catholic reception of early fascism, during a period when fascism as an ideology was very much under development, although towards *what* end form, or goal, was still uncertain, at least to outside observers, as is illustrated in the treatment of fascism within the pages of the Italian catholic newspaper *L'Avvenire d'Italia*, based in Bologna with a nationwide circulation. Our reading of *L'Avvenire* offers a privileged look at the gradual development of the fascist *habitus* in close, day-to-day contact, with fascism 'as it happened'.

Firstly, however, a brief sketch of the historical relationship between the Vatican and fascism, particularly between Vatican and fascist 'politics' in the years between 1919 and 1929. As we will show, from the point of view of the Vatican, this was a period of great hope, but as has been shown incisively by other contributors to this volume, also a period of considerable anxiety.¹

With the birth of the liberal, secular Italian State in the nineteenth century, and with the so-called 'Roman question' remaining unresolved for many decades, the popes increasingly sought to reinforce the Church's firm hold on society by means of associations such as the *Opera dei Congressi e Comitati cattolici* and Italian Catholic Action or *Azione Cattolica Italiana*. These organisations can be seen as manifestations of Catholic 'political' intervention in civil society,² not positioned at the level of party politics, but rather at the level of the structural organisation of society. This tactic became explicitly manifest in the field of professional organisation after the publication of the Papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum* in 1891.

Subsequently, the experience of the First World War brought about a growing need for change and spiritual renewal, with many a Catholic expressing their longing for the 're-christianisation' of the nationalised Italian masses, for a

¹ For a more elaborate version of the following introductory considerations, on which the present reflections are based, see Jan Nelis, 'The Clerical Response to a Totalitarian Political Religion: *La Civiltà Cattolica* and Italian Fascism', *Journal of Contemporary History* 46/2, 2011, p. 245-249.

² Renato Moro, *La formazione della classe dirigente cattolica (1929-1937)*, 1979, il Mulino, Bologna, p. 261.

‘new Christian order’.³ In response, the Vatican intensified its ‘political’ interest in Italian society, which led, among other things, to the revitalisation of Catholic Action under Benedict XV.

Halfway through Benedict’s Pontificate, these efforts were reinforced by the pope’s endorsement of the newly established Catholic lay political party, the *Partito Popolare Italiano*, founded by Don Luigi Sturzo in 1918. However, this foray into politics at the party level was short-lived: only two years later, the Vatican withdrew its support for the party, mainly because of its resistance to Vatican demands that it form an alliance with moderate conservative liberals standing in local and general elections held in 1920 and 1921, in an apparent effort to create a political counterweight to the Socialist Party, following the chaos of the ‘Two Red Years’ from 1918 to 1920.⁴

This process continued in 1922, when at the start of his Pontificate, *papa Ratti* Pius XI, who was against the creation and development of Catholic political parties, gave preference, as had been his custom during his earlier role as Archbishop of Milan, to the development of various forms of Catholic associationalism.⁵ When the fascist ‘March on Rome’ subsequently took place on October 28th, 1922, Pius had been in the Vatican less than a year. From the very outset, both ‘parties’ actively endeavoured to establish a *modus vivendi*.

Whereas Mussolini saw the Church as an *instrumentum regn^o* to be simultaneously wooed and intimidated, the pope adopted a more *Real* political attitude, considering fascism to be the most viable political option at that moment. In his view, and in light of the ‘lesser options’ offered by liberalism and socialism, fascism was capable of establishing the conditions seen as ideal by the Vatican for the above-mentioned ‘re-christianisation of society’, such as social order and discipline, but most particularly the establishment of an anti-liberal and anti-socialist, authoritarian and hierarchical State.⁷

As noted, Pius XI piloted the Church’s move towards intervention in civil society at an organisational level. When viewed in relation to the project of ‘re-christianisation’ of society,⁸ the Church’s approach could be termed as a

³ See Francesco Traniello, ‘L’Italia cattolica nell’era fascista’, in: Gabriele De Rosa (ed.), *Storia dell’Italia religiosa. III. L’età contemporanea*, 1995, Laterza, Roma-Bari, p. 264-268.

⁴ On Benedict’s abandonment of the *Partito Popolare*, see John Pollard, *Catholicism in Modern Italy. Religion, Society and Politics since 1861*, 2008, Routledge, London-New York, p. 79.

⁵ Traniello, ‘L’Italia cattolica’, op. cit., p. 263.

⁶ Arturo Carlo Jemolo, *Chiesa e Stato in Italia negli ultimi cento anni*, 1948, Einaudi, Torino, p. 594.

⁷ Cf. Pollard, *Catholicism in Modern Italy*, op. cit., p. 84, and Giovanni Miccoli, *Fra mito della cristianità e secolarizzazione. Studi sul rapporto chiesa-società nell’età contemporanea*, 1985, Marietti, Casale Monferrato, p. 120.

⁸ This idea of a “restaurazione cattolica” of society (Pietro Scoppola, ‘Considerazioni conclusive’, in: Paolo Pecorari (ed.), *Chiesa, Azione Cattolica e fascismo nell’Italia settentrionale durante il pontificato di Pio XI (1922-1939)*, 1979, Vita e Pensiero, Milano, p. 1275) has even led some scholars to define the phenomenon of ‘clerical fascism’, as a tendency, inherent to (a minority of) Catholics, to see in the fascist regime a means to perpetrate the mentioned re-conquest of society, by a natio-

‘total’,⁹ ‘totalising’ or even, in a certain sense, ‘totalitarian’ drive.¹⁰ The pope characterised the Church’s ambitions in similar terms,¹¹ endeavouring to forge the latter into an institution that pursued its goals ‘combatively’, in the name of Jesus Christ ‘the King’: *Cristo Re*, as can be read in the Papal encyclical *Quas Primas*, 1925.¹²

In this context, the Vatican’s gradual abandonment of the *Partito Popolare Italiano* can also be seen as a ‘tactical’ move so as not to compromise itself in the game of party politics, furthered by the fact that the *Partito Popolare* adopted an outspokenly anti-fascist stance.¹³ This situation is markedly reflected in the pages of *L’Avenire d’Italia*.

For the duration of the *ventennio fascista*, the competing institutions of fascism and Catholicism developed a mutual relationship of ‘give-and-take’, which led, significantly, to the *Conciliazione* of 1929, a pact that comprised not only the Lateran Treaty, which was essentially a politico-territorial deal between two nations, but also a ‘Concordat’, which specified the civil rights and duties of both parties. Although the actual implementation of these agreements was to prove somewhat problematic, the two parties never experienced a radical rift or schism, still managing to maintain a troubled, yet reasonably stable, relationship.

The general climate was one of tension between two social and ‘political’ actors, forced to exist side by side. This tension manifested not only at the purely political level – negotiations between regime and Vatican –, but also within society, a far broader social and discursive field. An important part of the latter was the written press, namely periodicals such as for example the Je-

nalised, ‘fascisticised’ Catholicism. On the phenomenon of ‘clerical fascism’, see Roger Griffin, ‘The ‘Holy Storm’: ‘Clerical Fascism’ through the Lens of Modernism’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8/2, 2007, p. 213-227, and John Pollard, ‘Clerical Fascism’: Context, Overview and Conclusion’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8/2, 2007, p. 433-446.

⁹ Renato Moro, ‘Religion and Politics in the Time of Secularisation: The Sacralisation of Politics and Politicisation of Religion’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 6/1, 2005, p. 80.

¹⁰ Fulvio De Giorgi, ‘Linguaggi militari e mobilitazione cattolica nell’Italia fascista’, *Contemporanea* 5/2, 2002, p. 285. On the ‘totalitarian’ character of the Catholic Church under Pius XI, as evidenced by the role of Catholic Action, see Yves Chiron, *Pie XI (1857-1939)*, 2004, Perrin, Paris, p. 196-215, and Giovanni Sale, *Fascismo e Vaticano prima della Conciliazione*, 2007, Jaca Book, Milano, p. 91.

¹¹ Emilio Gentile, ‘New idols: Catholicism in the face of Fascist totalitarianism’, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 11/2, 2006, p. 161.

¹² On this idea of a ‘combative’ Church, see De Giorgi, ‘Linguaggi militari’, op. cit. In this context, as well as for an analysis of the mentioned project of a ‘re-conquest’ or of a ‘re-christianisation’ of Italian society, see Emma Fattorini, *Pio XI, Hitler e Mussolini*, 2007, Einaudi, Torino, p. 20-24.

¹³ On the Vatican attitude *vis-à-vis* the *Partito Popolare* during the *ventennio*, see, among others, Pietro Scoppola, *La Chiesa e il fascismo. Documenti e interpretazioni*, 1976, Laterza, Roma-Bari, p. 63-68, Sale, *Fascismo e Vaticano*, op. cit., p. 21-28, Pollard, *Catholicism in Modern Italy*, op. cit., p. 83-84, and Martin Conway, *Catholic Politics in Europe 1918-1945*, 1997, Routledge, London, p. 31-32.

suit periodical *La Civiltà Cattolica*, and newspapers such as the Vatican *L'Osservatore Romano* and *L'Avvenire d'Italia*.¹⁴ A quick perusal of the pages of *L'Avvenire*, focusing on the years 1920-1925, shows a steady, and prudent, evolution of the discourse concerning Italian fascism, which from the outset was never openly criticised, except for references made to its sometimes excessive reliance upon violence, particularly before the October 28th, 1922 March on Rome.

However, shortly after the March on Rome, criticism of fascism became increasingly rare, at least when compared with, for example, criticism of socialism, freemasonry, liberalism, and even the Catholic *Partito Popolare Italiano*. Indeed the position taken by *L'Avvenire* seems to be effectively one of offering support, support for the 'powers that be',¹⁵ while at the same time refraining from assuming a too openly party political stance.

Party politics is subordinated to religion and religious morality and ethics. This repeated message is the almost sole constant in the pages of *L'Avvenire*, often following on from the publication of papal speeches, encyclicals etc. The message, for example in the case of elections, is to follow the principles of 'Christian morality', and go and vote: with no elaborate comments made on any particular party. Politics is a means to a specific end, namely an orderly, Christian society, and politics can by no means dictate with regards to religion, or become its competitor.

This can be seen in an article entitled 'Il Messia politico',¹⁶ in which fascism is not specifically evoked, but rather a variant of the idea of 'political heresy' in general is being criticised. As noted, there is no openly party political discourse, but rather a more generic message, in line with the views of the Vatican.

The latter position is somewhat nuanced by *L'Avvenire's* discourse on catholicism's societal form of 'politics', namely Catholic Action, which is often closely linked to the *Partito Popolare*, primarily as the source from which many members of this party originate: this commences with an article entitled 'Risaliamo alle sorgenti',¹⁷ 'let's return to the sources', published in May 1922. This article mentions, among other things, that

"l'adesione cordiale, la disciplina cosciente e ragionata quale sola si conviene ad uomini liberi, l'affetto sincero che ci legano al Partito Popolare non ci possono, nel momento delle sue fortune, far dimenticare la solidarietà di pensiero e di animi dei primi anni della nostra battaglia, che ci stringe al movimento cattolico, al quale dobbiamo se noi (e con noi tanti e tanti altri che oggi con noi si ritrovano nelle assemblee politiche) siamo

¹⁴ On catholic press under fascism, see, among others, Daniele Menozzi, 'Stampa cattolica e regime fascista', *Storia e problemi contemporanei* 33, 2003, p. 5-20.

¹⁵ In this respect, the newspaper seems to follow the line adapted by *La Civiltà Cattolica*, cf. Nelis, 'The Clerical Response', op. cit., p. 256-259.

¹⁶ 'Il Messia politico', *L'Avvenire d'Italia*, February 28, 1922.

¹⁷ 'Risaliamo alle sorgenti!', *L'Avvenire d'Italia*, May 10, 1922.

stati conservati alla milizia sociale-cristiana – o popolare che dir si voglia – nella vita pubblica e nelle organizzazioni economiche o sindacali.”

Some months later, this article is followed by a further contribution underlining the crucial importance of Catholic Action in the context of the projected catholic ‘re-conquest’ of Italian society.¹⁸ The significance of Catholic Action, crucial, as shown, in the pope’s view, is equally crucial for *L’Avvenire*: it is the only theme which seems to have allowed *L’Avvenire* to openly criticise the politics of the regime when this at times became unavoidable, for example on the occasion of violent attacks being made on branches of Catholic Action.¹⁹

As mentioned, no direct criticism of fascism is made, except in reference to its reliance, at least in the early days of the movement, on violence. The same counts for the aforementioned *Partito Popolare*, but in reverse and deteriorating order, again, paralleling the Vatican’s attitude.

Three examples can be cited to illustrate this tendency: in 1921, *L’Avvenire d’Italia* celebrates its 25 years of existence... and a number of the festivities take place at a local branch of the *Partito Popolare*.²⁰ This is a clear manifestation of political loyalty, which will, however, soon change: some months later, the mentioned article on a ‘return to the sources’,²¹ meaning Catholic Action, still makes reference to the *Partito*, but this is one of the last instances in which the party is unanimously judged in a positive manner. Indeed in January 1924, the positivity is officially at an end: *L’Avvenire* distances itself from the *Partito Popolare*,²² denouncing, among other things, the party’s unacceptable anti-fascism, judging it a “rinnovato errore disciplinare non soltanto voluto, ma ostinatamente cercato dalla Direzione del Partito Popolare”, and also denouncing, just one month later, the *Partito*’s now ‘hostile’ attitude towards *L’Avvenire d’Italia*.²³

The times are changing rapidly and we are now in the context of a fascist government slowly and steadily reinforcing its grip on Italian society. Notwithstanding, as mentioned, *L’Avvenire* manifests occasional condemnation of fascist violence – mostly directed at branches of Catholic Action –, it seems that during this period *L’Avvenire d’Italia* viewed Mussolini’s government pri-

¹⁸ ‘L’Azione cattolica nell’allocuzione pontificia’, *L’Avvenire d’Italia*, May 26, 1923.

¹⁹ ‘Una protesta dell’Azione cattolica’, *L’Avvenire d’Italia*, April 15, 1924, and ‘Polemiche pericolose’, *L’Avvenire d’Italia*, April 18, 1924. It should be mentioned here that this latter article is a direct reaction not against the fascist-led government, but against the fascist newspaper *Il Popolo d’Italia*, founded by Mussolini in 1914.

²⁰ ‘Venticinque anni di vita’, *L’Avvenire d’Italia*, January 6, 1922.

²¹ ‘Risaliamo alle sorgenti!’, op. cit.

²² See the eloquently entitled article ‘La segreteria del P.P.I. dichiara l’*Avvenire* non più ‘aderente’’, *L’Avvenire d’Italia*, January 3, 1924.

²³ ‘Un’alta parola ammonitrice ai cattolici’, *L’Avvenire d’Italia*, February 7, 1924.

marily as a source of hope with regard to a restoration of Italian society following the tumultuous years 1919-1921, and in general after World War I.

This attitude is already in evidence the day after the March on Rome, when Mussolini is depicted as a very solid option for the future, in light of his “volontà ricostruttrice” and, arguably, as a counterweight against bolshevism. Indeed in the mind of *L'Avvenire*, it was principally “per il dilagare della marea bolscevica nel dopoguerra il 25 marzo 1919”²⁴ that fascism was created.

In general, from the very beginning, references to the March on Rome place this event in a quasi-mythical context: no comment is made about any political implications, nor is there any acknowledgement that the same fascists whose violence had torn the nation apart were now occupying the capital. Instead, a quasi-filmic language is developed in order to describe the discipline and order with which the newly arrived fascists march through the capital.

Such is manifestly the case in the article ‘Entusiastica accoglienza romana al nuovo Capo del Governo’, published on October 31st, 1922.²⁵ Using a decidedly bombastic linguistic register, this contribution describes Mussolini’s entry into Rome after the March on Rome. *Un saggio*:

“Appena Mussolini ha messo piede sul predellino del vagone per discendere, fu di peso sollevato ed abbracciato dai presenti. Indi, circondato da una catena di camicie nere, si è avviato, tra dimostrazioni entusiastiche e tra strette di mano infinite fuori della stazione. L’on. Mussolini appariva calmo ma commosso. [...] L’on. Mussolini, uscito dal Quirinale, si è recato all'albergo Savoia. Quivi era atteso da una grande folla, composta in gran parte di fascisti, che lo hanno acclamato freneticamente, obbligandolo a comparire al balcone da dove egli ha arringato la folla invitando tutti alla calma, dicendo che *tra poche ore* avremo non un Ministero ma un *Governo*, e terminando al grido di ‘viva l’Italia’, ‘viva il Re!’, ‘viva il Fascismo’. La folla ha ripetuto gli evviva tra grande entusiasmo.”

Arguably this is still not so much a token of appreciation for the fascists as it is an expression of hope for order and calm, as can also be seen in a retrospective article entitled ‘L’avvento del fascismo’,²⁶ where the Italian population is being asked to get behind the newly elected leader in order to rebuild the nation. However, the linguistic register used now is more explicit, depicting fascism as an “audace e robusto esperimento”, which is seen as “ormai fatale”, i.e. part of Italy’s destiny.

A few days later, this is followed by the publication of a speech by Mussolini, without any added comments, which mentions the following:

²⁴ ‘Benito Mussolini’, *L'Avvenire d'Italia*, October 31, 1922.

²⁵ ‘Entusiastica accoglienza romana al nuovo Capo del Governo’, *L'Avvenire d'Italia*, October 31, 1922.

²⁶ ‘L’avvento del fascismo’, *L'Avvenire d'Italia*, December 10, 1922.

“Gridatelo nelle città e nelle campagne. Lo Stato fascista è forte, e deciso a difendersi a tutti i costi con la energia più fredda e inesorabile. Io sono il depositario della volontà della migliore gioventù italiana: il depositario della passione di mille e mille morti: il depositario di quel grande travaglio di ideali e di forze che fermenta nelle giovani generazioni italiane. Ho perciò doveri terribili da compiere e li compirò.”²⁷

Once Mussolini has been in power for a short period of time, the *collaborazionismo* of the *Partito Popolare*, which, as mentioned, will be abandoned at some future point, is repeatedly upheld by *L'Avvenire* as being the only means by which to avoid a socialist takeover.²⁸ Mussolini's government is now becoming increasingly legitimate in the eyes of the newspaper's correspondents, who are “fuori del fascismo-partito e collaboranti col fascismo-governo”.²⁹

In this early stage, there is still some reserve as to the value of fascism, whereas “quello di buono, che il fascismo al potere potrà fare o proporsi di compiere, sarà una risultante di sforzi o una coincidenza ideale con la precedente attività o con le iniziali battaglie del Partito Popolare.” However, it is not long before the young fascist government is identified as

“il solo governo possibile, tale governo che, come retrospettivamente apparisce il solo possibile, così futuristicamente parlando, a tutti apparirebbe catastrofica per il paese la sua caduta. Un buon governo fascista o mussoliniano è oggi, apparisce oggi alla coscienza della grande maggioranza degli italiani, come il governo della salute pubblica: *Salus rei publicae*.”³⁰

This decidedly rhetorical message is now frequently repeated, albeit in a variety of forms, using language that is increasingly bombastic and dramatic.

As mentioned, criticism of fascism is essentially limited to its continuing dependence on violence. However, at the same time the fate of the nation is being linked implicitly to the survival of Mussolini's government, which is viewed in this context as being in the “interesse supremo della nazione”.³¹ This thesis is never explicitly developed. *L'Avvenire* instead chooses to focus on the ‘positive’ effects (cf. supra) and on a number of particularly valuable aspects of fascism, interpreting it as a form of extreme and often constructive, disciplined nationalism,³² a “passione veemente d'amore per l'Italia” which is seen as sharing a close relationship with the catholic faith.

Accordingly, fascism-nationalism is then portrayed as the best option for the wellbeing of the nation. The goal must now be the ‘christianisation’ of

²⁷ “La marcia su Roma è appena all'inizio” dice Mussolini ai fascisti senesi, *L'Avvenire d'Italia*, December 20, 1922.

²⁸ “Dopo il discorso di Torino”, *L'Avvenire d'Italia*, December 22, 1922.

²⁹ “L'assorbimento del nazionalismo nei fasci. Un altro passo del fascismo verso una nuova disciplina e verso un ordine nuovo”, *L'Avvenire d'Italia*, February 27, 1923.

³⁰ “*Salus reipublicae suprema lex*”, *L'Avvenire d'Italia*, February 14, 1923.

³¹ “I rapporti tra il Fascismo, i liberali e i democratici italiani”, *L'Avvenire d'Italia*, May 9, 1923.

³² “Fascismo e cattolicesimo”, *L'Avvenire d'Italia*, August 4, 1923.

fascism, as indeed the fascists would soon declare the ‘fascistisation’ of religion to be their goal.³³

After a year of fascist government, on the anniversary of the March on Rome, in 1923, the message now seems to be the perpetration of full consensus. This can be read in the following words, whose sense can be distilled as much from the actual, literal meaning as well as the form in which they are delivered:

“A piazza del popolo ed oltre a nord della città lo spettacolo della folla varia ed incalzante cessa per dar luogo ad un altro più meraviglioso spettacolo di animazione e vita. Tutta la zona che va dal Tevere alle pendici del colle pinciano, Piazza del popolo, Piazzale Flaminio, via Luigi di Savoia, [it goes on like this for quite a long while], è come un vasto accampamento in cui brulica la moltitudine delle camicie nere affluite da ogni dove per partecipare al grandioso corteo. Il rullo dei tamburi, il suono delle fanfare, i comandi dei centurioni, i canti dei militi, le grida di acclamazione, si alternano e si confondono, mentre sventolano sulla massa ondeggiante bandiere, labari e gagliardetti.”³⁴

At this moment, the fascist government seemed to have brought a relative calm to the nation, even if at the cost of a reduction of civil liberties. In addition, there were hopes for the reinforcement of Catholicism’s influence on Italian society, for example through the reintroduction of religious courses within the educational system.

Mussolini was known to have been a radical anti-clerical socialist, but once in power proved himself an able opportunist, well aware of the importance of catholic religion in Italian society. At some moment, he came to be perceived as a fully fledged deified hero, even some kind of a political Messiah sent by “Provvidenza”;³⁵ this not even two years after the condemnatory remarks regarding the personality cult surrounding political leaders (cf. supra the article ‘Il Messia politico’). His achievements are presented in a completely positive light:

“Ad un anno di distanza da quei giorni nei quali auguravamo che la rivoluzione in opera sboccasse nell’assestamento dello Stato, tante volte minacciato e da lungo tempo pericolante [...] possiamo oggi con lealtà riconoscere quanto abbia già compiuto, e quanto dimostri di voler fare, l’uomo che ha impersonato e assommato in sé quel movimento, per la tranquillità e la prosperità della patria.”³⁶

³³ ‘Apostolato e politica di fronte al fascismo’, *L’Avvenire d’Italia*, August 18, 1923.

³⁴ ‘Le feste commemorative della Marcia su Roma chiuse nella capitale con una imponente sfilata’, *L’Avvenire d’Italia*, November 1, 1923.

³⁵ ‘Le vibranti accoglienze di Bologna al Presidente del Consiglio’, *L’Avvenire d’Italia*, October 30, 1923. Furthermore, this article considers Mussolini’s visit to Bologna at the occasion of the celebration of the March on Rome in October 1923 as among the “più memorabili e grandiose” events ever to have happened to the city of Bologna.

³⁶ ‘Domani Bologna accoglierà festante il Capo del Governo’, *L’Avvenire d’Italia*, October 28, 1923.

Consequently, when general elections are held in the beginning of 1924, *L'Avvenire's* position is officially neutral, but once again, and in an implicit manner, the merits of Mussolinian power are acknowledged, albeit most prudently. In a piece entitled 'La volontà del paese',³⁷ apart from the repeated idea of the ongoing "ricostruzione nazionale", it is primarily through an analysis *ex negativo* that *L'Avvenire* identifies fascism as the most viable option, by showing what it did *not* represent, at least in the eyes of *L'Avvenire*, i.e. dictatorship and violence.

The newspaper seems to believe that fascism will stay in power for at least a further five years of government.³⁸ After a year and a half in power, fascism can by no means be considered any longer a 'necessary evil' or as an historical parenthesis, as it had sometimes in the past; it has instead come to represent order and legitimate politics.

In conclusion to this short contribution, it seems clear that *L'Avvenire*, as was the Church, was simultaneously afraid of fascism,³⁹ as a competing ideology, as well as hopeful of reconciliation. From the beginning, the regime enjoyed some support, but this was not unconditional. This support was conditioned directly by, firstly and most importantly, the opinion of the pope, as well as by the extent to which fascism was seen to be of use as a weapon against common enemies, such as liberalism and above all communism,⁴⁰ as well as freemasonry⁴¹: those other 'ideologies', those other 'credos' which determined the balance of power, political and societal, in Italy.

Finally, and on a somewhat more abstract level, one could say that two mechanisms both propelled and inspired the positioning of *L'Avvenire d'Italia vis-à-vis* fascism. Firstly, the tendency was to offer support, a tendency born from a hope for a better, more Christian future. Thus support for fascism was at times quite outspoken, as we have shown. However, as mentioned, that support was never total or unconditional, at least not explicitly: *L'Avvenire* instead offered such support indirectly, allowing other written press sources to speak,

³⁷ 'La volontà del paese', *L'Avvenire d'Italia*, April 8, 1924.

³⁸ 'Rettifica di posizioni', *L'Avvenire d'Italia*, April 11, 1924.

³⁹ In this context, see for example Emilio Gentile, *Contro Cesare. Cristianesimo e totalitarismo nell'epoca dei fascismi*, 2010, Feltrinelli, Milano.

⁴⁰ See 'Successori del bolscevismo', *L'Avvenire d'Italia*, May 21, 1922, and 'Dovere civile', *L'Avvenire d'Italia*, May 30, 1922.

⁴¹ See 'La lotta antimassonica', *L'Avvenire d'Italia*, February 21, 1923: "La società tutta è gerarchia, non l'esercito solo e la magistratura. Lo Stato liberale poteva ammettere in nome della libertà e in realtà per debolezza di governo le interferenze extra e contro gerarchie della Massoneria: lo Stato fascista, che è lo Stato gerarchicamente concepito, no. – Non c'è posto per due galli nel pollaio unico e solo. O Stato o Massoneria, o il Presidente del Consiglio o il Gran Maestro della Massoneria: tutti e due simultaneamente, no." See also 'I rapporti tra nazionalisti e fascisti e la questione massonica', *L'Avvenire d'Italia*, February 13, 1923, and, above all, 'La ripercussione della deliberazione del Gran Consiglio Fascista sulla incompatibilità tra Fascismo e Massoneria', *L'Avvenire d'Italia*, February 15, 1923.

selecting fragments from other newspapers and written sources, almost all, without exception, in favour of the regime, and reproducing these without further comment... with the exception of the often less favourable, usually left-wing, press.

Secondly, and arguably more importantly: apart from what has already been stated and cited concerning *L'Avvenire's* opinions on fascism, it utilised a very basic but effective discursive tool; it ensured that a continuous public awareness of fascism was maintained, even if some information was relayed in a negative manner. In other words, ensuring that fascism was a constant topic of discussion, definitively proved to fascism's advantage. Indeed at times it was not *what* was said that affected public opinion, but the mere fact *that* anything at all was being discussed, or written, which served to both express, and, even more importantly, direct opinion.

One of the ways in which the impact of written press might be assessed is by acknowledging its broad sociological function, whereby not only its explicit message in se, but the active radius of that same message is taken into account. In the case of the discourse of *L'Avvenire d'Italia*, we can easily draw the conclusion that by means of this constant focus on and discussion of and a persistent avoidance of offering any real criticism, *L'Avvenire* contributed, in a very specific way, to the effective legitimisation of the regime.

AN EMBARRASSMENT OF OPTIONS: FASCISM AND CATHOLICISM IN AUSTRIA

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'The Facts of Austria'

The dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy had robbed the Catholic Church of the protection generally, if not always, bestowed by a Catholic dynasty. Like its Weimar twin, the First Republic was a by-product of military defeat. Even the Socialists who welcomed the end of the *ancien régime*, readily admitted the “Austrian Revolution” was a revolution of the non-German bourgeoisie against Vienna, not a result of popular enthusiasm.¹ German-Austrian bishops bowed to the inevitable. In a pastoral letter of Dec. 1, 1918 they explained that republics were just as permissible as monarchies and quoted Leo XIII: “Legitimate government is not necessarily tied to any particular form.”²

Paradoxically, though, the loss of territory, in particular the Sudeten German areas, massively increased the power and influence of the Catholic Christian Social Party within the Alpine rump state of German Austria. Their farming constituency dominated the provinces (except for Carinthia). The party's leader from 1922 to 1930, Monsignore Ignaz Seipel, emerged as the controversial mastermind of the First Republic, a “uomo della provvidenza”, as Pius XI called him.³ Thus, somewhat ironically in light of the anti-capitalist rhetoric of many of the Christian Social founding fathers, it was a Catholic priest who restored capitalism and put Austria on a sound financial footing in 1922. Seipel continued to work for a roll-back of the power of the Social Democrats who had profited from the collapse of the old order. Inevitably, though, the prominence of priests within the Christian Social party proved counter-productive from the pastoral point of view. Political opposition sometimes threatened to spill over into an exodus from the Church.

¹ Otto Bauer, ‘Die Österreichische Revolution’, in: Id., *Werkausgabe*, vol. 2, 1976, Europaverlag, Wien, p. 626, 633, 637.

² Richard Kutschera, *Johannes Maria Gföllner, Bischof dreier Zeitenwenden*, 1972, Oberösterreich. Landesverlag, Linz, p. 26.

³ Friedrich Engel-Janosi, *Vom Chaos zur Katastrophe. Vatikanische Gespräche 1918 bis 1938*, 1971, Herold, Wien, p. 94. On the close relations between Seipel and the papal nuncio, see Walter M. Iber, ‘Sotto il fascino del politico sacerdote. Il partito cristiano-sociale nella prima Repubblica austriaca’, *Römische Historische Mitteilungen* 52, 2010, p. 303-322.

Unlike the early Third Republic in France, Austrian politics did not revolve around an axis of republicans vs. monarchists, nor did battle lines run between fascists and democrats. Instead, the political spectrum consisted of rival ideological *laager* (Austro-Marxist Social Democrats, Catholic Christian Socials and the fragmented rest of the 'Liberals', i.e. middle class anti-clericals), each of which had a militant authoritarian and/or totalitarian and a democratically and/or parliamentary-minded wing. For Catholics, in particular, the tenets of corporativism, whose attractiveness increased after the onset of the economic crisis, could be interpreted both ways. The often-quoted papal encyclical of 1931, *Quadragesimo Anno*, with its appreciation of Italian efforts to overcome class warfare, coupled with gentle warnings about unfettered state-power, caught that mood very well. As late as 1934, the *Ständestaat* could and would be marketed as either an achievement of Austro-Fascism or as an extended version of peasant cooperatives.

The Heimwehr and 'The March on Vienna'

The joker in the pack of Austrian parties was the right-wing *Heimwehr* ('home guard') movement that increasingly looked to Mussolini for its inspiration and self-consciously styled itself 'Austro-Fascist'. The *Heimwehr* had briefly flourished as a local self-defence force during the chaotic days after the break-up of the monarchy. It re-surfaced after the Vienna riots of 1927 with a primarily domestic agenda of fighting Socialist paramilitaries (*Republikanischer Schutzbund*). Seipel used the *Heimwehr* as a dual purpose weapon, designed both to frighten the Socialists – and to put pressure on his smaller coalition partners from the laicist anti-clerical and pan-German *laager*. In 1930, the *Heimwehr* – while professing disdain of party politics in general – set up shop as a party of their own but won only 6 % of the vote. More than anything else, the *Heimwehren* represented the old elites of the monarchy, aristocrats, officers and business leaders, including prominent Jews, i.e. a milieu outside the realm of political Catholicism, but not openly hostile to it. Its leader during the 1930s, Prince Ernst Rüdiger Starhemberg, son of a rakish father and a pious mother active in Catholic politics, consistently advocated a fusion of German Nationalist and Catholic slogans and aspirations.

For Christian Socials, the *Heimwehr* movement was both a potential rival and an ally. The Church, too, was ambivalent about the movement. The archbishop of Salzburg, Sigismund Waitz, a native of Bressanone, former tutor of Emperor Charles I and a well-known legitimist, had been present at the creation of the movement in Tyrol in the early 1920s but chided the *Heimwehren* with becoming too political once they started running party lists of their own.⁴ Ferdinand Pawlikowski in Styria, a former army chaplain, had a reputation as

⁴ Hans Jablonka, *Waitz – Bischof unter Kaiser und Hitler*, 1971, Dom-Verlag, Wien, p. 65.

the Church's liaison officer with the *Heimwehr*. In 1929 he recommended the "clergy should not shun the movement", but lost hope when the bulk of the Styrian *Heimwehr* moved close to the Nazis in 1932.⁵ Johannes Gföllner of Linz was a crunchy conservative who saw the *Heimwehr* as anti-clerical wolves in sheeps' clothing and became one of the foremost critics of their arrogance and claims to power in 1934.⁶ Cardinal Friedrich Piffl in Vienna kept aloof from party politics; when Piffl died in early 1932, it was reported that Pius XI had initially wanted to appoint ex-Chancellor Seipel as his successor. But at that time Seipel was already desperately ill and recommended Theodor Innitzer who had briefly been Minister of Social Affairs in the Cabinet of Johannes Schober in 1929-30.⁷

The *Heimwehr* movement had been eager to develop ties to Mussolini ever since 1928-29. Starhemberg was installed as the movement's leader in a move engineered by both Mussolini and Austrian Chancellor Schober – a former head of police – in 1930. In the next few years, the *Heimwehr* followed a zig-zag-course; it entered government in 1930, and was banished to the opposition in 1931. With all its wild talk of emulating Mussolini's March on Rome, the *Heimwehr* never managed to choose the right time for a *coup d'état* or to coordinate its movements. An operetta-like putsch by its Styrian branch in September 1931 only served to discredit the *Heimwehr*.⁸ Under the impact of the economic crisis, the same year also saw the disintegration of the parliamentary centre-right cabinets that had governed Austria since 1922. The attractiveness of reverting to an authoritarian style of government clearly increased when the *Heimwehr* once again entered government in the spring of 1932, as Christian Social Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuß headed what was in effect a minority government that might be defeated at any moment.⁹ The Papal nuntio, Cardinal

⁵ 'Der Klerus soll sich gegenüber dieser Bewegung nicht ganz abseits stellen', Diözesanarchiv St. Pölten (DASP), Memelauer Papers, Box 1, protocoll of the Austrian Bishops' Conferences Nov. 26-28, 1929. Two years later (Nov. 24-26, 1931) Pawlikowski already lumped the *Heimwehr* together with the Nazis. In 1930 a story went around that Pawlikowski had offered to absolve Chancellor Schober from his oath sworn on the Constitution in order to enable him to back a *coup d'état*. See also Rainer Hubert, *Schober. Arbeitermörder und Hort der Republik!*, 1990, Böhlau, Wien.

⁶ DASP, Memelauer Papers 1, Gföllner to his fellow bishops, April 10, 1934.

⁷ Archivio Storico del Ministero di Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Ambasciata Vienna 1861-1938, busta 315/19, report 3629/2100, Sept. 26, 1932. A few years earlier, Seipel had apparently rejected a Cardinal's hat. He could only be tempted by such an appointment, he hinted, if he had a chance to succeed Cardinal Gasparri as Secretary of State; but that office was reserved for Italians (busta 291/6, report 1231/723, April 21, 1929).

⁸ Josef Hofmann, *Der Pfrimer-Putsch*, 1965, Stiasny, Wien; see also the Italian comments and suspicions in ASMAE, Ambasciata Austria 1861-1938, busta 306, reports from Sept. 12-17, 1931.

⁹ Faced with uncertain prospects, bishops advised Rome to conclude the pending negotiations about a concordat as soon as possible because general elections might easily lead to a situation that rendered all previous preparations meaningless (DASP, Memelauer Papers 1, Bishops' Conference Nov. 22-24, 1932). For a short summary of the Episcopal Conferences, see also Erika

Enrico Sibilía, undoubtedly favoured a *coup d'état* but despaired of President Wilhelm Miklas – “timoratissimo e democratissimo” – ever agreeing to one.¹⁰

Even worse, a general election would only make things worse. Regional polls clearly showed that in such a case the Nazis would obliterate the smaller fry among the right-wing laicist parties and emerge as a vibrant third force. Austria – and Austrian Catholics – thus faced a choice between two rival Fascist movements. The Nazis obviously represented the more dynamic and more popular version. The *Heimwehr* had managed to win a maximum of 6 to 8 % of the vote, the Nazis easily topped 15-20 % in 1932. Nazis were uneasy about appropriating the label of Fascism, though, because of wide-spread anti-Italian resentment in Austria. In terms of the Italian role model, Nazis represented the movement with all the exuberance of the *squadristi*; whereas the *Heimwehr* admired the regime, with its in-built safeguards of Crown, Church and the military.

The Nazi Challenge in the Early Years

If the *Heimwehr* were a mixed lot from the point of view of the Church, but one that deserved to be given the benefit of doubt, the Nazi mixture of pagan Teutonic myths and materialistic Socialism was unlikely to appeal to the Church.¹¹ Austrian Nazis did not have a programme of their own. But judged by their Bavarian and Reich German antics, the position of the Church in general could only be an adverse one, as Pawlikowski argued in his report on the political situation in the summer of 1932, after the big Nazi gains in recent regional elections. Sibilía was a bit more circumspect: The only criteria for him was whether the Nazis were hostile to the Church or not. If they were willing to furnish sufficient guarantees, the Church should not open hostilities on its own.¹² As a result, when Gföllner wanted to charge ahead and issue a blanket denunciation in late 1932, the majority of his fellow bishops asked for a second opinion and wanted Innitzer to first try and elicit “an official pronouncement about those parts of the Nazi programme that were incompatible with the teachings of the Church.”¹³

The Nazis had started life in Old Austria, as a political arm of nationalist trade unions, i.e. as the most left-wing of all the pan-German groups. In the meantime, they had turned into a mass movement that promised – or threatened – to leave the legacy of nineteenth century middle class anti-clericalism.

Weinzierl, ‘Der Episkopat’, in: Ferdinand Klostermann et al. (eds.), *Kirche in Österreich 1918-1965*, 1966, Herold, Wien, p. 21-77.

¹⁰ Documenti Diplomatici Italiani (DDI) VII/12, p. 382 (Sept. 22, 1932).

¹¹ Erika Weinzierl, ‘Österreichs Katholiken und der Nationalsozialismus’, *Wort und Wahrheit* 18, 1963, p. 419-439, 493-526. For popular consumption Weinzierl’s essays were re-issued without footnotes in 1988 (*Prüfstand. Österreichs Katholiken und der Nationalsozialismus*, 1988, St. Gabriel, Mödling).

¹² DASP, Memelauer Papers 1, Bishops’ Conference June 16, 1932. Pawlikowski quoted Sibilía.

¹³ DASP, Memelauer Papers 1, Bishops’ Conference Nov. 22-24, 1932.

calism behind. A few were prepared to take them at their word. If National Socialism represented a new departure on the part of the pan-Germans who had finally broken with Liberal *clichés*, it could be seen as a movement *sui generis*, an inchaote one, to be sure, but for that very reason, a movement that could still be guided or pointed in the right direction.¹⁴ Some might argue that Nazism was just the German form of bolshevism; others agreed that danger existed but might still be averted: Catholic exiles from Germany pointed one way; German exiles from Czechoslovakia the other way. This attempt at finding common ground – or at least common enemies – was primarily located in Vienna, influenced as it was by Sudeten German connections.

Catholics in Vienna – wedged between a powerful working-class steeped in Marxist class-consciousness and a Jewish business world that incidentally often supported the *Heimwehr* – lacked the earthy self-confidence of their rural brethren. They thus had an extra incentive to try and build bridges to rival political camps. In 1932, the leader of the Vienna Nazis – Eduard Frauenfeld, admittedly a maverick – argued: we “also claim our right to the gospel.”¹⁵ In line with their policy towards all political movements, the Church rejected the Stormtroopers’ plea to attend mass in St Stephens with their standards or to hold an open-air mass. If in hindsight it is easy to brand these moves as hypocrisy, the amazing thing was that the Nazis had even bothered to ask for the blessing of the Church, something no self-respecting Liberal (or Socialist) would have dared do.

The Establishment of the Authoritarian Regime

In March 1933, Dollfuß deftly used an opportunity provided by a dispute about the standing orders to dispense with parliament altogether. Faced with the alternative of either Marxist or National Socialism, in 1933 Austrian bishops – supported by Rome, as far as we can tell¹⁶ – unanimously welcomed the establishment of an authoritarian regime, dedicated to the implementation of corporativism (*Ständestaat*), with due reference to *Quadragesimo Anno*, under the joint leadership of Christian Social Chancellor Dollfuß and *Heimwehr* boss Starhemberg. When a few days after the abortive uprising of the Socialist *Schutzbund* in February 1934, President Miklas confronted the bishop’s conference with his misgivings (*Bedenken*) about the course pursued by the govern-

¹⁴ Count Adolf Dubsy, *Die Anschlussfrage im Rahmen einer mit österreichischen Legitimisten geführten Diskussion*, 1934, Pustet, Salzburg, p. 12.

¹⁵ Weinzierl, ‘Österreichs Katholiken’, op. cit., p. 434.

¹⁶ Austrian State Archive, Schmitz Papers, E 1786/75, Theodor Hornbostel to Richard Schmitz, Dec. 12, 1933, who reported the Vatican was following the Austrian experiment with warmest sympathy.

ment, his audience actually tried to calm him down.¹⁷ While the bishops were not prime movers, they can certainly be said to have “protected the flanks”¹⁸ of the government during the transitional period.

At the same time, on Dec. 7, 1933 the bishops issued a pastoral letter that called for all priests to resign their seats in parliamentary assemblies and all other political offices “in the light of delicate [*heikle*] circumstances”. That move was certainly in line with the Catholic Action strategy pursued by the Vatican for some time;¹⁹ on the other hand, the order was designated as temporary (*vorübergehend*) only. The withdrawal of clerics from the front-line of politics could be interpreted in a number of ways: as a retreat from the parliamentary system that was about to be dismantled as well as an attempt to distance themselves from some of the harsher measures of the government. It certainly did not signal any general withdrawal from politics. In the same conference that resolved to withdraw priests from political office, Gföllner also urged his colleagues to intimate to government circles that the bishops were interested in engaging in a dialogue about the impending constitutional reforms.²⁰

In fact, early 1934 was studded with extraordinary Bishops’ Conference meetings that were also attended by government ministers. Partly, the agenda of these meetings was concerned with the final stages of the negotiations about the Concordat that was about to be concluded; partly – especially the meeting with ex-Chancellor Otto Ender, who was in charge of constitutional reform, on March 21 – they had to do with the Constitution finally promulgated on May 1, 1934 “in the name of God”. Bishops made sure that the representatives of the Church in the legislative councils of the *Ständestaat* should not be nominated without their consent; later on, a proposal was circulated that the Church should even be represented in the corporatist institutions organized along economic criteria.

Catholic Action was supposed to provide a clean break with the party politics of old; actual practice made a mockery of these intentions when the old

¹⁷ DASP, Memelauer Papers 1, Bishops’ Conference, Feb. 22, 1934. Nuntius Sibilica was quoted by the Italian Ambassador: the government “should put on trousers, no longer frocks” (ASMAE, Ambasciata Vienna 1861-1938, busta 303/2, report 1154/34, March 20, 1934); Iber, ‘Sotto il fascino’, op. cit., p. 321.

¹⁸ Ernst Hanisch, ‘Der politische Katholizismus als ideologischer Träger des ‚Austrofaschismus‘’, in: Emmerich Talos/Wolfgang Neugebauer (eds.), *Austrofaschismus*, 2002, Lit-Verlag, Wien, p. 58.

¹⁹ The Italian ambassador even wrote about the “impossibility for the Church to allow the Austrian episcopate alone to pursue political activities that had been denied to the clergy of all other countries” (ASMAE, Ambasciata Vienna, busta 303/4, report 5087/2786, Dec. 15, 1933). The consul in Innsbruck reported that Dollfuß had asked the nuntio to press for such a declaration in order to get rid of some of his own recalcitrant party leaders (ASMAE, Ambasciata Vienna, busta 303/4, report 5087/2786, Dec. 6, 1933); Innitzer thought the measures announced were a bit too radical (busta 307/6, report 42/01, Jan. 2, 1934).

²⁰ Gföllner’s paper, the *Linzer Volksblatt* of the same day (Dec. 7, 1933), insisted that the Church was not even allowed to renounce its influence over public affairs.

Volksvereine were simply taken over by Catholic Action under another name. Gföllner's Upper Austria played a pioneering role in that respect. True, some of the old parliamentary leaders in Upper Austria, where the Christian Socials were known for their scepticism towards authoritarian experiments, resented Gföllner's take-over; but Gföllner had only sacrificed a party already abandoned by its own leaders on the federal level.²¹ In June 1934, Gföllner submitted a memorandum to Rome outlining his strategy: the associations that had taken refuge under the umbrella of Catholic Action should of course not be formally and directly represented in political organisms. But they should make sure that the "most diligent and most loyal" of the men trained by them, should find their way into these bodies.²² There is hardly a better way to describe the function of a party in a state officially devoid of such creatures.

In 1935, Gföllner's way of expanding Catholic Action's activities was held up as a shining example to be emulated by the other dioceses.²³ By that time, Gföllner had long since become embroiled in a running feud with the *Heimwehr* wing of the 'Patriotic Front'. In fact, the supposedly authoritarian regime was a one-party state run by a two-party coalition. Just as the Christian Socials disguised their party as an affiliate of Catholic Action, the *Heimwehr* dressed up as a militia formation. Once again, the thinly veiled purpose was party politics under another name. In a memorandum circulated by Gföllner's secretary Hausleithner it was argued the *Heimwehr* should simply be reduced to "the level of an a-political shooting association".²⁴ Predictably, the *Heimwehr* complained about the "clericalizing tendencies" of the regime; at one point, even Chancellor Schuschnigg is supposed to have criticized the overzealous activities of Catholic Action in Austria.²⁵

The *Heimwehr* wanted to extend its grip on youth organizations by founding a sort of Austrian-style *Balilla* or Hitler Youth under its own command. Gföllner and his allies reacted furiously: both political and military education should start at the age of 21 years only, at best 18; girls should obviously be excluded altogether. At any rate, it was impossible to see Catholic associ-

²¹ Helmut Wohnout, *Regierungsdiktatur oder Ständeparlament? Gesetzgebung im autoritären Österreich*, 1993, Böhlau, Wien, p. 62 sqq., 116; Hanisch, 'Der politische Katholizismus', op. cit., p. 60, calls the withdrawal of priests a deathblow to the Christian Social party; Harry Slapnicka, *Christlich-soziale in Oberösterreich*, 1984, Oberöstr. Landesverlag, Linz, p. 278-284, interprets the liquidation of the *Volksverein* as a move in line with the demands of the *Heimwehr*. Gföllner's whole track record makes that very unlikely. There is a certain parallel with the fate of the Centre Party whose dissolution was ratified in the Concordat of 1933 only after the event. See Rudolf Morsey, *Der Untergang des politischen Katholizismus*, 1977, Belsar, Stuttgart, p. 207.

²² DASP, Memelauer Papers 1, Circular by Gföllner, June 2, 1934; Memorandum of June 15, 1934.

²³ DASP, Memelauer Papers 1, Bishops' Conference, Nov. 25-28, 1935.

²⁴ DASP, Memelauer Papers 1, Gföllner's circular, April 10, 1934; with a 14 page memorandum by Hausleithner ('Denkschrift über die politische Entwicklung in Österreich').

²⁵ ASMAE, Ambasciata Vienna 1861-1938, busta 307/1, report 4106/2165, Oct. 15, 1934.

ations dissolved in one-party formations often headed by suspect leaders, who hailed from free-thinking and pan-German circles. In the beginning, it was suggested these youth formations should be equipped with curates; later, even this proposal was seen as a concession to an undesirable institution. If any such organization were formed, it should remain under the guidance of local priests and teachers.

Education was an obvious point of conflict between the Catholic Church and any movement that paid lip-service to the *stato totalitario*. Thus, the debates soon assumed the character of an ideological controversy that centred on the proper interpretation of *Quadragesimo Anno*, the papal encyclical quoted by both sides.²⁶ In his circular of April 10, 1934, Gföllner argued that it belonged to the calling of the episcopacy to guarantee that *Quadragesimo Anno* was “executed faithfully”. His secretary Hausleithner expanded the scope of the controversy when he pointed to the dissolution of the Catholic trade-unions as a loss for the cause, attacked the desire for uniformity (*Gleichschaltungbestrebungen*) unmistakably based on the Reich German example and for good measure added his interpretation that *Quadragesimo Anno* unequivocally rejected Italian Fascism. Only by sticking to Christian principles could Austria “defend and differentiate itself from its neighbours”.²⁷ In late 1935 it was reported that the *Freiheitsbund*, the paramilitaries representing the old Christian Social trade-unions, had officially complained to Rome that the government was deviating from the straight and narrow line of *Quadragesimo Anno*.²⁸

The official statement of the Bishops about patriotic youth education echoed these thoughts when it stated that Fascism was “a foreign import that had to be decisively rejected because it was based on the doctrine of an absolutist totalitarian state.”²⁹ Part of that debate was a war of words, or as Dollfuß once put it, it was concepts that mattered, not terminology.³⁰ Neither the way the *Heimwehr* proudly saw itself as the standard-bearer of Austro-Fascism nor the way Gföllner argued against it, while stressing his support for authoritarian rule, was necessarily consistent or congruent with later concepts of Fascism. In practice, behind all the rhetoric loomed turf wars about jobs and patronage in a time of high unemployment. Even so, the controversy high-

²⁶ For the early reception of the encyclical in Austria, see Wohnout, *Regierungsdiktatur oder Ständeparlament?*, op. cit., p. 48-53.

²⁷ DASP, Memelauer Papers 1, Gföllner’s circular, op. cit.

²⁸ DASP, Memelauer Papers 1, Bishops’ Conference Nov. 25-28, 1935. At the same time the *Freiheitsbund* started to be subsidized by Papen for its anti-*Heimwehr* activities. Cfr. Franz Müller, *Ein ‚Rechtskatholik‘ zwischen Kreuz und Hakenkreuz: Franz von Papen als Sonderbevollmächtigter Hitlers in Wien 1934-1938*, 1990, Lang, Frankfurt, p. 134-139; Anton Pelinka, *Stand oder Klasse? Die christliche Arbeiterbewegung Österreichs 1933 bis 1938*, 1972, Europaverlag, Wien, p. 164-169.

²⁹ DASP, Memelauer Papers 1, ‘Denkschrift des Episkopats über vaterländische Jugenderziehung’, § 6.

³⁰ DDI VII/14, p. 425 (Nov. 20, 1933).

lighted a crucial fault-line, as soon as the network of Catholic institutions was threatened by a one-party system of whatever hue, even one generally friendly to the Church. In the summer of 1936, when the *Österreichische Jungvolk* was actually established, tensions had abated because the influence of the *Heimwehr* was clearly declining; a separate *Katholisches Jungvolk* was maintained under the wing of Catholic Action. In Vienna, however, it took a long time for cooperation between the two organizations to be worked out.³¹

The Nazi Challenge after 1933

The phrase about foreign imports referred to Italian Fascism. National Socialism, with its violent campaign against Dollfuß, was condemned in far more unequivocal terms. Once again, though, regional differences surfaced. Gföllner of Linz with his ‘tout azimuth’ approach charged ahead in January 1933, with his denunciation of Socialism, both National or international, with a swipe at ungodly Jewish influence thrown in for good measure.³² A few months earlier, Innitzer – who was negotiating with the Vienna-based “initiative for religious peace” in his diocese – had still counselled against any such blanket denunciation. The German bishops, too, faced with a Hitler government, and finding their way towards a concordat, were unhappy with Gföllner’s outburst. Austrian bishops, in contrast, were anxious to emphasize that the German concordat was a treaty between sovereign states, and did not imply any blessing of a particular government’s ideology.³³

However, the Nazi phenomenon refused to go away. In July 1936, at Mussolini’s prompting, the Austrian government tried to come to an agreement with the Third Reich. The German ambassador to Vienna, Franz von Papen (Hitler’s former conservative Deputy Prime Minister), was a pivotal figure during these negotiations. Papen was widely regarded as a renegade by the Center Party and distrusted by the old nuntio Sibilina who called him a wolf in sheep’s clothing. Papen, however, managed to get on speaking terms with Sibilina’s successor Cicognani.³⁴ Psychologically, the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War certainly also reinforced the trend towards an agreement between Fascists and Catholics.

At about the same time, Hudal – the Austrian-born rector of the Anima – published his analysis of National Socialist doctrine. In terms of Austrian

³¹ Laura S. Gellott, *The Catholic Church and the Authoritarian Regime in Austria 1933-1938*, 1987, Garland, New York, p. 183-226.

³² Kutschera, *Johannes Maria Gföllner*, op. cit., p. 92-98.

³³ Maximilian Liebmann, *Theodor Innitzer und der Anschluss. Österreichs Kirche 1938*, 1988, Styria, Graz, p. 38-42; Weinzierl, ‘Österreichs Katholiken’, op. cit., p. 494; Rudolf Zinnhobler, ‘Die Bischöfe Gföllner und Fließner in der Auseinandersetzung mit dem Nationalsozialismus’, in: Maximilian Liebmann et al. (eds.), *Staat und Kirche in der Ostmark*, 1998, Lang, Frankfurt, p. 521.

³⁴ Weinzierl, ‘Österreichs Katholiken’, op. cit., p. 497; see also Müller, *Ein ‚Rechtskatholik‘*, op. cit., p. 142, 252, 257.

politics, what was noticeable was that Hudal's ideas were first published in the *Reichspost*, the old Christian Social paper whose editor was then advocating *détente* with the Third Reich in order to get rid of the *Heimwehr* domestically.³⁵ Hudal lamented the fact that Austrian Nazis were steeped in a left-wing, anti-Clerical tradition but still held out some hope for an arrangement with Hitler who had disavowed the Austrian radicals after the failed putsch of July 1934. As happened with many controversial books, Hudal seems to have been more often quoted than read – or if read, most commentators focused their attention on the first and the last few pages, with their welcoming of the July Agreement and wishful thinking about an understanding between Catholicism and National Socialism.³⁶

Ideologically, what Hudal tried to do was to follow Sibilía's advice from 1932. He outlined those areas where Catholic doctrine and Nazi writings conflicted. Tongue-in-cheek he showed how much Nazi concepts owed to the Liberalism the Nazis had allegedly overcome. He condemned the pre-occupation with "race and blood" but added those were concepts that did not lend themselves to any precise definition, anyway.³⁷ In selecting his target, in common with most Catholic critics, he concentrated on dissecting the writings of Rosenberg, allegedly the high priest of Nazi paganism, and some of the statements in the Hitler Youth broadsheet *Wille und Macht*. From those proponents of an anti-Roman attitude, he appealed to Hitler's campaign autobiography *Mein Kampf* where the *Führer* had outlined a different approach. While he wished Hitler good luck in his fight against Moscow and Versailles, in principle, Hudal did not differ from his critics in his attacks on totalitarianism. But, perhaps because he lived in Italy with its far less thorough application of totalitarian concepts, Hudal believed Hitler could still be persuaded to follow Mussolini's example.³⁸ Or, as a former collaborator of Seipel put it: "Revolutions are always started by radicals but as a rule led to their conclusion by conservatives."³⁹

In terms of Church politics, Rome soon let it be known that Hudal had published his bestseller without official permission. Coming as it did, during the months when Pius XI was preparing his encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge*, it was

³⁵ Müller, *Ein ‚Rechtskatholik‘*, op. cit., p. 119; Liebmann, *Theodor Innitzer und der Anschluß*, op. cit., p. 44-53; Weinzierl, 'Österreichs Katholiken', op. cit., p. 498 sqq., Peter Godman, *Der Vatikan und Hitler*, 2004, Droemer, München, p. 84 sqq., 169-182. For the ensuing newspaper polemic, see: Peter Eppel, *Zwischen Kreuz und Hakenkreuz. Die Haltung der Zeitschrift ‚Schönere Zukunft‘ zum Nationalsozialismus 1934-1938*, 1980, Böhlau, Wien, p. 297 sqq., 332 sqq.; Rudolf Ebneht, *Die österreichische Wochenschrift ‚Der christliche Ständestaat‘. Deutsche Emigration in Österreich 1933-1938*, 1976, Matthias-Grünwald, Mainz.

³⁶ Alois Hudal, *Die Grundlagen des Nationalsozialismus*, 1937, Johannes Günther, Leipzig, p. 20, 250 sqq.

³⁷ Hudal, *Die Grundlagen des Nationalsozialismus*, op. cit., p. 71, 77, 116, 145.

³⁸ Hudal, *Die Grundlagen des Nationalsozialismus*, op. cit., p. 196, 247.

³⁹ Karl Anton Rohan, *Schicksalstunde Europas*, 1937, Leykam, Graz, p. 422.

seen as an unwelcome distraction. Within Austria, Innitzer supported Hudal's efforts to open a dialogue, with the 'right wing' of the Nazi movement at least. In general, bishops in areas with strong Catholic and farming majorities in the West of Austria followed an intransigent line; e.g. in Upper Austria, even aristocrats from an impeccably Catholic background complained about the machinations of "hyper-clerical cliques".⁴⁰ In minority positions (Vienna and the South), the hierarchy tried to develop a more nuanced response. Whether by accident or design, official Church attitudes thus seem to have mirrored the attitudes of their flock.

Notabene: That split did not necessarily follow a left/right divide – in general conservatives opted for intransigence, believers in *aggiornamento* opted for dialogue with the followers even of 'materialist' movements. Gföllner who had been the first to turn his guns on the Nazis, was famous for his strict views on just about everything. Post-war commentators who applauded his track-record as an anti-Nazi polemicist, were unhappy about his disquisitions on the proper form of antisemitism. In the same breath, Gföllner denounced pornography and liberal capitalism, too. On the other hand, some of the 'bridge builders' – denounced by post-1968 progressives – in their time also had a record as progressives, impatient with the boring routine of Catholic associational life (*Vereinskatholizismus*) and curial centralism.⁴¹

While stressing their solidarity as both Germans and Catholics, Austrian bishops often found themselves at odds with their Reich German colleagues: in 1931, when the German bishops had started issuing anti-Nazi pronouncements, their Austrian brethren still counselled caution "for tactical reasons";⁴² two years later, when the German bishops were compelled to backtrack and the German concordat was negotiated, Gföllner's outburst was seen as unhelpful by Faulhaber and others;⁴³ in turn, the attempt at a *détente* on Innitzer's and Hudal's part in 1936-37 was seen as a sort of stab in the back for Reich German Catholics suffering from thinly veiled persecution by the Nazi party despite the concordat.

Anschluss

The events of March 1938 and their aftermath, as far as Church-State relations are concerned, have been described in detail and with the right touch

⁴⁰ Schlossarchiv Helfenberg, Box 112, Count Peter Revertera to his father, Dec. 30, 1937.

⁴¹ Otto Schulmeister, 'Kirche, Ideologie und Parteien', in: Klostermann et al. (eds.), *Kirche in Österreich*, op. cit., p. 224-227.

⁴² DASP, Memelauer Papers 1, Bishops' Conference, Nov. 24-26, 1931.

⁴³ Detlef Junker, *Die Deutsche Zentrumspartei und Hitler 1932/33*, 1969, Klett, Stuttgart, p. 216; Zinnhobler, 'Die Bischöfe Gföllner und Fließner', op. cit., p. 521.

of drama by Maximilian Liebmann.⁴⁴ To some extent, they reflect an engrossing interest in a peripheral event, a plebiscite with a foregone conclusion; to some extent they feed into a debate about Austrian vs. German identity that has little to do with Catholicism, and even less with Fascism. As a brief summary of a long-ranging controversy, Innitzer publicly thanked God that the transfer of power had happened without bloodshed. When he tried to publish a further statement to calm his flock, the attempt was hi-jacked by Hitler's plenipotentiary Joseph Bürckel who turned it into a campaign slogan for the plebiscite to ratify the *Anschluss* on April 10. Hitler himself led Innitzer to believe that a cooperative attitude on the part of the Austrian bishops could also have beneficial effects for Church-State relations throughout the Third Reich.

However, Pius XI thought the Austrians had gone too far in accommodating Hitler.⁴⁵ The nuntio asked them to preface their declaration with a cautionary note about safeguarding the Church's rights; Bürckel, who had started life as a primary school teacher in a Catholic school, astutely answered that plea by inserting a Biblical phrase about Christian duties towards God and the Emperor but in turn insisted on Innitzer ending his letter with a *Heil Hitler*. The use Nazi propaganda made of that declaration, prompted Pius XI and Pacelli to call Innitzer to Rome for a consultation where they made him sign an even more elaborate disclaimer stating that the declaration did not, of course, imply an approval of things incompatible with Catholic faith. Hitler in turn saw Innitzer on April 9 to tell him that in the light of these tergiversations he no longer saw fit to issue the guarantees he had previously promised.

The Austrian bishops had suffered from the delusion of many voters: promises extended during an election campaign – even such a one-sided one – turned out to be just that. Even worse, with the best of intentions, they had almost managed to sit themselves between two stools and enrage both Rome and Berlin. When he returned from the Vatican, Innitzer unhappily lamented “Rome does not understand us”; even Waitz, far more sceptical about any arrangement with the Third Reich, angrily rejected criticism from abroad. The bishops had been conscious that the Church was widely seen as a pillar of the failed Schuschnigg regime. That was why they were eager to emphasize that their support had always rested on the principle of reciprocity: they had supported Schuschnigg because Schuschnigg had supported them.⁴⁶ They offered Hitler a deal in the same spirit but soon turned their back on negotiations with the Nazis once it became clear that official actions contradicted the verbal inducements held out to them.

⁴⁴ Liebmann, *Theodor Innitzer und der Anschluss*, op. cit., p. 67 sqq.; Jablonka, *Waitz – Bischof*, op. cit., p. 78 sqq.; Weinzierl, ‘Österreichs Katholiken’, op. cit., p. 508-515.

⁴⁵ Pius XI is supposed to have said that as a Pope he mourned the demise of Austria, but even more so as an Italian (Engel-Janosi, *Vom Chaos zur Katastrophe*, op. cit., p. 177).

⁴⁶ Jablonka, *Waitz – Bischof*, op. cit., p. 120 quotes the bishop's diary (March 14, 1938).

The Nazi authorities turned Austria into a laboratory when they disingenuously argued that neither the old Austrian concordate of 1933 nor the German one was any longer valid in the newly created *Ostmark*.⁴⁷ The summer of 1938 saw a systematic assault on Catholic schools and seminaries. As a final straw, the Order of the Teutonic Knights was abolished the day before a scheduled meeting of Bürckel and the bishops on September 8, 1938. As a result, Innitzer curtly informed Bürckel that he saw no point in talking to him any longer. A month later, a Catholic youth rally in St Stephen's turned out to be a little too exuberant for Bürckel's taste; a day later a Hitler youth mob sacked the Archbishop's Palace next to Saint Stephen's.

Kulturkampf had arrived with a vengeance. However, contrary to the unitary approach (*Gleichschaltung*) practised by the Nazis, relations with the Church belonged to the prerogatives of the party provincial chieftains (*Gauleiter*) whom Goebbels once ridiculed: they acted like perfect princelings of the *ancien régime* who only lacked the *ius primae noctis* for perfection. Nazi legislation, with its avowed aim of *Entkonfessionalisierung*, was indeed not far different from the policies pursued by many anticlerical late 19th-century law-makers, e.g. the French Third Republic. What made it worse was the arbitrariness of the regime that found all sorts of pretexts for harassing believers at an administrative level. In fact, in religious matters a consistent approach (*verbindliche Linie*) simply did not exist.⁴⁸ Once again, regional differences mattered. Salzburg, with *Gauleiter* Rainer and Archbishop Waitz, became a battleground, then reverted to an era of (almost) good feelings under their successors Scheel and Rohrer.⁴⁹ In Tyrol, Nazis were particularly upset about the appointment of a Jesuit, Paulus Rusch, as Apostolic Vicar.⁵⁰ In Upper Austria, Church and State seem to have developed a sort of Don Camillo and Peppone relationship of grudging mutual respect between Gföllner and *Gauleiter* Eigruber.⁵¹

In general, once military fortunes turned for the worse, the Nazi persecution of the Churches moved into a lower gear.⁵² "Hitler's own stance was characteristically shifty. [...] He combined the ideological rejection of Christianity of the radicals with the pragmatism of the moderates."⁵³ Thus, he called

⁴⁷ Hitler, July 12, 1938 (Alfred Rinnerthaler, 'Die Orden als Feindbild des NS-Staates', in: Liebmann et al. (eds.), *Staat und Kirche in der 'Ostmark'*, op. cit., p. 372).

⁴⁸ Rupert Klieber, 'Widerstand', 'Resistenz' oder 'Widerwillige Loyalität?', in: Liebmann et al. (eds.), *Staat und Kirche in der 'Ostmark'*, op. cit., p. 123 sqq.

⁴⁹ Ernst Hanisch, *Nationalsozialistische Herrschaft in der Provinz. Salzburg im Dritten Reich*, 1983, Landespressebüro, Salzburg, p. 190.

⁵⁰ Gerhard Wanner, 'Katholische Kirche und Nationalsozialismus in Vorarlberg', in: Liebmann et al. (eds.), *Staat und Kirche in der 'Ostmark'*, op. cit., p. 455.

⁵¹ Weinzierl, 'Österreichs Katholiken', op. cit., p. 518; Zinnhobler, 'Die Bischöfe Gföllner und Fließner', op. cit., p. 535, 547 sqq.

⁵² Weinzierl, 'Österreichs Katholiken', op. cit., p. 252.

⁵³ E. D. R. Harrison, 'The Nazi Dissolution of the Monasteries: A Case-Study', *English Historical Review* 109, 1994, p. 326 sqq.

for a provisional end to the campaign against the Church in mid-1941 when the war against the Soviet Union started – a conflict the Church could support to a much bigger extent than the war against the Western powers.⁵⁴ Anecdotal evidence suggests that the prestige of the Church rose as the regime's military fortune declined. In Salzburg e.g. the number of converts already exceeded the number of apostates in 1944.⁵⁵ In general, Catholics practiced what has been termed "limited loyalty" towards the Third Reich;⁵⁶ the Church was told not to provoke the regime but to defend its own. Statistically, priests still accounted for proportionally more victims of political persecution than any other professional group in Austria between 1938 and 1945. Maybe because of their ties to the pre-1938 regime, their tally of victims seems to have been slightly higher than in the rest of Germany.⁵⁷

Summary

The Church neither embraced nor rejected Fascism. If anything, it was regarded as a cure to be used wisely and in moderation – only moderation was not a quality usually associated with Fascism. The Church had always been sceptical about out and out absolutism – the absolutism from above, as exemplified by Joseph II, and the absolutism from below, as threatened by popular sovereignty. Old Austria had provided a sort of mixed constitution, with universal suffrage that actually benefited the Catholic parties (and might have benefited them even more if they had been able to overcome their scruples about female suffrage) but also with reliable safeguards through the power of veto exercised by a Catholic monarch.

Any solution arrived at after 1918 was *Ersatz*, at best. The Church faced an electorate with an in-built anti-clerical bias. Paradoxically, it was one of the benefits of class warfare to prevent free-thinkers from left and right to join forces. Seipel was far ahead of his peers when he developed the custom of playing their enemies off one against the other into a fine art. With Seipel gone, and Hitler on the rise, an authoritarian option to ward off the dangers from both left and right seemed the best way out. The question was not whether Austria was to be run by Fascists or Democrats, but whether they were good Catholics – or at least willing to leave the Church alone. Fascists were bound to get into a fight with the Church if they took the *stato totalitario* seriously. But then, there

⁵⁴ Wanner, 'Katholische Kirche und Nationalsozialismus', op. cit., p. 462-465; Rinnerthaler, 'Die Orden als Feindbild', op. cit., p. 391.

⁵⁵ Hans Paarhammer, 'Der Kirchengaustritt und seine Folgen in der NS-Zeit', in: Liebmann et al. (eds.), *Staat und Kirche in der Ostmark*, op. cit., p. 294.

⁵⁶ Klieber, 'Widerstand', op. cit., p. 131.

⁵⁷ Wanner, 'Katholische Kirche und Nationalsozialismus', op. cit., p. 463. For the numbers, see Klieber, 'Widerstand', op. cit., p. 131: Of roughly 6600 priests in Austria 42 were either sentenced to death or died in concentration camps; more than 800 were arrested at one time or another.

are not that many politicians who take their programmes that seriously. Unfortunately, Hitler did; Mussolini was willing to extend *trasformismo* to the Church; Starhemberg gave the impression that he did not even know exactly what he believed in.

The post-war world, of course, was different. As far as Bolshevism was concerned, the GIs did a better job than any of the self-proclaimed saviours of the Occident from the inter-war period. The Church accepted Western-style democracy as the only available option – and broadened its options by establishing links with non-Catholic parties. It was rewarded by a decline of anti-clericalism – and by a long period of Christian Democratic predominance in government. However, that was only one side of the coin; the reverse side was: all those pious Catholics also presided over decades when the secularisation of Austrian society, helped by the erosion of the farming world, increasingly gained speed.

CATHOLICISM AND FASCISM IN THE REALM OF ST. WENCESLAS: POLITICS IN THE SECOND CZECHOSLOVAK REPUBLIC AND THE PROTECTORATE OF BOHEMIA AND MORAVIA

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Historians of Czechoslovakia have long hesitated to use the label “fascist.”¹ Jan Havránek, one of the foremost historians of Czechoslovakia, began a 1966 paper at the University of Washington with,

“When I told my colleagues in Prague that I would lecture in the United States on Czechoslovak fascism in interwar Czechoslovakia, their first reaction was that I had accepted an impossible assignment. They agreed that there was German and Slovak fascism in interwar Czechoslovakia, but denied the existence of either Czech or Czechoslovak fascism.”²

Similarly, American historian Joseph F. Zacek remarked, “At first thought it seems inappropriate to include Czechoslovakia in any survey of native fascism in interwar Europe.”³ Even David Kelly, who produced a book-length monograph on Czech fascism, admitted, “the Czech Lands produced their own brand of native fascism, albeit a small and politically peripheral movement.”⁴ In broader collections on European fascism, Czechs rarely get more than a passing mention. Coverage on Czechoslovakia focuses on pro-Nazi Sudeten Germans and the Slovak puppet government during the war. Historians generally refer to Second Republic Czechoslovakia, which collaborated with the Nazi invaders from October 1938 to March 1939, as an “authoritarian” not a “fascist” state.

Those who study the relationship between interwar Catholicism and the burgeoning European fascist movement similarly find little evidence of fascist sympathies among Czech Catholic political leaders – as opposed to their counterparts in Slovakia. Nor did the small Czech fascist organizations seek

¹ I am indebted to Bruce Berglund for insightful comments on the manuscript and for invaluable suggestions for sources. Melissa Feinberg, David Frey, Eagle Glasheim, and Paul Hanebrink read earlier versions of this essay and provided their usual perceptive observations.

² Jan Havránek, ‘Fascism in Czechoslovakia’, in: Peter F. Sugar (ed.), *Native Fascism in the Successor States, 1918-1945*, 1971, ABC-CLIO, Santa Barbara, California, p. 47.

³ Joseph F. Zacek, ‘Czechoslovak Fascisms’, in: Sugar (ed.), *Native Fascism*, op. cit., p. 56.

⁴ David D. Kelly, *The Czech Fascist Movement, 1922-1945*, 1995, East European Monographs, Boulder, Colorado, p. ix.

partnerships with disgruntled Catholic Czechs. The small openly fascist group *Vlajka* (Banner) led by Radola Gajda and the *Národní Liga* (National League), led by the Mussolini admirer, Jiří Štříbrný, were staunchly secular.⁵

Instead, Czech Catholic leaders were broadly known for their opposition to Nazi Rule. The leader of the Czechoslovak People's Party, Msgr. Jan Šrámek was a member of every interwar Czechoslovak government and served as Prime Minister in the London-based Czechoslovak government in exile. David Kelly asserts, "Thanks largely to Šrámek, the relationship between Church and state was not marked by continuous hostility." By demonstrating that "Catholicism was not inimical to the new state" Šrámek helped to guarantee democracy's survival until the Munich pact. Kelly compares Šrámek favorably to his Austrian counterpart, Msgr. Ignaz Seipel who pursued a reactionary, even proto-fascist agenda.⁶ Even Alena Gajanová's 1962 study of Czech fascism "before Munich," written in an era when the Communist Party strictly censored historical writing, characterized, "many Czech and Bohemian German Catholics [as] anti-fascist."⁷ In other European states, Catholic politicians and Fascists shared views on the dangers of Communism, capitalism, republicanism, and liberal individualism, and favored Franco's forces in the Spanish Civil War. Yet, Czechoslovak Catholic politicians remained vocally supportive of the Republic, and avoided issues such as the Spanish Civil War, which could drive a wedge between their party and the state. Even those Czech Catholic intellectuals who aligned themselves with European Catholic political ideology and supported Franco were strikingly critical of fascism and Nazism.

Nonetheless, I argue in this paper that Catholicism was central to the iconography of the Second Czechoslovak Republic and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. As Czech politics moved swiftly to the right upon the Nazi annexation of the Sudetenland and the subsequent invasion of Bohemia, Czech leaders and intellectuals who collaborated with the Germans relied on Catholic symbolism to demonstrate *both* a Czech national identity *and* an acceptance of German dominance in Bohemia and Moravia. This did not necessarily mean that these politicians and intellectuals were "fascists", but it does demonstrate that leaders of the Second Republic, who had long opposed the liberal democracy of the First Republic, manipulated Catholic history and symbolism to legitimize their power and new state.

I will examine this connection by analyzing the iconography of the post-Munich state led by Emil Hácha, a self-declared faithful Catholic, as well as the writings of Czechoslovakia's leading Catholic intellectual, Jaroslav Du-

⁵ See especially, Milan Nakonečný, *Vlajka: k historii a ideologii českého nacionalismu*, 2001, Chvojokovo Nakl., Prague.

⁶ Kelly, *The Czech Fascist Movement*, op. cit., p. 9.

⁷ Alena Gajanová, *Dvoji tvář: z historie předmnichovského fašismu*, 1962, Naše vojsko, Prague, p. 147. See also Tomáš Pasák, *Český fašismus 1922-1945 a kolaborace 1939-1945*, Práh, Prague, 1999.

rych. While certainly influenced by achievements and ideologies of the European Right, men like Hácha and Durych were also consciously exploiting Bohemia's unique religious history and the cultural debates that had raged in interwar Czechoslovakia.

Bohemian Religious History and the Czechoslovak Republic

The Czech Catholics who were attracted to rightist ideologies in the 1930s were those most frustrated with the way Czech national identity had been constructed and how the First Republic embodied that identity. During the nineteenth-century national renaissance, Czech patriots pointed to medieval Bohemian church reformers as evidence of a unique national culture. They chose as their hero the late medieval Catholic priest and Prague University rector Jan Hus, who urged church reforms, such as use of the vernacular language and the distribution of both bread and wine to the laity – traditionally, only ordained priests could receive the wine. Hus was burned for heresy on July 6, 1415, and the Bohemian Lands erupted into civil war following Hus's death. Bohemia was among the earliest Protestant regions in Europe, but the Austrian-sponsored Counter Reformation of the seventeenth century forcibly reconverted the population to Roman Catholicism.⁸

Nineteenth-century Czech nationalists interpreted Hus's proto-Protestant teachings as a challenge to Habsburg and Roman Catholic power in Bohemia. Honoring Jan Hus became a way to create a national narrative that distanced Czech history from Austrian rule. Hus's support of the Czech language also bolstered nationalists' demands for a separate Czech identity, distinct and separate from the dominant German culture of Imperial Austria. Following the First World War, the new state's president, Tomáš G. Masaryk – a convert to Protestantism and the author of several works about Hus and his legacy – posited Hus as a moral role model for the nation.⁹ For his Presidential seal and flag, Masaryk chose a quotation attributed to Hus: “Pravda vítězí” (“The truth prevails”). As Vladimír Macura wrote, “Through its relation to Masaryk and its transfer to the presidential flag, this phrase became officially statist [...] and joined the ranks of relics of nation and state.”¹⁰ Then in 1925, a state celebration in honor of Hus created an international conflict, when the Papal Nuncio left

⁸ For a full account of Czech nationalism and religious symbolism see Cynthia Paces, *Prague Panoramas: National Memory and Sacred Space in the Twentieth Century*, 2009, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh.

⁹ See especially, Tomáš G. Masaryk, *The Meaning of Czech History*, 1974, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

¹⁰ Quoted in Matthew S. Witkovsky, ‘Truly Blank: The Monument to National Liberation and Interwar Modernism in Prague’, *Umění* 49, 2001, p. 59. See also Vladimír Macura, ‘Pravda vítězí! Jako politické heslo’, in: Jiří Kroupa (ed.), *Veritas vincit-Pravda vítězí*, 1995, Koniasch Latin Press, Prague, p. 70-74.

Czechoslovakia in protest of a festival that honored a heretic. Three years of broken diplomatic relations between Czechoslovakia and the Vatican ensued.

In this country that was – at least nominally – over ninety percent Roman Catholic the choice of a condemned heretic as the unifying symbol of the nation enraged many, who protested the use of the Hus icon and proposed their own religious heroes, such as St. Wenceslas and St. Jan Nepomucký (St. John of Nepomuk), as the true symbols of the Czech historic past. The tension between the Protestant and Catholic symbols in Prague is particularly complicated by the fact that few nationalists who revered Hus and Žižka were religious reformers or even Protestant. They argued that Hus was a secular symbol, but religious Catholics found the choice provocative. Throughout the interwar period, many Catholic writers and leaders insisted that Czechoslovakia truly was a *Catholic nation*, and that Masaryk's circle of "free thinkers" unnecessarily and unfairly skewed the national identity toward a minority belief.

While touted as a multiparty democracy, Czechoslovakia had its discontents that were frustrated with the small ruling elite that gathered around President Tomáš Masaryk at Prague Castle. While moderates in the Catholic Czechoslovak People's Party supported Masaryk's government, those on the Catholic Right felt embattled by the principles of the new state. They blamed Masaryk's "Hussitism" for the 1918 destruction of a Baroque Marian Column that shared Prague's Old Town Square with a memorial to Jan Hus and for the break with the Vatican following the Hus Celebrations of 1925.¹¹

Leading this criticism was Jaroslav Durych, who wrote popular and critically acclaimed historical novels, poetry, as well as political columns in Catholic newspapers. Durych criticized what he felt was a culture of anti-Catholicism in Masaryk's Czechoslovakia, and he frequently decried the destruction of the Marian Column, the choice of a heretic as a national symbol, and the prominent Prague monument to Hus, which he characterized as a "bad statue of a bad preacher."¹² Durych used his newspaper columns to remind Czech readers of Bohemia's Catholic heritage, the contribution of the Jesuits and Baroque culture, yet he was dismissed by the editor of *Lidové listy*, the daily newspaper of the Czechoslovak People's Party, for his extreme views. His 1929 novel *Bloudění* (translated into English as *Descent of the Idol*) chronicled the achievements of Albrecht of Wallenstein, a Bohemian noble who led the Habsburg army during the Thirty Years War. Yet, despite the prominence of his writing during interwar Czechoslovakia, his political influence was limited to fellow conservative Catholics, particularly because Czechoslovak People's Party leader Msgr. Jan

¹¹ On religious conflict during the interwar period, see especially Cynthia Paces, 'The Czech Nation must be Catholic! An Alternative Version of Czech Nationalism during the First Republic', *Nationalities Papers* 27/3, 1999, p. 407-428.

¹² Jaroslav Durych, 'Staroměstský rynek', *Lidové listy*, May 10, 1923.

Šrámek maintained the Catholic party's pro-Masaryk position.

Although many Catholic intellectuals resented Czechoslovak republicanism, they did flourish in the second decade of independent Czechoslovakia. A circle of Czech Catholic writers including Durych, Jan Čep, Jan Zahradníček, Bohuslav Reynek, and Jakub Deml became prominent during the 1930s. The Catholic publisher Josef Florian sponsored many of their works, and members of the group were considered innovators in naturalist poetry and other genres. In 1935, an international Catholic Congress met in Prague, with Church leaders from throughout Europe attending. Leaders of the Czechoslovak People's Party, the Church hierarchy, Catholic intellectuals, as well as thousands of faithful Catholics participated, creating an atmosphere of inclusiveness and piety.

Emil Hácha, St. Wenceslas, and Collaboration

Despite the successes of Czechoslovak Catholics in the late First Republic, the advent of the Second Republic encouraged conservative Catholics to reassert themselves. Following Masaryk's retirement in 1935 Edvard Beneš succeeded as President. Within three years, Beneš was forced to accept the Munich Pact, in which France and Britain acquiesced to Hitler's demands for the German-populated Sudetenland. When Beneš resigned in protest and fled to London, the National Assembly chose Emil Hácha as Beneš's successor. Politically conservative and a deeply religious Catholic, Hácha had been a member of the Austro-Hungarian civil service and became a judge in independent Czechoslovakia. In 1925, the highly respected legal scholar became Chief Justice of Czechoslovakia's supreme court, appointed to the position by Masaryk. Right-leaning politicians, who embraced a wide range of beliefs – fascist, Catholic, anti-Communist, and anti-Semitic – hoped that the Second Czechoslovak Republic would pursue a conservative agenda, and mollify Germany enough to maintain an independent Czech government.

The Second Republic, ruled by the newly formed National Unity Party (a coalition of right and center-right parties), ended with Germany's invasion in March 1939. Hácha, quite ill and suffering emotionally from his recent widowhood, signed his country over to Hitler at a meeting in Berlin. Urging his citizens to remain calm, Hácha reported in a radio address that he had signed an agreement that, "confidently placed the fate of the Czech people and country in the hands of the Fuehrer and German Reich."¹³ The predominantly Czech regions of the Second Republic became the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, under the supervision of Konstantin von Neurath, a German diplomat and Nazi Party Member. Slovakia became an autonomous satellite state of the Third Reich. Hácha retained his position, though with even more limited authority,

¹³ Quoted in Chad Bryant, *Prague in Black*, 2007, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., p. 29.

and held the title State President until the end of the war.

Following the establishment of the Protectorate, Hácha defended his actions as the only way to safeguard his beloved nation. A complex figure, he challenged threats to national sovereignty, such as the dismantling of the Czechoslovak army and the introduction of the Gestapo in Czech territory, while welcoming the limits placed on democratic institutions, which he had long distrusted. While the Czechoslovak People's Party's moderate and pro-state leader Jan Šrámek served as Prime Minister in Beneš's London government, many Catholic politicians at home abandoned the inclusive patriotism of Šrámek, and deepened right-wing beliefs in authoritarian government.

Hácha made little public comment about the place of Czech Jews in the new state, but there is evidence that he supported the increased reprisals against them. Livia Rothkirchen, the foremost historian of the Holocaust in Bohemia and Moravia, argues that Hácha sought a greater role for the Czech leadership to participate in the 1941 deportations of Jews, but was rebuffed by Heydrich. He also accused Beneš of bowing to the influence of the "Jewish milieu" in the London government-in-exile. Hácha and other Czech leaders did appeal to the Germans to exempt a list of 1000 prominent Czech Jews, who had served the state in areas of science, the arts, sports, and outstanding military service, from anti-Jewish legislation. The request was denied, and Hácha assured the Nazi leadership that he would from then on only put forward names based on their direct relationship to the Aryan race. In the end, only 27 Jews were permitted to remain on the list, and even a personal appeal by Hácha to exempt Professor Hugo Siebenschein, who was completing a Czech-German dictionary, was denied. Rothkirchen concludes that these failures illuminate the profound powerlessness of the Czech State during the Protectorate.¹⁴

Despite his undeniable weakness, Hácha believed that his appeasement with Germany had at least saved the Czech nation and its Catholic symbols. In an interview with Czech writer Karel Horský, Hácha characterized himself as a martyr who had saved Prague: "And still, as you know, [the statue of] Saint Wenceslas is still standing in its place. Charles Bridge is standing, too, the Castle district was not blown 'into the air' and hundreds of thousands of our young people are still breathing and living."¹⁵

Saint Wenceslas, the tenth-century Bohemian patron saint, was a convenient national symbol for the Hácha government. As the national saint and

¹⁴ Livia Rothkirchen, 'The Protectorate Government and the 'Jewish Question' 1939-1941', *Yad Vashem Studies* XXVII, 1999, p. 331-362. See also Milada Červínková/Libuše Otáhalová (eds.), *Dokumenty z historie čsl. politiky 1939-1943, Acta occupationis Bohemiae et Moraviae*, 1966, Academia, Prague, a document collection of Protectorate era government documents and letters between Czech and German leaders, and Livia Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia. Facing the Holocaust*, 2005, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem.

¹⁵ Quoted in Bryant, *Prague in Black*, op. cit., p. 42.

founder of the Bohemian Crownlands, he symbolized Czech statehood and patriotism, while his legacy of compromise with the German princes in the region demonstrated a Czech willingness to cooperate with their neighbors. To justify his collaboration with the Nazi occupiers, Hácha told the Czechoslovak cabinet: “The Czechoslovak statesmen should take the national saint, Duke Wenceslas, as their model... [He] fought for German-Czech understanding, although initially he did not find understanding with his own people.”¹⁶ Hácha further drew the parallel between himself and the martyr Wenceslas by celebrating his inauguration with a state-sponsored Mass in St. Wenceslas Chapel of St. Vitus Cathedral, where the saint’s remains are held. At the Mass, Cardinal Kašpar spoke about the imperative of beginning the new era in the “spirit of St. Wenceslas.”¹⁷ His pastoral letter on October 11, 1938, just over a week after the signing of the Munich Agreement, had similarly argued that the memory of Wenceslas was a uniting force. Although he considered Munich a “catastrophe”, he blamed the divisive nationalist discourse of the First Republic for much of the crisis: “The belief in St. Wenceslas had already so often united our people, whereas Hussitism, [...] the Protestantism of White Mountain, the Godlessness of our new era, brought on today’s catastrophe.”¹⁸

Also that December, Prime Minister Rudolf Beran remarked that “national purity” must be safeguarded and that “national life and education would be inspired by a Christian spirit and by the tradition of St. Wenceslas.” He attempted to assure Czechs that the nation was still independent and that “Foreign models would not be blindly copied.”¹⁹ On September 28, 1939, a day shy of the one-year anniversary of the Munich Agreement, Hácha and fellow politicians as well as church leaders staged a Wenceslas Feast Day celebration for Prague. After the morning Mass, religious leaders carried Wenceslas’s remains from St. Vitus Cathedral, across Charles Bridge, through the Old Town, and finally to Wenceslas Square. More than 10,000 citizens watched the procession.²⁰

Not all Prague residents wanted to commemorate Wenceslas as a sign of compromise with Germany, however. Rather than support the state’s procession, many citizens throughout the day quietly laid wreaths at the Wenceslas

¹⁶ As quoted in Vojtech Mastny, *The Czechs under Nazi Rule. The Failure of National Resistance, 1939-42*, 1971, Columbia Univ. Press, New York, p. 23.

¹⁷ Emilia Hrabovec, ‘Der Heilige Stuhl und die böhmischen Länder 1938’, in: Martin Zückert/Laura Hölzlwimmer (eds.), *Religion in den böhmischen Ländern 1938-1948. Diktatur, Krieg und Gesellschaftswandel als Herausforderungen für religiöses Leben und kirchliche Organisation*, 2007, Oldenbourg, Munich, p. 120.

¹⁸ Hrabovec, ‘Der Heilige Stuhl’, op. cit., p. 119.

¹⁹ ‘B. C. Newton to Lord Halifax. No. 430 (C 15240/2475/12) Prague December 5, 1938’, excerpted in Bela Vago, *In the Shadow of the Swastika. The Rise of Fascism and Anti-Semitism in the Danube Basin, 1936-1939*, 1975, Saxon House for the Institute of Jewish Affairs, London, p. 360. This book is a collection of excerpted British diplomatic papers from Romania, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, with introductory chapters by Vago.

²⁰ Bryant, *Prague in Black*, op. cit., p. 59.

Memorial in front of the National Museum. In the evening, five women stood at the Memorial and sang the medieval hymn to St. Wenceslas; the gathering crowd answered with the Czechoslovak national anthem, a clear act of defiance. The police responded by continually silencing the crowd, until they finally dispersed the gathering and arrested five men. Four were described as “of Czech nationality” and one as a Jew, whom they held for five days.²¹ Early in the Protectorate carefully staged and organized events were tolerated, but any spontaneous displays of Czech patriotism were quickly subdued.

In general, though, the German authorities responded favorably to Hácha’s emphasis on Wenceslas as a national symbol that represented compromise with Germany. The Reich Propaganda Ministry also contributed to the developing iconography, issuing a statement in 1941 that the German and Czech culture shared many attributes that could be found in such cultural institutions as the St. Wenceslas tradition and Bohemian Baroque.²² Even Reinhard Heydrich participated in a ceremony to honor the memory of St. Wenceslas. Appointed as Deputy *Reichsprotektor* in September 1941, Heydrich was charged with harshening Nazi rule in Bohemia and Moravia and quelling the passive resistance of Czech workers. He also ordered the establishment of Terezín (Theresienstadt), a town in Bohemia, as a Jewish ghetto and ordered the deportation of Bohemian Jews. Though Heydrich took more control over Bohemia and Moravia than had von Neurath, he saw value in allowing some demonstrations of Czech identity, especially when they conformed to German intentions in the region. In a memorandum to Martin Bormann, head of the Nazi Party chancellery, Heydrich remarked on his participation in the festival for the inspection of the Wenceslas crown and insignia, during which he symbolically handed the seven keys of the Wenceslas Shrine in St. Vitus Cathedral to President Hácha. Heydrich informed Bormann that the act symbolized “a covenant of acceptance of the Wenceslas tradition in its loyalty to the Reich.”²³ In adapting the memory of St. Wenceslas, Hácha and other Catholic leaders, accomplished a key goal: to preserve some vestige of Czech patriotism in the difficult years of German occupation. However, their willingness to share the symbol with the Nazi regime signaled the deep failure of the era: Hácha’s inability or unwillingness to oppose the brutal Nazi policies taking place under his watch.

Jaroslav Durych and Catholic Intellectualism

The Czech leadership of the Second Republic and those who remained

²¹ Bryant, *Prague in Black*, op. cit., p. 59.

²² René Küpper, ‘Zur Instrumentalisierung der katholischen Kirche für die nationalsozialistische Protektoratspolitik’, in: Zückert/Höhlzlwimmer (eds.), *Religion in den böhmischen Ländern*, op. cit., p. 160.

²³ Küpper, ‘Zur Instrumentalisierung’, op. cit., p. 162.

nominally in power during the Protectorate were not alone in turning to Catholic symbols as a way to define the new Czech state. Catholic intellectuals, including Jan Čep, Jan Zahradníček, Bohuslav Reynek and Josef Florian, hoped that the defeat of Beneš and others from Masaryk's circle would usher in a new era of faith and Catholic hegemony. Jaroslav Durych was especially prominent, as he frequently contributed essays to newspapers and saw his role as a spokesman for conservative Catholics. Yet, as early as 1927, Durych had distanced himself from "fascism" claiming that the movement was an "Italian matter" and that the only label that described him was Catholic.²⁴ As international conflicts loomed in Europe in the 1930s, Durych became more vocal on positions common among conservative Catholics throughout Europe. In particular, he criticized the Republican fighters in the Spanish Civil War and viewed Franco as a savior of the Catholic Church in Spain and Europe. His view on this issue aligned him with politically oriented Catholics throughout Europe, and further distanced him from the moderate Catholicism of Jan Šrámek and the Czechoslovak People's Party.

Durych drew widespread attention when he attacked the beloved Czech writer and Masaryk intimate, Karel Čapek. Čapek's writing had become increasingly anti-war and more boldly anti-fascist. In a 1937 article, Durych fiercely criticized Čapek's support for the Republican cause in the Spanish Civil War. Like many Catholic European intellectuals, Durych viewed support for the Republicans as anti-Catholicism, writing "Intellectuals – European and ours – expect that Catholics should submit to slaughter, docilely and loyally."²⁵ In his piece, which he entitled "The tears of Karel Čapek", Durych did not merely challenge Čapek's political views but also questioned Čapek's more general anguish about the brutality of the civil war. Many viewed the article as an attack on the sickly Čapek's masculinity, particularly the closing of Durych's piece:

"I am an army doctor. For me, men are divided into three groups, A, B, and C, according to their fitness for military service. Over many long years, I have come to realize that each of these groups, A, B, and C, has its own morality. When I read Čapek, it is as an army doctor, not as a writer. I recognize him as a C, and I am afraid. I am afraid of everything that is C. I can imagine what would happen if C morality were to be favored by a large part of the nation."²⁶

²⁴ Martin C. Putna, 'Searching for a 'Fourth Path': Czech Catholicism between Liberalism, Communism, and Fascism', in: Bruce R. Berglund/Brian Porter-Szűcs (eds.), *Christianity and Modernity in Eastern Europe*, 2010, Central European University Press, Budapest, p. 85-109.

²⁵ Jaroslav Durych, 'Pláč Karla Čapka' (from *Akord* (Brno), roc IV, no. 1 1937, 8-11), reprinted in Zuzana Filová (ed.), *Jaroslav Durych: Publicista*, 2001, Academia, Prague, p. 220-223.

²⁶ Durych, 'Pláč Karla Čapka', op. cit., p. 11. Also quoted in Ivan Klíma, *Karel Čapek: life and work*, 2002, Catbird Press, North Haven, Connecticut, p. 213.

Čapek responded directly in the widely read journal *Přítomnost* in a piece that writer Ivan Klíma called “short and poisonous.”²⁷ More subtly, in a later essay on literature and masculinity, Čapek wrote that sophisticated, psychologically complex modern literature features ambiguous characters, whereas undeveloped writers create overly masculine military heroes. According to Klíma, many literarily minded Czechs believed that Čapek was attacking Durych’s military themed historical novels as well as his political views.

Following the establishment of the Second Czechoslovak Republic, Durych had high hopes for a new political structure in his country. He called for a new Czechoslovakia based on Catholic morality. On December 1, 1938, Durych published an article demanding a “purification” of the Czech lands, away from the freethinking and Hussite ideologies prevalent in the First Republic.²⁸ He went as far as to suggest “forbidding Masaryk’s philosophy” in order to bring God into the center of political life. He continued by arguing that Masaryk’s “catastrophic anti-Catholic philosophy did not belong among the foundation stones of the Second Republic.”²⁹

Despite admiration for authoritarian governments that he believed more efficient and appropriately hierarchical, Durych was not pro-Nazi. He naïvely believed that a Czech government under Hácha could govern independently from Germany. He placed tremendous faith in Hácha’s Catholicism and celebrated the new President’s incorporation of Catholic symbols and rituals in state ceremonies. Shortly after Hácha was installed in office, Durych was convinced that the Czechs’ willingness to work with Germany had preserved the Czech state:

“Yesterday we awoke from a terrible and painful dream. Our state flag has still not been desecrated; the army has still not succumbed and fallen into the earth; our nation and state has still not disappeared. It appears to us that this horrible and painful dream of the last two months is over... Thank God! After this era that appeared unendingly long, it is now possible that in front of the whole state, the fateful word ‘President’ could be declared again in St. Vitus Cathedral. Thanks to God and thanks to our new President.”³⁰

Even after the Second Republic succumbed to the German invasion and was incorporated into the Reich, Durych remained hopeful that Catholicism would form the basis of Czech life. In May 1939 – two months after the fall of the Second Republic and the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohe-

²⁷ Klíma, *Karel Čapek*, op. cit., p. 213.

²⁸ Jaroslav Durych, ‘Ve jménu Boží’ (from *Věšer* (Praha), rok XXV, č. 345, Dec. 1, 1938) reprinted in Filová (ed.), *Jaroslav Durych*, op. cit., p. 300-301.

²⁹ Jan Gebhart/Jan Kuklík, *Druhá Republika 1938-1939: Svár Demokracie a Totality v politickém, společenském a kulturním životě*, 2004, Paseka, Prague, p. 183, 277.

³⁰ Durych, ‘Ve jménu Boží’, op. cit., p. 300-301.

mia and Moravia – Durych petitioned Hácha to support the rebuilding of the Marian Column on Old Town Square. “The destruction of the Column of the Virgin Mary has not been atoned for”,³¹ he reminded the President. Durych appealed to Hácha as a fellow believer, who wanted to portray himself as a Czech patriot, not a mere collaborator, suggesting that the Marian Column could become a symbol of a new form of Czech nationalism. Durych was not the only Czech Catholic who saw the fallen Marian Column as a symbol of the First Republic’s debauchery. At the ceremony to inaugurate Hácha and bless the new state in December 1938 Prague Archbishop Cardinal Kašpar had remarked, “How offended God had been, beginning with the collapse of the Memorial Column to the Virgin Mary in the middle of the Main Square of Prague.”³²

In his letter to Hácha, Durych wrote that Mary is and has always been the “national mother, queen, and protector of the country.”³³ The Czechs brought shame upon their nation by abandoning Mary as their symbol, while neighboring countries continued to call her “Regina.” He assured Hácha that he only sought government approval of the project; voluntary associations would raise the necessary funds independently. The Presidential Chancellery responded, promising Durych that his request would be carefully considered. During the tumultuous period of the Protectorate and the Second World War, the resurrection of the Marian Column never came to fruition. The Marian Column did not rise again, but the era allowed the voices of its supporters to rise in a way they never could during the First Republic.

Durych refrained from extensively commenting on the Jewish question. However, one frequently cited article targeted Jews for their influence in the Czech education system. In a journal for Moravian teachers, Durych wrote, “Within the Jewish-Masonic question is the problem of progressive teachers who have an opportunity to overturn completely students’ foundations – from liberalism and humanism to Bolshevism and atheism.” He called for the Second Republic to “purify” school textbooks of “bad and pseudo-humanistic and unpatriotic ideology.” According to historians Jan Kuklík and Jan Gebhart, Durych’s statement was part of a larger effort in the “nationalistic press” to create a new “cultural hegemony” in the Second Republic.³⁴

Durych remained hopeful that the war would serve a moral purpose in Europe. He published his newspaper columns throughout the war and received funding from a Reich cultural office to travel to Germany.³⁵ In an April 1944

³¹ Durych to Presidential Chancellery. Archiv Kancelář Presidenta Republiky. Sign.: D 7171/38.

³² Quoted in Hrabovec, ‘Der Heilige Stuhl, op. cit., p. 119.

³³ Quoted in Hrabovec, ‘Der Heilige Stuhl, op. cit., p. 119.

³⁴ Quoted in Gebhart/Kuklík, *Druhá Republika*, op. cit., p. 203, and Jan Rataj, *O autoritativní národní stát: ideologické proměny české politiky v druhé republice 1938-1939*, 1997, Karolinum, Prague, p. 151.

³⁵ Bruce Berglund, *Personal Correspondence*, Jan. 29, 2011.

article in *Národní politika*, a conservative newspaper that was allowed to publish throughout the war, Durych wrote: “The primary purpose of this war is the victory of moral order over the anarchy that suffocated Europe for centuries.” For Durych, war was cathartic, and he seemed less concerned with who was victorious than with the idea that “victory plus faith” would yield a “renewed world.”³⁶ Durych’s goal was always a society in which a conservative Catholic morality and order prevailed. Yet, while he never allied directly with fascism or articulated a coherent political position, Durych’s faith in the cleansing power of war and his frequent call for a new social order certainly echoed the rhetoric of European fascist movements.

Reevaluating Catholicism and Fascism in the Czech Republic

The question remains as to whether we can and should characterize the era’s Catholic intellectuals and Czech political leadership as fascist. Most historians of this era refrain from the label, choosing instead “authoritarian” or an “authoritarian democracy” to describe the Second Republic.³⁷ The era’s conservative Catholic leaders, who remained in Bohemia during the war, believed that they stood to gain by supporting or tolerating German intervention and then occupation. They believed they could create a new Republic, divorced from Masaryk’s “Hussite” Czechoslovak state. The structure of the occupied state encouraged a hierarchical order that figures like Durych and Hácha believed natural and necessary. Perhaps naively, perhaps perceptively, Catholics like Hácha and Durych believed that Catholic rhetoric and symbols would simultaneously reinvigorate a Czech Catholic identity and appease the Germans with evidence of a long history of Czech-German cooperation.

In the post-communist era in the Czech Republic, there has been renewed interest in the Second Republic and Protectorate; and a lively, sometimes acrimonious, debate has emerged among scholars about the appropriateness of the labels “fascist” or “authoritarian” to describe the Czechs who served or supported the Second Republic and Protectorate governments. Jaroslav Durych is at the center of these debates, having been labeled a “fascist” by prominent Czech historians and then defended by other scholars and journalists. Since the fall of communism, Durych’s poetry, novels and essays have been republished and celebrated, and conferences and scholarly volumes have been dedicated to him. The newspaper *Studentské listy* featured an article about him in 1991, labeling him a “dissident” of the First Republic. The author

³⁶ Jaroslav Durych, ‘Smysl doby’ (*Národní politika*, roč LXII, č. 119, April 30, 1944, 1) reprinted in Filová (ed.), *Jaroslav Durych*, op. cit., p. 242-244.

³⁷ Jan Rataj calls the Second Republic an “authoritarian national state” in his landmark history of the era (Rataj, *O autoritativní národní stát*, op. cit., passim). Bela Vago quotes Rudolf Beran, the Prime Minister of the Second Republic who referred frequently to the new regime as an “authoritarian Democracy” (Vago, *In the Shadow of the Swastika*, op. cit., p. 83).

commended Durych's willingness to voice opposition to the wildly popular Masaryk. Using a term normally reserved for the activists who fought communism, in particular the new president, Václav Havel, the writer's choice of words was certainly provocative.³⁸

Durych also gained popularity with a newly formed organization in post-communist Prague: "The Society for the Rebuilding of the Marian Column on Old Town Square." Led by sculptor Jan Bradna, this association of private citizens with no formal support from the Catholic Church has been raising funds and petitioning the Prague municipal government for nearly twenty years to place a replica of the Marian Column on its former site. Society leaders often quote Durych's newspaper columns to demonstrate that the desire to replace the column dates to the First Republic.³⁹

Yet, other scholars, such as Jan Rataj, Jan Gebhart and Jan Kuklík, have strongly criticized Durych, often unfavorably comparing him to fellow writer Karel Čapek. Durych's pre-Munich attacks on Čapek have been used to discredit the Catholic writer. Only weeks after Durych's columns "Purifying the Nation" and "In the Name of God", called for Masaryk's philosophy to be forbidden in the new state, Karel Čapek succumbed to pneumonia at age 48. Čapek's close friendship with Masaryk and the timing of Čapek's death on Christmas Day, 1938, secured his status as the martyr of the First Republic. His friend and doctor expressed, "Munich killed him. [...] The Munich tragedy knocked the legs out from under what he believed and the wounded, disappointed soul wavered and, in the end, refused to support the sick, fragile body in its struggle."⁴⁰

Scholars' debates about Durych have reached a wider audience than the academy. In 1994 an exchange by literary scholar Jaroslav Med and historian Václav Žák was published by *Literární noviny*, the Czech equivalent of the *London or New York Review of Books*. Med's article, "Jaroslav Durych – Fašista?" takes historian Jan Rataj to task for calling Durych and several Czech Catholic intellectuals, such as Jakub Deml, Bohuslav Reynek, Josef Florian, and others associated with the publications *Řád* and *Národní obnova* part of "an active and enthusiastic fascist group."⁴¹ Med, whose own work has critiqued Durych's "almost un-Christian militant zeal for the victory of Roman Catholicism"⁴² in his support for Franco during the Spanish Civil war, nonetheless argues that "fascist" does not accurately describe Durych's ideology. Med agrees that Durych's increasing mistrust of democracy was the "weightiest mistake of his life" but

³⁸ Dan Hrubý, 'Jaroslav Durych, Disident první republiky', *Studenské listy* 2/5, 1991, p. 3.

³⁹ Cynthia Paces, 'The Fall and Rise of Prague's Marian Column', *Radical History Review* 79, 2001, p. 141-155.

⁴⁰ Klíma, *Karel Čapek*, op. cit., p. 236.

⁴¹ Jaroslav Med, 'Jaroslav Durych – Fašista?', *Literární noviny* 26, June 6, 1996, p. 7.

⁴² Jaroslav Med, 'Jaroslav Durych-Doslov', in Filová (ed.), *Jaroslav Durych*, op. cit., p. 341-345.

explains that Durych naively believed that only through the authority of the Roman Catholic hierarchy could people create a Godly Kingdom on earth.” This extreme viewpoint, according to Med, led Durych further into “isolation but never toward fascism.”⁴³

Vaclav Žák responded to Med’s piece with another article in *Literární noviny*, entitled “Christian values and political power.” Accusing Med of “apologetics”, Žák sided with Rataj and insisted that Durych and his circle embraced “the idea of fascism or at the very least flirted” with the ideology. The “Christian values” espoused by the Second Republic leadership and their intellectual supporters, such as Durych, Jan Čep, and Jan Zahradníček, enabled the anti-Semitism that became rampant in the occupied Protectorate. For example, he argued Durych’s suggestion to purge high school teachers who refused to “purify” school curricula, helped lay the groundwork for the unraveling of democracy after the war. Further, Durych’s association with publications that became increasingly authoritarian, anti-Semitic, and anti-democratic renders him culpable even for articles he did not pen himself.⁴⁴ For Rataj, Žák, and other Czech historians, Durych’s anti-Semitic statements about the Czech education system, coupled with his rhetoric of national purification, warrant the label fascist. Literary historian Martin Putna, the foremost expert on Czech Catholic literature, criticizes both approaches as polemical and “ideologically influenced” and calls for a more balanced treatment of Durych and other Catholic writers. He argues that Durych sought a “fourth path” that privileged Catholicism as a governing principle over liberalism, communism and fascism. These anti-democratic tendencies, he suggests, can only be effectively assessed “in the context of the time.”⁴⁵

Hácha, too, has been reassessed by Czech historians and journalists. Numerous articles that tried to make sense of Hácha’s role in history have appeared in the popular press. Many concurred with writer Viktor Šlajchrt who called Hácha “weak, indecisive, but basically a decent man.” Šlajchrt’s article in the news magazine *Respekt* was provocatively entitled, “The Good Czech. Emil Hácha” and put forward Hácha’s own argument that he was trying to preserve some Czech autonomy in the face of German aggression. Šlajchrt’s characterization of Hácha as “good” is facetious, but he does offer some rationalization for Hácha’s action, claiming that Hácha’s illnesses, “made him practically insane.”⁴⁶ Popular writers have made much of Hácha’s recent widowhood and numerous disabilities including diabetes and senility. Professional historians

⁴³ Med, Jaroslav Durych – Fašista?, op. cit.

⁴⁴ Vaclav Žák, ‘Křesťanské hodnoty a politická moc’, *Literární noviny* 34, Aug. 25, 1994, p. 7.

⁴⁵ Putna in Berglund/Porter-Szűcs (eds.), *Christianity and Modernity*, op. cit., p. 90. Putna also references Petr Fiala/Jiří Hanuš (eds.), *Katolická církev a totalitarismus v českých zemích*, 2001, CDK, Brno, as a non-ideological study.

⁴⁶ Viktor Šlajchrt, ‘Dobrý Čech. Emil Hácha’, *Respekt* 17, June 12, 2006, p. 13-15.

give a more nuanced view of Hácha, yet also consider his weakness a primary characteristic. Several scholarly biographies have appeared since the fall of Communism, ranging from the sympathetic assessment by Vit Machálek to the highly critical work of Dušan Tomášek and Robert Kvaček. Tomas Pasák's study of Hácha is widely considered the most comprehensive and even-handed.⁴⁷

Books on the Second Republic also evaluate Hácha's influence and the role of his Catholicism in decisions. Jan Gebhart and Jan Kuklík's book about the Second Republic emphasizes that the Nazi regime approved of Hácha's ascension, particularly because he opposed Freemasonry and held anti-Semitic views. They also emphasize his manipulation of the St. Wenceslas myth as a way to promote Catholicism while appeasing Germany. Jan Rataj places considerable responsibility for the Second Republic's authoritarian ideology on Hácha. His important book challenged the prevailing characterization of Czechoslovakia as a victim of external forces – Nazi Germany and Western appeasement. Instead, he looks to the deep conservatism of Hácha, Beran, and the Catholic intelligentsia to find domestic roots of authoritarianism. His book was controversial, as it forced Czechs to reconsider the mythology of their pre-communist past, yet has become one of the most influential books on the Second Republic.

These debates about the Second Republic point to the development of sophisticated academic debates in the post-communist era, as well as an interest in modern Czechoslovak history by readers of the popular press. Almost immediately after the fall of Communism, Czechs mined literary and historical sources to rediscover parts of their past that had been obscured or forbidden by the Communist regime. In Durych, many found a forgotten literary figure, who practically invented the Czech historical novel, spoke for conservative Catholics, and represented political and social viewpoints that challenged the hegemony of Masaryk's governing circle. In Hácha they found a complex historical figure, misguided and naïve, yet also believing that an authoritarian state could somehow preserve a vestige of Czech culture and independence. Contemporary Czech scholars seek to complicate the nation's past, leading it away from both the nostalgia surrounding Masaryk and the First Republic and the heavy-handed biases of Marxist academics. Perhaps this is why there has been considerable debate about the term "fascist", as it has been used carelessly in the past. After years of propaganda, Czechs understand that words and labels matter. Nonetheless, consensus about whether Second Republic leaders and intellectuals should be called "fascists" is unlikely to be reached.

⁴⁷ See Dušan Tomášek/Robert Kvaček, *Causa Emil Hacha*, 1995, Themis, Prague, Tomáš Pasák/Robert Kvaček, *JUDr. Emil Hácha*, 1997, Horizont, Prague, Vit Machálek, *Prezident v zrcetel: Život, činy a kříž Emila Háchy*, 1998, Regulus, Prague, and Tomáš Pasák, *Emil Hácha (1938-1945)*, 2007, Rybka Publishing, Prague.

‘CONCILIARE LA CONCEZIONE TOTALITARIA CON LE TRADIZIONI CATTOLICHE DELLA NAZIONE’. IL PARTITO POPOLARE E IL MOVIMENTO FASCISTA IN SLOVACCHIA (1922-1943)

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Introduzione

La maggior parte degli studi sulla penetrazione del fascismo in Europa centro-orientale è dedicata all’analisi dei regimi autoritari che nel corso degli anni ’20 e ’30 dello scorso secolo si instaurarono in tutti, o quasi, i paesi dell’area.² Tra le poche eccezioni ad essersi opposte alla tentazione autoritaria figurava la Cecoslovacchia. Nonostante l’immagine idealizzata quale “bastione della democrazia” sia stata rivista negli ultimi anni, il paese del presidente Masaryk, di solito, viene relegato ai margini delle indagini riguardanti la diffusione dell’ideologia fascista in Europa.³ Sebbene siano apparsi alcuni studi sul fascismo ceco, più numerosi sono i lavori dedicati allo Stato slovacco (1939-1945) guidato da Jozef Tiso.⁴

¹ Desidero ringraziare Monica Rebeschini e Francesco Caccamo per aver letto e commentato il manoscritto.

² Arnd Bauerkämper, *Il fascismo in Europa 1918-1945*, 2009, Ombre corte, Verona; Gustavo Corni, *Fascismo e fascismi. Movimenti partiti regimi in Europa e nel mondo*, 1989, Editori Riuniti, Roma; Stuart J. Woolf (a cura di), *Il fascismo in Europa*, 1968, Laterza, Bari; Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, 1991, St. Martin’s Press, New York, p. 130-131.

³ Il termine bastione di democrazia è preso in prestito dal titolo del seguente saggio: F. Gregory Campbell, ‘Central Europe’s Bastion of Democracy’, *East European Quarterly* 11/2, 1977, p. 155-176.

⁴ Sul fascismo ceco si veda: David Kelly, *The Czech Fascist Movement 1922-1942*, 1995, Columbia University Press, New York; Bedřich Loewenstein, ‘Il radicalismo di destra in Cecoslovacchia e la prima guerra mondiale’, *Storia Contemporanea* 2/3, 1970, p. 503-527; Joseph F. Žacek, ‘Czechoslovak Fascism’, in: Peter Sugar (ed.), *Native Fascism in the Successor States (1918-1945)*, 1971, ABC-CLIO, S. Barbara; Tomáš Pasák, *Český fašismus 1922-1945 a kolaborace 1939-1945*, 1999, Práh, Prague. Sullo Stato slovacco durante la seconda guerra mondiale e la sua collaborazione con l’Asse si veda Yeshayahu Jelinek, *The Parish Republic: Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party 1939-1945*, 1976, Columbia University Press, New York-London; Yeshayahu Jelinek, ‘Clero e fascismo: Il partito di Hlinka in Slovacchia e il movimento croato Ustasha’, in: Stein Ugelvik Larsen/Bernt Hagtvet/Jan Petter Myklebust (a cura di), *I fascisti. Le radici e le cause di un fenomeno europeo*, 1996, Ponte alle Grazie, Firenze; Jörg K. Hoensch, *Slovensko a Hitlerova vypočadna politika*, 2001, VEDA, Bratislava; Tatjana Tönsmeier, *Das Dritte Reich und die Slowakei 1939-1945*, 2003, F. Schöningh, Paderborn.

Il presente saggio prende invece in considerazione un lasso di tempo di più ampio respiro, partendo dal presupposto che un'altra ideologia totalitaria di destra, il fascismo italiano, sia esistita e si sia diffusa in Slovacchia prima della salita al potere di Hitler in Germania e dell'instaurazione del Terzo Reich. Perciò lo studio intende analizzare la situazione slovacca, allora parte della neonata Cecoslovacchia, tentando di capire se e in quale modo l'affermazione di Mussolini in Italia influenzò e contribuì alla diffusione del fascismo in Slovacchia. In questo modo si cercherà di dimostrare che il fascismo di stampo italiano attirò l'attenzione di una parte dell'élite politica slovacca ancor prima, e forse maggiormente, rispetto al nazismo di marca tedesca.

Dalla caduta dell'Impero alla nuova Europa

Non diversamente da altre parti del defunto Impero asburgico, anche la Cecoslovacchia, negli anni successivi al conflitto mondiale, si trovò ad affrontare una situazione confusa. In ambito economico, sebbene la condizione fosse migliore rispetto a quella degli altri Stati successori, poiché entro i confini cecoslovacchi si venne a trovare circa il 70% del potenziale industriale delle province occidentali della Monarchia, la nuova Repubblica non poté esimersi dall'affrontare un periodo seppur passeggero di crisi. Alle difficoltà di ordine economico si sommarono quelle di carattere nazionale.⁵ Se la maggior parte della popolazione tedesca, più di tre milioni di persone, concentrata ai margini del nuovo Stato, ma anche in molte delle principali città (Praga e Brno), ambiva all'unione con la Germania, i polacchi invece esigevano la restituzione di una parte della Slesia che si trovava in mano ceca, mentre in Slovacchia il governo centrale faticò non poco per togliere il comando alla precedente amministrazione ungherese.⁶ Inoltre, il trattato di pace di Trianon aveva lasciato in Slovacchia attorno agli 800 mila ungheresi, a dir poco insoddisfatti della nuova condizione di minoranza in cui furono relegati.⁷ Gli stessi slovacchi iniziarono a manifestare segni di insofferenza verso l'indirizzo politico ed economico centralista adottato dal governo di Praga. La scarsa sensibilità di quest'ultimo in materia di differenze nazionali era ravvisabile anche dai discorsi della classe politica al potere, che insisteva sul concetto di un'unica nazione cecoslovacca; la lingua ufficiale del Paese divenne, infatti, quella cecoslovacca.⁸

⁵ Ivan Berend/Gyorgy Ranki, *Lo sviluppo economico nell'Europa centro-orientale nel XIX e nel XX secolo*, 1978, Il Mulino, Bologna, p. 219.

⁶ Per quanto riguarda la situazione delle minoranze nazionali in Cecoslovacchia nel periodo tra le due guerre, soprattutto dal punto di vista legislativo, si veda René Petráš, *Menšiny v meziválečném Československu*, 2009, Karolinum, Prague.

⁷ József Galántai, *Trianon and the Protection of Minorities*, 1992, Columbia University Press, Boulder (Colorado).

⁸ Francesco Leoncini, *La questione dei Sudeti 1918-1938*, 1976, Liviana, Padova.

Questa situazione fu interpretata da una parte della popolazione slovacca come un'ingiustizia. A pilotare il malcontento c'erano i deputati di ispirazione cattolica, poco favorevoli ad una centralizzazione del nuovo Stato, ma che fino ad allora avevano dovuto cedere il passo ai politici di tendenza cecoslovacchista. I deputati cattolici si rifiutavano oramai di ricoprire un ruolo subordinato nel panorama politico locale, richiamandosi al fatto che la stragrande maggioranza della popolazione slovacca era profondamente legata alla religione cattolica. Il loro capo era monsignor Andrej Hlinka, fondatore e guida indiscussa del partito popolare slovacco (*Slovenská ľudová strana*).⁹ Oltre all'impronta religiosa, il principio di nazionalità rappresentava uno dei fondamenti ideologici della compagine popolare, che di conseguenza negava l'esistenza di una nazione cecoslovacca: si affermava che cechi e slovacchi erano due nazionalità distinte ed indipendenti, unite nella stessa compagine statale su un piano di uguaglianza. Se la situazione di emergenza che si era presentata alla fine della guerra poteva essere considerata una giustificazione plausibile del continuo richiamarsi ad una nazione cecoslovacca, già dopo pochi mesi quest'esigenza fu considerata da Hlinka e dal suo partito superata. Perciò, seppur ribadendo la necessità di un ruolo guida delle autorità centrali praguesi, Hlinka e i suoi non smisero mai di rivendicare una certa autonomia per la regione slovacca.¹⁰ Queste richieste si fecero sempre più pressanti nel marzo 1919, quando si venne a sapere dei contenuti del Patto di Pittsburgh, fino ad allora ignorato in Slovacchia.¹¹ Le pretese autonomiste conobbero un nuovo slancio con l'impegno per la creazione di un parlamento e di un'amministrazione propri, sottoscritto da Tomáš G. Masaryk, allora rappresentante del Consiglio nazionale cecoslovacco e futuro presidente della Cecoslovacchia, e con l'influente diaspora ceca e slovacca negli Stati Uniti.¹²

Le richieste si radicalizzarono a tal punto da ipotizzare intenzioni secessioniste dei suoi promotori, che poterono contare su un appoggio esterno e su gruppi e individui che non tardarono a proclamare come proprio il credo fascista. Il partito di Benito Mussolini era oramai salito al potere in Italia, da dove sprigionava una notevole forza di attrazione. L'Europa centro-orientale era

⁹ La figura di Hlinka era così rilevante che dal 1925 in poi al nome del partito si associò anche in forma ufficiale il suo. Divenne così la *Hlinková slovenská ľudová strana*.

¹⁰ Martin Vašš, *Slovenská otázka v 1. ČSR (1918-1938)*, 2011, Vydavateľstvo Maticy slovenskej, Martin.

¹¹ Il 30 maggio 1918 si riunirono nella città americana di Pittsburgh i rappresentanti della *Slovenská Liga* (Lega slovacca), dello *České Národní Sdružení* (Associazione nazionale ceca) e dello *Sváz Českých Katolíků* (Unione dei cattolici cechi) dove siglarono con Tomáš G. Masaryk, il cosiddetto Patto di Pittsburgh (*Pittsburská dohoda*), un documento sul futuro assetto da dare al nuovo Stato unitario. Tra i punti più importanti spiccavano il carattere repubblicano e democratico dello Stato e la necessità, all'interno di questo, di un ordinamento autonomo per la Slovacchia.

¹² Sul movimento autonomista slovacco si veda Elisabeth Bakke, *Doomed to Failure? The Czechoslovak nation project and the Slovak autonomist reaction*, 1999, University of Oslo, Oslo.

una zona potenzialmente molto ricettiva nei confronti del modello fascista e presentava quelle stesse condizioni che avevano portato alla ribalta il fenomeno in Italia: rivendicazioni territoriali a scapito dei vicini, mancanza di tradizioni democratiche, larghe masse di contadini analfabeti fino a pochi anni prima estranei alla vita politica e che ora esigevano una svolta radicale nella conduzione della questione agraria, un movimento comunista che stava prendendo velocemente forza, ed in più, una nutrita popolazione ebraica, facile preda di slogan populistici.

Dalla nuova Europa al Neue Ordnung

La Cecoslovacchia poteva apparire un'eccezione. Con un apparato industriale al passo con le potenze occidentali ed un livello di istruzione decisamente più elevato, la Repubblica di Masaryk si differenziava dalla situazione in cui si trovavano i suoi vicini. Non così la sola Slovacchia, le cui condizioni di arretratezza erano quelle descritte sopra. Nonostante gli slovacchi non accampassero diritti su territori altrui, tranne alcuni villaggi in Polonia, la questione della popolazione ungherese e della frontiera meridionale, quella con l'Ungheria, era oggetto di continue e violente polemiche. I contrasti nazionali e le richieste di autonomia dei politici slovacchi non passarono inosservati alla rappresentanza diplomatica italiana, nel primo dopoguerra retta dall'incaricato d'affari a Praga Francesco Barbaro, che in uno dei suoi rapporti riscontrava "come il movimento autonomista, anziché diminuire d'intensità, continua ad aumentare in modo piuttosto allarmante. Se grave è il problema delle relazioni tra tedesco-boemi e cechi nella Repubblica, molto più assillante è la questione slovacca".¹³

Alle istanze autonomiste iniziarono nel 1922 a mischiarsi, nella visione di alcuni politici slovacchi, i principi dell'ideologia fascista. L'archetipo mussoliniano attirava parecchie simpatie e "si estese in Europa per il solo fatto di esistere in Italia".¹⁴ Formazioni che si richiamavano apertamente alla dottrina fascista si diffusero, infatti, nei mesi immediatamente successivi alla marcia su Roma "in tutto il mondo".¹⁵ In Slovacchia nacquero all'interno di due partiti, la *Slovenská národná strana* (SNS) e la *Slovenská ľudová strana* (SĽS). A guidarle erano alcuni membri scontenti della condotta dei propri partiti o esclusi dai loro vertici, che con la formazione di nuove organizzazioni cercavano di spodestare i capi per occuparne il posto.

¹³ *Documenti Diplomatici Italiani* (poi DDI), serie VII-volume I, documento n° 263, p. 176.

¹⁴ Jerzy Borejsza, *Il fascismo e l'Europa orientale. Dalla propaganda all'aggressione*, 1981, Laterza, Roma-Bari, p. 21.

¹⁵ Juan J. Linz, 'Lo spazio politico e il fascismo come late-comer: condizioni che hanno condotto al successo o al fallimento del fascismo come movimento di massa nell'Europa fra le due guerre', in: Larsen/Hagtvet/Myklebust (a cura di), *I fascisti*, op. cit., p. 171.

A Martin, città simbolo del movimento nazionale slovacco, dalla fine del 1922 si riuniva la *Jednota slovenských junákov* (Unità degli eroi slovacchi), che si dichiarava ufficialmente estranea a rivendicazioni di carattere politico, ma nelle pratiche politiche e nella simbologia adottata dal raggruppamento si potevano ravvisare molte similitudini con l'ideologia fascista, poiché dall'organizzazione erano categoricamente esclusi comunisti ed ebrei, inoltre i loro membri indossavano la camicia nera. Un altro raggruppamento vicino alla SNS era l'*Organizácia slovenských národných fašistov* (Organizzazione dei fascisti nazionali slovacchi) che operava nella cittadina di Lučenec e, come è ravvisabile dal nome, non nascondeva la propria ammirazione per le idee fasciste.

Nessuna delle due organizzazioni riuscì ad ottenere un seguito particolarmente rilevante da assumere una posizione di qualche peso nel panorama politico locale. L'assenza di un programma politico coerente, i dissidi interni e l'impossibilità della SNS di appoggiarne le iniziative, perché essa stessa troppo debole, significò per loro un rapido declino.

Il potenziale successo di quella miscela di slogan nazionalistici impregnati di una forte carica sociale, discorsi antibolscevichi e battute antisemite non passò inosservato; alcuni esponenti del partito popolare si dimostrarono abili nel capire quale piega stesse prendendo la situazione nazionale ed internazionale e nello sfruttarla a proprio favore. Da alcuni personaggi vicini alla *Ludová strana* venne così messa in piedi l'organizzazione *Rodobrana* (Difesa patriottica). Dal gennaio 1923 iniziarono a formarsi, inizialmente in maniera riservata, quasi segreta, i primi gruppi di *rodobranci*. Ufficialmente istituiti con la precisa funzione di mantenere l'ordine durante i comizi del partito popolare, questi venivano visti dai loro capi come l'embrione di quella milizia che, dopo la realizzazione dell'autonomia della Slovacchia, avrebbe sostituito la gendarmeria ceca.¹⁶

La *Rodobrana* si dimostrò molte volte elemento di disturbo più che fautrice dell'ordine: le aggressioni dei suoi membri contro avversari politici, soprattutto comunisti e socialdemocratici, erano molto simili alle pratiche degli squadristi italiani. Violenti scontri si ebbero in molti centri slovacchi. Alle loro riunioni gli oratori incitavano il pubblico ad un'aperta rivolta, promettevano il benessere generale in una Slovacchia autonoma, richiamandosi apertamente agli ideali del fascismo italiano.¹⁷ Il loro padre spirituale e organizzatore principale del movimento era Vojtech Tuka; già professore all'università ungherese di Bratislava, dopo la chiusura di questa, Tuka si avvicinò alla *Ludová strana* e lo stesso Hlinka gli conferì compiti di rilievo nella redazione del foglio ufficiale del par-

¹⁶ Yeshayahu Jelinek, 'Storm-Troopers in Slovakia: The Rodobrana and the Hlinka Guard', *Journal of Contemporary History* 6/3, 1971, p. 97-119.

¹⁷ Miloslav Čaplovič, 'Rodobrana. Čierny pluk medzivojnovného Slovenska', *História Revue* 1/5, 2001, p. 12.

tito, lo *Slovák*.¹⁸ A capo della Rodobrana non c'era però Tuka, bensì Vojtech Hudec, uno dei molti giovani entusiasti che si unirono all'organizzazione. Oltre a Hudec, spiccavano per zelo ed efficienza i nomi di Alexander (Šaňo) Mach e di Ján Farkaš, futuri esponenti di altissimo livello del partito popolare.

La struttura organizzativa della Rodobrana era piuttosto articolata: la base era formata dalle *krídla*, le ali, con a capo un *krídlar*. Messe assieme, le *krídla*, costituivano una *tluľa*, truppa, che a sua volta si univa assieme ad altre truppe in gruppi. All'inizio della sua attività la Rodobrana poteva contare su tre gruppi: il più attivo aveva la sua base a Bratislava, gli altri due facevano capo alle sedi di Ružomberok e di Košice.

Vi facevano parte uomini, soprattutto giovani, attratti dall'aura di misticismo e segretezza che aleggiava attorno al nuovo movimento, e che già erano vicini alle organizzazioni locali della SES e dell'*Orol* (aquila), un'organizzazione ginnico-politica d'ispirazione nazional-popolare contrapposta alla liberale *Sokol* (falco) e strettamente legata alle istituzioni religiose ed al clero cattolico. Vestiti di camicie nere, i membri della Rodobrana erano muniti di *valaške*, bastoni, simili ad un'accetta, dal manico lungo, usate solitamente dai pastori e con le quali solevano allenarsi durante i loro esercizi di carattere militare. Molte volte le portavano con sé ai raduni ed ai comizi della SES.

La Rodobrana registrò un buon seguito, soprattutto nella parte occidentale della Slovacchia, tanto che in pochi mesi di vita riunì attorno a sé circa 5 mila aderenti. Ma la sua attività, che si andava facendo man mano più violenta, fu considerata troppo pericolosa dalle autorità cecoslovacche e perciò messa al bando il 31 agosto 1923.

Nonostante le misure restrittive adottate dal governo, gli aderenti alla Rodobrana continuarono la loro attività in altre organizzazioni simili, soprattutto nell'*Omladina* (Gioventù), nello *Združenie katolíckej slovenskej mládeže* (Unione della gioventù cattolica slovacca) e nella *Mlada autonomistická generácia* (Giovane generazione autonomista), nonché in altre organizzazioni legate alla Chiesa cattolica come il già menzionato *Orol* o lo *Spolok sväteho Vojtecha*. La presenza dello stesso Tuka simboleggiava la continuazione con l'organizzazione precedente. Il buon risultato elettorale ottenuto dalla *Slovenská ľudová strana*, che alle elezioni del novembre 1925, con quasi mezzo milione di voti, scavalcò gli agrari di Milan Hodža (poco meno di 250 mila voti), fece dei popolari il primo partito in Slovacchia. Forse, è grazie a tale affermazione che il governo acconsentì alla rinascita legale della Rodobrana.

Riorganizzata in due sezioni principali, quella di Bratislava, capeggiata dall'ex ufficiale dell'esercito ceco-slovacco Anton Snaczký, contava 29 mila membri, mentre la sezione orientale annoverava circa 22 mila presenze. Il loro

¹⁸ Ivan Kamenec, 'Prenikanie fašistickej ideológie a organizácií Národnej obce fašistickej do slovenského politického života v medzivojnovom období', *Historické štúdie* 24, 1980, p. 49.

programma politico non si differenziava da quello precedente ed i bersagli preferiti degli interventi pubblici continuavano ad essere il governo ed il presidente Masaryk, accusati di portare alla rovina il Paese e di essere indistintamente massoni, ebrei, socialisti e comunisti. Chiedevano l'autonomia della regione ed esigevano il riconoscimento di una più netta distinzione della nazionalità slovacca da quella ceca. Un volgare antisemitismo misto a slogan demagogici a sfondo sociale attirava soprattutto giovani, studenti, la piccola e la media borghesia. Ideologicamente vicini al fascismo italiano, questi veniva spesso tirato in ballo dal foglio dell'organizzazione chiamato anch'esso Rodobrana, che così si esprimeva in merito all'Italia:

“Centinaia di migliaia di partigiani entusiasti seguono oggi Mussolini, certi che egli segue la giusta via. In questi tre anni di governo la sua attività come capo del governo stesso, costituisce motivo di ammirazione per il mondo intero. Mussolini è diventato l'esempio e l'ideale per molti, particolarmente in quegli stati in cui la massoneria ebrea ha posato le sue mani adunche e trama oscuramente per trascinare l'Europa allo sbaraglio. Il fascismo, che significa ordine e giustizia e che ha spazzato l'anarchia social-comunista, è diventato oggi l'aspirazione di molti popoli. Da noi pure, in Slovacchia, il movimento fascista rappresentato dal partito 'Rodobrana' ha molte speranze di successo poiché si appoggia sulla parte sana della nazione, su di una massa di lavoratori, onesti ed entusiasti, guidati da capi che li condurranno alla vittoria”.¹⁹

Elogi come questi per il dittatore italiano furono destinati a riproporsi con frequenza sempre maggiore, non solo sui fogli più radicali com'era la Rodobrana ma anche sull'organo del partito popolare, lo *Slovák*, soprattutto dal 1926 in poi, da quando Hlinka nominò Tuka alla direzione del foglio. Pur approvando i toni filo-italiani e anti-governativi di Tuka, Hlinka si dimostrò tuttavia più moderato circa i tempi ed i modi da usare per ottenere l'autonomia della Slovacchia. Non deve perciò stupire l'articolo dello *Slovák* pubblicato in occasione di una visita a Bratislava di una delegazione di ufficiali dell'esercito italiano guidata dal generale Graziani:

“Il luminoso esempio italiano splende anche per noi. Esso ci incita all'azione. Noi Slovacchi marciamo verso una grande trincea ideale. La nostra 'RODOBRANA', che è il nostro Fascio, è infiammata d'entusiasmo, le sue braccia obbediscono con saldo vigore alla coscienza della sua forza. Essa è incoraggiata dalla miracolosa energia, dal valore e dall'inconcusca potenza dei fasci italiani.”²⁰

¹⁹ L'articolo è citato da un bollettino propagandistico che la legazione slovacca a Roma iniziò a pubblicare nel 1940. *Archivio Centrale dello Stato* (in seguito ACS), Ministero della Cultura Popolare-Direzione Generale Propaganda (in seguito MCP-DGP), busta 46, Legazione della Repubblica Slovacca-Ufficio Stampa, Boll. N. 1-1940, Rodobrana, 25.7.1926.

²⁰ ACS, MCP-DGP, busta 46, Legazione della Repubblica Slovacca-Ufficio Stampa, Boll. N. 1-1940. La visita ebbe luogo a Bratislava il 2 luglio 1926.

Gli attacchi al governo centrale si intensificarono diventando sempre più espliciti: l'11 maggio 1926 il quotidiano popolare uscì con un articolo in prima pagina, dal titolo *Fascismus regenerans*. Nel cantare le lodi di Mussolini e del sistema da egli instaurato in Italia l'autore dell'articolo, quasi sicuramente lo stesso Tuka, rilevava che la situazione politica locale non si differenziava di molto da quella in Italia nell'autunno del '22, registrando il pericolo comunista in agguato e le idee fasciste in continua espansione. Scagliandosi contro circoli governativi, socialisti, legionari ed ebrei, colpevoli di denigrare il fascismo, l'autore aggiungeva che questi sarebbe stato il benvenuto se avesse portato con sé i vantaggi che si erano avuti in Italia.

Il moltiplicarsi delle dichiarazioni anti-governative e di marca filo-fascista si spiega anche con il fatto che in quel periodo si fecero più intensi e proficui i contatti tra Tuka ed il movimento fascista ceco guidato dal generale Gajda, con il fine di preparare un colpo di Stato. In questo senso furono importanti i contatti di Tuka con Attilio Tamaro, all'epoca console italiano a Vienna e fautore di un sovvertimento in Europa centro-orientale a favore di una maggiore presenza italiana nell'area.²¹

Nel 1929 Tuka venne arrestato con l'accusa di tradimento e di spionaggio in favore dell'Ungheria. Il suo partito, che poco prima era entrato a far parte del governo e che non poteva di certo sorvolare sul successo avuto da Tuka fra una buona parte dell'elettorato, ordinò ai suoi ministri Tiso e Labaj di dare le dimissioni. In questo modo, la *Ludova strana* aveva sposato le posizioni dei suoi membri più radicali. Paradossalmente, tutto ciò aveva portato all'affievolimento delle organizzazioni dichiaratamente fasciste, che a cavallo degli anni '20 e '30 avevano perso molta della loro carica radicale a vantaggio del partito popolare.

A far sì che i popolari si rafforzassero contribuì non poco la politica mussoliniana. Proprio nel 1929, infatti, il duce siglò con la Chiesa cattolica i Patti Lateranensi, accattivandosi le simpatie di molti fedeli fino ad allora dimostratisi scettici verso la sua condotta politica. Arrivando a un accordo con la Santa Sede e ponendo fine ai dissidi fra Quirinale e Vaticano durati oltre mezzo secolo, Mussolini estese la sua popolarità a milioni di cattolici.²²

Dalla salita al potere di Hitler all'instaurazione dello Stato slovacco

Con la salita al potere di Hitler in Germania, Mussolini dovette intervenire per non farsi superare a destra dall'avversario tedesco. Con la creazione nel 1934 dei CAUR (Comitati d'Azione per l'Universalità di Roma), una specie di Internazionale fascista, il duce cercò di arginare l'ascesa di Hitler e di conservare così il proprio ruolo di principale referente per tutti i movimenti di

²¹ Attilio Tamaro, *La lotta delle razze nell'Europa danubiana*, 1923, Zanichelli, Bologna.

²² Borejsza, *Il fascismo*, op. cit., p. 24.

destra.²³ Dalla metà degli anni '30 tutta una serie di libri riguardanti la dottrina e la politica fascista furono tradotti in ceco e slovacco; non furono rare nemmeno le pubblicazioni di autori slovacchi inneggianti alla figura di Mussolini ed alla sua opera, come dimostra il libro di Karol Murgaš *Nové Taliansko* (La nuova Italia) del 1937. Tuttavia, la grande attenzione dedicata da parte italiana alla propaganda estera non poté evitare che l'apparato propagandistico tedesco e la forza economico-politica della Germania si imponessero in gran parte dei Paesi dell'Europa centro-orientale.

Nonostante il mancato trionfo dei popolari alle elezioni del 1935, sullo scenario politico locale il partito ottenne pur sempre il maggior numero di voti. L'élite politica cecoslovacca non poté quindi permettersi di ignorare l'affermazione degli autonomisti slovacchi. Il primo ministro Milan Hodža, da poco insediato, fu il primo slovacco a ricoprire quella carica; proprio per questo motivo era da molti considerato la persona più appropriata per far fronte alla questione slovacca, divenuta di grande attualità a fronte dei propositi aggressivi manifestati dai nazionalsocialisti tedeschi. Le trattative tra il governo ed i popolari fallirono però miseramente poco dopo.

Nell'immaginario di un numero sempre maggiore di esponenti popolari le richieste slovacche si sommarono all'influenza che le ideologie di estrema destra stavano producendo in Europa. Un compromesso per l'autonomia della regione slovacca non fu trovato neppure in seguito all'*Anschluss* austriaco con il Reich tedesco, quando per la Cecoslovacchia già si prospettava un avvenire estremamente precario. Nei mesi successivi, nel corso dei quali la pressione germanica fu acuita e l'isolamento internazionale della Repubblica divenne sempre più marcato, i popolari slovacchi si mantennero in disparte. Dopo aver avuto contatti con nazionalsocialisti tedeschi, fascisti italiani e molti altri rappresentanti di movimenti fascisti europei, non volevano correre il rischio di farsi accusare di collaborare con il nemico. La loro maggioranza esigeva una certa indipendenza da Praga, ma non certo al costo che la Cecoslovacchia fosse distrutta, rendendosi per di più complici dei tedeschi.

In un'atmosfera da 'si salvi chi può', che regnava allora in tutto il Paese e che fu resa ancora più concitata dall'esilio volontario del presidente Beneš, succeduto a Masaryk dopo la sua morte, i popolari slovacchi decisero di sfruttare tale situazione. Il 6 ottobre 1938, i rappresentanti di tutti i partiti slovacchi, esclusi i comunisti, approvarono la proposta popolare di instaurare in Slovacchia un potere politico autonomo. Il governo Syrový, salito in carica dopo l'abbandono di Hodža pochi giorni prima, approvò l'accordo senza nemmeno discuterlo. Il giorno seguente venne affidato a monsignor Jozef Tiso, succes-

²³ Marco Cuzzi, *L'internazionale delle camicie nere. I CAUR, Comitati d'azione per l'universalità di Roma, 1933-1939*, 2005, Mursia, Milano. Si veda anche Michael Ledeen, *L'internazionale fascista*, 1973, Laterza, Roma-Bari.

sore di Hlinka, l'incarico di formare un governo per la Slovacchia, denominata ufficialmente *Slovenská krajina* (letteralmente Regione slovacca). Agli organi centrali di Praga rimanevano le competenze in materia di politica estera, difesa e le giurisdizioni in merito a moneta, dogana e trasporti. Tutto il resto fu demandato al parlamento ed al governo slovacco. Si concludeva così la prima repubblica, ufficialmente *cecoslovacca*, ed aveva inizio la seconda, denominata *cecoslovacca*.

Da lì a poco gli appetiti magiari portarono all'arbitrato di Vienna, con cui l'Italia e la Germania consegnarono la Slovacchia meridionale all'Ungheria.²⁴ I popolari ne approfittarono per imporre a tutti gli altri partiti la fusione in una nuova compagine di coesione nazionale che diede vita alla *HSLŠ-Strana slovenskej národnej jednoty* (HŠLS-Partito dell'unità nazionale slovacca). Alle elezioni per il parlamento, tenutesi in dicembre, furono quindi ammessi solamente i candidati del nuovo partito unitario ed i rappresentanti dei partiti delle minoranze nazionali.

La litigiosità degli esponenti popolari che guidavano la regione fu motivo di grande irritazione per Hitler, il quale per poter anettere al Reich la Boemia e la Moravia senza rischiare un intervento delle Potenze occidentali aveva bisogno della dichiarazione di indipendenza slovacca. La pressione tedesca si faceva sempre più insistente. Hitler fece chiaramente capire a Tuka di sbrigliarsi a staccarsi dai cechi affermando: “insieme trovati, insieme impiccati...”.²⁵ Tra il 12 ed il 13 di marzo il Führer convocò pertanto a Berlino Jozef Tiso e gli intimò di staccarsi da Praga. Il giorno seguente, i deputati riuniti nel parlamento annunciarono la nascita della *Slovenská republika*. Con la conseguente richiesta di protezione da parte del Terzo Reich, la Slovacchia divenne il primo Stato satellite (*Schutzstaat*) della Germania.²⁶

L'Italia e lo Stato slovacco

Nonostante la preponderanza tedesca, l'Italia riuscì a mantenere alcune importanti posizioni all'interno dell'ambiente politico slovacco. Al momento del dibattito su quale tipo di Costituzione dare al nuovo Stato, il console italiano

²⁴ Il 2 novembre 1938 i ministri degli Esteri d'Italia e Germania, rispettivamente Ciano e Von Ribbentrop, si riunirono a Vienna, nel palazzo del Belvedere, e decisero, secondo lo *spirito di Monaco* (espressione usata all'epoca), il passaggio all'Ungheria di circa 10 mila chilometri quadrati di territorio slovacco. Si vennero a trovare in Ungheria le città di Nové Zámky, Galanta, Komárno, Lučenec, Rimavska Sobota, Rožňava, Košice e parte della Russia Subcarpatica, con più di 850 mila abitanti, dei quali, secondo l'ultimo censimento del 1930, mezzo milione erano di nazionalità magiara. Ladislav Deák, *Viedenská arbitráž (2. november 1938) – Mnichov pre Slovensko*, 1993, Slovak Academic Press, Bratislava. Interessante in merito anche l'annotazione di Galeazzo Ciano, *Diario*, 1969, Rizzoli, Milano, p. 207.

²⁵ Eubomír Lipták, *Slovensko v 20. storočí*, 2000, Kalligram, Bratislava, p. 175.

²⁶ Valerián Bystrický, ‘Zasadnutie Slovenského snemu 14. marca 1939’, *Historický Časopis* 47/1, 1999, p. 105-114.

a Bratislava Francesco Lo Faro riferì le parole di Tuka, allora vice presidente del Consiglio, “che dei due tipi di Stato autoritario, il fascista ed il nazionalsocialista, quello Italiano meglio si confà alla Slovacchia, in quanto è riuscito a conciliare la concezione totalitaria con le tradizioni cattoliche della Nazione”.²⁷

L'élite politica slovacca tentò di modellare il nuovo Stato secondo i principi già messi in atto dal fascismo in Italia. Molti esponenti popolari, infatti, non si accontentarono di essere dei semplici esecutori degli ordini provenienti da Berlino. Cercarono perciò di conservare una certa autonomia decisionale, appoggiandosi ideologicamente al regime italiano.²⁸

Il 21 luglio 1939, il parlamento approvò la Costituzione, “la quale, [...] mostrò infatti molti punti in comune con quella italiana”.²⁹ Veniva con essa istituito in Slovacchia il sistema corporativo, che assieme al nazionalismo e al credo cattolico avrebbero dovuto costituire, secondo le parole di Mederly, l'allora vice-presidente del parlamento, le basi del nuovo Stato. La nuova ideologia era il *národný socializmus* (socialismo nazionale).³⁰ A legittimare queste posizioni venivano più volte chiamate in causa le encicliche papali *Rerum novarum* di Leone XIII e *Quadragesimo anno* di Pio XI, non da ultimo da Jozef Tiso, egli stesso uomo di Chiesa, nelle cui mani, dopo l'elezione scontata a presidente, si concentrava il potere. Molti collaboratori di Tiso erano sacerdoti ed il clero occupava molte posizioni di potere nell'establishment del nuovo Stato “ed era molto difficile trovare un solo aspetto nella vita dello Stato in cui la presenza del clero non fosse cospicua”.³¹

La presenza estesa e capillare del clero cattolico influenzava inesorabilmente l'indirizzo politico, l'amministrazione e la gestione dello Stato in generale ed era alla base del continuo contrasto politico tra l'ala conservatrice, guidata dal presidente Tiso, e quella radicale del partito al potere. Questa era capeggiata da Tuka, allora capo del governo e da Mach, capo dell'Ufficio Propaganda e comandante in capo della Hlinková Garda (HG), erede della Rodobrana.³² Attorno a loro si riunivano intellettuali radicali e alcuni giovani sacerdoti, ma la loro base di consensi era concentrata tra i *gardisti*, uomini ap-

²⁷ ACS, MCP-DGP, busta 47, Telespresso n° 771/13 aprile 1939.

²⁸ L'interessamento per il regime italiano e per le sue istituzioni è poi confermato dalla missione a Roma di Jozef Mikuš, “segretario della Legazione di Slovacchia, il quale è stato incaricato dal suo Governo di compiere un'inchiesta e riferire circa il funzionamento del Ministero della Cultura Popolare in Italia.” (ACS, MCP-DGP, busta 46, 14.11.1939)

²⁹ Borejsza, *Il fascismo*, op. cit., p. 224.

³⁰ Karol Mederly, *Ustava Slovenskej republiky a jej zásadné smernice*, 1939, Knihotlačiareň Andreja, Bratislava.

³¹ Jelinek, ‘Clero e fascismo’, op. cit., p. 412.

³² Jelinek, *The Parish Republic*, op. cit., p. 20; Jörg K. Hoensch, ‘The Slovak Republic, 1939-1945’, in: Victor S. Mamatey/Radomír Luža (eds.), *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic 1918-1948*, 1973, Princeton University Press, Princeton, p. 279.

partenenti alla Hlinková Garda. Affermavano un completo asservimento della Slovacchia al Reich tedesco, sia da un punto di vista economico e politico, quanto da quello esclusivamente ideologico.

Il predominio dei conservatori a capo delle posizioni chiave era comunque fuor di dubbio e fu mantenuto fino all'estate del 1940. Nel febbraio di quell'anno i contrasti tra Mach ed il ministro degli Interni, nonché contemporaneamente degli Esteri, Ferdinand Ďurčanský indussero Mach a dare le dimissioni e culminarono in una crisi di governo. Ďurčanský era effettivamente intenzionato a svincolare il più possibile la Slovacchia dal Reich e, in questo senso, aveva tentato di indebolire le posizioni sia di Mach che di Tuka. Poiché la crisi aveva portato lo stesso Hitler ad interessarsi degli affari interni slovacchi, Tiso, Tuka e Mach furono convocati dal Führer a Salisburgo. Alla presenza di von Ribbentrop, Tiso fu informato della decisione che avrebbe dovuto destituire Ďurčanský, accusato di nutrire sentimenti anti-germanici, e promuovere Mach a ministro degli Interni. Il rafforzamento indiscusso della fazione radicale fece svanire ogni velleità di distanziarsi dal punto di vista tedesco. Tiso, nonostante uno spazio limitato di manovra, rimase in sella. Hitler si rese perfettamente conto di non poter lasciare nelle mani del gruppo radicale le redini di uno Stato che si esigeva tranquillo e che si proponeva come prova di magnanimità a quegli Stati che si fossero sottomessi senza opporre resistenza alla Germania.³³

Mussolini dal canto suo era ben conscio della preponderanza tedesca in Slovacchia ed in tutta l'area centro-orientale. Ciononostante non sembrò rassegnarsi all'eventualità di dover abbandonare del tutto le posizioni di influenza che il fascismo italiano era riuscito a conquistarsi, ed attraverso vari canali continuò a diffondere la propria dottrina.³⁴ Lo fece tramite libri, articoli su giornali e quotidiani, distribuzioni gratuite di film e di notiziari cinematografici, mostre, spettacoli, conferenze. La presenza di scritti inneggianti al fascismo, che già circolavano dall'inizio degli anni '30, si fece più massiccia e soprattutto organizzata, dopo che gli slovacchi proclamarono la loro indipendenza dai cechi. Il consolato italiano a Bratislava era un protagonista di questa nuova campagna di divulgazione.³⁵

L'Italia stava intensificando la propria presenza in Slovacchia soprattutto in ambito economico e culturale: ottenne l'introduzione dell'insegnamento dell'italiano nelle scuole medie, l'istituzione di una cattedra di lingua italiana

³³ Eubomír Lipták, 'Priprava a priebeh salyburgských rokovani roku 1940 medzi predstaviteľmi Nemecka a slovenského štátu', *Historický Časopis* 13/3, 1965, p. 329-366.

³⁴ Borejsza, *Il fascismo*, op. cit., p. 140.

³⁵ ACS, MCP-DGP, busta 46, *Appunto per S.E. il Ministro*, 22.5.1939. Si trattava comunque di un'operazione di più vasta portata, sostenuta anche finanziariamente dall'Italia; alla *Dottrina del Fascismo*, il Consolato propose di far seguire altre, significative pubblicazioni: *Fascismo, conquista proletaria, Il Dopolavoro in Italia e Maternità e infanzia*.

all'università che si affiancava al lettorato già esistente e si stava procedendo alla fondazione di un istituto di cultura.³⁶ Il rappresentante italiano in Slovacchia Guido Roncalli, succeduto a Lo Faro, avvertì però di non calcare troppo la mano e frenò gli animi troppo intraprendenti di coloro che auspicavano un ulteriore sviluppo della propaganda italiana nella zona, dato che

“difficilmente essa potrebbe essere realizzata senza attrito con quella tedesca, svolta qui con mezzi tali da rendere una nostra azione parallela, anche se non di concorrenza, solamente possibile con uno spiegamento di mezzi altrettanto grandioso e, a mio avviso, del tutto sproporzionato all'importanza di questo Paese”.³⁷

Specialmente dopo che l'inizio della guerra aveva chiaramente mostrato chi fosse l'anello debole dell'Asse, l'Italia non volle entrare direttamente negli affari interni della Slovacchia per non provocare inutili disagi e tensioni con l'alleata Germania. I suoi interessi all'epoca si accentrarono su altri Paesi. Le forze, che iniziavano a scarseggiare a causa del logorio della guerra, vennero indirizzate a conquistare, o salvare, quello che era ancora a portata di mano. E la Slovacchia non lo era, inesorabilmente incastrata nel sistema di dominio germanico sull'Europa centro-orientale.

A questo punto furono però gli esponenti popolari slovacchi, piuttosto che viceversa, interessati ad avere con il regime italiano contatti sempre più stretti. L'azione slovacca si svolgeva su due livelli: da una parte si inoltravano tutta una serie di proposte per potenziare l'immagine dell'Italia in Slovacchia, dall'altra si tentava di esportare l'immagine della Slovacchia, sottolineando i punti che i due Paesi avevano in comune.³⁸ La Legazione slovacca a Roma aveva perciò iniziato già dal novembre 1940 a pubblicare un foglio di informazioni, il *Notiziario slovacco*, che avrebbe dovuto tenere al corrente i lettori sui vari aspetti, prevalentemente politici, del proprio Paese.³⁹ Nel bollettino si dedicava molto spazio alle organizzazioni giovanili del regime, in primis alla *Hlinková Mládež* (HM-Gioventù di Hlinka), che reclutava giovani dai sei ai diciotto anni di età e faceva parte della struttura organizzativa del partito popolare. Si poneva l'accento sugli stretti rapporti intrattenuti tra la formazione giovanile slovacca e l'omologa italiana, la GIL (Gioventù Italiana del Littorio). Tra i due gruppi intercorsero effettivamente proficui contatti, suggellati da continui incontri.⁴⁰

³⁶ ACS, MCP-DGP, busta 47, 27.11.1940. Si veda anche Petr Kubík, *Slovensko-Talianske vzťahy 1939-1945*, 2010, Ústav pamäti národa, Pamäť národa, Bratislava, p. 140.

³⁷ Kubík, *Slovensko-Talianske*, op. cit., p. 140.

³⁸ *Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (ASMAE)*, Affari politici, Cecoslovacchia, posizione Slovacchia, busta 28, Telespresso n° 2525/655-12.8.1941.

³⁹ ACS, MCP-DGP, busta 46, Legazione della Repubblica Slovacca, 15.11.1940-Notiziario per la stampa e i giornalisti.

⁴⁰ ASMAE, Affari politici Cecoslovacchia, posizione Slovacchia, busta 29, Notiziario slovacco.

Questo bollettino non fu comunque l'unico mezzo di propaganda. I giornali slovacchi citavano frequentemente articoli apparsi su quotidiani o su riviste italiane tipo *Autarchia* e *Commercio*, *La difesa della razza* oppure *La rivista illustrata del Popolo d'Italia*. In questo modo la Slovacchia si era conquistata uno spazio nel sistema d'informazione italiano, sebbene sia difficile concordare con i commenti entusiastici della stampa slovacca dell'epoca.⁴¹

Decisamente più sentita era invece la presenza dell'Italia nella regione "tra il Danubio e i Carpazi".⁴² Lo *Slovák*, il *Gardista*, la *Slovenská Pravda* avevano varie volte pubblicato fotografie riguardanti l'attualità italiana fornite dal Ministero della Cultura Popolare. Quelle più richieste ritraevano i fronti di guerra greco-albanese e quello in Africa settentrionale.⁴³ Le fotografie erano però solo una minima parte del materiale propagandistico che dall'Italia, il più delle volte su richiesta slovacca, veniva mandato a Bratislava ed in altre località del Paese. Migliaia furono le pubblicazioni, di qualunque tipo, dai rotocalchi di moda ai giornali per bambini, dalle riviste storiche ai periodici politici, che venivano inviati in Slovacchia.⁴⁴ Al pubblico slovacco interessavano le famose canzoni italiane, anche quelle di regime come *Giovinezza* o *Fuoco di Vesta* (inno dei G.U.F.), gli usi e i costumi degli italiani, che venivano puntualmente raccontati durante l'*Ora italiana*, mandata in onda dalla radio slovacca, oppure i ritratti del duce.⁴⁵ Molto apprezzate erano le pellicole che venivano proiettate nelle sale cinematografiche della capitale; in questo senso era molto attivo il cinema *Nástup*, proprietà dell'omonima associazione, e l'Istituto di cultura italiana di Bratislava.

In seguito a questa martellante attività propagandistica, le stesse personalità più in vista dell'apparato statale si mostrarono favorevoli e benevolmente predisposte verso l'Italia, a riconferma delle affinità ideologiche che le legavano al regime fascista dagli anni passati. All'amicizia con l'alleato italiano era riservata la massima considerazione, seppur essa non ebbe maggiore successo a livello pratico a causa della posizione egemonica della Germania ed a causa dell'incapacità del regime italiano di tramutare le affinità ideologiche in effettive posizioni di forza, nè in Slovacchia, nè in altre parti d'Europa.

⁴¹ Kubík, *Slovensko-Talianske*, op. cit., p. 198-206.

⁴² L'espressione usata indica la Slovacchia ed è allo stesso tempo il titolo di un libro di Karol Murgaš, *Národ medzi Dunajom a Karpatmi*, 1940, [senza editore], Sv. Martin. Murgaš, già citato precedentemente, era un noto esponente del partito popolare, futuro capo della propaganda ed acceso ammiratore del sistema fascista italiano. In merito alla presenza dell'Italia nella stampa slovacca si veda Kubík, *Slovensko-Talianske*, op. cit., p. 206.

⁴³ ACS, MCP-DGP, busta 47, Telespresso n°1190, 19.4.1941.

⁴⁴ ACS, MCP-DGP, busta 47, Telespresso n°53/4133/42, 16.1.1942.

⁴⁵ ACS, MCP-DGP, busta 47, Telespresso n°2215, 26.6.1942.

L'IDEOLOGIA DEL CATTOLICESIMO POLITICO SLOVENO E LE PREMESSE IDEOLOGICHE DEL FASCISMO NEL PERIODO TRA LE DUE GUERRE

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Premessa

Questo contributo ha l'obiettivo di offrire una panoramica sui concetti e le idee che hanno animato il movimento del cattolicesimo politico sloveno negli anni Trenta del XX secolo, in seguito all'affermarsi al suo interno di una visione autoritaria cosiddetta di 'rinnovamento sociale'.¹

In via preliminare, è opportuno evidenziare che il cattolicesimo politico sloveno degli anni Trenta attinse le sue basi ideologiche da tre ambiti teorici: le encicliche papali, i modelli ideologici che hanno sostenuto le dittature autoritarie presenti in Austria, Portogallo e in altre realtà europee, la teoria del corporativismo enucleato dall'ideologia del fascismo italiano.

L'esempio tratto da queste tre componenti portò nei territori sloveni della Monarchia jugoslava dei risvolti ideologici ben precisi, destinati nel corso degli anni Trenta a far assumere al cattolicesimo politico sloveno un orientamento politico ed ideologico basato sulla negazione delle premesse chiave dell'Illuminismo e della democrazia. Ciò è desumibile dalle concezioni e dalle idee dei suoi principali ideologi, divulgate sulle principali riviste scientifiche cattoliche slovene, nella stampa periodica di orientamento cattolico, ma anche nei testi programmatici dell'Azione cattolica, nei programmi dei raduni cattolici, sia in forma monografica che in varie raccolte di scritti.²

¹ Su questo argomento i testi di riferimento sono: Egon Pelikan, *Akomodacija ideologije političnega katolicizma na Slovenskem*, 1997, Založba Obzorja, Maribor; Srečo Dragoš, *Katolicizem na Slovenskem. Socialni koncepti do druge svetovne vojne*, 1988, Založba Krt, Ljubljana.

² Ad esempio nelle riviste: *Čas* (1907–1942), Jugoslovanska tiskarna, Ljubljana; *Mi mladi borci* (1936–1941), Misijonska tiskarna, Domžale-Groblje; *Straža v viharju* (1934–1941), Jugoslovanska tiskarna, Ljubljana. Tra le monografie si ricordano: Ciril Žebot, *Korporativno narodno gospodarstvo*, 1939, Družba sv. Mohorja, Celje; Aleš Ušeničnik, *Izbrani spisi*, Zveski I.-X., 1940, Jugoslovanska tiskarna, Ljubljana; Id., *Katoliška načela*, 1937, Misijonska tiskarna, Domžale-Groblje; Id., *Obris socialnega vprašanja*, 1938, Misijonska tiskarna, Domžale-Groblje; Id., *Socialna ekonomija*, 1926, Društvena nabavna zadruga, Ljubljana; Id., *Sociologija, Katoliška bukvarna*, 1910, Društvena nabavna zadruga, Ljubljana; Id., *Socialno vprašanje*, 1925, Društvena nabavna zadruga, Ljubljana; Id., *Uvod v krščansko sociologijo*, 1920, Slovenska krščansko socialna zveza, Ljubljana.

Tali idee erano presenti in modo latente nello schieramento cattolico sloveno fin dalla sua genesi riconducibile alla fine del XIX secolo, quando il movimento aveva mosso i primi passi ispirato dal suo principale ideologo, il sacerdote Anton Mahnič.

Mahnič era mosso dalle idee di Pio IX e – seppur venticinque anni dopo – dal suo *Syllabus* del 1864. Su di lui influirono in misura non minore i principi ispiratori del cattolicesimo politico in Europa, e quindi l'atteggiamento della Chiesa cattolica verso le condizioni che si erano create in seguito all'unificazione dell'Italia e la conseguente fine dello Stato pontificio, l'avvento del liberalismo cattolico, l'introduzione del modernismo all'interno del cattolicesimo ecc. Papa Pio IX condannò quelle che erano da lui denotate come delle derive già nel *Syllabus* del 1864. Ciò che sorprende nella condanna del Pontefice è tuttavia l'assenza di distinzioni tra quelle che erano considerate potenzialmente come delle minacce all'autorità e alla posizione della Chiesa. Senza distinzione alcuna venivano contemplati il panteismo, il naturalismo, il razionalismo, il socialismo, il comunismo, le società segrete, l'autonomia culturale e scolastica, il ruolo dello stato, il protestantesimo ecc. Il *Syllabus* generò una particolare psicosi di complotto ordito contro la Chiesa cattolica, ossessione che catturò anche Mahnič.

A distanza di soli venticinque anni, tali idee furono tradotte in territorio sloveno in un preciso schema ideologico di mobilitazione politica che si concretizzò nei primi raduni cattolici e nella successiva fondazione, nel 1892, di un partito cattolico sloveno (*Katoliška narodna stranka*/Partito nazionale cattolico).³

All'indomani della prima guerra mondiale, l'applicazione del cosiddetto 'corporativismo' in seno all'ideologia del cattolicesimo politico sloveno degli anni Trenta non fu dunque cosa nuova, rappresentò piuttosto una specie di 'ideologia retrospettiva'. Lo sviluppo del movimento cattolico sloveno con la nascita del nuovo stato jugoslavo dovette inoltre fare i conti con un contesto (quello jugoslavo, appunto) in cui la maggioranza della popolazione, oltre allo stesso sovrano, era di fede ortodossa. Ciononostante, sembra che proprio la negazione del paradigma illuminista nel periodo tra le due guerre, in particolare alla fine degli anni Trenta, avesse contribuito in modo determinante a limitare l'influsso politico, e più in generale sociale, del movimento cattolico in area slovena.

Il monopolio del cattolicesimo politico nel territorio sloveno prima della Grande Guerra

Alla fine del XIX secolo e fino alla prima guerra mondiale, il cattolicesimo politico si assicurò nel territorio sloveno una sorta di predominio politico, adattandosi temporaneamente alle premesse modernizzatrici e illuministe che ancora negli anni Novanta del XIX secolo esso aveva contrastato: ovvero il

³ Cfr. Pelikan, *Akomodacija ideologije*, op. cit.

pluralismo partitico, il principio della democrazia, il principio della sovranità del popolo, e via dicendo.

L'organizzazione del cattolicesimo politico sloveno si realizzò sul modello politico dei cristiano sociali austriaci di Karl Lueger. In campo economico, tale modello fu imitato dal secondo ideologo del movimento, Janez Evangelist Krek, il quale organizzò sul territorio sloveno un'ampia rete cooperativa secondo il sistema *Raiffeisen*. In un'epoca per così dire di 'proto-liberalismo', il cattolicesimo politico prese il contadino, almeno in parte, sotto la sua protezione, fatto che in un paese prevalentemente agricolo, come quello sloveno, sortì ben presto precisi effetti politici. La struttura della Chiesa cattolica fu utilizzata non solo per l'organizzazione cooperativa ma anche per organizzare il partito cattolico.⁴

Del resto, l'egemonia politica dei partiti cattolici all'inizio del XX secolo caratterizzava tutte le zone conservatrici, rurali e provinciali della Monarchia asburgica, laddove la società aveva difficoltà a mettersi al passo con la modernità. Dopo la riforma elettorale del 1907, la democratizzazione in queste zone aveva portato paradossalmente al potere proprio i partiti più conservatori, che già in precedenza avevano contrastato in modo deciso i processi di modernizzazione della società, compresa la democrazia parlamentare.⁵

La struttura organizzativa del cattolicesimo politico sloveno nel Regno di Jugoslavia, dopo il 1918

Al quinto raduno cattolico, tenutosi a Lubiana nel 1923, l'orientamento prevalente era ancora quello democratico.⁶ La situazione era destinata a mutare notevolmente alla fine del decennio sulla scia della crisi economica. Nel Regno di Jugoslavia questo periodo coincise anche con la proclamazione da parte di re Alessandro della dittatura e nuovamente con la negazione del paradigma illuminista da parte dello schieramento cattolico.

Come constata lo storico austriaco Ernst Hanisch, questo fenomeno investì pure il cattolicesimo politico della ben più ampia area centroeuropea.⁷ Nel periodo tra le due guerre la Chiesa cattolica dell'area centroeuropea, nello scontro con la secolarizzazione e nel confronto con la modernizzazione delle condizioni sociali e politiche, si avvalse di una specie di 'triplice strategia', basata

⁴ Si veda Fran Erjavec, *Zgodovina katoliškega gibanja na Slovenskem*, 1928, Prosvetna zveza, Ljubljana.

⁵ La tematica è affrontata in: Ernst Hanisch, *Die Ideologie des Politischen Katholizismus in Österreich*, 1977, Geyer Edition, Wien-Salzburg; Id., *Konservatives und revolutionäres Denken*, 1975, Geyer Edition, Wien-Salzburg.

⁶ Janez Juhant, 'Filozofske vsebine in njihov idejni vpliv', in: France M. Dolinar/Joža Mahnič/Peter Vodopivec (eds.), *Cerkev, kultura in politika 1890-1941*, 1993, Slovenska matica, Ljubljana, p. 131.

⁷ Ernst Hanisch, 'Politični katolicizem. Država in Cerkev v Avstriji od leta 1919 do danes', in: Janko Pleterški (ed.), *Država in Cerkev (Izbrani zgodovinski in pravni vidiki)*, 2002, Slovenska Akademija Znanosti in Umetnosti, Ljubljana, p. 44.

sui partiti del cattolicesimo politico, l'Azione Cattolica e la politica dei concordati.

Dei citati, nel territorio sloveno nel periodo tra le due guerre, l'unico a non essere realizzato fu lo strumento del concordato. Va comunque ricordato che nel 1935 un concordato fu peraltro firmato, ma mai ratificato dal parlamento jugoslavo, a causa della ferma opposizione della Chiesa serbo-ortodossa.

Il movimento cattolico, le cui redini negli anni Trenta furono saldamente impugnate dalla corrente di destra, era composto da tre segmenti intellettuali strettamente intrecciati: gli ideologi (con Aleš Ušeničnik a capo), i politici (sotto la guida di Anton Korošec) e la gerarchia ecclesiastica (con a capo il vescovo lubianese Gregorij Rožman).

Nel Regno di Jugoslavia, tra le due guerre, la prassi politica del movimento cattolico sloveno si sviluppò, come accennato, in circostanze specifiche, essendo il paese a maggioranza ortodossa. Ciononostante, nella seconda metà del decennio il cattolicesimo politico poté qui assicurarsi l'egemonia assoluta sostenendo la politica centralista della corte di Belgrado e dei partiti centralisti serbi, strategia finalizzata ad 'accerchiare politicamente i croati', decisi avversari del centralismo belgradese.⁸ In cambio del proprio sostegno, il partito cattolico ottenne l'autonomia politica per i territori sloveni del Regno di Jugoslavia, il cosiddetto Banato della Drava. Tale concessione permise nelle regioni slovene del regno anche una triplice sovrapposizione tra le strutture organizzative del cattolicesimo politico, ovvero tra l'organizzazione politica del Partito popolare sloveno (*Slovenska ljudska stranka*), le organizzazioni dell'Azione Cattolica e le organizzazioni di carattere panstatale, jugoslavo (ad es. la lega dei sindacati jugoslavi JOGORAS, le società ginniche e di altra natura).⁹

Tali organizzazioni, nella seconda metà degli anni Trenta, seguivano e orientavano le attività dei singoli dalla culla alla tomba, rendendo così possibile la quasi totale egemonia e controllo sulla società. L'orientamento autoritario fu ulteriormente accelerato, dopo il 1935, con la politica estera, sotto la guida del presidente del governo Milan Stojadinović, di avvicinamento del Regno di Jugoslavia all'Italia fascista e alla Germania nazista.

Gli influssi del cattolicesimo politico europeo

Se da una parte si poneva, infatti, la questione di come mai la Chiesa e il cattolicesimo politico fossero privi di risposte concrete alla crisi economica e sociale, dall'altra, in tutta Europa veniva elaborata una serie di risposte che ignoravano la Chiesa o addirittura le si contrapponevano.

⁸ Jože Pirjevec, *Il giorno di San Vito*, 1993, Nuova Eri, Torino.

⁹ Anka Vidovič Miklavčič, *Mladina med nacionalizmom in katolicizmom (pregled razvoja in dejavnosti mladinskih organizacij, društev in gibanj v liberalno-unitarnem in katoliškem taboru v letih 1929-1941 v jugoslovanskem delu Slovenije)*, 1994, Založba krt, Ljubljana.

In molti paesi europei, la destra cattolica iniziò a considerare con interesse gli ideologi dei regimi europei autoritari e totalitari. In Europa, come d'altronde anche in territorio sloveno, ciò avveniva attraverso la condivisione di alcune idee comuni, come l'abolizione della lotta di classe, la critica del capitalismo/liberalismo e del socialismo/marxismo, la proclamazione della religione cattolica come elemento centrale della cultura e dell'identità nazionale, l'anticomunismo e l'antisemitismo.

Le due equazioni liberalismo=individualismo e socialismo=comunismo raccoglievano i principali nemici ideologici da sconfiggere. In alternativa sia al comunismo che al fascismo, ma soprattutto alla tradizione europea liberal-democratica in senso più ampio, fu dunque proclamata una specie di 'terza via', che fu applicata in Slovenia alle già menzionate peculiarità di quest'area.¹⁰ L'idealizzazione del corporativismo, propugnato ora dalle encicliche della Chiesa cattolica, permetteva in realtà di appellarsi all'autorità ecclesiastica ovunque il potere fosse stato assunto da movimenti antidemocratici, autoritari e totalitari.

Anche in territorio sloveno, ci si iniziò ad interrogare sulla natura dell'ordine democratico. Se alla fine del XIX secolo ad ispirare il principale ideologo sloveno, Anton Mahnič, era stato il *Syllabus* di Pio IX, ora invece il suo successore Aleš Ušeničnik, il più importante ideologo sloveno cattolico tra le due guerre, subì per lo più l'influsso delle encicliche, soprattutto la *Quadragesimo anno* e la *Divini Redemptoris*.¹¹

Le encicliche papali

L'enciclica *Quadragesimo anno*, del 1931, diffondeva l'idea di una 'terza via', che sebbene non ben specificata, nella sua essenza negava le istituzioni dello stato e della società democratica.¹² L'interpretazione dell'enciclica poneva la prerogativa di un *aut-aut* ideologico, e i principali ideologi del cattolicesimo politico sloveno condannarono immediatamente quegli autori, sloveni e stranieri, che non erano in linea con i dettami del documento. Era questo il caso dei socialdemocratici, dei democratici in genere, ma soprattutto dei cristiano-sociali tra cui spiccavano le figure dei tedeschi Wilhelm Hohof e Vitus Heller, che esercitavano un notevole influsso sui cristiano-sociali sloveni.¹³

Nel contempo, i principali ideologi del cattolicesimo politico sloveno iniziarono a dar ampio spazio agli ideologi della destra autoritaria, i cosiddetti

¹⁰ Martin Conway, *Catholic politics in Europe 1918-1945*, 1997, Routledge, London-New York, p. 53.

¹¹ Egon Pelikan, 'Vsi antikomunisti – vsi demokrati', in: Mitja Ferenc/Branka Petkovšek (eds.), *Mitsko in stereotipno v slovenskem pogledu na zgodovino. Zbornik 33. zborovanja Zveze zgodovinskih društev Slovenije*, 2006, Ljubljana, Zveza zgodovinskih društev Slovenije, p. 273-283.

¹² Hans Maier, *Revolution und Kirche*, 1988, Herder, Freiburg, p. 259.

¹³ Cfr. Ušeničnik, *Socialno vprašanje*, op. cit.

Ideologieliferanten (fornitori di ideologia), da Othmar Spann a Carl Schmidt ed altri.

L'influsso delle dittature autoritarie

L'enciclica papale *Quadragesimo anno* idealizzava l'ordinamento corporativo che, come tale, fu inserito in molti ordinamenti antidemocratici europei. Il cancelliere Dollfuss, ad esempio, prima dello scontro militare con i social-democratici in Austria, nel febbraio 1934, annunciò la costruzione di uno stato corporativo proprio basandosi sull'enciclica.¹⁴ All'enciclica papale si richiamarono anche i regimi di Franco in Spagna, più tardi di Tiso in Slovacchia, di Salazar in Portogallo, di Mussolini in Italia, dell'ammiraglio Horthy in Ungheria e, in un secondo tempo, del maresciallo Petain, collaborazionista nella Francia di Vichy.¹⁵

L'avvento delle dittature nei paesi citati fu seguito con entusiasmo dagli ideologi della destra cattolica autoritaria slovena. Nel tentativo di promuovere la cosiddetta 'terza via', i cattolici si infiammarono soprattutto per il modello portoghese di Salazar. La dittatura in questo Paese era infatti sufficientemente lontana e si prestava dunque a essere idealizzata, diversamente dalla dittatura di Dollfuss in Austria, invece, troppo vicina per poter essere trasformata in mito politico.

L'influenza dell'ideologia fascista italiana

Gli influssi diretti del pensiero fascista italiano costituiscono il terzo segmento su cui si basava l'ideologia cattolica slovena. Sono riscontrabili in singole figure, così come nei gruppi radicali dell'Azione cattolica, quali ad esempio l'organizzazione giovanile dei *Mladci Kristusa kralja* (I Giovani del re Cristo) di Ernest Tomec o il circolo accademico dell'Azione cattolica *Straža* (La sentinella), presieduto dal teologo Lambert Ehrlich.

Tra le figure maggiormente ricettive all'ideologia fascista va ricordato Ciril Žebot, che in un contributo dal titolo *Korporativno narodno gospodarstvo* (L'economia nazionale corporativa), edito nel 1939, faceva proprie e propagandava apertamente le idee del fascismo italiano.¹⁶ L'autore, che aveva condotto la propria tesi di dottorato presso l'Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano sul te-

¹⁴ Erika Weinzierl-Fischer, *Die österreichischen Konkordate von 1855 und 1933*, 1960, R. Oldenbourg, München, p. 226; oppure: Ernst Hanisch, 'Der Politische Katholizismus als ideologischer Träger des 'Austrofaschismus'', in: Talos Emmerich/Wolfgang Neugebauer (eds.), 'Austrofaschismus', 1985, Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, Wien; oppure: Erika Weinzierl, 'Austria: Church, State, Politics, and Ideology, 1919-1938', in: Wolff J. Reichard/Jörg K. Hoensch (eds.), *Catholics, the State and the European Radical Right 1919-1945*, 1987, Columbia University Press, New York, p. 18; oppure: Žitomir Janežič, 'Nemški katoliški shod na Dunaju', *Čas*, 1933-1934, p. 111-115.

¹⁵ Confronta lo sviluppo nei singoli paesi ad es. in: Stein Ugelvik Larsen/Hagtvet Bernt/Myklebust Jan Petter, *Who were the Fascists*, 1980, Universitetsforlaget, Bergen-Oslo-Tromsø, p. 15-25.

¹⁶ Ciril Žebot, *Korporativno narodno gospodarstvo*, 1939, Družba sv. Mohorja, Celje, p. 306.

ma delle corporazioni fasciste, si poneva come un indiscusso difensore del fascismo italiano in generale.¹⁷ Žebot era considerato uno dei giovani intellettuali più promettenti del cattolicesimo politico sloveno ed era certamente una figura di riferimento per l'Azione Cattolica.

Le divisioni nello schieramento cattolico

Come in altri contesti europei, dove la presenza liberale e socialdemocratica era alquanto limitata, anche in Slovenia il cattolicesimo politico aveva raggiunto una posizione predominante. Ma anche le divisioni nello schieramento cattolico sloveno seguivano il corso europeo, ovvero la frattura del blocco cattolico in tre gruppi. Il primo, quello della destra cattolica, si avvicinava alla negazione fascista della tradizione democratica europea e prevalse nello schieramento cattolico sloveno. Il secondo, della sinistra cattolica, si sarebbe progressivamente avvicinato negli anni Trenta al marxismo. Il terzo, quello dei democratici, ovvero negli anni Trenta il gruppo numericamente più esiguo, rimase sulle posizioni della democrazia parlamentare e della proprietà privata. Per tale ragione i democratici furono attaccati sia dai cristiano-socialisti (la sinistra cattolica), per non aver fatto proprie le concezioni del marxismo, che dalla destra per aver rigettato l'opzione filofascista.¹⁸

Conclusione

Agli inizi degli anni Trenta il cattolicesimo politico, forte dal punto di vista organizzativo, assunse il controllo quasi assoluto della politica e della società slovena attraverso una capillare rete organizzativa, giovanile, di genere, professione ecc.¹⁹

Se alla fine del XIX secolo i cristiano-sociali austriaci e tedeschi, come Wilhelm von Ketteler o Karl von Vogelsang, furono in grado di proporre un programma sociale, seppur conservativo, che fu utilizzato anche nel territorio sloveno, ora negli anni Trenta una soluzione di tal genere non era disponibile.

Nella prospettiva di superare sia l'opzione liberale che quella marxista, il cattolicesimo politico si avvicinò con la sua dottrina sociale pericolosamente alle premesse ideologiche del fascismo.

Pur ancor dominando la scena politica slovena, con il tempo esso avrebbe finito per ridursi ad un mero 'involucro politico'.

¹⁷ Žebot, *Korporativno narodno gospodarstvo*, op. cit., p. 307.

¹⁸ Egon Pelikan, *Tajno delovanje primorske dubovščine pod fašizmom*, 2002, Nova Revija, Ljubljana; Janez Juhant, 'Filozofske vsebine in njihov idejni vpliv', in: France M. Dolinar/Joža Mahnič/Peter Vodopivec (eds.), *Cerkev, kultura in politika 1890-1941*, 1993, Slovenska matica, Ljubljana, p. 121-132.

¹⁹ Vidovič Miklavčič, *Mladina med nacionalizmom in katolicizmom*, op. cit. L'influenza esercitata dal cattolicesimo politico sulla società slovena fu talmente capillare che nell'archivio di Marko Natlačén (Archivio della Repubblica di Slovenia, Lubiana) si trovano consigli obbligatori della parrocchia locale anche per accedere all'impiego statale di netturbino.

Non è certo azzardato avanzare l'ipotesi che già dalla prospettiva propagandista il corporativismo cattolico, se messo a confronto con il marxismo, si rivelava – a quel tempo naturalmente – di fatto un'alternativa di gran lunga peggiore.

All'avvicinarsi della seconda guerra mondiale, l'anticomunismo, come programma politico finalizzato a compensare la mancanza di un reale progetto sociale, avrebbe assunto dimensioni sempre più radicali e perfino escatologiche. Negli anni Trenta la Chiesa e il cattolicesimo politico anche in Slovenia ritennero opportuno fare i conti con la secolarizzazione della società, come del resto avvenne negli ambienti politici cattolici in Spagna, Portogallo, Slovacchia, Ungheria, Austria e altrove. Inoltre, durante la seconda guerra mondiale il cattolicesimo politico, solo in alcuni stati, si trovò a collaborare con il regime di occupazione fascista o nazista.

Dopo l'aggressione e l'occupazione del Regno di Jugoslavia, nell'aprile del 1941, il fenomeno del collaborazionismo pose tragicamente fine ai tentativi del cattolicesimo politico sloveno di monopolizzare la società.

In conclusione, perfino il fenomeno del collaborazionismo, infatti, può essere spiegato soltanto a fronte degli sviluppi che hanno caratterizzato gli anni Trenta, questione tra l'altro ancora attuale e controversa nel dibattito storiografico e politico sloveno di oggi.²⁰

²⁰ La letteratura su questo argomento è vastissima. A titolo puramente indicativo si veda ad es.: Bojan Godeša, *Kdor ni z nami, je proti nam: slovenski izobraženci med okupatorji, Osvobodilno fronto in protirevolucionarnim taborom*, 1995, Cankarjeva založba, Ljubljana; Boris Mlakar, *Slovensko domobranstvo: 1943-1945: ustanovitev, organizacija, idejno ozadje*, 2003, Slovenska matica, Ljubljana; Marija Čipić Rehar/France M. Dolinar/Tamara Griesser-Pečar/Blaž Otrin/Julijana Visočnik, *Med sodbo sodišča in sodbo vesti: dokumenti sodnega procesa proti škofu Gregoriju Rožmanu*, 2009, Družina, Ljubljana; Vida Deželak-Barič, *Komunistična partija Slovenije in revolucionarno gibanje 1941-1943*, 2007, Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, Ljubljana; Egon Pelikan, *Historical Novel between National Identity, Ideologies and 'Historical Genres'*, in: Gašper Troha/Vanesa Matajč/Gregor Pompe (eds.), *History and its Literary Genres*, 2008, Cambridge Scholars Press, Cambridge, p. 51-62.

FROM ANTEMURALE CHRISTIANITATIS TO ANTEMURALE HUMANITATIS: FASCISTICIZING CATHOLICISM IN INTERWAR CROATIA

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For centuries the notion of *antemurale christianitatis* (Bulwark of Christendom) had found expression in Croat national ideologies. It developed as a result of Croatia's status as an imperial borderland between the Habsburg and Ottoman realms. In the modern era it was progressively transmuted and largely secularized into the notion of *antemurale humanitatis*, understood here to mean 'bulwark of (Western or European) civilization'. The modern incarnation of this idea served primarily to buttress the political claims of Croat national ideologies and to legitimize their national aspirations in interwar Yugoslavia. It also reflected the growing concern in the interwar era with the threat posed by Communism. In the context of the Second World War, during the brief experiment in Croatian independence under fascist auspices, the threat posed by Communism melded with Croat nationalist concerns about Great Serbianism to bring to fruition the notion of Croatia as *antemurale humanitatis*.

In interwar Croatia, both the Catholic intelligentsia and fascist movement drew on the same religious and cultural imagery. However, it is one of the central theses of this work that the Catholic political movement and Croat fascism evolved in the interwar era along quite distinct political lines, but that their trajectories converged over time. This paper explores this relationship and the eventual convergence, which was mediated by nationalism and a shared vision of *antemurale humanitatis*. The paper makes the case that 'radical' Catholicism – the term used by its contemporary proponents – was distinct from Croatia's 'genuine' fascists, the Ustaša movement. Although there is a tendency in the historiography to see the Ustaše as fanatical 'clerico-fascists', this paper argues that the Ustaša movement was in actual fact largely a secular nationalist faction which, during its brief stint in power between 1941 and 1945, co-opted the Catholic movement for its own political ends. In other words, this paper proposes that political Catholicism and fascism in Croatia, although possessing distinct antecedents and constituencies came to share many of the same views, for example, with respect to a rejuvenated nation purged of its 'non-Western' (or 'non-European') influences. In the end, however, the marriage of the two did not produce a national form of 'clerico-fascism'. The competing tendencies

at play – Fascism's desire to secularize religion in service to the Nation, and political Catholicism's desire to sacralize politics – were never resolved in the form of a coherent ideology of Croat 'clerical Fascism'.

The Catholic Political Movement in Croatia, 1918-1941

Limitations of space do not permit a lengthy discussion of the nuances of interwar Croatian and Yugoslav politics. Suffice it to say that, for the purposes of our discussion, following the December 1918 creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (hereafter 'Yugoslavia'), two political groupings in Croatia deserve our attention. The first is the Croat People's Party, formed in May 1919 and commonly known as the 'Populists', which was the first modern Catholic political party in Croatia.¹ The second is the Croat Party of Right, which was formed in the late nineteenth century and was Croatia's party of integral nationalists. In the 1930s the Croat Party of Right's membership provided the core constituency of the fascist Ustaša movement. In several elections during Yugoslavia's brief democratic experiment between 1919 and 1928, neither the Croat People's Party nor the Croat Party of Right made significant electoral inroads among Catholic Croats; neither party ever polled more than two percent of the Croat popular vote. This stemmed from the fact that, with the birth of Yugoslavia and the introduction of universal male suffrage, Stjepan Radić's Croat Peasant Party became the dominant political force in Croatia; its political strength was rooted in Croatia's socially dominant countryside. Conversely, the Croat Party of Right had the support of the nationalist intelligentsia and provincial petty bourgeoisie, while the Croat People's Party – the Catholic political movement – drew its support from some Catholic intellectuals and clergy and from peasants in those regions where national identity had come late and where religious identity was still strong, e.g., in Dalmatia, parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Vojvodina. Croatian politics coalesced around the issue of opposition to Serbian state centralism, the resistance to which was led throughout the interwar period by the Croat Peasant Party.² The Croat Populists and Croat Party of Right existed on the margins of Croatian politics in the 1920s.

¹ On the Croat People's Party, see Zlatko Matijević, *Slom politike katoličkog jugoslavenstva: Hrvatska pučka stranka u političkom životu Kraljevine SHS, 1919-1929*, 1998, Hrvatski institut za povijest, Zagreb.

² On interwar Yugoslavia, see Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins History, Politics*, 1984, Cornell University Press, Ithaca; John Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice there was a country*, 1996, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge-New York; Ferdo Čulinović, *Jugoslavija između dva rata*, 2 vols., 1961, JAZU, Zagreb; and Branislav Gligorićević, *Parlament i političke stranke u Jugoslaviji 1919-1929*, 1979, Institut za savremenu istoriju, Belgrade. On the Croat Peasant Party, see Mark Biondich, *Stjepan Radić, the Croat Peasant Party and the Politics of Mass Mobilization, 1904-1928*, 2000, University of Toronto Press, Toronto; and Ljubo Boban, *Maček i politika HSS, 1928-1941*, 2 vols., 1974, Globus, Zagreb.

Two points are worth mentioning with respect to the ideology of Croat political Catholicism (i.e., the Croat Populists) in the 1920s: their position on the Yugoslav national question; and, their social program. With respect to the former, the Croat Populists supported the creation of Yugoslavia even as they resisted the highly centralized state system imposed by the two leading Serbian parties, the National Radicals and Democrats. The Croat Populists accepted the prevailing state ideology of *narodno jedinstvo* ('national oneness'), that is, the belief that Serbs, Croats and Slovenes were 'tribes' of the trinomial Yugoslav nation. In other words, they supported the gradual elimination of existing 'tribal', confessional and historical differences separating the Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats and Slovenes, but they did not support a highly centralized Yugoslav state that would force this unity upon the South Slav 'tribes'.³ As a result, the Croat Populists forged an alliance with the Slovene People's Party, a Catholic mass movement in neighbouring Slovenia, and together they pursued an 'autonomist', moderate platform that placed them in the ranks of the 'soft' opposition to Serbian state centralism.

With respect to their social program, the Croat Populists were in essence Christian Socialists and adopted a corporatist model designed to fill the void between the extremes of Communism and liberal capitalism.⁴ Aware of the importance of the social question, they promoted class cooperation and social harmony, the protection of private property, an extensive land reform, and personal liberties.⁵ Their political philosophy was rooted in Christian principles, which they hoped to incorporate into civic life. They supported the creation of a Christian peasant state, on the straightforward hypothesis that most people in the new state were peasants and practicing Christians. The application of Christian principles, coupled with state decentralization and regional autonomy, would supposedly bring about meaningful reform across politics, society and economic relations, in addition to alleviating 'tribal' tensions between the three state 'tribes' or peoples, the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.⁶

The Populists' program set them apart from the Croatian political mainstream. The Croat Peasant Party belonged to the 'hard' opposition – it sought the federalization of Yugoslavia – had a long history of anti-clericalism and possessed a more extensive program of social reform. On the other hand, Ante Pavelić's Croat Party of Right sought Croatian independence from Yugoslavia and in the 1930s was transmuted into the Ustaša movement. Its followers

³ For example, see 'Naš program', *Narodna politika* 123, 9 May 1919, p. 1; and, 'Za autonomiju i ravnopravnost naroda', *Narodna svijest* 5, 1 February 1921, p. 1.

⁴ 'Politika', *Narodna politika* 123, 9 May 1919, p. 1; and *Što je Hrvatska pučka stranka i što ona hoće? Načela i program stranke*, 1927, Pučka štamparija, Zagreb, passim.

⁵ 'Naš program', *Narodna svijest* 25, 21 May 1921, p. 1.

⁶ 'Vjera i politika', *Narodna svijest* 9, 28 February 1922, p. 1; and 'Kršćanstvo temelj politike', *Narodna svijest* 35, 1 September 1927, p. 1.

believed that they were engaged in a struggle against a Great Serbian policy “which with unbending consistency is working to destroy Croatia.”⁷ The Croat Party of Right (and later the Ustaše) saw itself as the bearer of an uncompromising struggle against Serbian state centralism.⁸ The point worth emphasizing here is that, in the 1920s, Croatia’s Catholic movement not only had a distinct social constituency but possessed a political platform – on nationality and social issues – that was quite dissimilar to that of the Croat Party of Right, which was the progenitor of Croatia’s fascist movement.

Circumstances changed dramatically in 1928-29. Following the June 1928 assassination of the Croat peasant leader Radić, Yugoslavia entered a protracted political crisis from which it would emerge over six months later, in January 1929, as a royal dictatorship.⁹ As a result of the dictatorship, Ante Pavelić fled Yugoslavia and found asylum in Fascist Italy, where in 1930 he founded the ‘Ustaša: Croat Revolutionary Organization’. His nascent organization initiated a violent struggle for Croatian independence. Conversely, the Catholic movement – in the absence of the now banned Croat People’s Party – consisted of a network of disparate entities, such as Catholic Action, some academic societies and periodicals, in addition to youth organizations. By the early 1930s, the Catholic movement was organizationally heterogeneous and still politically incongruent, without a clear political agenda as such.

This changed gradually but perceptibly in the 1930s. Many Croat Catholic activists were more readily prepared to abandon democracy in favor of a more assertive albeit authoritarian policy. After all, democracy in Yugoslavia had failed and had not brought about the Catholic movement’s ascendancy. The generation of Catholic students and intellectuals which came to maturity in the late 1920s and early 1930s had experienced only dysfunctional parliamentary democracy or dictatorship, in a context of heightened nationality tensions, as a result of which their own commitment to democracy and ethnic tolerance waned noticeably. What is more, the Yugoslav dictatorship (1929-34, but really to 1939) was, to all appearances, Serbian Orthodox and inimical to Croat Catholic interests. Catholics in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany might with varying degrees of enthusiasm accommodate themselves to those regimes, in the interests of the Nation and with the blessing of the Vatican, but this was impossible in Yugoslavia. There was no Concordat between the Vatican and Belgrade and therefore no tacit or overt blessing on the part of the Vatican to submit to the

⁷ Stjepan Sarkotić, *Radićevo izdajstvo*, 1925, unknown publisher, Vienna, p. 27.

⁸ Eugen Dido Kvaternik, ‘Sjećanja i zapažanja, 1929-1945: Prilozi za hrvatsku povijest’, in: Jere Jareb (ed.), 1995, Hrvatski institut za povijest, Zagreb, p. 271.

⁹ On the dictatorship as a watershed in Yugoslav history, see Christian Axboe Nielsen, *One State, One Nation, One King: The Dictatorship of King Aleksandar and His Yugoslav Project, 1929-1935*, 2002, Columbia University, Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation.

regime.¹⁰ (In 1935 the Vatican and Yugoslav government concluded a draft Concordat, but vocal opposition from the Serbian Orthodox Church and some Serb nationalists thwarted ratification in 1937.) Nor could Croat Catholics, after the experience of the royal dictatorship, readily accommodate themselves to a Yugoslav state that increasingly seemed to them to be working for Serb national and Orthodox religious supremacy.

This was the wider context within which the Catholic movement assumed new organizational forms and articulated a more militant political ideology. Its most successful initiative was its youth group, the Great Crusader Fraternity and Sorority (1931-45), which at its peak in 1938 had an estimated following of 40,000.¹¹ Its mission was to reshape society by producing a new generation of Catholic youth through indoctrination in the liturgy and faith; Croatian history; and, Catholic social teaching.¹² Its radical brand of redemptive Catholic ideology was intended to enable it to confront the threats posed by liberalism, Communism and Great Serbianism.

In the course of the 1930s, the nationalist component became far more pronounced in the Crusaders' and Catholic political ideology. Their nationalism was no longer merely of the autonomist variety, as Yugoslavism was now completely abandoned. The Crusaders adopted an integral Great Croatian ideology, which envisaged the eventual creation of a Great Croatia that included Bosnia-Herzegovina and parts of Vojvodina. The earlier ties to the Slovene Catholic movement also virtually disappeared, as the Crusaders sought to separate their membership from Yugoslavist and non-Croat influences.¹³ References to 'Yugoslavia' were rarely found in Crusader publications, nor was there much discussion of non-Catholic citizens, whether Serbian Orthodox or Bosnian Muslim. The accent was on the 'Homeland', tacitly understood as Great Croatia, and its Catholic and European history, represented through symbols and narratives commemorating medieval Croatian monarchs and Croatia's relations with the Papacy. The Crusaders' slogan of 'God, Church, Homeland', melded radical Catholicism with integral Croat nationalism and reflected the movement's commitment to Croatia as *antemurale humanitatis*.

¹⁰ Most Catholic political parties disappeared in the interwar era because of fascist dictatorship and Pope Pius XI's seeming indifference to their fate. Pius XI believed that Catholics should work through schools and 'Catholic Action' rather than through Catholic political parties, to transform society. In signing concordats with Italy (February 1929) and Nazi Germany (July 1933), Pius XI accepted the dissolution of Catholic parties in those countries in return for the continued existence of Catholic Action and parochial schools.

¹¹ See Sandra Prlenda, 'Young, Religious, and Radical: The Croat Catholic Youth Organizations, 1922-1945', in: John Lampe/Mark Mazower (eds.), *Ideologies and National Identities: The Case of Twentieth-Century Southeastern Europe*, 2004, Central European University Press, New York-Budapest, p. 82-109.

¹² Prlenda, 'Young, Religious, and Radical', op. cit., p. 91-92.

¹³ Prlenda, 'Young, Religious, and Radical', op. cit., p. 93.

The Catholic intelligentsia's views on nationality and identity in Great Croatia, demonstrate most ascetically the degree to which their thinking had radicalized over the previous decade. This was seen in their treatment of Serb and Bosnian Muslim identities, just as it was reflected in a more pronounced anti-Semitism.¹⁴ For its part, the Ustaša movement denied the existence of Serb and Bosnian Muslim peoples in Great Croatia, on the premise that there could only be one historic political nation on the territory of Great Croatia. In reality, however, Ustaša ideology vacillated between exclusionist and assimilationist tendencies, with the former, which accepted only the Catholic and Muslim populations as 'Croat', being the stronger of the two. The Catholic intelligentsia came around to a similar view, namely, that the Orthodox of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina were not Serbs at all but 'Croats' who had adopted a Serb consciousness in the nineteenth century because of nationalizing efforts of the Serbian Orthodox Church.¹⁵ This theory originated in the belief that the Orthodox of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina were descended from the autochthonous, pre-Ottoman Catholic (and thus supposedly 'Croat') population that had converted to Orthodoxy under Ottoman rule.¹⁶ For the Catholic intelligentsia, Orthodoxy in the western Balkans was increasingly viewed as the agency of Great Serbian ideology, and the 'South Slav Question' as essentially a religious question. These increasingly commonplace views betrayed a far less tolerant and inclusive position on the questions of nation and identity.

The role of nationalism was absolutely decisive. After all, both the Croat and Slovene Catholic movements had similar antecedents and drew on comparable inspirations from the Habsburg era. The influences of Austrian Christian Socialism and Italian Populism were discernable in both, and given their Yugoslavist orientation the Croat and Slovene Populists evolved in tandem, as political allies, in the 1920s. But nationalism proved to be the decisive dynamic and explains why, after January 1929, the Slovene and Croat clericalists parted company. The Slovene clericalists concluded that for reasons of national interest, namely, the threat posed by Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany to the Slovene lands, Slovenes were better served in Yugoslavia. The Croat clericalists, despite some ideological reservations, came to see in Italy and Germany po-

¹⁴ See Luka Vincetić, 'Antisemitizam u hrvatskoj katoličkoj štampi do Drugoga svjetskog rata', in: Ognjen Kraus (ed.), *Antisemitizam, Holokaust, Antifašizam*, 1996, Židovska općina, Zagreb, p. 54-64.

¹⁵ For a representative sample, see for example M. S., 'Srpski apetit', *Nezavisna Hrvatska Država*, 24 December 1938, p. 4; and 'Život katolika pod turskim gospodstvom u hrvatskim krajevima', *Hrvatski narod*, 7 April 1939, p. 10.

¹⁶ Krunoslav Draganović, *Katolička crkva u Bosni i Hercegovini nekad i danas*, 1934, unknown publisher, Zagreb; and Ivo Pilar, *Južnoslavensko pitanje: Prikaz cjelokupnog pitanja*, 1943, Matica Hrvatska, Zagreb, p. 112, 215, which was originally published as L. von Südland, *Die Südslavische Frage und der Weltkrieg*, 1918, Manz, Vienna.

tential allies in the realization of independence. Thus, while the Slovene People's Party continued to cooperate with the Serbian authorities throughout the 1930s, the Croat Catholic movement contributed to the centrifugal political tendencies in Croatia. This demonstrated that nationalist principles outweighed religious considerations when political interests were at stake. The ideational transformation of Croatia from historic *antemurale christianitatis* to *antemurale humanitatis* was completed by the 1930s; this conversion was mediated by integral nationalism.

As a generalization, it is fair to say that by the late 1930s the Catholic movement in Croatia largely rejected the moderate political line of the Croat Peasant Party, now under Vladko Maček, which was willing to solve the Croat Question within Yugoslavia. Many Catholics turned to or at least sympathized with Pavelić's uncompromising Ustaša movement. Accommodation with Yugoslavia seemed increasingly at odds with the Catholic program of militant Catholicism and integral Croat nationalism. By the late 1930s, the Ustaše were seen as the logical and only choice for those committed to outright independence.¹⁷ Two issues highlight this transformation in Croat Catholic thinking. The first was the political crisis surrounding the failed ratification of the draft Concordat of 1935. The Serbian Orthodox Church launched a public campaign against the Yugoslav government in 1937, accusing it of favoring the Catholic Church. This campaign scuttled ratification of the Concordat.¹⁸ The incident fuelled the Catholic movement's belief that Catholic and Croat interests could never be accommodated within Yugoslavia. Second, the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) unified Catholic groups and indeed the heterogeneous Croatian political right. For the Croat nationalist right, democracy was no longer assessed to be a viable option in societies like Spain or Croatia; 'authoritative' solutions on a corporatist model were seen as the only practicable course. The Catholic intellectual Ivo Bogdan noted in 1937 that Spain was a typical example of the failure of liberal democracy to address not only the national question, but other pressing social and political problems.¹⁹ Many Catholic periodicals now expressed sympathy for authoritarian regimes of the right, hailed the anti-Communism and militant patriotism of the Nationalists in Spain, and saw in the

¹⁷ Ivan Oršanić/Kazimir Katalinić (ed.), *Vizija slobode*, 1979, Hrvatska revija, Buenos Aires, p. 6, 20, 25.

¹⁸ See the discussion in Radmila Rakić, 'Religion in a Multinational State', in: Dejan Djokić (ed.), *Yugoslavia: Histories of a Failed Idea, 1918-1992*, 2003, Hurst, London, p. 201-202. The events are retold in Miloš Mišović, *Srpska crkva i konkordatska kriza*, 1983, Sloboda, Belgrade, and Ivan Mužić, *Katolička crkva u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji: Politički i pravni aspekti konkordata između Svete Stolice i Kraljevine Jugoslavije*, 1978, Crkva u svijetu, Split.

¹⁹ Ivo Bogdan, *Španjolska u krvi i plamenu: Dalji i bliži uzroci građanskog rata*, 1937, MOSK, Zagreb, p. 13.

Spanish example the potential of using Axis support to achieve Croatian independence.

In short, throughout the 1930s there was a growing convergence of views between the Catholic movement in Croatia and the émigré Croat fascists. This did not mean, however, that the Catholic movement did not have reservations about Nazism and Fascism. On the contrary, Catholic periodicals in Croatia repeatedly drew attention to the perils of Nazi ideology. Many Catholic intellectuals had serious misgivings about the nascent Nazi New Order, but were blinded to the perils of Nazism by their conviction that Axis support was the *sine qua non* of Croatian independence.

Independent State of Croatia, 1941-1945

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that during the Second World War a considerable segment of Croat Catholic clergy and laity sided with the Ustaša regime. The growing nationalism and militancy of the Catholic movement invariably led to this outcome. In the heady days of April 1941, when the Croatian state was born as a result of Axis invasion, many Catholic activists saw Ante Pavelić as “the avenger of a martyred past”.²⁰ They quickly occupied important positions in the regime, typically in the ranks of the Ustaša Youth or as leading propagandists. Undeniably preferring a Catholic Great Croatian State to a Great Serbian Yugoslavia, between 1941 and 1945 the Catholic movement committed itself to the defense of Croatian statehood.

This has led to allegations that the Ustaša State was hopelessly intertwined with the Catholic hierarchy. The reality was far more complex. The Church episcopacy led by Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac of Zagreb was increasingly troubled by the Ustaša regime, which over time more and more flouted Church prerogatives.²¹ The Ustaša State rather than the Church conducted forced conversions of Orthodox Serbs to Catholicism with little regard for Church prerogatives and it persecuted catholicized Serbs and Jews despite repeated Church interventions. The episcopacy split on the question of collaboration. The Church and Catholic movement were also torn by generational and regional fissures. The younger generation of radical Catholics generally supported the Ustaša regime with considerable enthusiasm, while the older generation was more reserved and in some cases overtly hostile. Catholic support for the regime also varied according to region. Often these fissures overlapped, creating a far more complex picture than is painted in the historiography.

²⁰ Dragutin Kamber, *Slom NDH: Kako sam ga ja proživio*, Božica Ercegovac Jambrović (ed.), 1993, Hrvatski informativni centar, Zagreb, p. 5.

²¹ On the controversial Stepinac, see Mark Biondich, ‘Controversies surrounding the Catholic Church in wartime Croatia, 1941-45’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 7/4, 2006, p. 429-457.

Conclusion

Native fascism in Croatia was largely a by-product of the nationalist struggles arising from Yugoslavia's vexing and increasingly acrimonious national question. Pavelić's Ustaša movement deliberately modeled itself after Italian Fascism, hoping to utilize Italian sponsorship and growing Croat popular opposition to the Yugoslav state to achieve independence, and was by 1941 completely fascistized. Radical Catholics too increasingly opted for authoritarian models, whilst retaining (unlike the Ustaše) certain reservations about both Fascism and Nazism. It is important to remember that interwar political Catholicism in Croatia underwent a veritable *volte face*: the early Croat Populists belonged to the moderate, Yugoslavist political center; nationalism and the national question facilitated their path to the radical right.

In the interwar era, Croatia's Catholic movement was always heterogeneous, politically weak and divided on many political issues even as it migrated to the radical right. Although the Catholic episcopacy was the movement's center of gravity, the laity operated independently and was generally far more radical than the bishops. This makes it difficult to ascribe to the Catholic movement a uniform ideology let alone one that can be termed 'clerico-fascist'. There is little doubt that Croat 'radical Catholicism' became more authoritarian and anti-democratic over the interwar period. Unlike traditional conservatives, however, many Catholic activists were not afraid to engage the masses. On the contrary, it was precisely their growing ideological militancy and efforts to recruit a mass movement of youth, which ultimately gave 'radical Catholicism' in Croatia a 'clerico-fascist' tenor. The movement also became less tolerant and inclusive of others, namely, Orthodox Serbs, Jews and to a degree even Bosnian Muslims, who were regarded by the Croat political establishment as Muslim 'Croats'. Its mission of transforming society along Catholic lines became linked to radical solutions to the Croat Question. The trajectory of Croat 'radical Catholicism' from political centrism to the radical right was mediated by nationalism. Another area of ideological convergence between the Croat Catholic movement and Ustaše was corporatism.

In the final analysis, therefore, many of Croatia's radical Catholics became fascist fellow-travelers rather than the 'genuine' article. They undeniably belonged to the East Central European radical right, but theirs was an abortive movement which was in the final analysis co-opted by the fascist Ustaša State. The radical Catholics tried after 1941 to use the Ustaša movement to realize some of their most basic objectives, namely, the affirmation of statehood and Catholic rejuvenation, but were themselves co-opted. As noted in the introduction, the marriage of the two did not produce a national form of 'clerical fascism'. The competing tendencies at play – Fascism's desire to secularize religion in service to the Nation, and political Catholicism's desire to sacralize

politics – were never resolved in the form of a coherent ideology of Croat ‘clerico-fascism’. The Ustaša regime can scarcely be described as ‘clerico-fascist’; the Ustaše had little interest in remaking Croats into radical Catholics or in revivifying Croatia through Catholic principles. The wartime reality showed that the Ustaše increasingly flouted the interests of the Church. The nature of the wartime Ustaša State being what it was, this project was immediately jeopardized: the Communist insurgency was soon seen as the far greater evil, and despite the reservations of many Catholics about the nature of the Ustaša regime and its Axis patrons, they committed themselves to the preservation of Croatian statehood. This was perhaps the primary reason why there was no public condemnation of the regime by the episcopacy; such a condemnation was seen as potentially detrimental to the fragile Croatian state and beneficial to its enemies, whether Great Serbian royalists or Yugoslav Communists. For many radical Catholics, however, once the marriage between their movement and the Ustaša State had been consummated in 1941, there was little serious thought of a divorce. By 1941-42, the horrid Ustaša regime was confronted by a Communist insurgency which threatened the survival of the state and, in the eyes of the Ustaše and radical Catholics alike, the existence of the Croat nation. This perceived existential threat merely confirmed in their eyes the ideology of *antemurale humanitatis* and the need for its vociferous advocacy.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND EXTREME RIGHT-WING IDEOLOGIES IN HUNGARY, 1920-1945

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When studying the politics of the ‘Catholic Church’, it becomes clear that not only statements and official declarations made by the episcopacy or the most prominent dignitaries – although these two groups are especially significant because of their positions of authority – have to be taken into account, but that at least two other factors should be included in the analysis: 1) the reactions of the lower clergy and 2) those of Catholic laymen (nominal and true believers). Even if those groups are closely related, their reactions to political challenge (the manifestations of the different political parties, including those of the extreme right) were not necessarily identical.

A second preliminary comment on this analysis concerns the notion of ‘fascism’. This word was deliberately omitted from the title, as it seems more useful to study Catholicism’s reaction to the extreme right in general, as the latter included several different organisations and trends, not to mention the national features involved in them.

In this context, it is important to note that the reactions of Catholic dignitaries and institutions to the extreme right and fascism are by no means independent from the relationship between Catholicism and the *ensemble* of public life (the political system, constitutional structure and other parties, etc., of the State in question). In addition, it is important to differentiate between distinct time periods, particularly the period between 1920 and 1945, which can be divided into several distinct sections in which both the social and political roles of the extreme right and the Catholic Church were characterised by a series of relatively well-defined features. Because such an enterprise would exceed the scope of the present study, this paper does aspire to presenting a complete account of the topic. Rather it will formulate a series of theses that will help lead to a future summary, with a series of concrete historical examples being used by way of illustration.

¹ This work was carried out as part of the TÁMOP-4.2.2/B-10/1-2010-0008 project in the framework of the New Hungarian Development Plan. The realization of this project is supported by the European Union and co-financed by the European Social Fund. The text was translated and revised by Judit Szabóné Papp and Harry Edward Bailey.

Over the previous few decades, the relationship between the Catholic Church and right wing ideologies, and the Holocaust, has been quite elaborately studied.² Concerning the Hungarian situation, from the 1950s to the 1970s, it was common to label the whole period as ‘fascist’, an attitude which was supplemented by a generally negative assessment of the Catholic Church, whereby the elements which pointed to its ‘alliance’ with the extreme right were stressed. Such a focus has gradually weakened, making way for an increasingly apologetic approach that focuses on manifestations of the Catholic Church’s resistance against fascism – an attitude that admittedly was by no means generalised. However, within the present paper we are confronted with a rather more complicated network of relations. For example, it is very common for apologetic approaches to deal almost exclusively with Catholic participation in the rescue of Jews, focusing on events after March 1944, i.e. at the moment that the country was under German occupation. However it is also obvious that the relationship with the Jewish community is of crucial importance to the relationship between Catholicism and the extreme right – even if it is by no means the exclusive factor. On general terms, it can be observed that analyses focus primarily on the way in which representatives of the Catholic Church viewed fascism and the extreme right. But this question could also be inverted, interrogating the positioning of extremist political parties *vis-à-vis* Catholicism.

In the long term, this complex network of relations would benefit greatly from an in depth study: in addition to the general characterisation of the Horthy regime, a primary sub-period can be identified, lasting from the early 1920s to the first half of the 1930s (with the Nazis coming into power in Germany), a second period that stretched out until the end of 1944 (the period of the shift to the right and the strengthening of the extreme right). An additional sub-period are the years during World War II, up until the German occupation. Finally, the year 1944 is marked by the collapse of the Horthy regime in October and the coming into power of the Arrow Cross movement, whereby the central issue becomes the relationship between the Church and the Arrow Cross dictatorship.

The starting point should be a summary of the specific nature of the Horthy regime.³ In the Horthy era, Hungary can be described as being under an

² For this paper the most important books and articles that were consulted are: Jenő Gergely, ‘A magyarországi katolikus egyház és a fasizmus’, *Századok* 1, 1987, p. 3-48; Id., ‘Concordatum Hungaricum. A nyilas kormány konkordátum tervezete 1945 elején’, *Századok* 3, 1995, p. 695-728; Roger Griffin, ‘The ‘Holy Storm’: ‘Clerical Fascism’ through the Lens of Modernism’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 2, 2007, p. 213-227; Béla Bodó, ‘Do not Lead us into (Fascist) Temptation’. The Catholic Church in Interwar Hungary’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 2, 2007, p. 413-431.

³ For the Catholic Church during the Horthy Era, Catholic political movements and ideologies: Jenő Gergely, *A katolikus egyház története Magyarországon, 1919-1945*, 1997, ELTE BTK, Budapest, 1997; Péter Sipos, ‘A Magyar Megújulás Pártja’, in: István Feitl, *Jobboldali radikalizmusok tegnap és*

authoritarian political system, operated under a multi-party parliament and government. At the same time, the rules concerning the right to vote were far from democratic, with State institutions serving the governing conservative party. From 1922 to the end of the regime, the governing party, which changed its name several times, had an overwhelming majority in the parliament, something that made it practically impossible to transform the existing political system. Between the two World Wars, the history of Hungary was basically determined by its defeat in World War I, the consequent takeover of a considerable part of both the territory and the population of the country by the neighbouring States, and its new status as a small country.⁴ The regime also had its own official ideology, known as 'Christian nationalism'. The latter blamed liberal legislation during the period prior to 1918 for weakening the 'spiritual unity' of the Hungarian nation, something it claimed could only be guaranteed by Christianity. Therefore, after 1920, Church and State were indissolubly linked to the whole of the regime and took on a 'Christian character', implying a complete sharing of interests between the historical Christian Churches (Roman and Greek Catholic, Protestant, Lutheran) and the Hungarian State. Thus, from the point of view of the relationship between religion and power, no real difference can be detected between Catholics and Protestants, although the Catholic Church held a truly privileged position. In addition to its numerous social privileges and the income from its *latifundia*, the latter enjoyed the extensive support of the State. In return, the Catholic Church provided the State with an important ideological basis, whereby religiosity and the presence of the Churches – especially that of the Catholic Church – permeated the whole of society and public life.

Between 1919 and 1922, the ideology of 'Christian nationalism' was initiated by two outstanding Church personalities, the Jesuit Béla Bangha and, more significantly, bishop Ottokár Prohászka. Prohászka advocated a total return to Christianity, and based his State theory on a combination of ethics and religion. He attached a great deal of importance to anti-Semitism, which, for him, was linked to the 'self-defence' of Christian Hungarians, whereby he also stressed the impossibility of assimilation, and promoted the restriction of social

ma, 1998 (1^o 1995), Napvilág, Budapest, p. 130-146; Moshe Y. Herczl, *Christianity and the Holocaust of Hungarian Jewry*, 1993, New York university Press, New York; Michael Phayer, *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930-1965*, 2000, Indiana University Press, Indianapolis; Csaba Fazekas, 'Collaborating with Horthy. Political Catholicism and Christian Political Organisations in Hungary, 1918-1944', in: Michael Gehler/Wolfram Kaiser/Helmut Wohnout (eds.), *Christian Democracy in 20th century Europe*, 2001, Böhlau Verlag, Weimar, p. 224-249; Leslie László, *Church and State in Hungary, 1919-1945*, 2004, METEM, Pannonhalma-Budapest; Paul A. Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary. Religion, Nationalism and Antisemitism, 1890-1944*, 2006, Cornell University Press, Ithaca-London.

⁴ Furthermore, the political life of the period was haunted by the memories of the bourgeois democratic republic in 1918 and the communist dictatorship in 1919.

positions held by Jews. Here it is important to observe that already in the 1920s both the governing party and its extreme right opposition (primarily the racists) regarded themselves as Christians and urged for the strengthening of Christian Churches. Several representatives of the Catholic Church indeed felt drawn to the extreme right, judging the ‘Christianity’ of the system insufficient. Although in 1920 parliament passed an act that limited the admission of Jews to universities (*numerus clausus*), the racists later considered the economic, social, and other acts for the ‘protection of the nation’ initiated by Prime Minister István Bethlen’s conservative, stabilisation government to be insufficient. On one occasion, Prohászka himself aired the feeling that a ‘Christian regime’ had come into being “without Christians”.⁵ The bishop was very popular with the extreme right because of his anti-Semitic views but also because he called for a series of social reforms such the strengthening of the Christian – that is, non-Jewish – middle class and press, land reform, etc. He also played an active role in the life of several extreme right organisations (e.g. Ébredő Magyarok Egyesülete – ‘Association of Awakening Hungarians’). However, Prohászka’s example did not seem to inspire his fellow bishops. Indeed, the extreme right’s demands were rarely mentioned during the episcopal meetings. After his death in 1927, both the influence of Prohászka’s ideas and his popularity waned. Still, his example was emulated by numerous representatives of the lower clergy, whereby parish priests expressed sharply anti-Semitic views as well as a preference for the extreme right (even in openly political meetings).

During the 1930s, Prohászka’s political views were shared by moderate and extreme right movements alike. As well as being a testimony to his prestige, powerful personality, and the vividness of his political heritage, this reveals two things. On one hand, following the global economic crisis, the governing party (together with the Horthy regime) shifted to the right, integrating some of the demands of the extreme right more easily so that Prohászka became an emblematic figure for every wing of the Catholic political movement. On the other hand, the Catholic Church itself became more open to the ambitious extreme right ideologies.⁶

Following the economic crisis and Hitler’s rise to power in 1933, extreme right political organisations (national socialists, fascists, Arrow Cross movement) became more powerful and present in Hungary.⁷ In general, the

⁵ From Ottokár Prohászka’s diary, June 30, 1920: Ottokár Prohászka, *Naplójegyzetek III (1919-1927)*, Zoltán Frenyó/Ferenc Szabó S. J. (eds.), 1997, Agapé, Budapest (Pázmány Péter Electronic Library. Nr. 316. – www.ppek.hu – December 2010).

⁶ Prohászka formulated his extreme right, anti-Semitic views as ‘national self-defence’, which he called ‘hungarism’. This term was owned and further developed by the extreme right of the 1930s.

⁷ E.g. Arrow Cross Party-Hungarist Movement, National Will Party, Christian National-Socialist Front, etc.

Catholic Church – both the higher and the lower clergy – rejected the German (Nazi) form of fascism, primarily because of its new paganism and anti-Christian character. However, in many respects, Christians found German national socialism attractive (or, at least, accepted its existence, mainly as a counterweight against communism). However, its (pagan) cult of race and blood remained fundamentally alien to the clergy. As the Horthy regime continued to present itself as a ‘Christian’ ideology, preference was given to the Italian version of fascism as well as to the Portuguese and Spanish authoritarian regimes, as the latter built up their political systems not against, but in alliance with, the Church. Even those extreme right organisations that showed affinity with the symbols of ancient Hungarian (pagan) religion attempted to integrate these elements into Christianity as much as possible. In the 1930s, several dozen extreme right (national socialist, fascist) parties were formed or transformed, giving rise to a heterogeneous, rapidly transforming party system (often also divided due to personal conflicts). The government often tried to restrict or abolish such organisations. The most influential was Ferenc Szálasi’s movement, which grew into a party that soon gained popular support: the Arrow Cross Party.

Without exception, both the Arrow Cross movement and similar extreme right groups emphasized their Christian commitment.⁸ They regarded Christianity to be the fundamental feature of their ideology and blended it with their social and economic objectives. It is important here to note that the Hungarian extreme right – although not unaffected by Italian and German fascism – was a typically Hungarian movement, emerging in the specific context of Hungarian social development and of the Hungarian political system. The representatives of this movement endeavoured to remain on good terms with German national socialism, primarily because they saw it as the major foreign policy factor of their possible success. In addition, most of the East European radical right wing movements were established on some kind of religious basis. In this context, the Hungarian case is quite unique, due to its multi-religious character. On a political level, the ‘Christianity’ of the Arrow Cross movement led to the idea of a “Christianity-based socialism”, because its leaders wanted to address members of the different Christian denominations in the same manner.⁹

The chapters on Church policy of the extreme right party programmes emphasized the role of the historical Christian Churches in the foundation of the State and the maintenance of the nation.¹⁰ In religious and nationalist texts,

⁸ Some expressed their ethico-religious commitment even in their names, cf. the Christian National Socialist Front (°1939).

⁹ A considerable number of them (including the leader of the Arrow Cross Movement, Ferenc Szálasi) were ardent Catholics.

¹⁰ Jenő Gergely/Ferenc Glatz/Ferenc Pölöskei (eds.), *Magyarországi pártprogramok, 1919-1944*, 1991, Kossuth, Budapest, p. 430-431, 463-464.

it was almost always considered to be a major task to safeguard the interests and, more particularly, to increase the income of the lower clergy, to provide legal protection for Churches, Church institutions and the practice of religion, and to strictly prosecute any form of anti-religious behaviour; in some cases, even the prospect of a concordat with the Holy See was present. Apart from the rare exception, such elements – which, it should be added, were also present in the conservative governing party's programme – seemed acceptable or even attractive to the Catholic Church.

The second half of the 1930s saw a considerable advance of the extreme right in Hungary, with the different radical parties obtaining 25 % of the votes in 1939 and sending 49 representatives into the Lower House, which counted a total of 260 members.¹¹ Although the governing party (*Magyar Élet Pártja* = 'Party of Hungarian Life') still obtained 181 mandates, the extreme right was stronger than it had ever been before, becoming a major rival to the government, whose slogans and programmes it emulated, whereby promising more rapid solutions. There were in total 29 individual constituencies in which an extreme right (Arrow Cross Party, national socialist, racist, etc.) candidate succeeded in obtaining over 40 % of the votes.¹² Of these 29 constituencies, 20 were primarily Roman Catholic districts – more than 80 % of the population –, allowing us to safely conclude that the Catholic Church did not oppose the extreme right.¹³

Furthermore, it is also worthwhile to explore the relation between the Catholic Church's leaders and the political programmes and activities of extreme right parties in the 1930s. In general, it can be said that they condemned the Nazis' 'new paganism' and racism, as well as their persecution of Christians. However, this did not by any means lead to formal opposition against the Hungarian extreme right, on the contrary: the Catholic episcopacy, both institutionally and ideologically well integrated into the Horthy regime, naturally expected the government to meet its demands and stabilise the position of the Church. Therefore, it did not intend to establish institutional connections with the radicals, but endeavoured to ignore them as much as possible. Basically it accepted their presence in political life, and did not make any particular objections. It only expressed its resentment in extreme cases, viewing the fight against atheistic Bolshevism as much more important, seeing it as the biggest threat to the Church. The episcopacy basically followed the Vatican's stance in this matter: in two 1937 encyclicals, Pius XI similarly condemned both atheist communism (*Divini Redemptoris*) and Nazism (*Mit Brennender Sorge*).

¹¹ László Hubai (ed.), *Magyarország választási atlasza*, 2001, Politikatörténeti Intézet, Budapest (CD-ROM). Of these, 29 belonged to the Arrow Cross Party.

¹² The total number of individual constituencies was 153.

¹³ Among these, there were such important Catholic constituencies as Pannonhalma, Veszprém and Zalaegerszeg.

The general intention seems to have been to keep the clergy separate from direct (daily) politics and party activities. At an episcopal meeting on October 21, 1937, this intent was typically formulated in the following way:

“In the present turbulent times, it is necessary to warn our priests against extremisms (e.g. the Arrow Cross movement). However, it is also necessary to warn some Catholic periodicals to show tact and moderation in criticising the behaviour of Church personalities in relation to such movements.”¹⁴

At the beginning of 1942, a provincial parish priest asked the episcopacy to clarify their position *vis-à-vis* both the Arrow Cross movement and the National Socialists. If it was heresy that they preached, so argued the priest, then Catholics could not be members of such parties, whereas if this were not the case, then Catholic devotees could become or remain members. Jusztinián Serédi, Archbishop of Esztergom, avoided taking sides and referred to the papacy, which had “investigated this issue in depth but applied no censorship against these movements.” Moreover, Catholic bishops thought that the members of the Arrow Cross Party were mostly “well-meaning” and that therefore the Catholic Church should not oppose their activities.¹⁵ This viewpoint was clearly expressed in a 1938 speech by József Grósz, apostolic governor and future bishop of Szombathely: “In general, I have nothing against either the Arrow Cross movement or the National Socialists, as long as they do not turn against Christ and his gospel”. Sharply rejecting the idea of an anti-fascist coalition with the left and the liberals, he also argued that, surpassing even the example set by the Italian fascists, the members of the Arrow Cross movement used the cross as their symbol; as long as this was the case, the Church had no problem with them, as in addition it also supported nationalism and social reforms. He continued: “As long as the Hungarian ultras worship Christ, go to Church, confess and sacrifice, and as long as they remain believers, we have no objection, and will not fight them.”¹⁶

The Catholic Church approved almost completely the most important programmatic elements of the extreme right. Typically for such movements, publications usually primarily mentioned nationalism, a tendency also characteristic to Hungarian catholicism, a direct consequence of the territorial revision of the peace treaties (even if aggressive nationalism was rejected). In addition, there was no real difference between the opinions voiced on the left-wing la-

¹⁴ Margit Beke (ed.), *A magyar katolikus püspökekari tanácskozáások története és jegyzőkönyvei 1919-1944 között*, vol. II, 1992, Aurora, München-Budapest, p. 148. This clearly targeted the anti-fascist periodical *Korunk Szava* (“Voice of our Age”), edited by young Catholic intellectuals. The background of this remark was that some clergymen were closely connected to the Arrow Cross movement (a fact well-known to the bishops).

¹⁵ Beke (ed.), *A magyar katolikus püspökekari*, op. cit., p. 321.

¹⁶ “Kikkel áll szemben a mi frontunk?”, *Szombathelyi Katolikus Tudósító* 4, 1938.

bour movement, on the Social Democratic and Communist Parties and on the Soviet Union, considered by both the Church and ordinary Hungarians as dangerous or even destructive. Together with liberalism and bourgeois democracy, left-wing movements were considered to be much more of a threat than the Nazis or the extreme right in general. In this context it is symptomatic that on March 14, 1944, days before the German occupation, the episcopacy was keen on enhancing vigilance against parishioners in congregations with Social Democratic political views.¹⁷

Whereas, without exception, extreme right movements were characterised by stateism, i.e. the tendency to strengthen the role of the State,¹⁸ to a certain extent, the Church backed the solution of social problems and the supporting of the poor, defenceless working class and peasants. In this context, in the spring of 1938, the bankers' union turned to the episcopacy criticising a series of extreme articles written by Catholic priests attacking plutocracy. Once again, the pontiffs expressed their opinion very cautiously, or rather, without taking a firm stand: "As articles written by priests in the spirit of fashionable racist and other extreme right slogans were also published in other periodicals, the episcopacy decides to warn the clergy against following extreme political views."¹⁹ A more marked conflict arose around the issue of (radical) land reform demanded by the extreme right, with the episcopacy insisting on keeping its *latifundia* as well as the system of land lease.²⁰

The approach to the 'Jewish problem' may be regarded as the most important emblematic question. In 1938 and 1939, (after thorough discussion) the Catholic Church ended up backing the first two, rather strict Acts on Jews passed by the Hungarian Parliament. In 1941, the Church did not support the third one, because it affected the sacramental status of marriage. Other anti-Jewish statutes, passed prior to 1944, were likewise approved by the Catholic Church (although the clergy often expressed its dissent in minor issues). As mentioned, the Catholic Church condemned Nazi racism, but did not do so when other forms of anti-Semitism were concerned (e.g. anti-Jewish movements demanding social 'proportionment' on an ethical-religious basis). Moreover, the different Churches vigorously contributed to the creation of an anti-Jewish current in public opinion during the Horthy era, notably by using Jews as a scapegoat for wrongdoing etc. In so doing, they were partly responsible for a rather pas-

¹⁷ Beke (ed.), *A magyar katolikus püspökökari*, op. cit., p. 407.

¹⁸ Here it should be noted that the Catholic Church did not in any way back the principle of dictatorship: when in October 1944, the dictatorship of the Arrow Cross movement seized power, the Church declared the Szálasi regime illegal and unconstitutional, interrupting all diplomatic ties. As a direct consequence, several bishops were arrested.

¹⁹ Beke (ed.), *A magyar katolikus püspökökari*, op. cit., p. 166.

²⁰ Some members of the lower clergy were in favour of the idea of land reform following the increase of parish priests' incomes by the Arrow Cross movement.

sive generalised attitude *vis-à-vis* the Holocaust. In relation to the mentioned 'Jewish acts', the episcopacy saw the 'protection' of Christianity, including of Jewish converts, as its primary concern, while in general it sought to apply the principles of 'natural law', i.e. the idea that punishment should be proportionate to the crime, and that no collective punishment could be inflicted upon any 'ethnic group'. In reality, the situation became rather confused. In January 1939, Gyula Glattfelder, bishop of Csanád, on one hand pointed out that in the draft of the second act on Jews, "in our country, [he could] see the first sign of the myth of blood and race, created as part of an alien ideology, which, if carried on, might lead to upheaval, takeover of power and irreligion", whereas on the other hand, several bishops essentially agreed with the act, as it intended to suppress the "Jewish spirit" and to eliminate "Jewish destruction", thus aiming at "the protection of Christian truth".²¹ In autumn 1940, they criticised (with no effect) the fact that forced labour was giving rise to "cruel treatment under Christian slogans".²² Their main concern seems to have been the fact that Jewish converts were forced to work on Sundays. Tension also rose when in 1941, the Hungarian State turned Jewish refugees of non-Hungarian citizenship over to Germany; here the episcopacy stated, while asking for humane treatment, that no protection should be offered to such "intruding elements".²³

From March 1944 onwards, the German occupation led to the concerted and rapid action of Hungarian authorities against Jews. In a few weeks, over 400,000 Hungarian Jews were deported. After prolonged negotiations, the Church voiced its dissent only when it was already too late. When the ghettos were being set up, they rejected the idea of protesting together with the Protestants, still concentrating primarily on the protection of Jewish converts. On June 29, 1944 the episcopacy issued an encyclical – whose distribution was forbidden by the government – that reflected its ambivalent position.²⁴ In addition to the notion of 'self-defence' and the stressing of the Church's past merits, the encyclical referred to the principles of natural law, stating that no man could be deprived of his inborn rights, mentioning the unacceptable sufferings caused by war, while only hinting indirectly at the fate of deported Jews. Although the anti-Jewish measures were condemned, and although Catholics were urged to not participate in anti-Jewish actions, the encyclical still held to a certain anti-Semitic discourse sustained by the Church over the past 25 years.²⁵ At the same ti-

²¹ Beke (ed.), *A magyar katolikus püspökekari*, op. cit., p. 200.

²² Beke (ed.), *A magyar katolikus püspökekari*, op. cit., p. 257.

²³ Beke (ed.), *A magyar katolikus püspökekari*, op. cit., p. 272.

²⁴ Beke (ed.), *A magyar katolikus püspökekari*, op. cit., p. 438-441.

²⁵ "We do not doubt that some members of the Jewish community have exerted a harmfully disintegrating influence on Hungarian economic, social and moral life. It is also a fact that the rest of the community have not stood up against them in this respect. We do not doubt that the Jewish problem should be solved in a lawful and just manner..."

me, however, it should be added that several members of the Catholic Church, including priests, monks and laymen, actively and without instruction from Church authorities, took part in the rescue of Jewish people, whereby often risking their lives.

The relation of Catholic lower clergy to the extreme right is a topic of research that has to date not yet been adequately addressed, based, for example, on a summary and investigation of parish bulletins and other local publications.²⁶ In this context, during the 1930s, several bishops observed that young priests had become followers of new ideologies advocating radical social change, thus strengthening local positions and echoing some of the ideas of the extreme right. Thus in provincial Church publications the Spanish Civil War was often qualified as a conflict between Christianity and Bolshevism, the Francoists being portrayed as people “protecting the gospel”.²⁷ The anti-Christian ideological content of German fascism was systematically rejected, sometimes even quite vehemently, as it was a “heterogeneous, incoherent” product “with elements taken from divergent sources and created by a brain revolting against God”; in addition, it was observed that “it is possible that soon the German swastika, like a huge mill-wheel, will crush Catholic lives and will be red with the blood of martyrs”; quite paradoxically, an alliance with the Nazis, fighting Bolshevism, was favoured.²⁸ Indeed the most frequent criticism of German fascism was that with its anti-Christian behaviour it weakened the efficiency of the fight against communism. Furthermore, the corporative system, based on the Italian and Portuguese examples, was seen as the forerunner to a “new lifestyle” that would stabilise the Hungarian State. At the end of the 1930s, such local publications supported the anti-Jewish acts in order to stop what was seen as Jewish immorality, whereby implicitly denying that Jewish citizens belonged to the Hungarian nation.²⁹ From 1941, the glorious advances of the Germans in the anti-Soviet war were increasingly being hailed as part of a “crusade”, a “war of self-defence” that was waged against Bolshevism, a conflict in which not States but worldviews were in opposition to each another, a near *calque* of some of the principles put forward by the extreme right.³⁰

²⁶ The contents of political articles as well as the views expressed by the clergy showed little difference; this counts not only for pro-extreme right views but also for anti-fascist criticism, even if anti-extreme right Catholic views were mainly expressed in the publications of intellectual groups and periodicals, such as, for example, the above-mentioned *Korunk Szava*.

²⁷ E.g. László Tarnavölgyi, ‘A spanyol események margójára’, *Egri Katolikus Tudósító* 2, 1937, p. 19-20; Id., ‘Katolikus voltunk megvallása a közéletben’, *Katolikus Alföld (Szegedi Katolikus Tudósító)* 6, 1937; [no author name], ‘Két világ harca’, *Katolikus Élet (Győr)* 1-2, 1937.

²⁸ E.g. István Toronyi, ‘Kereszténység vagy faji vallás?’, *Szombathelyi Katolikus Tudósító* 6, 1937; [no author name], ‘Legényegyletünk célkitűzései’, *Egyházi Értesítő (Piszfalva, Lábatlan)* 2, 1940, etc.

²⁹ E.g. ‘A zsidótörvény’, *Katolikus Alföld (Szegedi Katolikus Tudósító)* 5, 1938, etc.

³⁰ A quotation from a Catholic periodical in Győr: “[in the war] millions of valiant Christian soldiers fight against atheist and bestial Bolshevik soldiers with sacred religious and patriotic zeal

In summary of this brief study, a series of concluding remarks can be made. Several politicians of the Horthy period (including Ottokár Prohászka, as mentioned above) considered that the country's problems were the consequence of liberal legislation and of tolerance towards the Jews; the latter were seen as incapable of assimilation, and as an element hostile to the nation. This was a viewpoint that the governing party of the 'Christian national' Horthy regime shared with the extreme right-wing opposition.

The debate concerning the nature of the Horthy regime is all but closed. Perhaps the most fitting definition would be to label it as an 'authoritarian regime', as a form of limited multi-party parliamentarianism whereby, for example, the governing party could not be substituted. From the very beginning, the regime underscored the value of so-called 'Christian national' ideology, which had been developed at the beginning of the 1920s. Opposed to liberalism and especially liberal legislation, the essence of this latter ideology was the identification of the historical Christian Churches with the Hungarian nation, whereby Church and State were closely intertwined. In this context, concerning the relation of the Church to power, for a short time period the former opposition between Protestants and Catholics disappeared.

From the very beginning, anti-Semitism was an integral part of 'Christian national' ideology. Because it was politically motivated, it was seen as a racial, rather than religiously motivated phenomenon. Anti-Semitism was portrayed as the 'self-defence of the Hungarian nation' against Jewish capitalists and Jewish influence that penetrated immoral and harmful political movements. In 1920, the Hungarian Parliament was among the first in Europe to pass an anti-Jewish act, in which a prominent role was played by the Catholic Church, particularly by Ottokár Prohászka. The latter argued that assimilation was unsuccessful because Jews took unfair advantage of the trust of the Hungarian nation; therefore, their rights – and, for that matter, those of all immigrants – ought to be curtailed. Prohászka indicated that a possible solution to the 'Jewish problem' would be their banishment from public life. Here his opinion differed from Nazi anti-Semitism, as he also stated that conversion was a very good option, if not the ideal one, whereby even Zionism was deemed acceptable.

From the beginning of the 1930s, in contrast to the situation in Germany, Hungarian extreme right radicalism considered Christianity to be the basis of its ideology. In this respect, there was no real difference between the Horthy administration and Hungarian National Socialists (Fascists, Hungarists, Arrow Cross movement, etc.). During the heyday of the extreme right, the Hungarian Churches, at all levels, rejected both German racial ideology and the pagan, oc-

and prodigious heroism..." (Alajos Nagelreiter, 'A háború erkölcsi megítélése', *Katolikus Élet* (Győr) 8, 1941.

cult formalities of Nazism. At the same time, they regarded Bolshevism as the arch-enemy, considering the extreme right as the 'lesser evil' – the exact same viewpoint as that expressed by the Vatican. Furthermore, the rejection of racial Nazism by no means implied the rejection of anti-Semitism. Indeed radical political programmes (including anti-Jewish views) became widespread among the lower clergy, creating, particularly in the provinces, a fertile ground for the spread of extreme right organisations.

THE END OF A DECADE AND THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR IN TRANSYLVANIAN GREEK-CATHOLIC PRESS

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General considerations

Most post-communist studies regarding the Greek-Catholic (United) Church in Transylvania and Banat focus mainly on two major research topics, directly dealing with the identity and historical legitimacy of the Greek-Catholic belief/cult: the Unification with the Church of Rome¹ and the martyrdom and anti-communist resistance.² Other, more recent studies analyse the Church's

¹ *Manifestul de unire (The Union Manifest)* or *Cartea de mărturie (The Book of Confession)*, issued on October 7, 1698, affirmed the decision of the Romanian Orthodox clergy from Transylvania to unite with the Church of Rome. Thus, the Romanian Church United with Rome (the United Church) was formed. In time, it became very important for the confessional and cultural status of a significant part of the Romanians in historical Transylvania. The census from 1930 revealed that 31.1% of Transylvania's population was Greek-Catholic, while 27.8% was Orthodox. In Crişana-Maramureş 36,8% of the population declared itself Orthodox and 25,2% Greek-Catholic; in Banat 56,1% of the total population was Orthodox and 3,6% Greek-Catholic. See Ioan Mărculeţ/Cătălina Mărculeţ/Vasile Mărculeţ, 'Populaţia greco-catolică între anii 1900-2002', *Viaţa Creştină* 306/8, 2004, p. 14-15. The most representative studies on this subject are: Ovidiu Ghitta, *Naşterea unei biserici. Biserica greco-catolică din Sătmar în primul ei secol de existenţă (1667-1761)*, 2001, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca; Remus Câmpeanu, *Biserica Română Unită între istorie şi istoriografie*, 2003, Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca; Daniel Dumitran, *Un timp al reformelor. Biserica Greco-Catolică din Transilvania sub conducerea episcopului Ioan Bob (1782-1830)*, 2005, Editura Scriptorium, Bucureşti; Greta-Monica Miron, *Biserica Greco-Catolică din comitatul Cluj în secolul al XVIII-lea*, 2007, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca; Ciprian Ghişa/Ioana Bonda/Petre Magdău, 'Coordonatele discursului identitar greco-catolic în secolul XIX', in: N. Bocşan/Ana Sima/Ion Cârja (eds.), *Identităţi confesionale în Europa Central-Orientală (secolele XVII-XXI)*, 2009, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca.

² The Union with Rome was regarded with hostility by the Orthodox Church, as well as by the Communist Party, which in the disparagement campaign unleashed in its official publications considered it as "anti-national", "anachronistic", "undermining the Romanian nation". See Dennis Deletant, *Teroarea comunistă în România. Gheorghiu-Dej şi statul poliţienesc (1948-1965)*, 2001, Polirom, Iaşi, p. 82. As early as the autumn of 1948 the State undertook administrative actions: the urgent gathering of "acts of adhesion to Orthodoxy" amongst the members of the clergy, under the pressure of the Security, as well as convening a gathering where the return of Greek-Catholics to the Romanian Orthodox Church was proclaimed. This process would be ended with the signing of an act that proclaimed the return to Orthodoxy. The political action was to be finalised by the end of October 1948. The return to the Romanian Orthodox Church was orchestrated as a movement of "religious and popular character". On December 1, 1948, the Great National As-

important role in the process of political and cultural emancipation of the Romanian nation in Transylvania and Banat during the 18th and 19th centuries, and the relationship between the Church, the Holy See and European Catholicism. Thus, our study cannot benefit from an extensive bibliography.

This paper will analyse the official discourse of the United Church, particularly as it was recorded in religious press from Transylvania and Banat (see esp. the newspaper *Unirea (The Union)* and the magazine *Cultura Creștină (Christian Culture)*). Tracking the latter discourse has not been an easy undertaking, mainly due to the fact that the dissolution of the Greek-Catholic Church (1948) had also affected the documentary background of this Church in Romania.

In Eastern Europe, the Greek-Catholic Churches were spiritually and canonically subordinated to the Vatican. In the interwar period, the Roman Church strengthened its structure and increased its role in society, developing its diplomatic activities and voicing its opinion on major issues. This *engagement* increased its influence, but also made it more vulnerable, especially in Nazi Germany. Indeed during the 1930s, the Catholic Church became increasingly worried by the rapid development of extremisms. Still, due to the ideological incompatibilities between the Vatican and the Kremlin, the ‘threat’ of bolshevism remained the major concern. This tendency was all the more manifest near the end of the 1930s, when large Catholic communities in the Baltic States and Poland became part of the Soviet Union.

Between the two World Wars, mentions of extremism were influenced by the general Catholic position, as well as by the way in which bolshevik and fascist actions had affected the status of the Church and Romanian identity and interests, both inside Romania’s borders and in the territories that were lost during the summer of 1940. Greek-Catholic intellectuals and theologians published their views on fascism in Church press. In some cases, the absence of a coherent official position regarding some forms of extremism or intolerance – cf. infra the so-called ‘Jewish problem’ – led to a certain divergence of opinions.

At the beginning of the 1940s, as the war on religion waged inside the Soviet Union, the experience of the Spanish civil war and the apparent preservation of Catholic values in Fascist Italy determined the Greek-Catholic press. On one hand, Benito Mussolini and Ion Antonescu’s fascism was promoted, as well as the idea of an anti-communist crusade. On the other hand, when Nazi actions started threatening the life of German Catholics, Christian identity and global peace, the Greek-Catholic discourse regarding Nazism became more radical. However, it was mainly expressed in terms of Christian morality and Catholic dogma, as the alliance between Antonescu’s Romania and Nazi Ger-

sembly declared the dissolution of the Greek-Catholic Church in Romania. Because of their unanimous refusal to accept the joining of the two Churches, the Greek-Catholic bishops were imprisoned.

many (September 1940), the anti-Soviet war (1941-1944), the new approach in Romania's foreign policy, as well as censorship rendered public manifestations of discontent increasingly hazardous.

At the same time, Romanian Orthodoxy was strongly affected by the way in which Church hierarchs, a significant part of the intelligentsia, and – above all – the members of the Archangel Michael Legion interwove Orthodox doctrine and political discourse, and linked it to the so-called 'Jewish problem'. The most difficult period for this Church was that of the Antonescu-Legionary government (the 'National Legionary State'), when Orthodoxy became a source of legitimacy. Due to the traditional obedience of the Orthodox Church to the authorities, its attitude differed greatly from that of the Vatican. Because of its involvement in politics, its lack of reaction against the transformation of Orthodoxy into militant Orthodoxism, as well as its anti-Semitism, the Romanian Orthodox Church was effectively responsible for the dissemination of ethno-cratic ideas and for institutionalizing anti-Semitism in inter-war Romania.

On the other hand, the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church emulated the Holy See's policy regarding communism, Nazism and racism. But the opinions that were expressed became significantly less explicit in the 1940s, and increasingly so during the National Legionary State and Antonescu's dictatorship. No doubt this was due to the relatively unstable status of the United Church following the growing hostility of the Orthodox Church, which aimed at the dissolution of the institution.³ On the other hand, Romania's participation in the anti-Soviet war satisfied the expectations of most Romanians, whereas Antonescu's popularity was enhanced by recent events, especially the liberation of the Romanian territories that were ceded in the summer of 1940, and that of the Soviet-oppressed Eastern churches.

Whereas State censorship was an additional factor, the above reasons can only partially justify the absence of criticism towards Antonescu's anti-democratic and anti-Semitic dictatorship. When the right-wing cabinet was installed, and ever since the beginning of the anti-Soviet war, obedience to the dictatorship effectively became the official stance, and no negative comments regarding right-wing extremism were voiced, not even of Horthy's Hungary.

³ The Constitution of 1923 declared the Romanian Orthodox Church the "dominant State Church" (Article 22), while the Greek-Catholic Church was considered a "national cult prevailing over all other faiths." During Antonescu's dictatorship, one of the primary objectives of the Orthodox clergy was the abolishment of their rival institution. The strongest supporter for the cause was the ultra-nationalist anti-Semitic Orthodox metropolitan of Transdnistria, Visarion Puiu. Between 1940 and 1943, he urged the government to pass a law that would abolish the Greek-Catholic cult and forcefully integrate the Byzantine Catholics into the Orthodox Church. The Orthodox clergy claimed that Greek-Catholicism was just a hybrid, a product of conjuncture that did not represent Romanian identity. One of the most vocal adversaries of the Greek-Catholic Church was the Orthodox theologian Dumitru Stăniloae.

The anti-Soviet war, considered legitimate, became the most dominant topic. But another issue gained importance.

From anti-Judaism to anti-Semitism

Both traditional Romanian anti-Semitism and its socio-economically motivated variant acquired new features between the two Wars. Common to political and intellectual circles in urban areas, these two manifestations of anti-Semitism acquired a manifestly racist character. By contrast, in rural areas, the dominant traits were those of anti-Judaism, accompanied by traditional accusations of deicide and infanticide. However, a discourse of extreme intolerance developed by politicians and promoted in the press,⁴ a discourse that was also predominant among cultural elites, transformed xenophobia into outright hatred. This tendency was catalysed by the territorial losses during the summer of 1940.

The ceding of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the Soviet Union, as stipulated by the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, was considered a national apocalypse. The Jewish communities, even those from the Old Kingdom (the Romanian territories as they were before the World War I⁵), were held accountable for this 'tragedy'. In addition to all this, the Bessarabia and Bukovina Jewish communities themselves faced a tragic dilemma, as they had to choose between the two governments. On one hand, as citizens of the Soviet Union, they would be stripped of their property; on the other hand, in Antonescu's Romania anti-Semitism was official State policy, whereas alongside the loss of property, they would also face radical exclusion, as well as possible deportation and abuse.

Even if only a handful had expressed their affinity with the Soviet Regime, at the arrival of the Romanian army, most Jews were considered to be active agents of the former Soviet government, as many of them were native Russian speakers, and some displayed manifestly pro-Soviet attitudes.

⁴ Anti-Semitism had deep roots in Romania and Transylvania. Among anti-Semitism promoters were such personalities as Mihail Kogălniceanu, Vasile Alecsandri, Vasile Conta, Mihai Eminescu, and Nicolae Paulescu. In Transylvania, the most representative figures were Ion Slavici, Ioan Pop-Reteganul, and above all Octavian Goga, who disseminated anti-Semitism among Romanian rural elites (most Transylvanian Jews were Hungarian-speakers and Romanians considered them to be loyal to the Hungarian State) in the periodical *Țara Noastră*.

⁵ As early as the Summer of 1940, following the Ultimatum, Romanian Jews became the target of aggressive behaviour, especially in Moldova: see Ion Șerbănescu (ed.), *The Jews from Romania Between 1940 and 1944*, vol. III, part I (1940-1942: *Harsh Times*), 1997, Hasefer, Bucharest, p. 22 sqq. In this context, we should mention the Dorohoi Pogrom, as well as episodes in which Jews were killed and thrown out of trains, as was for example the case in the Fălticeni train station on July 3, 1940.

They rapidly became the perfect scapegoat and, indeed, victims of genocide, with the approval of local populations and Romanian soldiers.⁶ Transylvania and Banat United press largely ignored the issue. Most articles published by Greek-Catholic papers showed indifference, sometimes also compassion. However, there were also echoes of xenophobia and residues of traditional anti-Semitism – dating from the period prior to the formation of Greater Romania.

To the Romanians, the Axis campaign in the East meant the liberation of Soviet occupied Romanian territories, whereas to the Jewish communities of North-Eastern Romania, the beginning of the anti-Soviet war meant the beginning of the Holocaust. As mentioned before, the mass killing of Jews was a direct consequence to the Romanian-German advance into Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia in the summer of 1941, when thousands of Jews were killed.⁷ Within this tragic context, some Greek-Catholic media commentators published messages that associated Judaism with communism. Such concepts were inserted into a fundamentalist discourse on the “holy war waged for Christian faith”.⁸ Thus Catholic press became a direct agent of the dictatorship, whereby armed conflict, aimed at the liberation of Romanian territories in the name of Christian Values, was presented as just and holy.⁹

In order to comply with official political discourse, the press would write about a war that was fought alongside “our great ally, Adolf Hitler’s Reich, a holy war, a war for the liberation of our brothers from Bessarabia and Bukovina from the tyranny of the Bolshevik hordes and for the defence of European culture and civilisation”.¹⁰ During the war, the press, including the Greek-Catholic press, considered Antonescu’s regime as respectful of traditional Romanian values. The will to recover the Romanian territories that were lost during the autumn of 1940, the fear that Antonescu, a practicing Orthodox, would give in to the Orthodox hierarchs’ demands and dismantle Greek-Catholicism (fears strengthened by Mussolini’s death), pushed the Uni-

⁶ See for example the case of the Boian Massacre (nowadays a village in the Chernivtsi Oblast province of Western Ukraine), on http://www.mareleboian.com/istorie_mold.html (accessed on August 13, 2013).

⁷ See Dennis Deletant, “Transnistria: soluția românească la ‘problema evreiască’”, in: Armand Goșu (ed.), *Despre Holocaust și comunism. Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Recentă*, vol. I, 2002, Polirom, Iași, p. 88.

⁸ ‘Războiul sfânt’, *Unirea* 26, June 28, 1941, p. 1. To justify their support of the war against the Soviet Union, the Greek-Catholic press incorporated both patriotic and manicheistic elements in its pages, writing for example about “our justice”, “clearing our honor lost by abandoning Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia”, “the fight for humanity”, “for God. Bolshevism is the kingdom of Lucifer”, “for the prevailing of the Cross.”

⁹ ‘Priviri în viitor’, *Unirea* 35, August 30, 1941, p. 2.

¹⁰ See Ștefan Pop, ‘Locotenet Horia Agarici’, *Unirea* 26, June 20, 1941, p. 3.

ted Church to officially endorse Antonescu's regime and to consider his Christian-nationalist policy as being in line with Church values.¹¹

The Effect of the Loss of Northern Transylvania on the Greek-Catholic Attitude towards Fascist Regimes

The annexation of Northern Transylvania to Horthy's Hungary, imposed by the Vienna Dictate (August 30, 1940),¹² deeply affected the Greek-Catholic Church, whose members now faced a regime of suspicion and persecution.¹³ Therefore, starting in June-July 1940, the United Church's publications focused exclusively on this issue. Articles on the psycho-ethnic flaws of Hungarians were published,¹⁴ emphasizing their historical lack of loyalty towards the Habsburg Empire, as well as a sort of historic fatalism inherent to Hungarians.¹⁵ The most dramatic articles appeared in August, immediately after the territorial secession. The discourse was dominated by the language that could be found in Christian Apocalypse literature; thus "the pagan mentality of hatred took over every mind", to which it was added that the causes of "this scourge that controls the world" were of a moral nature, i.e. atheist materialism, anti-Christian secularism and neo-paganism.¹⁶

The division of Transylvania between Hungary and Romania also brought with it the division of the Greek-Catholic Church. In the pastoral letter *Să ne stăpânim durerea* (*Let Us Contain Our Pain*), Metropolitan Nicolescu described the situation of Transylvanian Romanians, comparing it to the torments of Job, upon whom fell a "violent storm", which fed him the "bread of pain".¹⁷ The articles published until May 1941 focused mainly on presenting the atrocities committed by Horthyists in the territory affected by the Vienna Award.¹⁸

¹¹ See 'Naționalism creștin', *Unirea* 31, August 2, 1941, p. 1-3; see the same approval of general Antonescu's actions, also in *Unirea* (45, November 8, 1941).

¹² The International Act also known as the Second Vienna Arbitrage.

¹³ Greek-Catholic press published the names of a series of priests who were tortured, killed or banished.

¹⁴ At this moment, and especially in 1940 and at the beginning of 1941, Hungarians were presented as similar to Soviets and Nazis, as "the knights of the Pusztá" (Corneliu Coposu, 'Ardealul, Ardealul, Ardealul', *Unirea* 37, September 14, 1940). On the ethnic purge and the stereotypical image of the Hungarians, see 'Până când (How Much Longer)', *Unirea* 42, October 19, 1940, p. 1; here they were called "barbarians", arrogant ("vain"), "savages", "knights of the desert", "the worst of all nations", and even "demons".

¹⁵ See especially Augustin Popa, 'Din adâncuri', *Unirea* 33, August 7, 1940, p. 2.

¹⁶ See pr. Septimiu I. Todoran, 'Ceasul urei', *Unirea* 25, August 21, 1940, p. 1.

¹⁷ Alexandru Nicolescu, 'Să ne stăpânim durerea', *Unirea* 36, September 7, 1940, p. 1-2; see also the editorial from *Unirea* 37, September 14, 1940, p. 1.

¹⁸ See 'Până când?', *Unirea* 42, October 19, 1940, p. 2.

Rejecting the Legionary Project

During the 1930s and the first years of the War, Romanian anti-Semitism was reinvented as a doctrine. Alongside the ‘classical’ characteristics of medieval and pre-modern anti-Judaism, the Legion of Archangel Michael, the most important Romanian right wing organisation, was particularly outspoken regarding the issue, openly declaring its religious nature and messianic thrust. Religious fervour became the major factor of distinction between Romanian right wing extremism¹⁹ Italian fascism, German Nazism and any other form of fascism in the Balkans.²⁰

The official Greek-Catholic discourse on the Iron Guard’s nature and intentions was inspired by the Vatican’s approach to right wing extremisms. Greek-Catholic press categorically condemned Legionarism and accused it of trying to promote ideas and practices that were contradictory to Christian faith in general, and to Romanian identity in particular.

On their part, the legionaries greatly insisted on Orthodox identity (the rival religious cult) to build their own political and national project, undermining the position of the Byzantine-rite Romanian Catholic Church, and denying its historical contribution to the creation of Romanian identity in the Modern Age. They considered the Romanian Orthodox Church to be the only national Church, the representative of the ‘Romanian race’. Such an approach, which was essentially spiritual-religious, ignored the religious identity of most

¹⁹ The other fascist movements (The National-Christian Defence League (1923-1935) and the National Christian Party, created in 1935 by the fusion between NCDL and the National Agrarian Party) were more likely imitations of Italian fascism. Instead, ultra-nationalist populism was/is common to all far-right extremisms. In this context, see Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, 1993, Routledge, London-New York, p. 14.

²⁰ Mirela Banićă, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română, stat și societate în anii '30*, 2007, Ed. Polirom, Iași, p. 143. Western historiography has more or less directly approached this issue, insisting on the so-called mystical dimension of the movement, reducing Legionarism to this particularity. See Henry Roberts, *Romania: Political Problems of an Agrarian State*, 1969, Archon Books, New York, p. 231-232; Eugen Weber, *Varieties of Fascism*, 1964, Van Nostrand, New York, p. 96; Roger Eatwell, ‘Reflections on Fascism and Religion’, in: A. Pedahzur/L. Wienberg (eds.), *Religious Fundamentalism and Political Extremism* IV/3, 2003, Psychology Press, New York, p. 154 (here we see the integration of Legionarism into the category of clerical fascisms alongside the Croatian, Salazar and Slovak movements). To our knowledge, the first to analyse the “legionary spirit” and the first to write about the mysticism of the Iron Guard, was Mircea Șoimu in 1938. The main comparison was between Legionarism and Italian fascism; the author considered that the Italian fascists conserved Catholic values because of “political opportunism” (Alexandru Petrescu, *Reflecții asupra mișcării fasciste din România anilor '30*, *Studia Politica* VII/4, 2007, p. 869). Only Roger Griffin signalled that Legionarism, beyond the official mystical discourse, was above all an ultra-nationalist movement that used Orthodoxy to legitimise the so-called eschatological purpose (national regeneration through the Legionary project); according to Griffin (‘Fascism’, in: Brenda Brasher (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Fundamentalism*, 2002, Berkshire Reference Works, Massachusetts, p. 198 sqq.), even Florin Müller (*Metamorfoze ale politicului românesc, 1938-1944*, 2005, Editura Universității from Bucharest, Bucharest, p. 122-124) supports the idea that the movement was, above all, of religious inspiration, unlike corporatist (and secular) fascism or pagan Nazism.

Romanians in Transylvania, and denied the holistic nature of the Christian message.

So far (Romanian) scholars have addressed the theoretical foundations of anti-Semitism, the effect of anti-Semitic discourse, attitudes on the outbreak and unfolding of the Romanian Holocaust during the National-Legionary State (September 1940-January 1941), and Antonescu's dictatorship (January 1941-August 1944). Studies have particularly concentrated on how Romanian Orthodoxy became the foundation of Legionarism and anti-Semitism, whereby Legionarism has been interpreted as a "spiritual revolution".²¹

In the mid-1930s, most intellectuals thought that the Romanian nation had to be revitalised through a radical *renovatio*; amongst those who embraced official legionary ideology was Mircea Eliade, who wrote several articles on the messianic/eschatological vocation of the 'Iron Guard'. Eliade would perfect his theory – at a time when the Iron Guard was undertaking political assassinations, and engaging in virulently anti-Semitic attitudes –, whereby emphasizing the superiority of Legionarism *vis-à-vis* other extremist ideologies:

"If Nazism is founded on the nation and Fascism on the State, as they say, then the Legionary Movement has the right to claim itself as the only Christian mystic capable of leading human societies. It is a Christian revolution, a spiritual revolution, ascetic and virile within the history of Europe, a revolution of a kind that European history has not seen before".²²

On their part, Greek-Catholic scholars struggled to show that the State that was based upon Legionary ideology would transform the Church into a simple, de-

²¹ In his writings, Zelea Codreanu often expressed his desire to reintroduce morals into politics, to eliminate corruption and petty politics. Nichifor Crainic, one of the theoreticians of Legionarism, talked about the fundamentalist (ethnocratic and autocratic) State, where "the law of Jesus" would become "State law" and would assure the collective salvation of the nation. See also Mona Mamulea, *Dialectica închiderii și deschiderii în cultura română*, 2007, Ed. Academiei Române, Bucharest, p. 423, Radu Ioanid, *The Sword of the Archangel – Fascist Ideology in Romania*, 1990, Columbia University Press, New York, and Armin Heinen, *Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail – o contribuție la problema fascismului mondial*, 1999, Ed. Humanitas, Bucharest.

²² Mircea Eliade, 'Comentarii la un jurământ', *Vremea* 476, February 21, 1937, p. 2; for Eliade's enthusiastic approval of legionary ideology, see his writings in Mircea Eliade, *Texte 'legionare' și despre 'românism'*, 2001, Ed. Dacia, Cluj, p. 72-74, as well as the analysis of Andrei Oișteanu on Eliade's "political short-sightedness" (Andrei Oișteanu, 'Eclipsa rațiunii' în cazul Antonescu și 'miopia politică' în cazul Eliade', 22 1, 1999, p. 11); Id., *Imaginaea evreului în cultura română. Studiu de imagologie în context est-central european*, 2001, Ed. Humanitas, Bucharest. Eliade believed that legionaries were destined to reinvent and sanctify the nation and state (see, concretely, the project of establishing the National Legionary State). Although, in their discourse, the intellectuals of the time subscribed to the idea that the legionary movement had a messianic finality, Orthodox religion was losing the holistic character of the Christian message, being included as a hierophany of the Romanian world, and founded on the exaltation of race and ancestry (cf. Bădică, *Biserica ortodoxă română*, op. cit., p. 208). Concerning conscious commitment to Legionarism and the opportunism of Eliade, see Florin Țurcan, *Mircea Eliade. Prizonierul istoriei (Mircea Eliade. The Prisoner of History)*, 2005, Humanitas, Bucharest.

sanctified institution.²³ In doing so Greek-Catholic press echoed the Pope's encyclical *Mit Brennender Sorge*, which condemned Hitlerism,²⁴ and it replied to an open letter in which the Legion's leader, Zelea-Codreanu, tried to assure the Greek-Catholic Church that a future Legionary State would not dissolve their "religious cult". In the same letter, Zelea-Codreanu also accused Roman Catholicism of blindness towards left-wing ideologies, giving the example of Spanish Catholics who voted for the republicans, "the enemies of Jesus",²⁵ during parliamentary elections, thus exposing themselves to repression and atrocities. Despite these seemingly reassuring words, the leader of the Legionary movement continued to express his conviction that the foundation of Romanianism was Orthodoxy. Indeed due to its universalism, Greek-Catholicism could not be the doctrinal basis for a mystical nationalism.

Another issue of theoretical dispute between Greek-Catholics and the Legion of Archangel Michael was that of national salvation – "the redeeming of the kin". While the Legionaries believed that this eschatological objective could only be achieved through the establishment of an ethnocentric State and the sanctification of politics, the Greek-Catholics considered the spirit of Catholic universalism through peace, progress, tolerance and the respect of civil rights to be the necessary precondition.²⁶

During the 1930s, the Greek-Catholic press saw Legionaries as "wandering youngsters", and condemned their doctrine of heroic death, radical antidemocratic beliefs and reliance upon political violence.²⁷ The Legionary rebellion radicalised these attitudes; Church press now branded them as "beasts of perdition", "young people alienated from Romanian identity",²⁸ "doomed to

²³ 'Legionarismul și Biserica', *Unirea* 48, November 27, 1937, p. 1.

²⁴ See the encyclical *Mit Brennender Sorge* (March 15, 1937).

²⁵ The letter was reproduced in *Unirea* 48, November 27, 1937, p. 1-2.

²⁶ Bătrânul Ortodox (Alias), 'Naționalism și creștinism', *Unirea* 13, March 26, 1938, p. 2. This article discussed, with acrid irony, a theme dear to all nationalists of any political colour, i.e. that of "salvation through nation"; the author bantered N. Iorga (as the patriarch of Romanian nationalism), A. C. Cuza, the legionaries, and O. Goga, concluding that salvation can only be reached through Jesus Christ.

²⁷ See especially the articles regarding the assassination/execution of M. Stelescu by a legionary commando, "a sign that barbarism is mingled with courage and violence with justice" (Augustin Popa, 'Editorial', *Cultura creștină* 7-8, 1937, p. 385-389); see the same ideas regarding the assassination of Ion Bratu, rector of the University of Iasi, a political murder which the legionary students claimed to have committed "in the name of Christ, the King and the Nation".

²⁸ See 'Țară nouă', *Unirea* 5, February 1, 1941, p. 1: "they mutilated our nation, spiritually and physically, dressing it in stubborn stupidity, in alien clothes. We need no shirts, nor smuggled salutes. We need neither a legionary nor a communist country, but simply, and beautifully: a Romanian Christian country". Even legionary heroism was suspected to be an imported product. In this context, Augustin Popa stated that this type of manifestation of the sacrificial cult was just an alien wandering to the Romanian tradition; cf. Augustin Popa, *Pietre de temelie*, 2008, Buna Vestire, Blaj, p. 58-60.

eternal damnation”,²⁹ for they had “perverted the word of the Gospels” and used it as an incentive for murder. The rebellion, which was seen as part of a civil war, was compared to a “monster, the most hideous thing that Satan’s imagination could invent”; it was “spiritual death”.³⁰ The Iron Guard, the political expression of the legionary doctrine, was condemned for its anti-national actions, its thirst for (exclusive) power, and the betrayal of its political partners in a time of distress. Only the military victims of the rebellion³¹ were commemorated, whereas loyalty towards Antonescu was once more expressed;³² indeed even the introduction of the death penalty for the possession of guns without a permit was hailed.³³ But no word on the Bucharest pogrom, the massacre of Jews by legionary squads in the chaos of the rebellion.

The Romanian Orthodox Church was also reluctant to accept the insistence on the divine, the instrumentalisation of Orthodoxy, and the anti-clerical opinions of legionary ideologists, such as Nae Ionescu. The deciding majority of the Romanian Orthodox Church’s Holy Synod did not offer open and unconditional support to the Legionary Movement or to the National Legionary State. The hierarchs preferred general Ion Antonescu, a traditionalist who did not aim for spiritual revolution or for the reformation of patriarchal Romanian Orthodoxy.³⁴ That being said, a number of priests and hierarchs actively took part in legionary ceremonies, and even administered the sacraments of the Church.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that certain culturally inherited secular concepts, i.e. anti-Semitism, which, from a certain perspective, is a modern adaptation of religiously inspired anti-Judaism, can radically alter collective behaviour when enhanced in political and/or dramatic-conflicting contexts. Only a critical and demystifying approach can lead to lucid and impartial analysis of such phenomena, avoiding the paradigmatic loophole of historicism, as well as the omission and deformation of historical facts.

²⁹ “... And we will hide in another grave, stealthily and without any final appreciation, the bodies of the ill-fated, who gave their lives, under the terrible will of a fatal wandering...” (‘Margini de prăpăstii’, *Unirea* 2, January 25, 1941, p. 1)

³⁰ ‘Margini de prăpăstii’, op. cit., p. 1.

³¹ The list of officers and soldiers killed during confrontations with the Legionaries was published in *Unirea* 5, February 1, 1941, p. 3.

³² The United Church of Romania also feared that general Antonescu, an active Orthodox believer, would act according to the wishes of the Romanian Orthodox Church and abolish Greek-Catholicism.

³³ See *Decretul-Lege din 5 februarie 1941*, also published in *Unirea* 7, February 15, 1941, p. 3.

³⁴ See Bădică, *Biserica ortodoxă română*, op. cit., p. 214-215.

UKRAINIAN INTEGRAL NATIONALISM AND THE GREEK-CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE 1920-30S

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In 1934, after a series of terrorist attacks carried out by the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) in Galicia, the head of the Greek-Catholic Church (GCC), Metropolitan Andrei Sheptyts'kyi, issued a pastoral letter which sharply condemned “the criminal deeds of Ukrainian terrorists”.¹ It was the highest point in the conflict between the Greek-Catholic Church and the revolutionary Nationalist movement.² Why did the conflict arise? The most obvious answer is: because the Church could not condone violence and murder. But this is only part of the truth.

Although there are numerous studies on the history of radical Ukrainian Nationalism and the GCC, the ‘uncomfortable’ aspects of their relations still await special research. In full accordance with Ernest Renan’s famous aphorism,³ nationalist historians directly resorted to selective emphasis or ‘forgetting’ of historical events: they preferred to write about how the Church supported the struggle for liberation and about the clergy participation in the Nationalist movement, but quite understandably avoided discussing the conflict between the OUN and the Church.⁴

In the depiction of Soviet historians, “the criminal activities of Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists always found support on the part of the Uniate Church,” whose head, “the Trojan horse of Vatican” count Sheptyts'kyi, was the nationalists’ spiritual father.⁵ No conflicts between the ‘father’ and the ‘children’ were mentioned. Ironically, in this respect the approaches of the nationalist historians and their Soviet counterparts – leaving aside their propagandist rhetoric – were quite similar.

¹ Andrei Sheptyts'kyi, *Pastyr's'ke poslannia*, vol. 2: 1918-1939, 2009, Andrei, Lviv, p. 177-178.

² In this article, the words ‘Nationalism’ and ‘Nationalist’ are capitalised when related to the organised Ukrainian integral nationalist movement, especially the OUN.

³ “Forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation, which is why progress in historical studies often constitutes a danger for [the principle of] nationality” (Ernest Renan, ‘What Is a Nation?’, in: Homi K. Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration*, 1990, Routledge, London-New York, p. 11).

⁴ See e. g. Petro Mirchuk, *Narys istorii OUN. 1920-1939 roky*, 2007 (1° 1968), Ukrains'ka vydavnycha spilka, Kyiv.

⁵ Volodymyr Zamlyn's'kyi, *Sbhyakel' chornoï z'rady*, 1969, Kameniar, Lviv, p. 38-39.

The old conception of an alliance between the GCC and extreme nationalism did not disappear with the collapse of the Soviet historical school and found an interesting continuation in an article by Ukrainian political scientist Anton Shekhovtsov, published in a special issue of a solid Anglophone journal (the issue was later republished as a book). Shekhovtsov tries to prove several key theses: 1) Dontsov's and the OUN's Ukrainian Nationalism was a variety of fascism; 2) the GCC was dominated by a trend favouring an alliance with Ukrainian fascism in order to destroy communism and considered the OUN as a tool for the expansion of Greek-Catholicism towards the East; 3) there also existed an influential group of 'clerical fascists' (Fr. Mykola Conrad and other proponents of 'Christian nationalism') who sought not only an alliance but also a synthesis of Ukrainian Catholicism and fascism.⁶

In Shekhovtsov's article there are many correct observations, for example, that the main stumbling block in the relations between the Church and Ukrainian Nationalism was the Nationalists' insistence upon replacing the idea of God by that of the nation or, in other words, the tendency to create a political religion. There is also some truth in the thesis that a part of the clergy considered an alliance with Nationalism on the platform of anti-communism and anti-liberalism both feasible and desirable.⁷

However, in proving the existence of Ukrainian 'clerical fascism', the author resorted to rather selective quotation of sources and arbitrary interpretations. I will not enumerate all the inaccuracies present in his article, but I have to point out the saddest mistake which unfairly tarnishes Metropolitan Sheptyts'kyi. Seeking to prove the thesis of 'double standards' of the GCC's highest hierarchy which, according to Shekhovtsov, blessed the bloody nationalist struggle against communism, the author gives the following quotation, allegedly from an article by Sheptyts'kyi:

"All laws which are offensive to the laws of God and nature, all the laws which are unjust and harmful for citizens and people, are not obligatory in the context of Catholic doctrine [...] Ukrainian nationalism must be ready to use all means of fighting against communism, not excluding mass physical extermination, even at the cost of millions of human lives."⁸

The first sentence of this quotation is really taken from the Metropolitan's article 'The Ukrainian Catholic Union and Politics',⁹ while the second one comes

⁶ Anton Shekhovtsov, 'By Cross and Sword: 'Clerical Fascism' in Interwar Western Ukraine', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8/2, 2007, p. 271-285 (reprinted in: Matthew Feldman/Marius Turda/Tudor Georgescu (eds.), *Clerical Fascism in Interwar Europe*, 2008, Routledge, London, p. 59-73).

⁷ Shekhovtsov, 'By Cross and Sword', op. cit., p. 280-281.

⁸ Cited in Shekhovtsov, 'By Cross and Sword', op. cit., p. 279.

⁹ Mytropolyt Andrei [Sheptyts'kyi], 'Ukrains'kyi Katolyts'kyi Soiuz i polityka', *Meta* 14, April 10, 1932.

from an editorial article which was published in the next issue of *Meta* [‘The Goal’] newspaper and bore no relation to Sheptyts’kyi.¹⁰ On the whole, in my opinion, the author failed to prove convincingly any of his main theses.

In sum, it can be said that previous studies on the issue of the GCC’s relationship with Ukrainian integral nationalism and the latter’s attitude to religion were either biased or, even if adopting an impartial point of view, still failed to account for the fact that Ukrainian integral nationalism itself showed a tendency to transform into a political religion whose adherents were inclined to consider the Church as a dangerous rival and met a similar attitude on the part of the Church.

In this article I will try to apply Emilio Gentile’s theory of political religion and Roger Griffin’s conception of ‘palingenetic ultra-nationalism’ to the study of Ukrainian integral nationalism and its relations with the GCC.¹¹ Although both theories were developed in the study of fascism, they can be equally useful for the investigation of various ultra-nationalist movements, even those which never obtained power.

Nationalism as Religion

Some contemporary observers and later researchers regarded interwar Ukrainian integral nationalism, whose main manifestations in the 1920-30s were the ‘active nationalism’ of political writer Dmytro Dontsov and the ‘organised nationalism’ represented by the ideology and practice of the OUN, as a variety of fascism. Indeed, it had much in common with fascism, including attempts to create a political religion, and met some generally accepted definitions of fascism, e. g. Roger Griffin’s famous definition: “Fascism is a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism.”¹²

However, unlike fascism, Ukrainian integral nationalism was an ideology of a stateless nation. Its closest ‘ideological relative’ in Europe was the Croatian Ustaša before its transformation into a state party.¹³ Some scholars believe that the Ustaša was a fascist movement from the very beginning.¹⁴ But

¹⁰ ‘Vahannia i vyrviniuvannia. Uvahy do pytan’ ukrains’koi polityky’, *Meta* 15, April 17, 1932.

¹¹ See Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*, 1996, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Mass.); Id., ‘The Sacralisation of Politics: Definitions, Interpretations and Reflections on the Question of Secular Religion and Totalitarianism’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 1/1, 2000, p. 18-55; Id., *Politics as Religion*, 2006, Princeton University Press, Princeton-Oxford; Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, 1993, Routledge, London; Id., ‘Cloister or Cluster? The Implications of Emilio Gentile’s Ecumenical Theory of Political Religion for the Study of Extremism’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 6/1, 2005, p. 32-52; and Id., *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*, 2007, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.

¹² Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, op. cit., p. 44.

¹³ For the history of the Ustaša, see Srdja Trifkovic, *Ustaša: Croatian Separatism and European Politics, 1929-1945*, 1998, Lord Byron Foundation for Balkan Studies, London.

¹⁴ See e. g. Mark Biondich, ‘Radical Catholicism and Fascism in Croatia, 1918-1945’, *Totalitarian*

in my opinion, the ultra-nationalist organisations of stateless peoples like the OUN, the Ustaša and so on constitute a separate genus of political movements and respective ideologies, different both from fascism and from the democratic trend in the national liberation movement. Unfortunately, there is no special term in political science for this kind of movements. Without being peremptory, I would suggest that the proper designation for the ideology and practice of the OUN and similar movements is not fascism, but rather ‘ustashism’, which can be defined as revolutionary integral nationalism developing under conditions of perceived foreign oppression and using violence for the purpose of liberating the nation and creating an independent authoritarian state. Ustashism did share some essential characteristics of fascism, so it can be regarded as proto-fascism which could turn into a fully fledged form of fascism in case it won independence.

The best soil for integral nationalism is formed in situations of a serious political or military defeat that humiliates national dignity, a crisis of national identity, and a real or perceived danger for the survival of the nation. It was under such circumstances, formed as a result of the defeat of the Ukrainian independence struggle, that D. Dontsov developed his theory of ‘active nationalism’. Reflecting on the causes of defeat of the Ukrainian struggle for statehood, Dontsov concluded that the leaders of the Ukrainian national revival were marked by “overgrowth of intellect”: they had too much trust in the omnipotence of reason, admired science, but had no faith in the power of their own national idea. Ukrainian democratic nationalism learned a “vulgarised religion of reason”,¹⁵ but lacked the religious fervour without which no idea can win. Thus, Dontsov intended to create a new outlook, inspired by a truly religious faith in the only absolute – the nation.

In the article ‘Church and Nationalism’ Dontsov noted closer relations between two previously hostile forces – nationalism and the Church. Writing about the latter, he had in mind primarily the Catholic Church, to which he felt deep respect. Dontsov considered “a slow assimilation of the worldview of modern nationalism to the theological outlook of the Church” the main reason for the rapprochement of the Church and nationalism. Just like the Church, modern nationalism rejected the idols of materialism, rationalism, and socialism, worshipped by the older generation, and adopted a dogmatic belief in the idea of the nation:

“Our time has become a disaster for rationalism. In the political realm, it has been supplanted by reckless national dogmatism. The idea of nation has assumed the axiomatic nature of an idea that finds its justification in itself and is based not on reason, but solely on faith. Speaking through the lips of its greatest apostle, Maurice Barres,

Movements and Political Religions 8/2, 2007, p. 383-399.

¹⁵ Dmytro Dontsov, *Trvory*, vol. 1: *Heopolitychni ta ideolohichni pratsi*, 2001, Kal’variia, Lviv, p. 252.

modern nationalism has dethroned *l'intelligence*, replacing it by passion as the most explosive force in the history of humanity. Modern nationalism is looking for its God not in an ideal, produced by mind, but rather in its own desire, in its own faith, not in arguments, but in its own *contra spem spero!* [...] By this evolution from mind to passion, from logic to faith, from rationalism to dogmatism, in this rebellion against the almighty mind – the new nationalism has considerably assimilated the theological outlook of the Church, which in the ‘Syllabus’ of 1864 rejected the view that ‘human reason is the sole arbiter of truth and falsehood’.”¹⁶

According to Dontsov, this modern nationalism demands

“total self-denial in the name of Nation as the Absolute. Dreaming only about serving this Absolute and approaching it just like a faithful approaches his Saviour – a modern nationalist, like medieval *fidei defensor*, has regard neither for the number of existences which must be sacrificed for the triumph of his idea, nor for the moral or material ruin he will bring about, as he had no regard for all those things in 1914”.¹⁷

Here we can see how the nation is surrounded by a halo of holiness and becomes an object of worship, in fact, a substitute for God in the eyes of the nationalists.

Other features which, according to Dontsov, contribute to the theological nature of nationalism and make its worldview similar to that of the Church include its militant spirit, intolerance, readiness to resort to ‘saving violence’, and uncompromising fanaticism. Dontsov goes as far as to declare war the essence of both the new nationalism and Christianity.¹⁸

In 1926, Dontsov published his most famous book, *Nationalism*,¹⁹ formulating a number of ‘requirements’ which followed from his ‘active nationalism’ and which included dogmatism, fanaticism and illusionism. These requirements could be summarised in a sentence: to be successful, nationalism should become a religion.

The requirement of illusionism was especially important. By ‘illusionism’ Dontsov, much like Georges Sorel, meant a purposeful creation of social myths. Only myths and illusions, not logical constructions, can mobilise masses to revolutionary work. According to this requirement, Dontsov himself appears as a mythmaker in his works. Among the key myths that permeate all his works written after World War I, the most important are: 1) Myth of national rebirth. This myth is typical for any nationalism, but Dontsov reinterpreted it in a spirit very similar to the fascist palingenetic myth,²⁰ as national regeneration in a post-

¹⁶ Dmytro Dontsov, ‘Tserkva i natsionalizm’, *Literaturno-Naukovi Vistnyk* 23/2, 1924, p. 76-77.

¹⁷ Dontsov, ‘Tserkva i natsionalizm’, op. cit., p. 77-78.

¹⁸ Dontsov, ‘Tserkva i natsionalizm’, op. cit., p. 79.

¹⁹ Dontsov, *Tvory*, op. cit., p. 243-425.

²⁰ For a definition of the fascist palingenetic myth, see Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, op. cit., p. 35, 240; Id., ‘General Introduction’, in: Id. (ed.), *Fascism*, 1995, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 2-4; Id., ‘Palingenetic myth’, in: Cyprian P. Blamires/Paul Jackson (eds.), *World Fascism: a Historical Encyclopedia*, vol. 2, 2006, ABC-CLIO, Santa Barbara (Calif.), p. 498-499.

liberal new order which will follow a period of perceived decline and will be based on the dominance of strong races and nations; 2) Myth of Ukraine's mission as a bulwark of the European civilisation in front of barbarian Asia and Russia as an Asian vanguard; and 3) Myth of the last fight, in which the new religion of nationalism will prevail over the dying religion of socialism with its numerous sects.

The admiration for Italian fascism and Nazism, which became political religions in their respective countries, strengthened Dontsov's confidence in the need to fill Ukrainian nationalism with religious content. In January 1937, Dontsov published the article '1937' inspired by the civil war in Spain and the signs of an approaching Second World War. He wrote about the clash between two "ersatz-religions": "the dying religion of socialism with its subsects of liberalism and masonry" and the new worldview of nationalism, including fascism. However, Dontsov warned:

"Of course, nationalism can not be called a religion in the proper sense of the word. So, when talking about the struggle of the two 'religions', we refer only to their purely religious spirit of faith in one's cause and dedication to it. Obviously, these ersatz-religions have not their own concepts of God, the future life, immortality, etc. But these 'ersatz-religions' exist, and there is a war between them."²¹

Finally Dontsov expressed his belief in the inevitable victory of the 'religion' of nationalism:

"To think that the two 'religions' may come to an agreement is a vain hope. [...] The new 'religion' that will win is the one whose believers will demonstrate more recklessness and a greater spirit of dedication. [...] The new faith that will win is the one which is hostile to Pharaoh's servants and will let neither Marxists nor Erasmists lead it astray."²²

As Stepan Lenkavs'kyi, a later OUN activist, noted as early as 1928, Dontsov's ideological system "represents a theoretical worldview which has important distinctive marks of religion: strong emotional colouring, fanatical belief in the truth and inviolability of its dogmas, reckless intolerance to and negation of everything that does not agree with it."²³

Thus, by creating his 'active nationalism', Dontsov constructed not simply a new ideology: he deliberately sought to establish a new political religion, although he preferred to put the word 'religion' in brackets, understanding the difference between nationalism and religion "in the proper sense". Has he

²¹ Dmytro Dontsov, '1937', *Vistnyk* 5/1, 1937, p. 57.

²² Dontsov, '1937', op. cit., p. 64-65. "Erasmists" (from Erasmus of Rotterdam) here mean 'cosmopolitan humanists'.

²³ Stepan Lenkavs'kyi, *Ukrains'kyi natsionalizm: Tvory*, vol. 1, 2002, Lileya-NV, Ivano-Frankivsk, p. 505.

achieved his goal? To some extent, yes. In the memoirs of his contemporaries we can often read that young Galician Ukrainians perceived Dontsov as a prophet of a new faith and his works, as a ‘gospel’. The ‘active nationalism’ influenced the ideology of the OUN, which also assumed a quasi-religious character. But Dontsov failed to create a fully fledged political religion.

For the existence of any religion, including a political one, at least two things are required: a ‘holy scripture’ and a ‘church’. Dontsov’s works could really become a ‘holy scripture’ for new Ukrainian Nationalism. The role of the ‘church’ could be performed by the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists, but actually the relations between Dontsov and the OUN were uneasy. Having experienced the influence of ‘active nationalism’ at some stage, ‘organised nationalism’ nevertheless went its own way.

The OUN was formed in 1929 as a result of the consolidation of several nationalist groups both in Galicia and among Ukrainian émigrés. Like Dontsov, the OUN aspired not only to the political liberation of the Ukrainian nation, but also to a larger spiritual revolution in order to create a new Ukrainian man. “Armed revolution? We will achieve nothing by it [...] until we first accomplish a revolution of minds, a revolution of education and morality, a spiritual revolution,” – wrote the head of the OUN Secretariat Volodymyr Martynets’ in 1929. He believed that Nationalists had to re-educate the Ukrainians, spoiled by Bolshevik rule, by any means, including violence:

“Indeed, in this kingdom of boors and beggars we shall have – as soon as the Ukrainian power is established – to resort to the methods of Peter the Great: by terror we shall have to teach them to respect human dignity, by terror we shall inculcate in them the respect for human self (what a paradox), by terror we will impose cleanliness and order, etc. We shall even have to issue official prescriptions about wearing collars, manners of behaviour, meals and so on. One dictatorship should be replaced by another, which will turn into the people’s rule only gradually as the dictatorship itself will educate the masses. [...] Apparently, one cannot make slave a free man otherwise than with a rod. For the good of that unfortunate people, we must whip them, or they will never wake up and throw off their yoke. We must replace the enemies with ourselves, we, Ukrainians (a part of us), must become the ‘Varangians’ over ourselves (the general mass), for there is no other way to get rid of the alien ‘Varangians’.²⁴ [...] Let us face the truth: it is by terror and violence against our own people that we shall obtain its liberty.”²⁵

However, the OUN’s leaders understood that ‘whipping’ could not be the only means for creating a new Ukrainian man. An important feature of the OUN, which resembled totalitarian movements – both leftist and rightist –, was

²⁴ “Varangians” here mean ‘(foreign) rulers who establish order’. According to the ‘Primary Chronicle’, in the 9th century disorders among Slavonic and Finnish tribes prompted them to invite the Varangians “to come and rule.”

²⁵ *Tsentrал'nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv brohads'kykh ob'iednan' Ukrainy*, fond 269 (Kolektsiia dokumentiv ‘Ukrayins’kyi muzei u Prazi’), inv. 1, file 174, p. 81.

the sacralisation of politics, aimed at creating a sort of religious movement. In 1929, to underscore the fact that the OUN was not a party, but a “separate faith in the political field”,²⁶ S. Lenkavs’kyi wrote the famous ‘Ten Commandments of the Ukrainian Nationalist’, better known as ‘The Decalogue’. The introduction to it, written somewhat later by Ivan Gabrusevych, declared: “I am the Spirit of the eternal element that saved you from the Tatar deluge and put you on the edge of two worlds to create new life...”²⁷ Here, the “Spirit of the eternal element” has taken the place of the biblical God who gave his ‘Ten Commandments’ to Moses, and Ukrainians represent the chosen people. A few years later, ‘The 12 Character Traits of the Ukrainian Nationalist’ and ‘The 44 Rules of Life of the Ukrainian Nationalist’ were written and became important attachments to ‘The Decalogue’. In form, they resembled various lists of Christian virtues, but they significantly differed from them in the content. In the introduction to ‘The 44 Rules’, we see an example of the ‘palingenetic myth’ constructed according to the scheme ‘former glory of the nation – ruin – rebirth in the struggle’:

“The immortal imperious will of the Ukrainian Nation, which ordered your ancestors to conquer the world and brought them to the walls of Constantinople and beyond the Caspian Sea and Volga; which erected a powerful Ukrainian state and marked by sword and plough the borders of its power; which, in its fight against the hordes, fulfilled the historical mission of Ukraine as manifested in acts of statesmanship and creative intentions of the Great Hetmans and Geniuses who rose from the ruin to new revolutionary action and state building – now claims authoritatively a new life, inaugurates a great era of Ukrainian nationalism and tells you: Stand up and fight! Listen and believe, conquer and win, so that Ukraine may now become as powerful as it was formerly and may create new life to its own liking and its own will.”²⁸

In the ‘Rules’, even God is interpreted in a nationalist manner:

“11. The powerful God of Princess Olga and Volodymyr the Great requires of thee not tears, not mercy or passive contemplation, but courage and active life. 12. Know, that God is best honoured through Nation and in the name of Nation by active love for Ukraine and by the strict morals of a fighter and founder of independent state life.”²⁹

The prominent OUN activist, Dmytro Shtykalo, even wrote that “*nationalism requires faith in the nation, not in God.*” However, “*the religion of nationalism cannot be against the fact that its faithful (nationalists) profess dogmas of another religion [Christianity] as long as these alien dogmas harmonise and coincide with its own.*”³⁰

²⁶ Mirchuk, *Narys istorii OUN*, op. cit., p. 106.

²⁷ Cited in Mirchuk, *Narys istorii OUN*, op. cit., p. 106.

²⁸ Cited in Mirchuk, *Narys istorii OUN*, op. cit., p. 107.

²⁹ Cited in Mirchuk, *Narys istorii OUN*, op. cit., p. 108.

³⁰ Dmytro Shtykalo, *Nad svitom siaie kbrest mecha*, 1936, Nakladom Olhy Hrozovs’koi, Lviv, p. 25.

The necessity of strengthening the faith of the militants motivated the creation of the OUN's own cult with its own rites, rituals, symbols, etc. Thus, a 'cult of heroism' became central to the political and educational activities of the OUN.³¹ The expressions of this cult included veneration of the graves of Ukrainian soldiers killed during the war for independence, and especially mourning ceremonies in memory of OUN militants sentenced to death by Polish courts or killed in combat.

After the murder of OUN leader Yevhen Konovalets' by a Soviet agent in 1938, his posthumous cult as "the Leader, the Founder and the Renovator"³² began to spread. After the split of the OUN in 1940, both successor organisations created the cults of their own respective leaders – Andriy Melnyk and Stepan Bandera. But that is another story that goes beyond the chronological scope of this article. In August 1939, drawing a line under its efforts to create a new nationalist religion, the II Grand Assembly of the OUN, held in Rome, stated: "From deeds, blood and death for the sake of the idea there is born a new faith of Ukrainians – Ukrainian Nationalism".³³

Church Response

The tendency towards a Nationalist religion was strong enough to provoke sharp criticism from the Greek-Catholic Church and its Metropolitan Andrei Sheptyts'kyi. The confrontation between the Nationalist and the Catholic camp resulted in a sharp debate which unfolded both in the press and in separately published books and pamphlets. The immediate impulse for the escalation of the conflict was the young Nationalists' public opposition against the 'Ukrainian Youth for Christ' celebration (1933) and against the establishment of the Catholic Action of Ukrainian Youth. However, neither this nor even the OUN terrorist acts were the main reason for the confrontation.

The essence of the divergences between the Church and 'neonationalism' was correctly observed in an anonymous article in *Meta*. It rejected the view that the conflict had been caused by the incompatibility of nationalism with a religious Catholic outlook, as some Nationalists thought:

"Nationalism as a doctrine does not contradict Catholicism. [...] The whole religious and spiritual agenda of the Ukrainian Catholic Church and Ukrainian Catholicism is so definitely emancipatory, so, one might say, nationally-Ukrainian, that it is really hard to identify the point of contention..."³⁴

³¹ See e. g. Roman Brut, *Kul't heroizmu*, 1937, Promini, Lviv.

³² 'Vidozva II Velykoho Zboru Ukrain's'kykh Natsionalistiv', in: Taras Hunchak/Roman Solchanyk (eds.), *Ukrains'ka suspil'no-politychna dumka v 20 stolitti: Dokumenty i materiyaly*, vol. 2, 1983, Suchasnist', [s. l.], p. 420.

³³ 'Vidozva II Velykoho', op. cit., p. 421.

³⁴ 'Ukrains'kyi neonatsionalizm i katolytsyzm', *Meta* 50, December 17, 1933.

However, the conflict was not accidental and, given that its underlying cause had not been removed, the article predicted even more bitter confrontation. The biggest danger in the eyes of the Church was that

“neonationalism gives the civil instinct that leads to the creation of complex human communities a mark of exclusivity, the status of the highest regulator of all human initiatives, endeavours and even thoughts. As a result, it endows the concept of ‘nation’ with the meaning of an absolute truth. So, as if rearranging the hierarchy of ethical values, it puts the ‘nation’ and not God at the top of the hierarchy. Moreover, it demands religious worship of this highest value and therefore, becomes a religion itself.”³⁵

A similar opinion was expressed by Fr. Dr. Mykola Konrad in his sermon for Ukrainian students, delivered at the Church of the Holy Spirit in Lviv. He stated that in the modern era, under the influence of humanism, liberalism and socialism and as a consequence of the desire to separate education and moral life from religion, the moral education of youth had declined disastrously:

“In place of God, the human was installed, be it an individual, a community, a nation, a state, or humanity as a whole. Elevated to the pedestal of divinity, they became the sources of law, the criteria of good and evil, the highest rules of education and life. Recently, this plague has also infected some nationalists both in our country and abroad. They have substituted nation for God and embraced an ethics independent of God and religion.”³⁶

This and other similar statements by the leaders of the GCC and the Ukrainian Catholic movement show that the Church saw a serious danger in the transformation of the Ukrainian ‘neonationalism’ of Dontsov and the OUN into a secular religion, which sought to subordinate traditional Christianity – a trend that became fully evident by 1933.

Among the clergy, there were different approaches to Ukrainian nationalism. Bishop Hryhoriy Khomyshyn, who was wholly loyal to the Polish authorities, criticised not only the extreme nationalism but also the much more moderate organisations like the Ukrainian National Democratic Alliance, while Metropolitan Sheptyts’kyi and his followers supported the moderate nationalist movement but condemned the OUN’s ideology and terrorist practice.

However, some Ukrainian Catholic activists, while criticising Dontsov’s ideology, still felt that militant nationalism can play an important role in the fight against the main threat – communism. From this stemmed the idea of an alliance between Catholicism and nationalism in the common struggle with communism and other ideologies that were considered hostile to the Church,

³⁵ ‘Ukrains’kyi neonatsionalizm’, op. cit.

³⁶ Mykola Konrad, ‘Propovid’ dlia Akademichnoi Molodi’, *Meta* 51, December 24, 1933.

but the nationalism had first to be purified of its anti-Christian elements. This conception was most consistently expressed by Fr. Konrad in his pamphlet ‘Catholicism and Nationalism’ (1934):

“Nationalism and Catholicism are powerful allies in the struggle against liberalism and socialism. To bring a new, energetic and enthusiastic elite together and to put it under the guidance of conscious and strong-willed leaders, to push masses to action, to the resolute and victorious struggle against the rotten spirit of capitalism and Satanic communism, for a renewal of human life – private, family, national and state life – based on the principles of Christian justice and love – this is the order of the 20th century. The contemporary Catholic and nationalist movement is a modern crusade. In Catholicism, its slogan is: I believe! It is the will of God! – while in nationalism it is: I want! *Voglio!* The union of religious ethos and nationalist pathos is an irresistible force! Sword and cross – herein lies the hope of nations and the humankind for a new and better tomorrow, when **pax Christi in regno Christi** will triumph.”³⁷

This is the main text which A. Shekhovtsov takes into consideration when formulating his concept of the alleged Western Ukrainian ‘clerical fascism’ marked by an exclusive, palingenetic vision of both national and church life. However, Konrad’s pamphlet shows solely that its author regarded the ‘modern nationalism’, including fascism, as a lesser evil in comparison with communism and considered desirable an alliance of Catholicism and nationalism in their struggle against the common enemies – communism and anti-clerical liberalism. In this case, integral nationalism had to be purified from its “Nietzschean perversions”, return to the bosom of Christianity and recognize the authority of the Church. As to the palingenetic discourse, it is peculiar to Christianity no less than to nationalism (by the way, not only the fascist one). Indeed, the important component of both ideologies – revolutionary integral nationalism and political Catholicism – was a myth of social palingenesis. To the ultra-nationalists, it meant the rebirth or rather a new birth of the nation in a post-liberal new order based on the domination of strong and healthy nations. To the Catholics, it meant a Christian rebirth of the person, society and nation through the restoration of the ideals of “noble medieval Catholicism” and the establishment of *pax Christi in regno Christi*. However, for Konrad any acceptance of purely fascist ideas was out of the question. On the contrary, he criticised the tendency to dissolve personality within nation, the ‘statolatry’ (idolatrous worship of state) and so on. Hence, the term ‘clerical fascism’ here is nothing but misleading.

Konrad’s pamphlet became one of the manifestations of ‘Christian’ or ‘Catholic nationalism’, whose adherents (Bishop Ivan Buchko, Markiy Dzerovych, Konstantyn Chekhovych and others) tried to combine Christianity with conservative nationalism and sometimes even sought an agreement with the

³⁷ Mykola Konrad, *Natsionalizm i katolytyzm*, 2003, Hran’, Ivano-Frankivsk, p. 29.

revolutionary Nationalists. However, the idea of a Catholic-Nationalist alliance was never implemented. Moreover, in 1934, when a member of the OUN shot a prominent Catholic activist, Director of the Ukrainian Gymnasium in Lviv Ivan Babi, relations between the Church and the nationalist movement became extremely strained. After the OUN regional leaders, headed by Stepan Bandera, were arrested and convicted in the mid-1930s, the conflict lost its sharpness, but still simmered up to 1939.

Conclusion

Thus, Gentile's and Griffin's theoretical models can really help to understand the development of Ukrainian integral nationalism, the intentions of its leaders and theorists, the sources of its influence and its relations with the Church. But, of course, one should use these models with discretion, taking into account the specific context of interwar Western Ukraine and the limitations imposed by the stateless status of Ukrainians.

Like other integral nationalist movements in Europe (including the fascist ones), Ukrainian Nationalists had a tendency to sacralise politics and create a political religion, using the following discursive strategies: 1) absolutisation of the Ukrainian nation and its placement at the centre of their system of beliefs and myths; 2) creation of special ethical codes designed to unite the members of the movement in a sacred community of fighters; 3) representation of the nationalist organisation as an elect community invested with a messianic role; and 4) development of a political liturgy, which included the cult of heroism and rituals connected with the *sacred history* of the liberation struggle.

The Nationalists praised the Church as one of the most important foundations of the nation and attempted to establish a symbiotic relationship with Christianity for the ultimate purpose of incorporating it into the nationalist religion.

Nevertheless, Ukrainian integral nationalism never became a fully fledged political religion. Acting in underground and lacking their own state, Ukrainian nationalists could not use the educational system and media to indoctrinate the masses. Besides, secular religion is a modern phenomenon, while the interwar Western Ukrainian society remained traditional in many of its aspects, so most of the Galician Ukrainians, especially the older generation, had no need for a secular religion to fill the gap, created by an ontological or 'nomic' crisis. Their devotion to Christianity of the Greek-Catholic rite put a brake on the nationalist sacralisation of politics.

On the basis of its attitude towards Ukrainian nationalism, the highest hierarchy of the GCC and the Catholic movement's leadership can be divided in two camps: 1) a relatively small group surrounding Bishop Khomyshyn who was loyal to the Polish authorities and displayed a negative attitude to the very notion of Ukrainian nationalism even in its moderate form; and 2) the main

camp, headed by Metropolitan Sheptyts'kyi, consisting of clergy and intellectuals who held moderate nationalist views but rejected the terrorist methods of the Nationalist movement and its tendency towards creating a secular religion. Inside this camp, there was a group of 'Christian nationalists' who tried to bring about a synthesis of Catholicism and nationalism on the anti-Communist and anti-liberal platform.

In addition, many ordinary priests actively supported the Nationalist struggle for independence. The relations between the clergy and the OUN remained ambivalent until the end of World War II, when both the Greek-Catholic Church and the Ukrainian Nationalist movement were suppressed by the Soviet regime.

KATHOLISCHE KIRCHE UND TOTALITARISMUS. EIN IDEENGESCHICHTLICHER ÜBERBLICK

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Einleitung

Betrachtet man die Geschichte im Allgemeinen, gibt es immer wieder Tendenzen zu einer einseitigen Zuspitzung der Macht im kirchlichen oder weltlichen Bereich. Im 20. Jahrhundert nahm diese Zuspitzung eine dramatische Form an: Säkulare politische Systeme wollten Staat und Bürger in ihrer Totalität umfassen und beherrschen. Dabei bedienten sie sich einer einseitig auf ihre Machtinteressen ausgerichteten Ideologie,¹ die weder der Wahrheit noch der Vernunft folgt und ein verzerrtes Bild der Wirklichkeit zeichnet. Ein solches politisches System wird als Totalitarismus bezeichnet. Die Ideologie des Totalitarismus verspricht das Heil im Diesseits und bedient sich dabei religiöser Symbolik und Bedeutung, allerdings in einem rein säkularen Zusammenhang. Totalitäre Systeme wollen das Ende der Zeit innerhalb der Zeit herbeiführen, also künstlich eine Apokalypse schaffen. Nach dieser „künstlichen Apokalypse“ folgt nicht das Reich Gottes, sondern die Verwirklichung der Utopien der totalitären Ideologien, wie die klassenlose Gesellschaft, die Vorherrschaft einer Rasse oder schlicht die Weltherrschaft. Totalitarismen können somit auch als politische Religionen bezeichnet werden.

Religion und Politik

Zwischen den Bereichen Politik und Religion, Staat und Kirche, ergibt sich stets ein Spannungsverhältnis eigenen Charakters. Dieses Verhältnis muss prinzipiell geregelt werden, um Konfliktfälle zu vermeiden: In der Antike, ausgehend von Ägypten über Griechenland und Rom, waren die Bereiche Politik, Kult und Religion eins. Man kann hier von einer Theopolitie oder Theokratie sprechen: Das politische Oberhaupt eines Staates war einziger Mittler zwischen den Menschen und Gott und wurde teils selbst als Gott verehrt, wie besonders im antiken Rom. Politik und Religion sind als „politische Religion“ in der Antike eins.

¹ ‚Ideologie‘ in einem neutralen Sinne bedeutet ‚Ideengeschichte‘. Der Totalitarismus stellt die Ideengeschichte in seinen weltanschaulichen Dienst.

Die entscheidende Wende brachte das Christentum: Es wehrte sich gegen die gottgleiche Verehrung eines Staatsoberhauptes und unterschied die Bereiche Politik und Religion. Im Neuen Testament wird dies durch die „Zinsgroschenparabel“² und die „Zwei-Reiche-Lehre“³ ausgedrückt: Der irdischen Macht soll an Geld wie Gehorsam gegeben werden, was sie verlangt, genauso wie Gott auf ihm angemessene Weise zu dienen ist. Kaiser Justinian I., der Große, vollendet in den Jahren 527 bis 565 die Wandlung des Christentums zur Staatsreligion des römischen Reiches, das sich jedoch zunehmendem Verfall ausgesetzt sieht. Reste eines Staatskirchentums überdauern in Westeuropa bis ins 20. Jahrhundert, ebenso wie im Bereich der Orthodoxie in Osteuropa eine „Symphonia“, ein ineinanderwirkender Gleichklang von Staat und Kirche, bis heute fortlebt. Dennoch gründen sich, mit Ausnahme der islamischen Staaten, wie Iran oder Pakistan, oder der protestantischen Länder Nordeuropas, am Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts die meisten Staaten auf weitgehend säkulare Verfassungen. Sie folgen, wenn sie sich religiösen Grundsätzen verschreiben, eher den Grundsätzen einer „konfessionslosen“ Zivilreligion, wie insbesondere die USA.

Doch seit dem 17. Jahrhundert ist eine starke Indienstnahme der Religion durch den Staat feststellbar. In diesem Zusammenhang tritt erstmals der Begriff „politische Religion“ auf. Schon vor dem Auftreten der „neuen“ politischen Religion findet ein immer weiter fortschreitender innerweltlicher Abschluss der menschlichen Gesellschaft statt. Diese Entwicklung, gegen die sich das Christentum in seiner Geschichte immer wieder zur Wehr setzen musste und auch wusste, gipfelt in der Entstehung der totalitären Gewaltregime des 20. Jahrhunderts: Faschismus, Nationalsozialismus und Kommunismus, oder besser Marxismus-Leninismus. Indem die Totalitarismen Religion und Kirche zugunsten ihrer Ideologie an den Rand drängen oder gar aufheben, besetzen sie mit ihren eigenen pseudo-dogmatischen Grund- und Lehrsätzen das religiöse Feld. Ihre Lehre wird zu einer neuen „Heilsbotschaft“, die eine „Erlösung“ verspricht. Die oft vernichtende, inhumane Durchsetzung der Ziele politischer Massenbewegungen wird für ihre Anhänger zur „heiligen Pflicht“. Diese Tendenzen religiösen Charakters sind, trotz der unterschiedlichen historischen Voraussetzungen, die bei der Entstehung der politischen Massenbewegungen des 20. Jahrhunderts zu berücksichtigen sind, grundsätzlich in allen totalitären Regimen festzustellen. Sie werden in den Augen einiger zu einer Ersatzreligion, einem „surrogierenden“ Religionsersatz oder einer politischen Religion.

² Mt. 22, 15-22, Mk. 12, 13-17 und Lk. 20, 20-26; zentral: „Gebt also dem Kaiser, was des Kaisers ist, und Gott, was Gottes ist!“ (Mt. 22, 21, s. a. Mk. 12, 17 und Lk. 20, 25)

³ Röm. 13, 1-7, zentral: „Jedermann unterwerfe sich der obrigkeitlichen Gewalt; denn es gibt keine Gewalt außer von Gott; die bestehenden [erg.: geistlichen und weltlichen] Gewalten aber sind von Gott angeordnet.“ (Röm. 13, 1f.)

Kurzer kirchengeschichtlicher Überblick

Zur Interpretation von Entstehung und Auswirkungen totalitärer Ideologien dienen auch kirchengeschichtliche Perspektiven, die schon im Frühchristentum ihren Anfang nehmen. Die Engführung der politischen und religiösen Sphäre, die totalitäre Regime ausmachen, führt, wie bereits erwähnt, strukturell auf die antike Ungeschiedenheit von Politik, Kult und Religion zurück. Die Aufhebung der antiken Theopolitie durch das frühe Christentum, unter anderem durch die Verweigerung des Kaiserkults, war eine der Haupterrungenschaften der noch jungen Religion. Aufgrund der Widersetzung gegen den Staatskult hatte das Christentum in seiner Anfangszeit viele Opfer zu beklagen, wie die frühen Christenverfolgungen des 1. Jahrhunderts im antiken Rom unter den Kaisern Nero und Domitian zeigen. Die durch das Christentum erreichte Unterscheidung von Politik und Religion wird in den politischen Massenbewegungen des 20. Jahrhunderts zugunsten einer neuen Form der antiken politischen Religion wieder aufgehoben. Der Mensch und die Gesellschaft sollen redivinisiert werden, nachdem die christliche, aber auch bereits die jüdische Religion durch eine Dedivinisation den Unterschied zwischen der irdischen Sphäre und der transzendenten Sphäre des Göttlichen deutlich gemacht hatte. Auf diese Redivinisation durch die politischen Religionen, die jedoch nicht mit der antiken Theopolitie gleichzusetzen sind, weist Eric Voegelin in *Die Neue Wissenschaft der Politik* hin:

„Unter De-Divinisation soll also der historische Prozeß verstanden werden, in dessen Verlauf die Kultur des Polytheismus an der Atrophie des Erlebens starb und die menschliche Existenz in der Gesellschaft neugeordnet wurde [...]. Unter Re-Divinisation soll jedoch nicht ein Wiederaufleben der polytheistischen Kultur im griechisch-römischen Sinne verstanden werden. [...] Die moderne Re-Divinisation hat ihren Ursprung vielmehr im Christentum selbst, insofern sie von Komponenten in ihm herührt, die von der allgemeinen Kirche als häretisch unterdrückt worden waren.“⁴

Voegelin weist hier klar darauf hin, dass totalitäre Bewegungen für ihn die Gestalt häretischer Sekten haben. Im Verlauf der Kirchengeschichte gab es viele „Caesaren“, die neben der weltlichen auch religiöse Autorität für sich beanspruchten und sich als göttlich verehren ließen. Gegen diese „Caesaren“ konnte sich die Kirche größtenteils zur Wehr setzen: Sie machte ihnen klar, dass nicht die weltlich-politische Macht, sondern die Kirche allein den Menschen das Heil bringe. Die weltliche Macht hat vielmehr dafür zu sorgen, dass den Menschen als Bürgern die Heilsvermittlung durch die Kirche ermöglicht wird. Diese klassische christliche Staatslehre, wie sie grundlegend bei Augustinus und bei Thomas von Aquin zu finden ist, gründet auf dem Prinzip der universalen Gottesherrschaft, die sich in eine geistliche und eine weltliche

⁴ Eric Voegelin, *Die Neue Wissenschaft der Politik*, 1959 (1° 1951), Pustet, München, S. 153f.

Machtsphäre ausdifferenziert, wie es im 13. Kapitel des Briefes des Apostel Paulus an die Römer zu finden ist. Es gibt eine geistliche und eine weltliche Gewalt, wobei die geistliche der weltlichen übergeordnet ist und jede Autorität, auch die weltliche, einzig von Gott ausgeht: „Ein jeder soll sich der obrigkeitlichen Gewalt unterordnen. Denn es gibt keine [*sc.* geistliche oder weltliche] Gewalt, die nicht von Gott stammt. Wo eine Gewalt besteht, ist sie von Gott angeordnet.“⁵ Und im 1. Petrusbrief heißt es: „Unterwerft euch um des Herrn willen jeglicher menschlichen Ordnung“.⁶

So spricht der heilige Papst Gelasius I., der die Kirche von 492 bis 496 regiert hat, im Jahre 494 in seinem Brief an Kaiser Anastasios I. davon, dass innerhalb der christlichen Welt eine geistliche und eine weltliche, spirituale und temporale, Seite unterschieden werden muss und beide Bereiche nach je eigenen Maßstäben geleitet werden müssen, wobei der kirchlichen Macht größere Bedeutung beizumessen ist, da sie für das Seelenheil Sorge trägt:

„Zwei sind es nämlich, erhabener Kaiser, durch die an oberster Stelle diese Welt regiert wird: die geheiligte Autorität der Bischöfe und die kaiserliche Gewalt. Von diesen beiden ist die Last der Priester um so schwerer, als sie auch selbst für die Könige der Menschen vor Gottes Gericht werden Rechenschaft ablegen müssen.“⁷

Das sich daraus ableitende Gelasianische Prinzip lässt sich also aus kirchenhistorischer Sicht folgendermaßen zusammenfassen:

„Für das Verhältnis von Staat und Kirche entwickelte er [Papst Gelasius I.], anknüpfend an augustinische Gedanken, in einem Schreiben an Kaiser Anastasios I. grundsätzliche Ausführungen, die sogenannte Zweigewaltentheorie, welche dann von den Päpsten des Mittelalters aufgegriffen und weiter ausgebaut wurde“.⁸

Die Zweigewaltentheorie oder Zweischwerterlehre, wie sie Gelasius I. differenziert ausführt, beruht auf der Passion Christi nach dem Evangelisten Lukas:

⁵ Röm. 13, 1f.

⁶ 1. Petr. 2, 13.

⁷ „Duo quippe sunt, imperator Auguste, quibus principaliter mundus hic regitur: auctoritas sacra [*al. sacrata*] pontificium, et regalis potestas. In quibus tanto gravius est pondus sacerdotum, quanto etiam pro ipsis regibus Domino [*al. hominum*, siehe Hugo Rahner, *Kirche und Staat im frühen Christentum*, 1961, Kösel, München, S. 256] in divino reddituri sunt examine rationem.“ (Gelasius [Papa, I.], Epistola VIII. Ad Anastasium imperatorem, in: Jacques Paul Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series latina* (= MPL), Bd. 59: *SS. Gelasii I Papae, Aviti, Faustini, necnon Joannis Diaconi, Juliani Pomerii et duorum anonymorum opera omnia*, 1862, Garnier, Paris, Sp. 42) Siehe auch Rahner, *Kirche und Staat*, op. cit., S. 252-265 (Quellen), 256 (Zitat), 205-231, bes. 205, 225-227. Siehe dazu: Gerd Tellenbach, *Libertas*, 1996 (1° 1936), Kohlhammer, Stuttgart u. a., S. 42-48 und Henning Ottmann, *Geschichte des politischen Denkens*, Bd. 2: *Römer und Mittelalter*, Teilbd. 2: *Das Mittelalter*, 2004, Metzler, Stuttgart-Weimar, S. 45f.

⁸ Franz Xaver Seppelt/Georg Schwaiger, *Geschichte der Päpste*, 1964, Kösel, München, S. 47. Siehe dazu auch: Joseph Bernhart, *Der Vatikan als Weltmacht* 1951, List, München, S. 71-87 (1° *Der Vatikan als Thron der Welt*, 1930, List, Leipzig).

Christus setzte vor seinem Kreuzestod die geistliche und weltliche Gewalt als voneinander unabhängig ein, als ihm seine Jünger zwei Schwerter dargeboten hatten. Die Zweiswerterlehre beruht auf einer gleichnishaften Auslegung von Lk. 22, 38: „Da riefen sie [sc. die Jünger Jesu]: ‚Herr, siehe, hier sind zwei Schwerter.‘ Er aber sagte zu ihnen: ‚Es ist genug.‘“ Im griechischen Original ist die Antwort Christi als *bikanon estin* überliefert. Dies würde auch folgende deutsche Übersetzung rechtfertigen: „Es ist [sc. an Zahl und Stärke] hinreichend.“ Diese Stelle ist nur beim Evangelisten Lukas überliefert. Gelasius I. weist wohl indirekt auf diese Stelle bei Lukas hin, wenn er schreibt: „Duo quippe sunt, [...]“, „Zwei sind es nämlich, [...]“.

Beide Seiten, Staat und Kirche, haben also ihre eigene rechtliche Souveränität, wobei der geistlichen Seite das höhere Gewicht und die erhabeneren Aufgabe zukommen. Dennoch sollen Staat und Kirche zusammenarbeiten und gemeinsam für das Wohl des Menschen sorgen, jede Seite in ihrem Bereich: die weltliche im Bereich des Staates und des öffentlichen Wohls (*salus publica*) mit dem Gemeinwohl (*bonum commune*) als Ziel, die geistliche in den Bereichen der Lehre, der Verkündigung und der Pastoral, die das Seelenheil (*salus animae*) zum Ziel haben. Keine der beiden Seiten soll die andere in ihrem Herrschaftsbereich behindern. Die Frage nach dem Absoluten ist demnach auf Seiten der Kirche zu klären. Der Staat soll sich von dieser Frage entlasten, da er sich andernfalls autoritär oder sogar totalitär auflädt. Auch Jacob Talmon geht in „The Doctrine of Poverty“ auf die prinzipielle Differenzierung der Aufgaben zwischen Kirche und Staat ein.⁹ Maßgebliche Interpretationen des Konzepts der „Zwei-Reiche-Lehre“ finden sich vor Gelasius I. schon bei Augustinus in *De civitate Dei* (413-427)¹⁰ und später bei Thomas von Aquin in *De regimine principum* (um 1265).¹¹ Thomas geht in seiner kurzen staatsphilosophischen Schrift auch auf die Problematik der Tyrannenherrschaft ein, der Diktatur eines Einzelnen: „Der Ty-

⁹ Siehe Jacob Leib Talmon (Flajszer), *The Doctrine of Poverty in its Religious, Social and Political aspects as illustrated by some XII-XIII century movements*, 1943, London [Diss. phil.], S. 141-149.

¹⁰ Aurelius Augustinus, *De Civitate Dei libri XXII*, in: Id., *Opera Omnia*, Bd. 7 (= MPL, Bd. 41), [1864], Brepols, Turnhout, Sp. 13-804; bes. Id., *De Civitate Dei*, op. cit., lib. XVIII u. XIX, Sp. 559-658. Siehe dazu Christoph Horn, *Augustinus*, 1995, C. H. Beck, München, S. 111-127, bes. 115-118.

¹¹ Thomas von Aquin, *De regimine principum ad regem Cypri*, in: Id., *Politica divi Thomae Aquinatis opuscula duo*, 1948, Marietti, Turin, Rom, S. 1-97. Dt. Übersetzung des von Thomas von Aquin verfassten Teils (bis einschließlich lib. II, cap. 4; entstanden um 1265) von Friedrich Schreyvogel: Thomas von Aquin, *Über die Herrschaft der Fürsten*, 1990, Reclam, Stuttgart; siehe darin auch das Nachwort von Ulrich Matz (Aquin, *Über die Herrschaft der Fürsten*, op. cit., S. 73-89, bes. 88f.), in dem auf die ideologiekritische Unterscheidung von weltlicher und geistlicher Macht hingewiesen wird: „[...]“; erst die neuzeitlichen Ideologien werden den Staat wieder zum Werkzeug der Erlösung des Menschen und die Politik damit zur fürchterlichen Macht einer absolut existenzentscheidenden Religion steigern.“ (Aquin, *Über die Herrschaft der Fürsten*, op. cit., S. 89)

rann verachtet das Gemeinwohl und sucht seinen persönlichen Vorteil.¹² Ferner erörtert Thomas, wie die Tyrannis zustande kommt und wie sie durch die gute Alleinherrschaft im Königtum verhindert werden kann.¹³ Doch Staat und Kirche konnten sich in der Geschichte nicht immer auf eine gerechte Aufgabenverteilung und ein friedliches Gegenüber einigen. So griff Marsilius von Padua im 13./14. Jahrhundert die Freiheit der Kirche deutlich an. Er verlangte, dass die Kirche im Staat aufzugehen und ihm als ein *instrumentum regni* zu dienen habe, wie Murray hervorhebt:

„Marsilius’ Grundvoraussetzung, die sich von einer Averroistischen Interpretation des Aristoteles ableitete, war die Einheit des Staates, die sich als ein Verbot der Organisation des menschlichen Lebens in zwei getrennten Gemeinschaften, der spiritualen und der temporalen, ausprägte.“¹⁴

In ähnlicher Weise sah auch Thomas Hobbes ein Aufgehen der Kirche im Staat vor, wobei der Staat vollkommen die Kirche ersetzen und ihre Aufgabe übernehmen soll. Beide, Marsilius und Hobbes, die aus unterschiedlichen Richtungen zu einer ähnlich kritischen Sichtweise der Unabhängigkeit der Kirche kamen, konnten sich letztlich nicht durchsetzen. Noch überwog das Gelasianische Prinzip und die „Zwei-Reiche-Lehre“.

Einen Angriff auf die Freiheit der Kirche ganz eigener Art bilden schon früh die totalitären Systeme: Sie verlangen einen Monismus im politischen, sozialen, rechtlichen und religiösen Bereich. Jeder, der außerhalb dieses monistischen Systems steht, ist ein Feind. Widersetzt sich die Kirche gegen diesen zwanghaften Monismus, stehen sich Kirche und Staat damit feindlich gegenüber.

„Die totalitären Grundzüge dieser Lösung sind sehr klar. Seine basale Behauptung ist ein durchgängiger Monismus, ein politischer, sozialer, rechtlicher und religiöser: es gibt nur einen einzigen Souverän, eine Gesellschaft, ein Gesetz und einen Glauben. Und die größte Negation richtet sich gegen den christlichen Dualismus der Gewalten, Gesellschaften und Gesetze – in eine spirituale und temporale, göttliche und menschliche Seite. Auf diese Negation folgt das Aufgehen der Kirche in der Gemeinschaft, das Aufgehen der Gemeinschaft im Staat, das Aufgehen des Staates in der Partei und die Behauptung, dass der Partei-Staat die höchste spirituale und moralische, ebenso wie die

¹² Aquin, *Über die Herrschaft der Fürsten*, op. cit., S. 14f.; Orig.: Id., *De regimine principum ad regem Cypri*, in: Id., *Politica divi Thomae Aquinatis opuscula duo*, 1984, Marietti, Turin, Rom, lib. I, cap. 3, S. 4: „[...] tyrannus, contempto communi bono, quaerit privatam [...]“.

¹³ Siehe Aquin, *De regimine principum ad regem Cypri*, op. cit., lib. I, cap. 2-7, 10 u. 11 u. lib. IV, cap. 8, S. 3-10, 12-15, 75f. (dt.: Id., *Über die Herrschaft der Fürsten*, op. cit., S. 10-31, 39-47; lib. IV, cap. 8 nicht enthalten). Der zitierte Text stammt ab einschließlich lib. II, cap. 5 nicht von Thomas von Aquin selbst, sondern wird seinem Schüler Tholomäus von Lucca zugeschrieben, der die Schrift um 1303 fortgesetzt haben soll. (siehe Nachw. v. Ulrich Matz zu: Aquin, *Über die Herrschaft der Fürsten*, op. cit., S. 78-80)

¹⁴ John Courtney Murray, ‘The Church and Totalitarian Democracy’, *Theological Studies* 13/4, 1952, S. 543.

höchste politische, Autorität und Realität ist. Er hat seine eigene absolute autonome ideologische Substanz und seinen eigenen absoluten und unabhängigen Zweck; er ist der letztgültige Träger menschlichen Verlangens. Außerhalb dieses einen Souveräns ist nichts. Oder vielmehr, wer oder was vorgibt, außerhalb des Souveräns zu stehen, ist ‚der Feind‘.“¹⁵

Die Linien zum Totalitarismus im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts sind hier schon deutlich vorgezeichnet. Doch bereits lange vor dem „Jahrhundert der Diktaturen und Despotien“, als das man das 20. Jahrhundert durchaus ansehen kann, wird die Kirche durch den Monismus des Jakobinismus der Französischen Revolution angegriffen: Auch hier ergibt sich ein Antagonismus zwischen Staat und Kirche, da der Staat die Aufgaben der Kirche absorbieren wollte und anstelle von Religion und Kirche die Heilsbedürftigkeit der Menschen erfüllen wollte. Kirche und Klerus sehen sich auch in nachrevolutionärer Zeit starker Verfolgung ausgesetzt. Diese Situation führte 1801 zum Napoleonischen Konkordat, ein Defensivkonkordat zwischen Papst Pius VII. und dem Frankreich Napoleons.

Auch im „Kulturkampf“ sah sich die katholische Kirche im „Bismarck’schen“ Deutschland mit einem Gegenüber konfrontiert, das alle Gemeinschaften, besonders die Kirche, der Souveränität des Staates völlig unterwerfen wollte. Man fürchtete in Deutschland mancherorts den „Ultramontanismus“,¹⁶ eine „Steuerung“ der Katholiken von Rom aus, wodurch die staatliche Souveränität untergraben werden könnte. Papst Leo XIII., seit 1878 Nachfolger von Pius IX., vermittelte diesen Konflikt zwischen Berlin und Rom ebenfalls unter Berufung auf das Gelasianische Prinzip, das beiden Gemeinschaften, Staat und Kirche, Souveränität einräumt.

Die nächste Station der Entwicklung betrifft die totalitären Systeme im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts. Auch hier trat die katholische Kirche den neuen Staatsformen mit dem Abschluss von Konkordaten gegenüber. Sie tat dies nicht, um mit totalitären Systemen zu paktieren – ein Konkordat ist immer ein Vertrag zwischen der katholischen Kirche und dem Staat, nicht einer Partei –, sondern um die eigene Freiheit zu wahren, so gut es geht, damit die Kirche den ihr eigenen Aufgaben in Verkündigung und Seelsorge, insbesondere dem Spenden der heiligen Sakramente, weiterhin nachkommen kann. Zu nennen sind hier die „Lateranverträge“ und ein gleichzeitig abgeschlossenes Konkordat vom 11.2.1929 zwischen der Kirche und dem unter faschistischer Herrschaft stehenden Italien und das defensive Reichskonkordat mit dem von Nationalsozialisten beherrschten Deutschland, das am 20.7.1933 in Rom unterzeichnet und am 10.9.1939 ratifiziert wurde. Beide Konkordate fanden zur Zeit Pius’ XI.

¹⁵ Murray, ‘The Church and Totalitarian Democracy’, op. cit., S. 531.

¹⁶ Zum Verhältnis zwischen der katholischen Kirche und dem „Bismarck’schen“ Deutschland siehe u. a.: Karl Buchheim, *Ultramontanismus und Demokratie*, 1963, Kösel, München, bes. S. 309-324.

statt, dessen Regierungszeit eine wahre „Konkordatsära“ zum Schutze der Kirche darstellt. Auch die in deutscher Sprache veröffentlichte Enzyklika „Mit brennender Sorge“ (*Cum Cura ardenti*, 14.3.1937) ist ein wichtiges Dokument Pius' XI. gegen das totalitäre Regime des Dritten Reichs. Nach dem Tod Pius' XI. trat 1939 Eugenio Pacelli als Papst Pius XII. dessen Nachfolge an. Die Anstrengungen von Pius XII. gegen den drohenden Ausbruch des Zweiten Weltkrieges waren leider vergebens, wie auch sein Versuch, durch die Vorstellung eines Friedenskonzepts, insbesondere in seinen Weihnachtsansprachen, das Ende des Krieges schneller herbeizuführen.¹⁷ Dennoch verhinderte Pius XII. durch sein Verhalten Schlimmeres für die Kirche und rettete im Verborgenen vielen Juden und Verfolgten das Leben. Eine oft vergessene Tatsache.

Es ist also festzustellen, dass die Kirche dem ihr drohenden Freiheitsverlust gegenüber monistischen staatlichen Systemen und totalitären Ideologien durch umfassende Darlegungen der eigenen Position gegenüber dem Staat in Enzykliken und anderen Verlautbarungen entgegenwirkte, hier ist auch Leo XIII.¹⁸ zu beachten. Hauptziel der Kirche war es, den Verlust ihrer Freiheit in Verkündigung, Lehre und Pastoral durch den Abschluss von Konkordaten zu verhindern.

Gnostische (selbsterlösende) und baretische Elemente der Entwicklung totalitärer Ideologien

Doch was waren die Gründe, die zur Bildung ideologisch-totalitärer Systeme führten? Es gibt in Europa eine lange Tradition ursprünglich rationaler Bewegungen, die von ihren Anhängern Glauben einfordern. Allen voran die Gnosis, die neben und nach anderen antiken Philosophien – erinnert sei nur an den Pythagoreismus – zu einer Art Glaubensgemeinschaft wurde. Über gnostische Sektenbewegungen der Spätantike, wie den Manichäismus, und des Mittelalters, hier sind als zwei Beispiele unter vielen die Katharer und die Waldenser zu nennen, führte diese Tradition zu den Ideologien der Neuzeit, die sich durch den Glauben an die Wissenschaftlichkeit auszeichnen. Die christliche Denktradition versuchte im 17. Jahrhundert, die Entgrenzungstendenzen der Wissenschaft in der Renaissance zu überwinden, indem sie es anstrebte, eine neuerliche, gewissermaßen neo-scholastische, Ordnung wiederherzustellen. Dadurch wollte das christliche Denken erneut eine starke Verbindung mit der Wissenschaft erzielen, doch dieses Unterfangen scheiterte: Die Vernunft weigerte sich, sich länger der christlichen Scholastik ein- und unterzuordnen und nahm damit mehr und mehr säkularistische Züge an, wobei jedoch auch heilsvermittelnde Züge der Wissenschaft aufgrund des von ihr erzielten Fortschritts auftraten.

¹⁷ Zur Auseinandersetzung der katholischen Kirche mit dem Faschismus und dem Nationalsozialismus siehe auch: Karl Bihlmeyer, *Kirchengeschichte. Dritter Teil: Die Neuzeit und die neueste Zeit*, 1961 (1^o 1933), Schönigh, Paderborn, S. 489-497 u. 513-523.

¹⁸ Leo XIII. beschäftigte sich insbesondere in seinen Verlautbarungen *Nobilissima Gallorum gens* von 1884 und *Immortale Dei* von 1885 mit dem Verhältnis von Staat und Kirche.

Dem stellte sich wiederum die Kirche entgegen. Auch gegen neue Tendenzen innerhalb der Theologie ging sie in dieser Zeit mit großer Deutlichkeit vor. Dies zeigen die Reaktionen der katholischen Kirche auf die verschiedenen Strömungen der Reformation, die in Deutschland mit dem Ablassstreit und der Veröffentlichung von Martin Luthers 95 Thesen zum Ablass 1517 in Wittenberg ihren Anfang nahm, der die Lehrverurteilungen Papst Leos X. folgten.

Ein anderes Beispiel ist der Jansenismus, der Mitte des 17. Jahrhunderts in Frankreich seinen Ursprung hat. 1642 wurde die Lehre des Theologen Cornelius Jansen, der 1638 verstarb, von Urban VIII. durch die Bulle *In eminenti* verboten. Die Unstimmigkeiten entzündeten sich insbesondere an Jansens Gnadenlehre, die er in seiner Studie über den heiligen Augustinus¹⁹ grundgelegt hat, und die den menschlichen Anteil am Wirken der göttlichen Gnade stark in Zweifel zieht (bei Jansen: *sola gratia*). Die Vernunft zeigt dem Jansenismus folgend in ihrem neuen wissenschaftlichen Streben zwei Tendenzen. Erstens will sie sich vom Offenbarungswissen völlig lossagen, da sie den Primat der reinen Vernunftkenntnis anstrebt. Zweitens will die Vernunft selbst die Rolle der Offenbarung übernehmen, indem sie sich mit den Zügen der Offenbarung vermischt. So nimmt die Vernunft einen gnostischen, selbsterlösenden Charakter an.

Dieser rein rationalistischen Tendenz steht unter anderem die Lehre von den beiden Naturen Jesu Christi, der göttlichen und der menschlichen, die in ihm beide unvermischt und ungetrennt zu voller Entfaltung kommen, gegenüber. Die Lehre von den zwei Naturen wurde auf dem Konzil von Chalkedon im Jahre 451 dogmatisiert, um das Christentum gegenüber den damaligen häretischen Tendenzen, die auch von gnostischen Bewegungen ausgingen, zu festigen. Aufgrund der neuzeitlichen gnostischen Tendenzen, die schon vor dem 17. Jahrhundert spürbar wurden, und die, auch durch den Ockham'schen Nominalismus bedingt, eine klare Bedeutung der Offenbarung schmälerten, wurde auf dem Tridentinum (1545 bis 1563) das chalkedonische Dogma von den zwei Naturen Christi in seiner Bedeutung gestärkt. Jedoch konnten eine weiter fortschreitende Entfernung von der Offenbarung und eine weitere Säkularisierung der Vernunft auf Dauer nicht verhindert werden. Auch Jansen wendet sich gegen das Tridentinum.

Der christliche Glaube verlor im Verlauf der Geschichte seit dem 16. und 17. Jahrhundert zunehmend den Status, der Ort der Gewissheit zu sein, wobei gleichzeitig der Gewissheit des positiven Wissens wachsende Bedeutung beigemessen wurde. Dabei wird oft übersehen, dass die Kirche keineswegs ein weiter fortschreitendes Forschen der Vernunft verboten hat. Sie stellte sich nur gegen eine selbstvergöttlichende Stellung des Menschen, der sich zum Maß ü-

¹⁹ Cornelius Jansen, *Augustinus seu S. Augustini de humanae naturae sanitate, aegritudine, medicina adv. Pelagianos et Massilienses*, 1640, Lovanii.

ber alle Dinge macht. Eine solche Grenze für die Vernunft mag die Offenbarung setzen, wie in der Lehre von den zwei Naturen, die ja gleichzeitig in Jesus Christus wirken, zum Ausdruck kommt. Jedoch wird die Offenbarung ihrerseits durch die *praeambula fidei* rational gesichert, so dass ein rationaler Umgang mit dem Offenbarungswissen möglich ist. Im Gegensatz dazu stellt der Fideismus eine rein intuitive Hinwendung zum Glauben dar.

Die säkulare Ideologie zeichnet sich in ihrer Geschichte auch durch ein deutliches Leugnen der Gottessohnschaft – und damit der Göttlichkeit – Jesu Christi und durch eine dadurch bedingte Ablehnung der Trinität aus. Das heißt, dass die Ideologie zwar in ihrem naturalistischen Charakter eine scheinbare Allwissenheit an den Tag legt, aber kein transzendentes Leitbild annimmt. Das Leitbild einer Ideologie, sei es die Natur, die Geschichte oder auch die Rasse, ist eine zum *Realissimum* erhobene innerweltliche Größe, in der sich der Mensch spiegelt. Dadurch kommt es zu einer Selbstvergötzung des Menschen in der Ideologie.

In der Folge wurde die Freiheit des Menschen überbewertet und führt zu einer ideologischen Überhebung der Macht des Menschen. Dies drückte sich in der Ideologie durch die Vernichtung von Andersdenkenden und eine Aufhebung der Freiheit des menschlichen Geistes aus. Alain Besançon zieht daraus als Folgerung:

„Die Ideologie, die eine *perversa imitatio* der Wissenschaft im Bereich des Inhalts ist, ist im Bereich der Form eine *perversa imitatio* der Religion. Und da ihre von Gnosis und Götzendienst befleckten Grundlagen das Gegenteil des Christentums sind, konstituiert sie sich als Gegenkirche mit ihren Gegenkonzilen, ihren Gegenpäpsten usw.“²⁰

Alain Besançon sieht die Ideologie gerade nicht als säkularisierte beziehungsweise säkulare oder politische Religion an. Der Grund dafür ist, dass diejenigen, die einer Ideologie nachfolgen, deren religiösen Charakter zwar spüren und deshalb gegenüber der Ideologie eine Haltung wie gegenüber einer Religion einnehmen, die Ideologie aber nicht als Religion ansehen. Überdies sind Ideologien fast ausschließlich antireligiös oder atheistisch eingestellt.

Mehr denn jemals zuvor in der Kirchengeschichte benötigen die Menschen in der Epoche der Ideologien und, wie die Entwicklung in Osteuropa nach dem Untergang des kommunistischen Systems zeigt, in der Epoche nach den Ideologien eine geistige und geistliche Erneuerung, um ihr Leben neu gestalten zu können. Kurz: Mehr als je zuvor brauchen die Menschen heute die Vermittlung von Heil, um den Gefahren des Relativismus trotzen zu können,

²⁰ Marie-Joseph Le Guillou, *Das Mysterium des Vaters*, 1974, Johannes-Verlag, Einsiedeln, S. 181 (1° *Le mystère du Père*, 1973, Fayard, Paris). Siehe dazu auch Carlos-Josaphat Pinto de Oliveira, 'Orthodoxie religieuse et idéologie totalitaire', in: Edgar Morin/Claude Julien et al., *Forces et faiblesses des totalitarismes*, 1987, Universitätsverlag, Freiburg in der Schweiz, S. 97-99.

so dass sie sich nicht in die Sackgasse einer Ideologie flüchten, sondern in christlicher Verantwortung ihr Leben führen können. Dabei kommt der Kirche die zentrale, weil heilsvermittelnde Rolle zu.

Der „neue Mythos“ als Basis totalitärer Ideologien

Wie wichtig eine gefestigte Haltung der Kirche gegenüber den Angriffen gefährlicher Ideologien ist, wird Anfang der dreißiger Jahre des 20. Jahrhunderts durch das Aufkommen des neuen nationalsozialistischen Mythos, wie er 1930 in Alfred Rosenberg'sch Buch „Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts“²¹ zum Ausdruck kommt, deutlich. Gegen diese neue Art von „Glauben“, die an die Stelle des alten Glaubens der christlichen Kirche zu treten beabsichtigte, konnte sich die Kirche nur in Teilen wirksam zur Wehr setzen. Rosenberg'sch Buch wurde am 9.2.1934 von der katholischen Kirche auf den Index verbotener Schriften gesetzt. Der Jesuitenpater Anton Koch und der protestantische Theologe Walther Künneth sind Beispiele für eine deutliche christliche Kritik am neuen Mythos, die jedoch sein Ausbreiten nicht wirksam verhindern konnten. 1935 stellt Künneth in seiner Kritik dem Rosenberg'schen „Mythus“ den christlichen Glauben, der sich auf der Offenbarung gründet und an seiner zentralen Gestalt Jesus Christus orientiert, gegenüber.²² Rosenberg liefert in unsachgemäßer Weise eine Neuinterpretation vieler Elemente nordisch germanischer Mythologie zu Gunsten der nationalsozialistischen Ideologie und stellt damit einen neuen, die gesamte Wirklichkeit deutenden, Mythos der Moderne zusammen. Rosenberg'sch „Werk“ beginnt, so Künneth: „[...] in der Ebene des Politischen und erhebt sich in die Sphäre der Weltanschauung, es setzt ein bei der Frage nach der inneren Rettung der Nation und endet in dem Bereich der Religion“.²³

Anton Koch S.J. äußert in einigen Beiträgen in den „Stimmen der Zeit“ in den frühen 1930er Jahren seine Kritik an der neuen „Weltanschauung“, die sich in Rosenberg'sch „Mythus“ ausdrückt, und an der hinter ihr stehenden Ideologie.²⁴ So untersucht er 1934 die vielen Unzulänglichkeiten und universal-

²¹ Alfred Rosenberg, *Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts*, 1943 (1° 1930), Hoheneichen, München; für Manfred Ach resultiert aus der Neuinterpretation der nordisch germanischen Mythologie ein ‚Neopaganismus‘, der noch weit nach den Zeiten nationalsozialistischer Propaganda Wirkung zeigt (Manfred Ach, ‚Neopaganismus und ‚nordische‘ Politreligion‘, in: Wulf Metz (ed.), *Bekennen in der Zeit*, 1981, Evangelischer Presseverband, München, S. 191f).

²² Siehe Walther Künneth, *Antwort auf den Mythus*, 1935, Wichern, Berlin.

²³ Künneth, *Antwort auf den Mythus*, op. cit., S. 7 (nach Ach, ‚Neopaganismus und ‚nordische‘ Politreligion‘, op. cit., S. 191f).

²⁴ Eine erste Kritik Kochs an der neugermanischen mythischen Weltanschauung, die mit einer kritischen Betrachtung von Rosenbergs „Mythus“ beginnt, ist bereits 1932 zu spüren (Anton Koch, ‚Der ewige Traum‘, *Stimmen der Zeit* 63/1, 1932, S. 13-19). In ‚Probleme der Deutschreligion‘ betrachtet Koch 1934 kritisch die Entwicklung einer neuen Religion in Deutschland, der Deutschreligion, die auf einer Neuinterpretation der nordisch germanischen Mythologie fußt, so-

wie kirchengeschichtlichen Unwahrheiten und Ungenauigkeiten in Rosenberg'sch „Mythus“.²⁵ Die Kirche ist nach der Auffassung Rosenberg'sch die Summe aus dem mediterranen östlichen Völker- und Kulturgemisch, ein unübersehbares Chaos, das in seinem Inneren Weltherrschaftspläne hege. Rosenberg versucht, die Kirche, ihre Geschichte, Tradition und ihren Glauben, die schon beinahe 2000 Jahre währen, mit einem Streich zu entwerten und auszulöschen. Koch bemerkt über das Bild, das Rosenberg über die Kirche abgibt: „Statt eines wahren Bildes wird jedoch ein Zerrbild geboten, wie es willkürlicher kaum gedacht werden kann, und zwar geschaffen durch Methoden, welche die Willkür in der Zeichnung nur zu deutlich aufzeigen.“²⁶ So wird mit großer Einseitigkeit das Schlechte an der Kirche aufgezählt, wie die Verfehlungen der Päpste, wohingegen die kulturellen Leistungen, die sogar objektive Kritiker der Kirche anerkennen, nicht dargestellt werden. Dabei misst Rosenberg auch mit zweierlei Maß: Zeugnisse von nordeuropäischen Bekenntnissen zum Gehorsam Gottes und zu genügsamer Haltung werden höher eingestuft als die Bekenntnisse frühchristlicher Märtyrer, die dem mediterran-östlichen „Völkergemisch“ entstammen. Selbst Paulus wird eitle Selbstsucht unterstellt, wenn es im ersten Korintherbrief von ihm heißt: „denn lieber will ich sterben, als – nein, meinen Ruhm soll mir keiner rauben!“²⁷ Koch stellt klar, dass hier höchstwahrscheinlich ein Anakoluth vorliegt, und es richtig heißt: „Lieber sterbe ich – [als dass ich von euch einen Pfennig annehme]! Ich lasse mir meine Ehre nicht abkaufen!“²⁸ Eine ähnliche Fehldeutung Rosenberg'sch, so Koch, liegt im Worte Jesu Christi, die Jünger dürften niemand anderem sagen, dass er der Messias sei, vor.²⁹ Bei Rosenberg wird daraus eine Drohung Jesu, ihn niemals als den Messias zu bezeichnen.³⁰ Wie diese Beispiele schon andeuten, ist die Untersuchung der Quellen bei Rosenberg sehr dürftig, meist verwendet er Quellen zweiten oder dritten Ranges, so Koch.³¹ Letztlich besteht die Aufgabe des „Mythus“, der als neuer Glaube Rasse und Nation vergöttert, darin, „die geschichtlich gegebene christliche Religion und Kirche als niederrassig zu entwerten“.³² Drei Dinge werden aus Kochs Kritik am „Mythus“ für eine ideengeschichtliche Perspektive zur Deutung des Totalitarismus deutlich. 1. Koch fordert durch seine Kritik die Gläubigen auf, sich mit Leidenschaft gegen die feindliche neue

wie deren „Verquickung mit dem Politischen“ (Anton Koch, „Probleme der Deutschreligion“, *Stimmen der Zeit* 64/7, 1934, S. 11).

²⁵ Anton Koch, „Der neue Mythus und der alte Glaube“, *Stimmen der Zeit* 65/2, 1934, S. 73-87.

²⁶ Koch, „Der neue Mythus“, op. cit., S. 75.

²⁷ 1. Kor. 9, 15; diese missverständliche Deutung legt auch die Luthersche Übersetzung fraglicher Stelle nahe: „Lieber würde ich sterben – nein, meinen Ruhm soll niemand zunichte machen!“

²⁸ Siehe Koch, „Der neue Mythus“, op. cit., S. 76.

²⁹ Mt. 16, 15f. u. 20, Mk. 8, 29f. und Lk. 9, 20f.

³⁰ Siehe Koch, „Der neue Mythus“, op. cit., S. 79.

³¹ Siehe Koch, „Der neue Mythus“, op. cit., S. 77f.

³² Koch, „Der neue Mythus“, op. cit., S. 81.

Weltanschauung zur Wehr zu setzen.³³ 2. Der Gegensatz zwischen christlicher Lehre und totalitärer Ideologie wird deutlich und die grundsätzliche Unvereinbarkeit beider Positionen. Nicht zu vergessen sind in diesem Zusammenhang einige Teilideologisierungungen durch Häresie oder Abspaltung von der einen Kirche Christi. 3. Eine sehr wichtige Perspektive: Aus Kochs kurzer Untersuchung wird ersichtlich, wie sehr der Versuch scheitern muss, die Weltgeschichte so zu interpretieren, dass sie nur auf eine Ideologie, hier auf die des Nationalsozialismus, und auf ein Ereignis, hier auf die Erlösung durch das Dritte Reich unter Führung Adolf Hitlers, hinauslaufen würde. Das entscheidende Ereignis einer christlichen Geschichtsdeutung, der *kairós* (Zeitpunkt) im *chrónos* (Zeit(dauer)) ist das Leben Jesu Christi und sein Kreuzestod, durch den alle Menschen die Möglichkeit erhalten, erlöst zu werden. Jedes Ereignis danach und auch davor ist aus einer christlichen Perspektive der Geschichte von diesem Heilsereignis ausgehend zu interpretieren.³⁴

Christlicher Widerstand als „Bollwerk“ gegen totalitäre Ideologien

Der christliche Widerstand ist ein sehr umfangreiches historisches Kapitel, das einer eigenen Betrachtung würdig ist. Für viele Christen war der Weg in den Widerstand die einzig mögliche Antwort eines Gläubigen auf die totalitären Irrlehren, die Ideologien. Der Glaube richtet dabei unseren Blick auf die Wahrheit. So wird die Unwahrheit der totalitären Ideologien, die die Wahrheit pervertieren und sich als Heilslehren „aufspielen“, deutlich. So seien einige wenige Hinweise zum christlichen Widerstand gegeben: Der selige Pater Rupert Mayer S.J. hat in Tat und Wort, besonders durch seine Predigten in der Münchener St. Michaelskirche, Widerstand geleistet, der heilige Maximilian Kolbe durch die Tat, die heilige Edith Stein wiederum durch das Wort. Die Männer des 20. Juli, sie führten ein Attentat auf Hitler durch, das erfolglos blieb, und wurden allesamt hingerichtet, leisteten Widerstand durch die Tat, unter ihnen General von Stauffenberg. Fritz Gerlich stellte sich als Journalist schon früh gegen die nationalsozialistische Doktrin und opferte dafür sein Leben. Der Widerstandskreis „Weiße Rose“ um die Geschwister Scholl wirkte an der Universität München durch die Verbreitung von Flugblättern. Die „Weiße Rose“ pflegte Verbindungen in ganz Deutschland. Am 22.2.1943 wurden Hans und Sophie Scholl verurteilt und noch am selben Tag in München-Stadelheim hingerichtet. Eine weitere Widerstandsgruppe war der „Kreisauer Kreis“, der im Nord-Osten Deutschlands wirkte. Durch Wort und Tat stellten sich auch deutsche Bischöfe und Papst Pius XII. gegen den totalitären Terror.

³³ Siehe Koch, ‚Der neue Mythos‘, op. cit., S. 87.

³⁴ Siehe dazu auch Hans Maier, ‚Das totalitäre Zeitalter und die Kirchen‘, *Historisches Jahrbuch* 112, 1992, S. 410f.

Viele Menschen hatten 1942 keinen Boden mehr unter ihren Füßen, niemals zuvor in der Geschichte hatten sie weniger Halt, so Dietrich Bonhoeffer, ein protestantischer Widerstandskämpfer, der am 9.4.1945 im KZ Flossenbürg hingerichtet wurde. Der Nationalsozialismus hat die christlichen Werte zerschlagen, oder, was fast noch schlimmer war, pervertiert. Der dienende Gehorsam gegenüber der Obrigkeit wurde zum Dienst im Namen des Bösen:

„Die große Maskerade des Bösen hat alle ethischen Begriffe durcheinander gewirbelt. Daß das Böse in der Gestalt des Lichts, der Wohltat, des geschichtlich Notwendigen, des sozial Gerechten erscheint, ist für den aus unserer tradierten ethischen Begriffswelt Kommenden schlechthin verwirrend; für den Christen, der aus der Bibel lebt, ist es gerade die Befreiung der abgründigen Bosheit des Bösen.“³⁵

Die Maskerade des Bösen tritt in einem Gewand des Guten auf, in der staatlichen Ordnung, auf deren Autorität sich die Christen, die dem „es gibt keine Gewalt außer von Gott“ im Römerbrief³⁶ folgten, stets verlassen hatten. Hans Maier interpretiert diese „Maskerade des Bösen“ bei Dietrich Bonhoeffer als *pompa diaboli*. Dieser frühchristliche Begriff drückt die Versuchung des Teufels aus, wie sie auch im nationalsozialistischen „Führerkult“ zu finden ist. Im Taufbekenntnis widersagen die Christen zu allen Zeiten solchen Versuchungen des Teufels.³⁷ Doch der Teufel und damit das Böse sind trickreich, da sie im Gewand des eigentlich Guten auftreten. Letztlich beugt sich das Gewissen vieler den Versuchungen des Bösen, jedoch nehmen auch wenige das „Wagnis der auf eigenste Verantwortung hin geschehenden Tat, die allein das Böse im Zentrum zu treffen und zu überwinden vermag“³⁸ auf sich. In ihnen kann sich das Gute mit Gottes Hilfe durchsetzen.

Im Matthäusevangelium spricht Jesus: „Du bist Petrus, und auf diesen Felsen will ich meine Kirche bauen, und die Pforten der Hölle werden sie nicht überwältigen.“³⁹ Ausgehend von dieser Aussage kann man Bonhoeffers Deutung des Bösen in der Gestalt des Lichts auch als einen trickreichen „Versuch der Hölle“ sehen, die Kirche Jesu Christi zu überwältigen. Allein der, der aus seinem Glauben heraus in seiner Verantwortung gegenüber Gott handelt, hält

³⁵ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, ‚Nach zehn Jahren‘, in: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, hrsg. v. Eberhard Bethge, 1964, Kaiser, München, S. 10f.

³⁶ Röm. 13, 1f.

³⁷ Siehe einen Diskussionsbeitrag von Hans Maier: ‚Das zweite ist der Führerkult, die *pompa diaboli*. Ein uralter Begriff aus frühchristlichen Zeiten, der noch im Taufritus bis heute weiterlebt: Widersagt du dem Teufel und all seinem Gepränge? Bonhoeffer hat nicht nur diese *pompa diaboli* wiederentdeckt, er hat auch ein Stück christlicher Immunisierung dagegen wiederentdeckt, die Arkandisziplin, auch eine frühchristliche Tradition.‘ (Hans Maier/Michael Schäfer (ed.), *‘Totalitarismus‘ und ‚Politische Religionen‘*, Bd. II, 1997, Schöningh, Paderborn u. a., S. 200) Zur *pompa diaboli* siehe auch: Maier, ‚Das totalitäre Zeitalter‘, op. cit., S. 401 u. 411.

³⁸ Bonhoeffer, ‚Nach zehn Jahren‘, op. cit., S. 12.

³⁹ Mt. 16, 18.

der teuflischen Versuchung des Totalitarismus stand und zeigt wahre Verantwortung vor Gott.

Die Christen sollen in der Nachfolge Christi das Leid und die Gefahr, die aus der totalitären Ideologie entspringen, wahrnehmen und, selbst gegen besseres Wissen und eigene Interessen, dagegen vorgehen. Sogar wenn dabei das eigene Wohlergehen gefährdet wird, müssen Christen gegen das Unrecht vorgehen, auch wenn sie zu Lebzeiten in ihrem Leid allein bleiben:

„Nicht Genies, nicht Zyniker, nicht Menschenverächter, nicht raffinierte Taktiker, sondern schlichte, einfache, gerade Menschen werden wir brauchen. Wird unsere innere Widerstandskraft gegen das uns Aufgezwungene stark genug und unsere Aufrichtigkeit gegen uns selbst schonungslos genug geblieben sein, daß wir den Weg zur Schlichtheit und Geradheit wiederfinden?“⁴⁰

Resümee

Welche ideengeschichtlichen Perspektiven lassen sich nun insgesamt bei der Deutung des Totalitarismus erkennen? In ihrer Außendimension, ihrem Verhältnis zu weltlichen Organisationen, wie dem Staat, setzt sich die Kirche durch den Abschluss von Konkordaten gegen einen drohenden Verlust ihrer Freiheit zur Wehr. Sie versucht, sich durch solche „Defensivverträge“, die keinen Pakt mit einem verbrecherischen Unrechtsregime darstellen, einen gewissen Handlungsspielraum und ihre Freiheit in Lehre, Verkündigung und Pastoral zu erhalten. Den totalitären Ideologien soll damit der Einzug in das „Innere der Kirche“, in den Glauben, verwehrt werden. Auch die Herausgabe von Enzykliken, die die Gelasianische Unterscheidung der Bedeutung von Kirche und Staat deutlich machen, ist eine Maßnahme der Kirche, um ihre Souveränität gegenüber dem Staat zu untermauern. Der politisch weltlichen Macht ist durch Jesus Christus ihr heilbringender Charakter, den sie nominal in der Antike besaß, entzogen worden. Christus selbst ist der wahre Heilbringer, er hat die irdische Macht „entdämonisiert“: Er hat durch sein Wirken gezeigt, dass die antike Politik sich als göttlich ansieht, ohne es zu sein.

In der Innendimension zeigt die Kirche in ihrer Geschichte, dass sie auf die Herausforderungen totalitärer Einflüsse stets mit einer neuerlichen Stärkung ihres Glaubens reagieren musste. Der Glaube darf nicht anfällig gegenüber ideologischen Einflüssen werden. Er muss vielmehr die Gläubigen davor bewahren, sich von der mit ihm nicht zu vereinbarenden totalitären Ideologie, der politischen Religion, anziehen und verwirren zu lassen. So leistete die Kirche gegen die staatliche Obrigkeit in vielen Fällen passiven und auch aktiven Widerstand. Dennoch konnte die Kirche nicht immer verhindern, daß totalitäre Ideologien staatstragend wurden. In solchen Extremsituationen gingen die Gläubigen bis ans Äußerste ihrer Möglichkeiten und oft noch darüber hinaus,

⁴⁰ Bonhoeffer, „Nach zehn Jahren“, op. cit., S. 31.

wie die Beteiligten am Widerstand gegen die totalitaristischen Terrorregime zeigen.⁴¹ Dies führte andererseits auch zu einer Stärkung des Glaubens.

Der Glaube der Kirche ist also ein wirksames Schutzschild gegen weltliche Ideologien, die den Menschen total, wie der Totalitarismus zeigt, vereinnahmen wollen, wodurch das Bekenntnis zu Gott in Freiheit nicht mehr möglich ist. Eine dienende Zuwendung zur Liebe Gottes wird dem Menschen durch die Ideologie also unmöglich gemacht. Einzig der Glaube warnt und schützt in diesem Fall. Der Glaube stellt die Wahrheit, wahre Erlösung und wahres Heil vor Augen, dies lehrt die Kirche. Die totalitären Ideologien lehren eine verkehrte, perverse Wahrheit, ebenso eine verkehrte Erlösung und verkehrtes Heil. Die Orientierung am Glauben der Kirche bewahrt vor verkehrten Lehren.

⁴¹ Zum christlichen Widerstand im Dritten Reich siehe: Hans Maier, *Politische Religionen*, 1995, Herder, Freiburg i. Br.-Basel-Wien, S. 62-74.