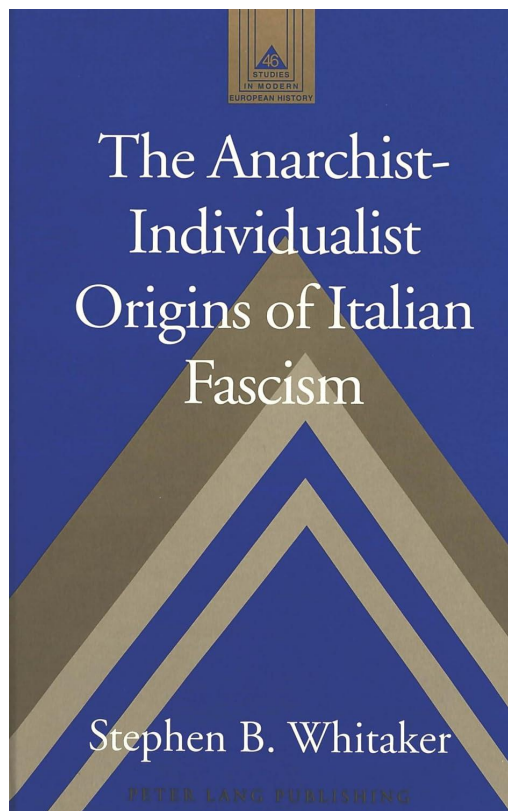


The Anarchist-Individualist Origins of Italian Fascism

(Studies in Modern European History)

Stephen B. Whitaker



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2002 Book Synopsis

The anarchist origins of Italian fascism are vividly described in this multiple biography of four anarchists who demonstrated extreme individualist tendencies. Leandro Arpinati began his political career as an anarchist, but went on to lead the Bologna fascists and become Mussolini's Minister of the Interior and the "Second Duce of Fascism." Massimo Rocca was the extreme anarchist-individualist who goaded Mussolini into openly declaring his stance in favor of intervention in the First World War. Maria Rygier was a leader among the Bologna anarchists who reshaped the revolutionary ideas of the left in terms acceptable to the right. Torquato Nanni helped fuse the left wing of Fascism to the right wing of Bolshevism. All were friends of the young Mussolini, but were among the first to express disillusionment with fascism. By 1934, they had been arrested for "anti-fascist activities" and forced into external or internal exile. Despite Arpinati's and Nanni's participation in the Resistance a decade later, communist partisans assassinated them on the day of Liberation in April 1945. This book's analysis of the motives behind their assassination leads to conclusions about the use of the Myth of the Resistance as a paradigm for government in postwar Italy. It also suggests a model by which political parties have been appended to major personalities according to the degree to which they opposed fascism.

1994 Thesis Abstract

The dissertation presents an intellectual history and multiple biography of four anarchists-turned-interventionists who later joined the fascist movement. Leandro Arpinati began his political career as one of the few anarcho-individualists who favored Italy's intervention in the First World War. He was among the founders of the Bolognese *fascia di combattimento*, and, later, Mussolini's Undersecretary to the Ministry of the Interior from 1929 to 1933, where he was known as the "Second Duce of Fascism." In May 1933 he was forced from the government for opposing the establishment of the regime. Arpinati's anarcho-individualism shaped his tripartite ideology of Individual-State-Nation, his defense of the individual, and his preference for authoritarian over totalitarian solutions. He was also influenced by a group of socialists and revolutionary syndicalists including: Massimo Rocca, an extreme anarcho-individualist who goaded Mussolini into openly declaring an interventionist stance; Maria Rygier, a leader among the Bolognese anarchists who successfully articulated the revolutionary ideas of the left in terms acceptable to the right; and, Torquato Nanni, a prominent socialist lawyer and journalist who hoped to fuse the left wing of Fascism to the right wing of Bolshevism. Like Arpinati, all were close friends of the young Mussolini in Romagna and were among the first to express openly their disillusionment with fascism in power. By 1934, all four had been arrested for "anti-fascist activities" and forced into external or internal exile (*confino*). Despite Arpinati and Nanni's participation in the

Resistance a decade later, they were assassinated by communist partisans on the day of Liberation in April 1945. An analysis of the motives behind their assassinations leads to conclusions about the use of history for sustaining the Myth of the Resistance as a governing paradigm in the postwar period. An examination of the transition from the fascist state to the postwar Italian Republic suggests a model by which political parties have been appended to major personalities in the postwar Italian Republic according to the degree to which they were associated with fascism. Similarly, a resolution of the current political impasse in Italy is likely to involve appending new political alliances to major personalities to the degree to which they have been involved in the political corruption since the Second World War.

“Individual-state-nation”: Anarchist-individualism and the origins of Italian Fascism:
Leandro Arpinati, Torquato Nanni, Maria Rygier, and Massimo Rocca

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Prologue

October 1922¹

On October 28, 1922 Benito Mussolini completed what fascist historians would later consider a train journey of legendary proportions from Milan to Rome to take effective control of the Italian Government: The March on Rome. Mussolini had triumphed over violent hard-liners within the fascist movement by maintaining a series of contacts with the more reform-minded “fascists of the first hour,” including his old friend and ally Leandro Arpinati, leader of the Bolognese fascists. Born in the neighboring towns of Predappio and Civitella di Romagna in northeastern Italy, Mussolini and Arpinati shared a strong sense of fascism’s potential for creating a social revolution. Over the preceding two years Arpinati’s paramilitary squads had waged a violent campaign of political intimidation which had brought fascism to national stature and made Arpinati the uncontested *ras*, or leader, of the Bolognese province, Emilia-Romagna. Yet, the fascists’ consolidation of power hinged on Mussolini’s campaign to “normalize” the movement into a political establishment no longer dependent on violent intimidation.

In Emilia-Romagna, Arpinati hoped to carry out Mussolini’s directive by reestablishing contact with local leaders who might be willing to support the fascist movement either actively or passively. Arpinati sought to legitimize fascism by gaining support among a network of friends and acquaintances regardless of their professed political stances. Among his most valued contacts was Torquato Nanni, a prominent socialist leader from Santa Sofia, five miles from Civitella di Romagna inside Tuscany, far from Arpinati’s base in Bologna. As mayor overseeing the reconstruction of Santa Sofia following the devastating earthquake of 1918, Nanni enjoyed considerable prestige in the region. His competence in those years added enormously to the prestige of the Socialist Party, and the local fascists continued to be an marginal group whose sudden rise over the socialists in previous months had required many violent punitive expeditions

¹ This reconstruction is based on the following sources: Luciano Bergonzini, “Gli Ultimi giorni di Arpinati e Nanni alia Malacappa,” in *Torquato Nanni e il movimento socialista nella Romagna toscana*, ed. Lorenzo Bedeschi, (Rimini: Maggioli, 1997), 105–130; Roberto Cantagalli, *Storia del fascismo fiorentino 1919–1925* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1972): 340; Giancarla Arpinati Cantamessa, *Arpinati mio padre* (Rome: Il Sagittario, 1968): 122–123; Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il fascista I. La conquista del potere 1921–1925* (Turin: Einaudi, 1966): 385–386; Natale Graziani, *La chiusa d’Ercole* (Forlì: Edizioni Camera di Commercio, Industria, Artigianato e Agricoltura, 1979): 266, including an interview by Graziani with Italo Valentini, leader of the *fascio* at San Benedetto in Alpe, 1960; Torquato Nanni, Jr., interviews by author, Santa Sofia, June 1989, December 1991, and May 1992.

assisted by squads from adjacent towns. In fact, the *fascio* of Santa Sofia continued to resist Mussolini and Arpinati's effort to eliminate violent methods and "normalize" itself.

In this increasingly tense situation Nanni had become the local *persona non grata* for the fascists. Standing a mere five feet six inches tall, with a wild, full beard covering a weathered and grooved face, the thirty-four year-old Nanni was a conspicuous propagandist for the Socialist Party, constantly trekking by horseback or farmer's cart between the principal villages and towns of the region. In his thick walking boots, heavy tweed suit and waistcoat, and with a pipe jutting from the side of his mouth below a wide-brimmed felt hat, he seemed the very embodiment of the socialists' disregard for the fascists. At the local fascist headquarters, recently relocated to the town hall where Nanni formerly had his office, the leader of the local *fascio* kept a skull labeled "Nanni" on his desk.

At noon on October 28, while Mussolini's blackshirts descended on Rome, a squad of fascists from Santa Sofia together with other squads from the most fascist towns in Romagna — S. Benedetto in Alpe, Rocca San Casciano, and Castrocaro — descended on Torquato Nanni's villa for a "march" of their own. Fully armed with billy clubs, revolvers and the cod-liver oil which they often force-fed their socialist "enemies," a group forced its way into Nanni's villa while another surrounded the compound. The leader of the squad, dressed in the typical fascist "uniform" — jack-boots and black jodhpurs, a large leather scabbard with hand grenades, a black shirt and black fez with a skull and crossbones — searched the villa briefly, threatening Nanni's wife and children with a rifle. Nanni came down from his bedroom and offered himself peacefully to the fascists, who handcuffed him, forced him into one of the waiting cars, and drove him to the town hall.

Word of Nanni's kidnapping passed quickly through Santa Sofia, and hundreds of citizens convened in the square before the town hall, shouting for his release. Nanni was paraded in handcuffs onto the balcony overlooking the crowd, an unnecessary gesture of submission which only increased the crowd's indignation. In his former office, Nanni saw for the first time the skull with his name on it. Within minutes, a group composed of the region's principal landowners had assembled, making it clear not only who was behind the kidnapping, but also who had been arming and funding the squads over the previous months. Faced with the possibility that they intended to assassinate him, Nanni was determined to appear unfazed. He asked permission to smoke, and silently went through the complex and time-consuming ritual of packing and lighting his pipe.

Outside, Nanni's friends had succeeded in reaching the local *carabinieri*, who were reluctant to intervene, and began inciting the crowd to force their way to where Nanni was being held. Fearing a deterioration of the situation, the fascists decided to transport Nanni to one of the nearby towns with greater fascist sympathies. Followed by a convoy of trucks and cars, he was driven to the Monte delle Forche, the mountain pass overlooking Santa Sofia. There the fascist squads pinned him to the ground, stripped him, painted his penis the red, white, and green of the Italian flag, and tried to rip off

his “socialist” beard. Some wanted to execute him immediately. On the descent from the pass the leaders stopped to consider the possibility of staging a fake accident, but decided instead on a public lynching.

In the central square of Rocca San Casciano the squads were met by another waiting crowd. Momentarily uncertain whether the crowd was sympathetic, they argued openly about whether they should drive him directly over the Apennines to Florence. For Nanni, this widened the picture considerably for it meant that his removal had been ordered by the leaders of the Florentine *fascio* including Marchese Perrone, Odett Santini, and Amerigo Diunini.² It also meant that the intransigent Florentine *fascio* was seizing the opportunity to carry out further violent expeditions while attention was focused on Rome.

The detour to Florence proved unnecessary, however, as the majority of the crowd in Rocca San Casciano supported the fascists’ actions. Dissension was not tolerated. As charges were read against Nanni in the square, a local priest tried to come to his aid shouting “Courage, Nanni! Have courage!” The squadristi beat the priest into a coma. Moments before the lynching, however, a scuffle broke out between the fascists and the town’s remaining socialists, causing a delay during which Nanni was rescued by the local marshal of the carabinieri, who took him away to the local command post and prison.

For the next few hours Nanni was held in the local prison “for his own protection” while the fascist squads surrounded the station and demanded his release. His situation remained precarious given the many occasions in the preceding two years on which both the national and local forces of authority had either actively or passively sanctioned fascist violence. With Mussolini poised to take control of the country, the local marshal wasn’t taking any chances.

Back in Santa Sofia, Nanni’s wife had contacted her brother, Ing. Crova, who sped to Bologna to seek the possible intervention of Arpinati. As darkness fell over the city, Crova searched in vain for Arpinati, first at the Bolognese fascist headquarters, then at his home. He eventually found him at the morgue where preparations were being made for the funeral of two fascists — including his close friend Giancarlo Nannini³ — killed by socialists during one of the fascists’ “punitive expeditions.” Crova found himself in a difficult situation. Asking for Arpinati’s intervention to save Nanni, a socialist, seemed inappropriate. Crova knelt beside Arpinati, and explained Nanni’s situation in a whisper. Arpinati did not turn his head in recognition. Fearing that he had not been heard, Crova began to repeat his request when Arpinati stood and looked down at Crova menacingly. Arpinati stood a full foot taller than Crova, who stepped back in fear. Arpinati turned one more time to Nannini’s body and said, “I understand.”

Back in Rocca San Casciano Nanni lay on a cot in the darkened prison cell, unable to sleep as the fascists shouted outside. Just after midnight he heard the heavy footsteps

² Dumini would later be held responsible for the murder of the Socialist deputy Giacomo Matteotti.

³ Arpinati would later name his daughter, Giancarla, after Nannini.

and voices of a group of men marching down the hall. His cell door swung open and a black-shirted fascist filled the doorway. Others stood behind him in the light of the hallway. When the light was turned on, Nanni saw his old friend Arpinati.

* * *

April 1945⁴

Through the winter of 1944–45, the Allied push up the Italian Peninsula had stalled along the Gothic Line, a stable front stretching from the Adriatic coastline north of Ravenna, across the northern Italian plain to south of Imola, and along the Apennines to the Ligurian coast south of La Spezia. The previous Fall the U.S. 5th Army had advanced over the Apennine passes from Florence towards Bologna while the British 8th Army had moved up the Adriatic coast to Rimini. The difficult terrain in the Apennines, combined with the British Army’s “changing of the guard” — in which British forces were transferred to the Greek front — meant that forces advancing over the Apennines from Florence and those advancing more quickly along the base of the foothills from Rimini, failed to liberate Bologna before winter rains made further advance impossible. To the south of Bologna in the foothills of the Apennines, a German panzer division and parachute division faced off two against two Allied divisions composed of U.S., British, Polish, and “Jewish,” troops.

On his farm at Malacappa, fifteen miles north of Bologna in the rich, flat land of the *bassa bolognese*, Leandro Arpinati greeted the news of the Allied “stall” with consternation. For over two years he had been helping feed and cloth the citizens of that small farming village on the Reno River. Since June of the previous year a unit of German soldiers led by General von Schellwitz had requisitioned his farm, occupying the ground floor of the villa as a regional base of operations and forcing his family and other “guests” seeking refuge to move to the second and third floors. In addition to Arpinati’s immediate family, also present were: Torquato Nanni and family, homeless since March when “Black Brigades” of Mussolini’s refounded Italian Socialist Republic sacked his villa at Santa Sofia; Mario Lolli, Arpinati’s long-time friend and personal secretary, and his family; and, two fugitive Italian-Americans from the British Intelligence Service who had lost their equipment after being inaccurately dropped behind the German lines. The arrival of the Germans brought the population of Malacappa to a precariously high level given the farm’s limited capacity to provide food.

⁴ This reconstruction is based on the following sources: Arpinati Cantamessa, *Arpinati mio padre*, op. cit., 259–289; Arpinati Cantamessa, interviews by author, Malacappa, June 1989, December 1991, January 1992, April 1992, May 1992, and September 1992; Nanni, Jr., interviews by the author, op. cit.; Bergonzini, “Gli Ultimi giorni di Arpinati e Nanni alia Malacappa,” op. cit., 105–130; Agostino Iraci, *Arpinati l’oppositore di Mussolini* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1970), 265–274; and, Beppe Toffoli, telephone interview by author, May 1992.

On April 16, 1945, Allied offensives began along the Gothic Line, and one by one each of the principal cities of the Romagnan foothills was liberated: Faenza, Castel Bolognese, Imola, Castel San Pietro. The Allies outflanked German positions on the plains to the northeast of each of these cities while other troops fought out of the hills, outflanking the Germans on the west. This repeated pattern forced the Germans to withdrawal due north before heading northwest towards Milan, a maneuver which, in the case of Bologna, pushed the advancing battlefront through Malacappa.

On April 19, General von Schellwnitz informed Arpinati that, given Malacappa's "natural" defensive qualities — the nearby Reno River and its high dikes — he had been ordered to defend the location to the last man to facilitate the German retreat to the Po River. It fell on Arpinati to communicate this decision to the citizens of Malacappa convened in front of his villa, such that preparations might be made for a retreat from possible bombardment. Some villagers returned immediately to their homes and loaded carts with their possessions. Arpinati made his own position clear: "If it is any comfort for those who can't retreat, I'm staying here." As it turned out, few people actually departed, for word quickly passed that the retreating German Army, completely without gasoline, was requisitioning beasts of burden to pull their tanks and armored vehicles. After private deliberations with Arpinati, however, General von Schellwnitz reappeared before the group to announce, "The crazy dream of my people is over, the war is lost. I want to make the first gesture of a new, better Germany. I am going to disobey orders. I am leaving. Your village will be spared." The general strode across the portico, bowed formally to Arpinati's wife, and departed with his chauffeur in a cloud of dust.

Two days later, on Saturday April 21 just after curfew had been raised, the remainder of the German unit hastily departed Malacappa, as well. In fits and starts throughout the day, various quarters of Bologna were liberated. Towards noon a desperate German patrol passed through Malacappa hoping to link up with General von Schellwnitz. Arpinati came forward to inform the patrol that General von Schellwnitz had departed two days earlier, and the remainder of his troops that morning. Suspecting a trap, the leader demanded to search the villa. Arpinati accompanied him indoors for a brief, private discussion during which he recounted the events surrounding the General's departure, and suggested that the patrol move on quickly. No search of the house was conducted, and Arpinati provided them what little food was available. One soldier stepped forward, timidly unwrapped an egg from a handkerchief, and asked Arpinati's daughter to cook it for him. After a brief rest, the group marched north, occasionally threatened by strafing from Allied airplanes.

The initial hope that the front would pass that same day faded as the Germans put up a final defense on the outskirts of Bologna. Through the night, afraid that the villa might be the target of aerial bombardment, most of the inhabitants of Malacappa either slept out of doors or in the central hallway on the ground floor. The air vibrated with the sound of the Allied cannonade and the rumble of German armored personnel carriers on the provincial road near the village.

The first American tank passed through Malacappa the following morning, Sunday, April 22, 1945, at 10:30 AM, apparently lost in its close pursuit of the retreating Germans. The tank was surrounded by the villagers who offered bouquets of wildflowers along with what food they could offer. The villagers, the two Intelligence Service agents, Mario Lolli, Torquato Nanni, and the other inhabitants of Malacappa gathered around Arpinati in front of the villa to thank him for saving them not only from the Germans, but also from a long winter of hunger. Nanni stated quite frankly, "You have saved us all," and embraced his friend. Women cried and children yelled as the men shouted and embraced.

Little by little, however, the initial euphoria diminished and the villagers straggled back to their homes. Towards noon, Arpinati received a visit from an old friend, Dino Zanobetti, who warned him of the retribution that might come during the lull after the passing of the front. He gave Arpinati his revolver for protection. Arpinati remarked that the limited use of his right arm, the result of an accident many years before in the *Mille Miglia* car race, would probably prevent him from using it. He nevertheless put it in his right pocket, and bid his old friend good-bye.

Just before one o'clock in the afternoon, Arpinati, Nanni, Lolli, Arpinati's daughter Giancarla, and her friend Luisa were sitting on the porch of the villa waiting for lunch. Two local farmers approached, engaging Arpinati and Nanni in excited conversation about their plans for rebuilding the livestock herds and planting for the following year. Together they strolled across the front lawn towards the barns flanking the main driveway off the provincial road. Finding the talk of farming increasingly tedious, Giancarla and Luisa walked down the driveway to the dikes which separate the provincial road from Reno River to look for any other Allied vehicles.

They had walked only a few yards when a flatbed truck roared around the corner onto the driveway. As it passed, several of the armed men in back saluted.

"Those aren't soldiers, they're partisans," remarked Luisa.

The truck stopped abruptly underneath the twin beech trees where Arpinati, Nanni, and Lolli were standing. The two farmers took fright and started running towards the river. Three men and two women, armed with revolvers, hand grenades, daggers, and machine guns, descended from the flatbed while the driver stayed in the cab with the engine running.

One of gunmen stepped forward and demanded in an excited voice, "Which one of you is Arpinati?"

Arpinati stood with his back to the twin beeches, his right hand resting on the small of his back, palm facing outward, his unimpaired left arm hanging freely alongside his body. To his immediate left stood Mario Lolli, to his right, Torquato Nanni.

"I am Arpinati," he responded.

From behind, one of the women screamed, "Do it! Shoot!"

The gunman placed the barrel of his machine gun on Arpinati's forehead, but Arpinati took the barrel between the thumb and forefinger of his left hand and moved it slowly to the left and downward. "Wait just a moment," he said calmly.

Nanni stepped forward to block Arpinati with beseeching, outstretched arms, and asked "What is it you want to do? Why?"

A second gunman stepped forward and butted Nanni violently above the right ear with the stock of his machine gun. The blow knocked him unconscious, and he fell to the ground bleeding profusely. Taking advantage of the confusion, Lolli stepped forward to seize the weapon from the first gunman, but the gun was strapped over his shoulder and around his back, and Lolli was unable to wrest it from him. The second gunman turned away from Nanni, lifted the machine gun high on his shoulder, aiming point-blank at Arpinati's head. He fired several rounds, killing Arpinati immediately. The force of the blasts spun him Arpinati around until he collapsed on the ground next to Nanni. The gunman stepped calmly forward, placed the barrel of the machine gun behind Nanni's ear and fired several rounds killing him. Each blast rolled Nanni's body backwards into the low ditch on the outside edge of the fence.

The gunman stopped to fire several more rounds into Arpinati, and in that brief moment Lolli was able to leap through the gap between the twin beech trees, scramble through an opening in the outer fence, and gain a head start across the front lawn towards the villa.

"Do it! Kill the others too!" yelled the women, referring not only to Lolli and Nanni, but Giancarla and Luisa.

The two young women ran to a second fence gate, followed closely by a third gunman who fumbled with a hand grenade.

"Finish off the wounded one," someone yelled as a gunman continued firing erratically as he ran after Lolli.

Behind her, Giancarla heard someone yell, "Here, Gino, here, use a hand grenade. The children, the family, where are they?" Then she turned to see one of the assassins throw a hand grenade at her. It bounced off her left knee and fell unexploded on the ground.

Just then, the two agents from the Intelligence Service who had gone into the village to get a haircut and a shave, appeared yelling in Italian and English, "Stop! Stop! What's going on here? Stop shooting! Intelligence Service!"

The gunmen broke off their pursuit of Lolli and the two young women. As they retreated to their truck, they stopped to strip Arpinati and Nanni's bodies of wallets, watches, shoes, and the unused revolver. Before climbing aboard they stood at attention, gave the "communist salute" with closed fists, and warned, "We'll be back."

Although Giancarla and her friend Luisa were unharmed, Mario Lolli lay seriously wounded. In the ditch beyond the fence lay the bodies of Leandro Arpinati and Torquato Nanni. Arpinati's face had been completely removed by the machine gun blasts. Nanni's face carried only a vague smile.

Introduction

In July 1983 I began the project of mapping the geology of the Rattlesnake Mountain igneous complex in Maine, a five-square mile, one-thousand foot granite hump. The intrusive outcrop of Rattlesnake Mountain commands the rolling countryside around it, a conspicuous and salient presence whose origins demand explanation. My task was to provide that explanation. In many ways the granite mountain seemed to be a single homogenous feature with no relation to the much older “country rock” which surrounded it. Cross-cutting relationships soon revealed that Rattlesnake Mountain had forced its way through the crust in a violent, almost cataclysmic event that forever transformed the country rock itself. The intrusion had brought forces to bear which changed the country rock into something altogether different than what it had been before.

Mountains of this type do not appear out of nowhere. The granite of Rattlesnake Mountain began deep in the magma of the earth’s toffee-like mantle, a semi-solid lake on which the earth’s plates glide like a reassembled orange peel. Rattlesnake Mountain therefore had deep roots which predated its appearance at the earth’s surface. Now, it stands undeniable, resistant to erosion, even to glaciers. It will take another equally catastrophic event to alter its shape into something else.

As summer wore into autumn, I tried to understand the mountain’s origins from the “outside,” on a regional level. This approach only limited rather than furthered my research. Finally, I tried to understand the mountain from the “inside,” and raced against the first snowfall to map out subtle variation in mineral composition in what had originally seemed to be an undifferentiated granite mass. Frustrated with the failure of the label “granite” to adequately describe the huge variations in mineral composition I was observing, I began inventing my own names for the many “types” of granite which striped and stippled my now exotically-colored geologic map. The mountain which I had thought to be so homogenous, so mineralogically coherent, was proving to be heterogeneous, and incoherent.

My “internal” approach proved to be the proper one. Although the mountain had intruded through the crust from the mantle in a single cataclysmic event, the composition of the mountain was not the same as that of the magma reservoir from which it had come. The magma which had formed Rattlesnake Mountain had gone through a long journey both in terms of distance and chemistry. As it moved upwards it underwent successive “distillations” during which only certain components of the original reservoir proceeded onwards while others were discarded. The final result, the outcrop I had mapped, contained differentiated stripes and pods of magma in juxtaposition.

All were “granite.” All had the same parent. But some had shed components that others had retained.

In the end, my results were shaped both by the “external” approach — which provided a mechanism for the emplacement of the actual granite dome — and by the “internal” approach — which allowed me to distinguish the many types of granite “distilled” from the single parent source.

Like a mountain, fascism sits above the plane of modern Italian history commanding attention, demanding explanation. Its violent arrival transformed Italian society and culture, reshaping it into something very different from what it had been before. My attempt to understand the origins of Italian fascism, like mapping a mountain, has required a similar attempt to mix “external” and “internal” approaches. The “external” approach can be thought of as leading to a “classical” interpretation of fascism, which sees it as a direct outgrowth of the First World War, a “rupture with continuity,” or as Benedetto Croce described it, an “historical parenthesis.” Similar to my own attempt to understand Rattlesnake Mountain from the outside, this approach offers a mechanism for the emplacement of fascism as an ideologically homogeneous movement while ignoring not only its relationship to the social and cultural currents which predate it, but also its actual heterogeneous ideological make-up. I have also attempted to understand Italian fascism from the inside, to map out these ideological currents as they were put forth by key thinkers.

Here, too, I became increasingly frustrated with the label “fascist,” for its failure to adequately describe the huge variations in ideology I was observing. Fascism seemed to be composed not only of differing national “fascisms,” but Italian fascism itself also seemed to be composed of various “types” of fascism. I soon found that the “internal” approach of biography allowed me to understand questions of motivation and appeal, to trace backwards from the exposed surface revealed by these thinkers’ individual participation in the movement and understand how their ideas were “distilled” from similar social and cultural sources.

While biography as an “internal” approach allowed me to interconnect social, cultural, political, and even economic history, I was still faced with the problem of the representativeness of the protagonist. Like other historiographical genres, biography is constrained by the relationship between particular events and individuals on the one hand and generalized trends and collectives on the other. The problem of “representativeness” concerns relating individual experience to collective experience. If we assume a “sample-size” continuum — from autobiography to biography to group biography — then there is a point at which the problem of generalization becomes more important methodologically than that of representativeness. That biographers usually deal with a single individual tends to make this more problematic. Jerry Muller, for example, defends his biography of the German sociologist and Nazi sympathizer, Hans Freyer,

as a “representative biography.”¹ He argues that “In order to...go beyond the particular case of Freyer, this study focuses not on the peculiarities of Freyer’s psyche, family, or personality, but rather on those social and cultural contexts which he shared with those who followed a similar intellectual and political trajectory.”² Muller attempts to bridge the gap between the particular and the general by assuming that Freyer’s life-story synthesizes the experience of a larger group of Nazi fellow-travelers who later deradicalized. Renzo De Felice claims that his decision to write a biography of Mussolini rather than a general history of Italian fascism was based on a similar assumption. Yet, De Felice’s five-volume biography earns its reputation in spite of being a biography because it expands a treatment of Mussolini into a grand narrative of the fascist period. Here we have two separate cases: for De Felice, Mussolini’s life-story provides the context for a general interpretation of fascism; for Muller, Hans Freyer’s life-story provides the context for discussing theories of deradicalization on the extreme Right. De Felice overcomes the representativeness-versus-generalization problem not by finding the balance along the continuum between autobiography and collective history, but by synthesizing “external” and “internal” approaches in what might be called a “fully contextualized” biography. Such biographies recognize that individual choices and acts often run counter to general trends and forces in history and can only be understood through relating these choices to the larger historical context. The strength of fully contextualized biographies is not the study of a “representative” life in itself, but rather the presentation of a life’s detail in order to discuss larger issues. In this sense Muller is not presenting Freyer as a “representative” figure, but rather as an historical figure suitable for discussing theories of denazification.

As De Felice’s five volumes and more than 3,000 pages on Mussolini indicate, a “fully contextualized biography” is beyond the scope of most historians, myself included. De Felice tried to understand not only the “mountain,” but the “continent” surrounding it. I, on the other hand, wanted to understand the mountain by looking at only one of the types of granite, and set about finding a prominent individual in the fascist movement and regime who, by telling his or her life story, would allow me to explore my personal interest in the ongoing struggle in politics between the individual and the collective.

That individual is Leandro Arpinati. While other individuals might have been chosen, none has been so neglected, especially given his importance during the fascist period. Arpinati has usually been considered one of the “fascists of the first hour” along with Roberto Farinacci, Italo Balbo, Dino Grandi, Kurt Suckert (later, Curzio Malaparte), Michele Bianchi, and Giuseppe Bottai. Arpinati was also an anarcho-individualist in his early years and carried the political morality of his anarcho-individualism to the highest levels of power. This dissertation focuses

¹ Jerry Muller, *The Other God That Failed: Hans Freyer and the Deradicalization of German Conservatism* (Princeton: PUP, 1988).

² *Ibid.*, 4.

on the first half of his life and the development and impact on fascism of his anarcho-individualism and its implicit political morality

Historians have attributed nearly every political ideology of nineteenth century to the fascist movement — socialism, communism, classical liberalism, conservatism. It is amazing that such antagonistic elements could be brought together in a single worldview, which contributes to fascism being misinterpreted as a separate political ideology of its own with its own clearly stated tenets, beliefs, and goals. Fascism combined parts of each of these political ideologies and transformed them. Yet, one ideological thread running through Italian fascism which has not been fully elaborated is that of anarcho-individualism. This dissertation will also attempt to address that omission.

Notwithstanding the fascists' own retroactive attempts to imbue the movement with a coherent political theory, it was an ideologically heterogeneous movement, a single fascism composed of various fascisms often appended to principal leaders, many of them "fascists of the first hour." As often happens with revolutions that succeed, historians have sought to uncover fascism's roots in the late nineteenth century and have told its story as if it contained a certain inevitability. Gaetano Salvemini once remarked, "If the anarchists are not careful, their enemies will write their history."³ The story of Leandro Arpinati and the other anarcho-individualists has, indeed, been written by its enemies. The anarchists' failure to make a successful revolution of their own has resulted in their being relegated to the losers column of history. Having first lost their struggle with the fascist Regime, which in turn lost its struggle with itself, the Italian people, the Germans, the Americans, and the partisans, the anarcho-individualists were repeatedly the losers. This has meant that anarcho-individualism's influence on the catchall fascist movement has been ignored. As will be seen, Leandro Arpinati's anarcho-individualist roots shaped his tripartite ideology of Individual-State-Nation, his defense of the individual, and his preference for authoritarian rather than totalitarian solutions. Yet, the name of Leandro Arpinati has all but disappeared from Italian history. The story of the *ras*, or leader, of Bologna and former Undersecretary to the Ministry of the Interior — at one time known as the "Second Duce" of fascism — has been thoroughly neglected.

Yet, Arpinati's political morality was influenced by other thinkers as well, and this dissertation also follows the trail of a group of anarcho-individualists who passed their ideas like a baton in an intellectual relay race ending with their support, first for Italian intervention in the First World War and, second, for the fascist movement. As fascism transformed itself into a one-party Regime, however, they were among the first to express disillusionment with the reality of fascism in power as they continued their defense of the individual. These thinkers include: Massimo Rocca, a fiery orator and extreme anarcho-individualist who later supported Arpinati's attempt to prevent the movement from becoming a totalitarian state; Maria Rygier, a leader among the Bolog-

³ Carl Levy, "Italian Anarchism, 1870–1926," in *For Anarchism*, ed. David Goodway, 25–78 (London and New York: Routledge, 1989): 25.

nese anarchists-turned-interventionists and one of the few women leaders to support the early movement; and, Torquato Nanni, a prominent socialist lawyer, journalist, and political leader whose politics were also marked by strong individualism. Arpinati adapted the Myth of the First Paris Commune from the pages of Nanni's *Bolscevismo e fascismo al lume della critica marxista: Benito Mussolini [Bolshevism and fascism in Light of Marxist Criticism. Benito Mussolini]*⁴ to mean the Italian comune or municipality, a congregation of freely-participating individuals within which consensus could be built on free choice.

This dissertation involves a considerable examination of these other individuals as well, a device that will help to overcome two methodological problems. First, there is the problem of "representativeness." My hope is to avoid tenuous conclusions and ecological fallacies by offering a detailed biographical understanding of Arpinati's fellow-travelers and establish causal links between their life-stories and the larger historical context. Referring back to the continuum between autobiography and group biography, this study is a group biography in which three of the biographies serve to foreground the life of the most prominent member of that group, Leandro Arpinati. Although the final emphasis is on Arpinati, it arrives at that point by revealing a great deal about the particular influences of Rocca, Rygier, and Nanni on Arpinati. Second, there is the problem that aside from a few newspaper articles early in his career, Arpinati wrote almost nothing: no diaries, no political studies, no important political briefs, and gave very few speeches either as a Deputy to the fascist Parliament, as Mayor [*Podesta*] of Bologna, as a member of the fascist Grand Council, or as Undersecretary to the Ministry of the Interior. With so few written texts available, it is necessary to understand the development of Arpinati's political morality by understanding those with similar moralities who influenced his thinking at various points in his life. As such, Arpinati's relationship with Torquato Nanni is particularly important. As the prologue demonstrates, one of the few constants in Arpinati's life was his friendship with Torquato Nanni. Although it is impossible to substantiate the claim often heard in Romagna that friendships are stronger there than elsewhere, at nearly every crucial moment in Nanni's career we find Arpinati's direct or indirect intervention. While Arpinati may have risen to power and prestige within the fascist movement with or without the ideological contributions of Nanni, Nanni would certainly have remained a figure of only local importance without the assistance of Arpinati. As the prologue also indicates, Nanni might not have survived the fascist seizure of power without Arpinati's intervention. Conversely, Nanni supported Arpinati through the lowest moments of his internal exile and house arrest.

Arpinati and Nanni's three-way "Romagnan" friendship with Mussolini had a similar character, though it was not as close. To understand this friendship we must also look closely at Nanni's writings. Unlike Arpinati, Nanni did little else but write, providing

⁴ Torquato Nanni, *Bolscevismo e fascismo al lume della critica marxista. Benito Mussolini* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1924).

insight into why both he and Arpinati remained “Mussolinians” while their support for fascism diminished. Nanni’s preferred genre was the biography including: *Bolscevismo e fascismo al lume della critica marxista*; *Benito Mussolini*; *Leandro Arpinati e il fascismo bolognese*; *La gente di mare e Giovanni Giulietti*; and, his autobiography, *Profondità di vita*.⁵ In a sense, none of Nanni’s books is about the protagonist it supposedly portrays.⁶ In the same way that Mozart’s opera *Don Giovanni* is not really about Don Giovanni but about the torturous moral path of Leporello who places his destiny with that of Don Giovanni, Nanni’s biographies are not really about Mussolini and Arpinati but about Nanni’s own attempts to concretize a working political ideology.⁷ Unlike Leporello, who avoids the wrath of the *conmmendatore*, Nanni paid the ultimate price for his relationship with Arpinati, a price he has continued to pay by being ignored by historians since his death.

In fact, my original impetus to study Arpinati’s life was to understand why he and Nanni had been ignored. From this original curiosity the unifying theme of “defascistification” emerged, one which guided my research in Italy for many months. As the research proceeded, however, I soon realized that studying Arpinati’s life was more interesting than any ideas I had about it. As original documents merged and conflicted with secondary sources and the oral testimonies of survivors, I came to understand that within the region of Emilia-Romagna the issue of whether Arpinati and Nanni were “fascist” or “anti-fascist” was still very important. Furthermore, a judgment could not be made concerning Arpinati’s “defascistification” because the debate, which began with his departure from the Ministry of the Interior in 1934, continues. On the forty-seventh anniversary of Bologna’s Liberation, I created a *mini-scandolo* when the Bolognese daily *Il Resto del Carlino* published an interview in which I put forth preliminary evidence concerning who ordered and carried out Arpinati and Nanni’s assassination.⁸ By the time the furor had ended, both the interviewer and I had received threatening phone calls: “Leave this Arpinati thing alone.” Click.

Although I do not lack the courage to stand behind any of my conclusions, I was forced to reflect that I received no threatening phone calls about the geological origins of Rattlesnake Mountain. The study presented here offers only tentative conclusions about Arpinati and Nanni’s “defascistification.” A full account of the *battaglia del storici* will have to be presented in a later study which treats in detail the second half

⁵ Torquato Nanni, *Leandro Arpinati e il fascismo bolognese* (Bologna: Autarchia, 1927); *La gente di mare e Giuseppe Giulietti* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1925); and, *Profondità di vita* (Milan: Bocea, 1942).

⁶ In an preface prepared for an unsuccessful attempt to reprint *Bolscevismo e fascismo* in the early 1970s, De Felice wrote that the book is essential to any “comprehensive political and intellectual biography of Nanni” (Giuseppina Cavallucci and Oscar Bandidni, papers, personal library, Santa Sofia).

⁷ In modern interpretations of the opera twins are often cast for the roles of Don Giovanni and Leporello.

⁸ Gianni Boselli, “Un ‘giallo Arpinati’? Ricerca di uno studioso americano negli archivi di Washington,” *RdC* (22 April 1992); “Arpinati fu ucciso dai gappisti. Lo disse il Segretario del CLN regionale. Gli archivi di Washington e un libro di testimonianze,” *RdC* (24 April 1992); and, “Caso Arpinati, terzo atto. Lo storico Usa Whitaker reagisce dopo le polemiche,” *RdC* (26 April 1992).

of Arpinati and Nanni's lives and historiographical "afterlives." This dissertation will lay the ground work for such a study by demonstrating that the politico-moral ideas not only of Leandro Arpinati and Torquato Nanni, but also of Massimo Rocca and Maria Rygier lie in that enormous terrain between the labels "fascist" and "anti-fascist." The numerous and contending "versions" and interpretations of their lives has often hinged on specious identification and foregrounding of events which place them in one or the other category. I have tried to improve the quality of my evaluations about these various "versions" by conducting interviews (where possible) with the historians who wrote them, and weaving these events into a comprehensive narrative. Because of the negative historical baggage attached to the generic term "fascist," any search for a label between these two poles necessary requires an re-evaluation of the original term. By placing it in its larger historical context, I hope to show that Italian fascism originally referred only to the specific political movement which began in Italy after the First World War, one which predated other twentieth-century forms of dictatorship such as Nazism with which it is often compared as a form of cultural deviance. I do not want to convey the impression that studying the appeal of fascism to those who took it seriously means that fascism appeals to me personally. I take fascism seriously as an object of academic scrutiny without sympathizing with the material being scrutinized.

In the case of Arpinati, it is extremely difficult to develop a set of terms from the available political taxonomy to describe his beliefs and the actions which proceeded from them. Although recognizing that Arpinati gave primacy to individualism helps us make sense of a contradictory career, interpreting his actions is considerably more complicated. At the base of Arpinati's anarchoindividualism lies a conviction that politics could provide a substitute for morality in the vacuum created by attacks which he and others led against traditional religious institutions. Arpinati hoped that politics might provide an alternative source for ethical structure and in so doing give meaning to his life and the lives of his followers. To capture the sense of this politico-moral sensibility and the way in which it was derived from other anarcho-individualists with similar political moralities, it is perhaps best to begin telling the story from the very beginning.

Chapters 1 through 3 outline the emergence of anarchoindividualism in Italy in the early decades of the century until the Interventionist Crisis of 1914–1915. The early lives of Massimo Rocca and Maria Rygier are examined to show the influence of their anti-pacifist stances on the Italian anarchist movement and, later, on Leandro Arpinati.

Chapter 4 outlines the physical, cultural and political atmosphere of Emilia-Romagna through the life-story of Torquato Nanni. Emphasis is placed on Nanni's anticlericalism, his Myth of the Paris Commune, and the crisis of the Socialist Party after the First World War.

Chapters 5 and 6 introduce Leandro Arpinati, outlining his relationships with Rocca, Rygier, Nanni, and Mussolini. Arpinati's independent political philosophy emerges

during the “Two Red Years” [*biennia rosso*](1919–1920) and the fascist seizure of power in Bologna (1920–22), during which time he led the local fascists.

Whereas chapters 1 through 5 emphasize the lesser-known events of these characters’ early lives, chapters 6 and 7 concentrate on interpreting events during the fascist period about which much more is known and has been written. In particular, I reinterpret Arpinati’s public life in terms of his anarcho-individualism as he attempted to “normalize” fascism and build consensus in Bologna. The evolving ideas of Nanni, Rocca, and Rygier provide a backdrop, then a counterpoint to Arpinati’s political ascendancy.

This narrative discusses the first part of Arpinati’s life until the time of his departure for Rome as Undersecretary to the Ministry of the Interior in September 1929. The epilogue briefly completes the narratives including: Arpinati’s downfall, removal from office, and the erosion of his power-base in Bologna; Arpinati and Nanni’s arrest, and internal exile, including the their later house arrest on Arpinati’s farm (1934–1945); Nanni’s reemergence as an important influence on Arpinati as he comes to terms with his fascist past; and, Arpinati’s brief participation in the Italian Army during the Second World War, his return to Malacappa, and his participation in the Resistance. Finally, the events surrounding Arpinati and Nanni’s death are examined to draw conclusions about possible motives.

Chapter 1: Anarcho-Individualist Theory in the Nineteenth Century

The Greek root of the word anarchism is *anarchoa*, the simplest translation of which is “without a ruler.” This can mean “either the negative condition of unruliness or the positive condition of being unruled because rule is unnecessary for the preservation of order.”¹ The popular image of the nihilistic, bomb-throwing terrorist who favors social chaos and the overthrow of the government captured the popular imagination in the late nineteenth-century “age of assassination attempts,” and it is now well-established in the popular imagination.² Such an image may be misleading, but defining the core of the classical European anarchist tradition in nineteenth-century political thought is, difficult. George Woodcock defines anarchism as “a system of social thought, aiming at fundamental changes in the structure of society and particularly...at the replacement of the authoritarian state by some form of nongovernmental co-operation between free individuals.”³ The tension in anarchist thought between authority and individuality is central, but there is much more, for anarchism is a product also of the Rationalists of the eighteenth-century, especially “confidence in man’s reasonable nature and belief in the possibility of intellectual and moral progress.”⁴ The reference to “belief” hints at anarchism’s religious temperament, at its aspiration to act as a substitute for religious faith. Thus, there is also a tension between anarchism’s rational and non-rational elements, the latter contributing to its widespread appeal in Europe in the nineteenth century. In Isaac Kramnick’s words, anarchists, as products of the political theory of the Enlightenment

waver between a progressive futuristic orientation with assumptions of perfectibility and endless improvement, and a nostalgic yearning for a simple agrarian and pre-industrial existence on the other hand...The anarchist is forever torn between the liberal values of individuality, independence, autonomy, privacy, and self-determination, on the one hand, and the non-

¹ ‘George Woodcock, *Anarchism* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1962): 10.

² See for example: Pier Carlo Masini, *Storia degli anarchici! Italian! nell’epoca degli attentati* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1981).

³ Woodcock, *Anarchism*, op. cit., 13.

⁴ James Joli, *The Anarchists* (London: Methuen, 1979): 12.

liberal values of community, solidarity and the encouragement of virtue through social pressure on the other.⁵

Although the French Enlightenment philosophers were not anarchists — they accepted that the state should have power to coerce citizens in their own interest — the anarchists shared with them the fundamental belief in man's goodness. According to James Joli, Rousseau is the eighteenth-century ancestor of anarchism, the one who "created the climate of ideas in which anarchism became possible."⁶ Part of this climate of ideas among nineteenth-century anarchists was not only a contempt for ordinary moral values and institutions but also a "yearning for life in harmony with 'nature,' in which government would only be an artifact of the past."⁷ In the void created by the attacks of the eighteenth-century Rationalists on religion, the nineteenth-century anarchists placed Nature, that is natural authority, independent of individual leaders.

Despite the natural underpinnings of anarchism as a system of "social thought," Woodcock's broad definition leaves doubts about anarchism as a system of "political thought." Most proponents of classical European anarchism were not philosophical or theoretical anarchists, but men intimately concerned with anarchism in practice. What unified anarchists of all stripes was their hostility to the political status quo, that is, their negative attitude towards the "government" or "state," though both terms were often left poorly defined. Generally speaking, anarchists saw politics as "linked with coercions directed against both nature and the will of individual people."⁸ Their hope was to collapse the distinction between the potentially authoritarian natural community and the individual by proposing a moral community in which the "government" would disappear and each individual would become a self-regulator. As Fowler notes, "community and liberation went together, abolishing the old distinction between genuine individuality and vibrant community."⁹ However, a contradiction remained. As a form of social thought, anarchism was unflinchingly hostile towards the entire concept of politics, political coercion, and authority. As a form of political thought, the major anarchist thinkers never rejected the principle of authority as defined as "that to which one owes moral obedience."¹⁰ None of the anarchist theoreticians maintained that the free individual could exist outside some social environment, though there was considerable debate whether society was a necessary condition or a continuously problematic trap. Some form of social structure was seen as natural: cooperation and organization

⁵ Isaac Kramnick, "On Anarchism and the Real World: William Godwin and Radical England," *American Political Science Review* 66 (1972): 128, cited in Paul Thomas, *Karl Marx and the Anarchists* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980): 10.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁷ R.B. Fowler, "The Anarchist Tradition of Political Thought," *Western Political Quarterly* 25, 4 (December 1972): 740.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 751.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 746.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 742.

were acceptable “as long as they were natural and were not pressed down upon the many by a few.”¹¹

The anarchists’ attitude towards coercion and violence was more problematic, and intimately related to their particular understanding of natural law. The anarchists were not nihilists in that they accepted moral principles and natural laws and believed “in a moral urge powerful enough to survive the destruction of authority and still hold society together in the free and natural bonds of fraternity.”¹² Destruction for the anarchist was “part of that same eternal process that brings death and renewed life to the world of nature.”¹³ Realizing that the natural (often utopian) outcomes of their destructive wiping away of the status quo would eliminate coercion in the long term, anarchists were prepared to employ coercion in the short term. Unlike “government” coercion, however, the coercion and violence of the anarchists was carried out by individual agents acting of their own free will as responsible, conscious persons. There was another problem. With their larger program being to liberate every person — within the constraints of social life and the requirements of nature — the anarchists did not want to “jeopardize utopia because of the recalcitrance of a few.”¹⁴ In short, the anarchists could not resolve the contradiction between the needs and rights of the individual and the needs and rights of the collective. This same contradiction would become more important as anarchism was imported into the fascist movement. Fowler aptly questions whether establishing the individual as moral self-regulator “would yield meaningful autonomy rather than a false sense of individualism built upon actual social conformity.”¹⁵ This phrase captures the essence of the contradictory position of anarchism within the fascist movement. To understand more fully these contradictions as they resurfaced in the fascist movement, it is necessary to examine anarcho-individualism as first outlined by the nineteenth-century prophet of the individual, Max Stirner.

Max Stirner was the pseudonym of the German philosopher Johann Caspar Schmidt (b. Beyrouth, 1806-d.Berlin, 1856) whose single important work, *The Ego and His Own* [*Der Einzige und sei Eigentum*]¹⁶ marked him as the “last of the Hegelians.”¹⁷ As a student at the University of Berlin from 1826–28, Stirner had the opportunity to hear Hegel lecture on the Philosophy of Religion, the History of Philosophy, and the Philosophy of the Subjective Spirit. In subsequent years, first in Erlangen and then back in Berlin, Stirner attended the lectures of other Hegelian philosophers including: P.K. Marheineke (1780–1846); Christian Kapp (1790–1874); and Karl L. Michelet (1801–1893). From 1839 to 1844 Stirner taught German in an academy for young women and passed the final years of his life in economic misery attending to the further explication

¹¹ Ibid., 751.

¹² Woodcock, *Anarchism*, op. cit., 15.

¹³ Ibid., 14.

¹⁴ Fowler, “The Anarchist Tradition of Political Thought,” op. cit., 745.

¹⁵ Ibid., 741.

¹⁶ Max Stirner, *The Ego and His Own* (New York: Libertarian Book Club, 1963) .

¹⁷ David McLellan, *The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx* (London: MacMillan, 1969): 119.

of his ideas. Had he not written *The Ego and His Own*, Stirner would surely have been forgotten, his writing before and after this work being of little significance.¹⁸

In an acute, aphoristic style bursting with absolute irreverence for all the religious, social, moral, and even logical ideas of his day, Stirner developed a theory of the unconditional sovereignty of the individual, who lives only for itself and its own well-being. His tone is notably opposed to rationality, stressing the individual will, instincts, and the elemental self. To understand Stirner's overall argument, it is in many ways easiest to start from his conclusions and work backwards:

I am owner of my might, and I am so when I know myself as unique. In the unique One the owner himself returns to his creative nothing, of which he is born. Every higher essence above me, be it God, be it man, weakens the feeling of my uniqueness, and pales only before the sun of this consciousness. If I concern myself for myself, the Unique One, then my concern rests on its transitory moral creator, who consumes himself, and I may say: All things are nothing to me.¹⁹

The lengthy, relentless exposition which leads to these conclusions is the most important statement of individualism and the consequences of taking it to its logical end. As we shall see, Joli is partly correct when he notes that Stirner's essential message is repeated in one form or another on every page. *The Ego and His Own* is a very personal book, a form of caustic self-expression which goes beyond being a collection of clichés and solipsisms to become the manifesto of the anarcho-individualists.

Stirner begins by attacking abstract, generalized concepts such as Man and Humanity, as "spooks." He describes any such concepts as "NOTHING BUT THOUGHTS [Stirner's emphasis], a heaven in themselves, a pure world of thought, logical thought."²⁰ He labels all the abstract categories of contemporary life as "spooks," and attacks them without mercy: fatherland, morality, religion, sentimentality, the state, parties, revolution, God, hierarchies, the Church, the Bible, Liberalism, and socialism. "The divine is God's concern," writes Stirner, "the human, man's. My concern is neither the divine nor the human, not the true, good, just, free, etc., but solely what is mine, and it is not a general one, but is — unique, as I am unique."²¹ Stirner attacks the concept of Man, denying it as an abstract category and states that oneself, as a unique human individual is the only thing about which we have certain knowledge. Even freedom, the goal of most anarchists, is attacked by Stirner. As Woodcock remarks, "Freedom he sees as a condition of being rid of certain things, but he points out that the very nature of life makes absolute freedom an impossibility."²² The singularity of the Unique One goes beyond freedom to become "ownness":

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, op. cit., 366.

²⁰ Ibid., 11.

²¹ Ibid., 5.

²² Woodcock, *Anarchism*, op. cit., 100.

Ownness includes in itself everything own, and brings to honor again what Christian language dishonored. But ownness has not any alien standard either, as it is not in any sense an idea like freedom, morality, humanity, and the like: it is only a description of — the owner.

To establish ownness as a positive quality, Stirner must first topple competing notions of collectivity in which humans find meaning, including the State and the Nation and what he identifies as the most common political ideologies of these collectives, political and social liberalism. Stirner sarcastically summarizes political liberalism, the “speech of commonalty,” as follows:

[In liberalism] the true man is the Nation, but the individual is always an egoist. Therefore, strip off your individuality or isolation wherein dwells discord and egoistic inequality and consecrate yourself wholly to the true man — the Nation or the State. Then you will rank as men, and have all that is man’s; the State, the true man, will entitle you to what belongs to it, and give you the “rights of man”; Man gives you his rights.²³

Having already delegitimized the abstract concept of Man for purporting to exist above the unique individual, Stirner equates the State and Nation with Man to dismiss them as “spooks.” Stirner rejects the idea that “One must give himself up...act ‘disinterestedly,’ not want to benefit himself, but the State.”²⁴ He dismisses as nonsense that “the obedient servant is the free man,”²⁵ and maintains that rather than securing freedom from the State and its laws, “political liberty” subjects the individual to the State. For Stirner, subjecting the individual to the state, as in absolutism, is akin to political Catholicism: “Only by means of his corporation, his estate, did the individual have relation to the greater corporation, the State — as in Catholicism the individual deals with God only through the priest.”²⁶ Political liberalism for Stirner is a form of “political Protestantism” in which the individual, as a servant with the title of “citizen,” comes into immediate connection with his God, the State: “Political liberty, this fundamental doctrine of liberalism, is nothing but a second phase of — Protestantism, and runs quite parallel with religious liberty.”²⁷ The free individual for Stirner is independent of every individual dictator, responsible to no man, including the “impersonal ruler,” which the commonalty has become over the individual.

The human religion is only the last metamorphosis of the Christian religion. For liberalism is a religion because it separates my essence from me and sets it above me, because it exalts “Man” to the same extent as any other

²³ *Stirner, The Ego and His Own op. cit., 99.*

²⁴ *Ibid., 100.*

²⁵ *Ibid., 105.*

²⁶ *Ibid., 103.*

²⁷ *Ibid., 106.*

religion does its God or idol, because it makes what is mine into something otherworldly, because in general it makes out of what is mine, out of my qualities and my property, something alien –to wit, an “essence”;...because it sets me beneath Man, and thereby creates for me a “vocation.”²⁸

This rejection of all masters including the state in political liberalism is equally applied to all forms of collectivism in Stirner’s attack on “social Liberalism,” or socialism. Calling the proletariat a “ragamuffin crew,” Stirner states, “I am no longer a ragamuffin, but have been one.”²⁹ Again, he considers any attempt to include the unique individual in a collective as “robbery of the ‘personal’ in the interest of ‘humanity’.”³⁰ Any attempt to form a State around an abstract notion of a collectivity, whether despotic or democratic is for Stirner a negation of the individual will, “based on the worship of collective man...which the man who wishes to possess himself in uniqueness can not tolerate.”³¹ stirner rejects communism and its assertion that men “have equal rights by nature,” asserting instead that men have no right at all by nature, that “right” is a religious concept and that when the French Revolution “stamped equality as a ‘right’ it took flight into the religious domain, into the region of the sacred, of the ideal.”³²

Into the void created by his attack on the citizen and God, Stirner substitutes the Unique One, consciousness of its ownness, who does everything for itself and on its own account: “rage against everything that is not you...obey yourselves rather than men!”³³ The Unique One’s consciousness of ownness leads to an understanding of one’s “will” and “might,” allowing one to secure freedom in the world so that “he who has might ‘stands above the law’.”³⁴ “Cheating, hypocrisy, lying look worse than they are,” writes Stirner, “He who has not concealed an illegality that may have been committed...has simply let violence be done to him; he was a weakling from — conscience.”³⁵ Stirner’s rejection of fundamental “rights” as abstractions sanctioned by the even larger abstractions of the state and society permits his radical excuse of violence:

I am entitled by myself to murder if I myself do not forbid it to myself, if I myself do not fear murder as “wrong.” The only thing I am entitled to is what I do not do with a free cheer, that is, what I do not entitle myself to...If it is right for me, it is right.”³⁶

As can be seen, Stirner substitutes himself for God, making himself a Unique One, a demi-god, a manifestation of the one’s coming to consciousness of their ownness.

²⁸ Ibid., 177.

²⁹ Ibid., 139.

³⁰ Ibid., 118.

³¹ Woodcock, *Anarchism*, op. cit., 101.

³² Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, op. cit., 189.

³³ Ibid., 163.

³⁴ Ibid., 167.

³⁵ Ibid., 165.

³⁶ Ibid., 190.

However, Stirner's annihilation of all the stable verities of the nineteenth-century world meant not total chaos and slaughter, but a world in which people defends by force their own uniqueness in a "Union of Egos" wherein each Unique One recognizes that "rule over others would destroy his own independence."³⁷ Stirner offers few clues as to the form this "Union" might take, although his comments regarding parties and partisanship offer some clues. Calling the party a "State within a State," Stirner remarks caustically that "the very people who cry loudest that there must be an opposition in the State inveigh against every discord in the party...proof that they too want only a — State."³⁸ He labels all parties "born societies" that are from the start dead unions because the "independence of the party conditions the lack of independence of the party-members."³⁹ The ownness of the Unique One, however, permits apostasy and defection so that although the egoists could "take up" with a party, "he can not let himself be embraced and taken up by the party [which] remains all the time nothing but a gathering; he is one of the party; he takes part."⁴⁰ For Stirner, one's likelihood of participating in the "Union of Egos" depends on one's having property; and, property, for Stirner, is conditioned by might:

So long as I condition myself as holder, I am the proprietor of the thing; if it gets away from me again, no matter by what power...then the property is extinct. Thus, property and possessions coincide. It is not a right lying outside my might that legitimizes me, but solely my might; if I no longer have this, the thing vanishes away from me.⁴¹

Stirner disagreed with Proudhon that "property is theft":

Proudhon, like the communists, fights against egoism. Therefore, they are continuations and consistent carryings-on of the Christian principles, the principle of love, of sacrifice for something general, something alien. They complete in property only what has long been extant as a matter of fact —to wit, the propertylessness of the individual... Proudhon is like the Christians in that he ascribes to God that which he denies to men...Neither God nor Man ("human society") is proprietor, but the individual.⁴²

As such, communism, which proposes the abolition of all personal property, only presses the Unique One into further dependence on an abstract concept, a "spook": the collectivity. The Union, on the other hand, secures the besieged property of the Unique Individual. In perhaps his most quoted phrase, Stirner states that "the property

³⁷ Woodcock, *Anarchism*, op. cit., 102.

³⁸ Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, op. cit., 235.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 237.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 238.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 251.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 250–51.

question cannot be solved so amicably as the socialists, yes, even the communists, dream. It is solved only by the war of all against all.”⁴³ The Union of Egos would function on the principal of reciprocal utility:

For me you are nothing but –my food, even as I too am fed upon you and turned to use by you. We have only one relation to each other, that of usability... We owe each other nothing, for what I seem to owe to you I owe at most to myself.⁴⁴

The Union becomes a voluntary collection of Unique Ones, a world of Stirnerian egoists which paradoxically results from the permanent tension of potential mutual destruction. The Union is an instrument that does not possess the individual but is possessed by the individual. Writes Stirner, “The Union exists for you and through you, the society conversely lays claim to you for itself and exists even without you; in short, society is sacred, the Union your own; society consumes you, you consume the union.”⁴⁵

Stirner’s Union of Egoists places him within the classical nineteenth-century European anarchist tradition. Although like most anarchists he wanted to escape formalized rules and government –in short, all political authority — his Union of Egoists clearly places individuals in a social nexus. External authority might be rejected, but Stirner did not suppose that society could disappear, despite the attractions of complete autonomy, of the isolated individual in a Hobbesian state of nature. Stirner, too, sanctioned the authority of Nature, presupposing in his union of Egoists that each of the Unique Ones was at heart good. Like other nineteenth-century anarchists, therefore, even Stirner fell back on the notion that some natural authority would be “invoked spontaneously by each person,” despite the “massive tension between each individual and the society in which he is ensnared.”⁴⁶ Although other nineteenth-century European anarchists such as Kropotkin were profoundly ambivalent about violence (all the while recognizing that it was both understandable and sometimes necessary), Stirner was “prepared to employ coercion whenever his vision was violated, no matter how perfect the society...Stirner did not evade the costs to others of his devotion to himself.”⁴⁷ However, Stirner felt that use of force would lead to a progressively freer society, one of group interaction under individually chosen, shared norms in which man was freely at peace with his fellows under the benevolence of nature.”⁴⁸ Stirner hoped that the Union of Egoists would exalt the individual and collapse the traditional distinction between the individual and the community. This would occur not by collapsing the

⁴³ Ibid., 260.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 297.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 313.

⁴⁶ Fowler, “The Anarchist Tradition of Political Thought,” op. cit., 743.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 744–45.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 748.

distinction between the state or government and the individual, but by eliminating the government by making it indistinguishable from the community. As will be seen, Arpinati hoped that fascism might produce the same end by evolving as a community of individuals with a political morality similar to his own. For Stirner, however, there still remained the problem of how to define that community. To understand how he does this, it is necessary to look at the relationship between Stirner and Hegel.

Although he is often described as a radical extremist beyond the Hegelian Left, Stirner's familiarity with the philosophical ideas of both Hegel and his followers suggests a different conclusion. His formal study of Hegel and other Hegelian philosophers was more extensive than that of any of the Young Hegelians, including Marx, Engels, Bauer, and Feurbach.⁴⁹ His very method of dialectical reasoning, his attempt to collapse the traditional distinction between the natural community and the specific individual; political theory and practice; truth and non-truth; and, subject and object, mark him as the student of Hegel that he was. Although Stirner was interested in "completing" Hegel's work, in *The Ego and His Own* he nevertheless attacks Hegel by attacking Spirit as something other than himself: "...we must finally become conscious that the spirit...is nothing; in other words, that the spirit is — a lie."⁵⁰ Spirit, according to Stirner has been made into something sacred, and "what is sacred to me is not my own."⁵¹ Whereas Spirit for Hegel has both communal and divine aspects, Stirner claims to reject both, for Spirit in either form is in constant conflict with the ego. In addition he attacked Hegel as "the philosopher of the bourgeoisie...[who] succeeded in glorifying the dependence of the subject on the object, obedience to the objective world."⁵² Because of these attacks, many critics place Stirner at the end of a historical series of even more decadent inheritors of Hegel's doctrines, as a sort of "anti-Hegel." Lawrence Stepelevich, originally the principle proponent of this view,⁵³ has since concluded that Stirner's work can be seen as the logical consequence of Hegel's historical system. Stepelevich points out that the leap from describing Stirner as "the last of the Hegelians" to describing him as the "Anti-Hegel" would accord fully with Hegel's logic of history, and that "for the committed Hegelian, historical posterity is a condition *sine qua non*, for the fixing of logical dependency...History and logic are inseparable forms of Spirit."⁵⁴ Stepelevich takes Stirner "as a phenomenological exemplification of Spirit's advance to ultimate self-knowledge."⁵⁵ This conclusion should be seen in its historical context. Following Hegel's death, his disciples were faced with the problem

⁴⁹ Lawrence Stepelevich, "Max Stirner as Hegelian," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 46, 4 (1985): 603.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁵² Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, op. cit., 105.

⁵³ See Lawrence Stepelevich, "Hegel and Stirner: Thesis and Antithesis," *Idealistic Studies* 4, 3 (1976): 263–278.

⁵⁴ Stepelevich, "Max Stirner as Hegelian," op. cit., 602.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 601.

that his philosophical system had supposedly put an end to any further intellectual conquests. While so-called Right Hegelians worked on a further explanation of Hegel's system, Left or Young Hegelians responded to the question, "What is to be done?" and turned their attention to questions of praxis and materiality.⁵⁶ Stirner, however, was one of the most biting critics of the Young Hegelian School as his attacks on Feuerbach in *The Ego and His Own* indicate.⁵⁷ According to Stepelevich, it is Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Mind* which "covertly serves as the thesis for Stirner's work," and helps him to complete Hegel's philosophy.⁵⁸ In short, Stirner substitutes the "we" of Hegel's *Phenomenology* — "that constant observer and sometimes director of the course of knowledge from its beginning in apparent sense-certainty to its conclusion in absolute knowledge"⁵⁹ — as more than just "myself, Max Stirner," but as "The Unique One" ["*Der Einzige*"]. It is a term denoting radical individuality which lies outside all classifications, beyond definition because as Stirner concludes: "I have set my cause on nothing." It is a term grounded in Hegel's conception that absolute knowledge would not merely culminate in an ego but in a Unique ego... "and this ego, being beyond forms of consciousness that sets definitions, is undefinable."⁶⁰

As final proof that Stirner is the last of the Hegelians, Stepelevich puts forth three principles of Hegelianism which Stirner uses to "complete" Hegelianism: a) that the path of knowledge ends in pure self-consciousness; b) that this absolute embodiment of self-consciousness is the Unique Ego; and, c) that the Unique Ego is a negative "reality" transcending history. For Stirner, the "Man of absolute Knowledge is the Unique One, the first individual of an age beyond history. This is not the negativity of the nihilist, but the negativity of the conscious ego."⁶¹ "Stirner's declaration of his own creative nothingness, which he carefully distinguishes from a merely passive emptiness, is the only essential and proper attribute that a finite being could claim within the metaphysical context of a system which had negation as the principle of determination."⁶² In as much as the disciples of Hegel were attempting to continue Hegel's work by putting his ideas to practice, Stirner thought he was bringing Hegelianism to its logical conclusion by emphasizing its most extreme consequences, namely the rejection of everything. Yet, Stirner did not wholly reject Hegel, he merely substituted the "Unique One" for the "we" of Hegel's *Phenomenology* and announced a new age free of self-imposed limitations. Stirner feels that he has created the Unique One *ex nihilo*, an Uncaused Cause. Writes Stirner, "I am not nothing in the sense of emptiness, but I am

⁵⁶ William J. Brazill, *The Young Hegelians* (New Haven: YUP, 1970).

⁵⁷ Marx and Engels, in turn, viciously attacked Stirner in the "Saint Max" section of *The German Ideology*.

⁵⁸ Stepelevich, "Max Stirner as Hegelian," op. cit., 605.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 607.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 609.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Stepelevich, "Hegel and Stirner: Thesis and Antithesis," op. cit., 274.

the creative nothing, the nothing out of which I myself as creator create everything.”⁶³ Unfortunately, his creation of the Unique One and his call for a Union of Egos leaves us woefully short on details as to how such a union might function in practice. Like many anarchists calling for the rejection of social structures, Stirner has failed to resolve the traditional tension between the collective and the individual. Stirner fails to offer political guidelines for establishing and maintaining the Union of Egos because any such collective would require some common set of values and objectives, leading to the relegitimation of ethical and moral structures, all of which he has categorically rejected. Rather than take a position with regard to morality, he assumes the “inevitability” of his program, declares victory, and walks away from its inherent problems. Failing to address these contradictions allows him to continue to reject morality in politics as a “spook.” Such a politics without moral vision permits violent coercion which conveniently “assists” the inevitability of his program. Ommiting practical details means that subsequent interpreters could draw independent conclusion.

In fact, the anarcho-individualists-turned-fascists examined in this study did fill in the practical details on Stirner’s behalf. Massimo Rocca and his disciple Arpinati called for a political morality which would complete Stirner’s work by bridging the distinction between the individual and the collective. Whereas Stirner’s rejection of morality permitted violent political coercion, Rocca would include violent political coercion as part and parcel of his political morality. At least in the early years, Arpinati and the other fascists would follow this lead. Later, it would become clear that different and conflicting notions of political morality were in play. The development of these conflicting notion of political morality involved diverse “distillations” of theories popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, of which Stirner is only one example. We must also examine the thinking of Friedrich Nietzsche, particularly his thoughts on morality, violence, and the relationship between Stirner’s Unique One and the *Uebermensch*, the Superman.

There is more than just a similarity in temperament and language between Stirner and Nietzsche’s philosophies of extreme individualism. As James Martin notes in his introduction to *The Ego and Its Own*, “Stirner was attached to the tail of Nietzsche’s comet as a ‘precursor’ though he had been a comet in his own right before Nietzsche had even been old enough to learn to walk.”⁶⁴ Nietzsche was familiar with Stirner’s work and worried about being accused of plagiarizing him.⁶⁵ In fact, Nietzsche can be seen to have taken the reified Stirnerian Unique One and the principle of ego-sovereignty, and modified them to reflect his own notions about aesthetics. However, while Nietzsche accepted the general distinctions outlined by Stirner, he was ultimately a poet who appropriated Stirner’s thoughts to elevate the Unique ego to the level of Superman.

⁶³ Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, op. cit., 5.

⁶⁴ James Martin, introduction to Max Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, op. cit., xi.

⁶⁵ Robert Colasso, introduction to Max Stirner, *L’Unico e la sua proprieta’*, trans. Leonardo Amoroso, ed. Roberto Colasso (Milan: Adelphi, 1979): xvi.

As indicated above, Stirner shared with the other nineteenth-century European anarchists the notion that humans in their “natural” state were fundamentally good. While the conduct of the Unique One might continue in practice to be extremely selfish and utilitarian, Stirner brushed such objections aside as residues of Christian morality, which he thought had become a thoroughly State affair.

Certainly everything that regards the principle of morality is a State affair. Family concerns are altogether State concerns with us too, only that our State puts confidence in families without painful oversight...The question is whether anything sacred is to rule over man, be it called faith or ethical law (morality). The State behaves as the same ruler that the Church was. The latter rests on godliness, the former on morality.⁶⁶

Yet, Stirner had enough confidence in humankind’s intrinsic good nature to contemplate a self-controlled collective, the Union of Egoists, leading to the highest moral freedom. For Stirner, humanity’s moral default-setting was “good,” meaning that he did not object to all forms of morality, despite his statements to the contrary. Nietzsche, on the other hand, rejected the notion of a morality that would somehow be given by nature. As Allan Megill notes:

We may concede Nietzsche’s appeals to “nature,” his panegyrics to “life,” his calls for an immediate and uncomplicated mode of behavior. But what does “nature,” or “life,” mean?...In any culture that has become sufficiently self-conscious about its behavior to articulate moral theories, the very notion of naturalness will have become so distant as to be all but useless, except as propaganda.⁶⁷

Like Stirner’s attack on the prevailing Christian morality of his culture, Nietzsche, by disassociating morality from “the nature of things,” went beyond Stirner to relativize all morality: “there are not moral phenomena at all, but only moral interpretations of phenomena.”⁶⁸ For Nietzsche, the free creativity of the artist was the best means for choosing between competing modes of behavior, noting that “the state was created by conquerors having the egoism of artists, who imposed on a formless ‘reality’ their own image of how the world ought to be ordered.”⁶⁹ Whereas Stirner struggled to remain within the confines of rational and logical thought in completing the work of Hegel, Nietzsche’s innovation was to emphasize the non-rational side of aesthetic self-creation. Nietzsche’s egoist was not the Unique One, freely participating in and passively profiting from a Union of Egos, but rather a higher superhuman of the future, more powerful than present humans: the Superman.⁷⁰ The Supermen

⁶⁶ Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, op. cit., 225–26.

⁶⁷ Allan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity* (Berkeley: UCAP, 1985): 30.

⁶⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, in Nietzsche, *Basic Writings* (New York: Modern Library, 1968): 108, cited in *ibid.*, 31.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁷⁰ Paul Carus, *Nietzsche and Other Exponents of Individualism* (Chicago: Open Court, 1914): 41.

do not feel compelled to justify their work on grounds of its naturalness or utility or rationality...What comes into being does so as a result of artistic will. [Nietzsche] conceives of “nature” and of “the natural” as human creations. In his view, the world in which we live is a work of art that is continually being created and recreated.⁷¹

This fundamental difference between Nietzsche and Stirner about nature was significant. Megill’s assertion that Nietzsche’s “notion of the world as aesthetically self-creating constitutes an absolutely stunning innovation in thought,” is only partly true.⁷² In the *Ego and His Own* Stirner had already proposed the idea of the individual creating one’s own existence *ex nihilo*. So, while it can be said that Nietzsche was the “founder of what became the aesthetic metacritique of ‘truth,’ wherein ‘the work of art,’ or ‘the text,’ or ‘language’ is seen as establishing the grounds for truth’s possibility,”⁷³ Stirner had already questioned absolute truth as abstract category or “spook.” Wrote Stirner of truth:

As reality or worldliness is “vain and a thing of naught”...It has value not in itself but in me. Of itself it is valueless. The truth is a creature. All truths beneath me are to my liking; a truth above me, a truth that I should have to direct myself by, I am not acquainted with. For me there is no truth, for nothing is more than I.⁷⁴

Nietzsche too was concerned with the effects of Christian morality on human life. Whereas Stirner’s ill-defined Union of Egoists involved some form of political association, Nietzsche, as a naturalistic philosopher, was more concerned with the relationship between literature, art, aesthetics, and philosophy than with morality in politics. If Stirner offered only a rough outline of anarchist community, he at least expressed clearer ideas about the relationship between the individual and the state, that is, what the state should not be.

I am free in no State...The State always has the sole purpose to limit, tame, subordinate, the individual –to make him subject to some generality or other...Never does the State aim to bring in the free activity of individuals, but always that which is bound to the purpose of the State.⁷⁵

This is not to say that Nietzsche was an unpolitical philosopher, while it is true that political theorists, politicians, and leaders have appropriated (and misappropriated) his ideas for political ends, Nietzsche can be thought of as the philosopher who (perhaps

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 33.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, op. cit., 354–55.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 226–27.

unwittingly) attached an aesthetic and mythical dimension to politics. For example, Nietzsche proposed what Allan Megill calls the “rebirth of tragic myth in contemporary life.”⁷⁶ Although the fascists’, for example, use of myth and mythic symbolism may not have been what Nietzsche envisioned, the fascists’ certainly believed that they were reversing the process by which myth had been lost, and promoting something similar to what Nietzsche proposed as “the gradual reawakening of the Dionysian spirit in our modern world!”⁷⁷

The purpose of this extended examination of the sources of the anarcho-individualist tradition has been to provide a framework for understanding how these ideas were interpreted, evaluated, combined, and mutated by later political thinkers. In the case of Massimo Rocca and Leandro Arpinati we will see how these anarcho-individualists-turned-fascists distilled the ideas not only of Stirner and Nietzsche, but also many contemporary Italian thinkers, and imported this mixture into the ideologically heterogeneous fascist movement. In the case of Torquato Nanni, we shall see how his understanding of nineteenth century-European anarchist thought informed his particular brand of socialism. For Maria Rygier, we will see how her move from revolutionary syndicalism to anarchoindividualism lead to her brief early support of fascism. Finally, it will also be shown how the contradictions of anarcho-individualism which they imported into the movement led to disastrous results for themselves as the movement transformed itself into a regime.

The implication of these introductory pages is not that thinkers such as Hegel, Stirner, and Nietzsche were proto-fascists, but rather to show that they were among the thinkers on the menu from which the anarcho-individualists selected ideas for the development of their own political morality. It will become clear that the anarcho-individualists treated in this study (particularly Rocca) did not stick with Stirner or Nietzsche to the bitter logical end and broke off from him at that point where they no longer cared to proceed. As was pointed out in the Introduction, it is difficult to find a set of terms from the existing political taxonomy with which to describe adequately the ideas of these anarcho-individualists. The difficulties of studying the often protean ideology of anarchism are compounded when one tries to study their role within the equally protean anti-ideology of fascist movement. The anarcho-individualists were another of the many groups whose problematic mix of ideas could find a home in an ideologically heterogeneous movement which had a shared sense of negative goals in the short term, but conflicting positive goals in the long term. As will be seen, the anarcho-individualists did not survive within fascism in the long term.

If the ideas of the anarcho-individualists seem paradoxical, it might be helpful to keep in mind the following. First, the anarcho-individualists were more concerned with political efficacy than with ideological consistency. Where possible they wanted to

⁷⁶ Megill, *Prophets of Extremity*, op. cit., 77.

⁷⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, in Nietzsche, *Basic writings*, op. cit., 19, cited in *ibid.*, 77.

translate their ideas into practice, though more often than not practical responses to circumstances required a modification of the ideas rather than vice-versa. Second, anarchism, as George Woodcock points out, “is a creed inspired and ridden by paradox, [a] belief that [it] is a manifestation of natural human urges, and that it is the tendency to create authoritarian institutions which is the transient aberration.”⁷⁸ The anarcho-individualists’ ideas may seem paradoxical because they are, in fact, based on a paradox. To help understand this contradiction we now turn to the role of the anarchoindividualists within the Italian anarchist and syndicalist movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

⁷⁸ Woodcock, *Anarchism*, op. cit., 37.

Chapter 2: Anarcho-Individualism in Italy From Unification to The Intervention Crisis

Following the foundation of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861, the country was governed by a ruling elite which, though nominally located in Rome (in 1870 and after), drew its original source of power from the region of Piedmont, especially from what would later become known as the “industrial triangle” of Milan, Genoa, and Turin. The political culture of the country was characterized by fragmentation and atomization with a complex network of allegiances — local, regional, and national — making competing demands on the as-yet undefined “Italian” citizen. The obvious difference between South and North (where there were also pronounced regional differences) was exacerbated by the phenomenon of *campanilismo*, and the legacy of centuries of misgovernment by the Spaniards, the Bourbons, and the Catholic Church. As David Roberts notes, a political elite “of generally able and upright men found themselves trying to consolidate a precarious new nation and to shape liberal institutions at the same time.”¹ It has been argued that the liberal system, complete with its inherent notion of fiscal restraint in government, was grafted onto this intricate structure characterized by a general lack of civic consciousness and national awareness necessary for political organization.² Unification had involved a victory over not only the Hapsburgs, but also the Papal States and the Catholic Church. The Church refused to recognize the Italian State in which it was “trapped,” and was seen as hostile to the state. The long struggle against the Church culminating in Unification had divided many Italian citizens between anti-clerical defenders of the secular state and those wanting some resolution of the so-called Roman Problem. Such broad differences were part of what Edward Tannenbaum sees as part of “a conditioned inability to work together in a spirit of trust and cooperation.”³ This inability to form spontaneous, voluntary associations was to implications for Italy’s prospects of becoming a unified modern European state. Matters were further complicated by the underdeveloped state of legal, governmental, and medical facilities in the country. As will be seen, these defects, present from Unification, would continue to worsen in the years leading up to First World War, while

¹ David Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition and Italian Fascism* (Chapel Hill: UNCP, 1979) : 26.

² See Domenico Preti, *La modernizzazione corporativa (1922–1940)* (Milan: Angeli, 1987); and, Preti, interview by author, Cornacchiaia, July 1992.

³ Edward Tannenbaum, *The Fascist Experience* (New York: Basic Books, 1972): 14–15.

at the same time “contemporaries critical of their society were liable to magnify the defects... exaggerating the discipline and political competence of non-Italians and the corresponding deficiencies of the Italians.”⁴

In Massimo d’Azeglio’s words, therefore, the Risorgimento had “made Italy,” but it had not “made Italians.”⁵ For d’Azeglio and other Italian intellectuals following Unification, the country’s sub-cultures, customs, microeconomies, and dialects constituted a threat to the newly-formed Nation. The type of internal colonization which took place in France under the Third Republic to forge national identity had not yet taken place in Italy and, arguably, would not take place until the fascist period.⁶ Dennis Mack Smith makes much the same point when he writes:

The closer the Risorgimento is studied, the more it comes to look like a complex mixture of individual movements, of which, one, but only one among many, was a patriotic revolt against the Austrians. Other revolts were against being taxed, against compulsory military service, against censorship; others were against various manifestations of class war; there were movements against the Church, and also against anticlericalism; there was the rivalry between neighboring towns, as there was the perpetual tension between town and countryside, and in the rural areas between peasants, and shepherds; there was the struggle for economic freedom; there was above all the struggle for food and jobs.⁷

By the time of the 1871 censuses, 68.8 percent of Italians aged six and over were illiterate, with much higher figures for the South.⁸ Cavour even claimed that his ignorance of the South “may have been an advantage in giving him the courage to confront the difficulty of making a nation out of such diversity.”⁹ David Roberts maintains, however, that the result of this complex interrelation of factors was that the ruling elite fell into a “politics of pessimism,” and responded accordingly. First, they sought to control the history of the *Risorgimento*, establishing it as myth upon which Italians, many for the first time forced into elementary education in the compulsory Italian language,¹⁰ would be introduced to the country of which they were now citizens. In the years following Unification the Institutes and Museums of the *Risorgimento* were

⁴ Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition and Italian Fascism*, op. cit., 29.

⁵ Cited in Christopher Seton-Watson, *Italy from Liberalism to Fascism, 1870–1925* (London: Methuen, 1967): 13.

⁶ The notion of “internal colonization” is borrowed from Eugen Weber, *Peasants Into Frenchmen* (Stanford: SUP, 1976).

⁷ Dennis Mack Smith, Victor *Emmanuel*, Cavour and the Risorgimento (London: OUP, 1971) : 253, cited in Daniel Pick “The Faces of Anarchy: Lombroso and the Politics of Criminal Science in Post-Unification Italy,” *History Workshop Journal* 21 (Spring 1986): 60–80.

⁸ Martin Clark, *Modern Italy, 1871–1932* (London and New York: Longman, 1984): 35.

⁹ Pick, “The Faces of Anarchy,” op. cit., 84nl6.

¹⁰ Clark, *Modern Italy, 1871–1982*, op. cit., 34–35.

opened in each of the major Italian cities. Particular emphasis was placed on the role of traditionally rebellious regions such as Romagna in the *Risorgimento*. Second, the newly instituted legal system which accompanied the establishment of other organizations of the liberal state sought to define the “good citizen” and the “good subject” by redefining criminality.

Led by Cesare Lombroso, notions of criminality and criminal “classification” in the Italian state following Unification were heavily influenced by the Social Darwinism of positivist criminology and anthropometric measuring, particularly phrenology. Lombroso linked phrenology to theories of racial development by which “racial fitness was deemed critical for the international ‘struggle for survival’.”¹¹ Although his ideas were eventually rejected by most Italian intellectuals, he was influential in shifting the focus from the crime — Infractions of the law — to the criminal — a certain form of being, a physical as well as behavioral type. It was a short jump from the identification of criminals in positivist criminal anthropology to the identification of political “subversives” in the struggle to strengthen and defend the Italian nation. Anthropometric criterion were readily taken up by the military to determine fitness for compulsory service, criterion which are still used today.¹² At a time when military service had not yet undergone the evolution from a “privilege” to an “obligation” to be avoided, Lombrosian standards could be used as a weapon for preventing the entry of undesirables into the military. As Daniel Pick notes, the purpose of Italian criminology can thus be seen as

an attempt to construct an ordered language for the containment of disorder and through that language, to formulate the definition of a political subject by elaborating ever more closely the criteria for political exclusion. Where early nineteenth century radicalism, in its heritage from the Enlightenment, had sought to ask why anybody should not be a calculating reasonable subject, the Lombrosians turned the question round. Rationality was taken to be a rare distinction, not a universal “birth right.”¹³

Preventive detention being amongst the methods available to the Italian state in the late nineteenth century, the Lombrosians legitimized the state’s ability to anticipate political crimes by indicating in advance who might be a political criminal. One of the primary targets of political exclusion were the anarchists. Even before the socialists, whose claim to rationality could be disputed by the ruling elite but not completely denied, the anarchist became the key subject of observation in developing criteria for political exclusion. As Carl Levy notes, “the government always struck harder at the

¹¹ Ibid., 70.

¹² For example, military draftees can still be rejected for being too short, or if the ratio between the length of their arms and the girth of their thorax does not fall within an acceptable average range. How this range is determined is unknown, though presumably it is based on measurements of other recruits.

¹³ Pick, “The Faces of Anarchy,” op. cit., 76.

anarchists than it did at the emergent parliamentary socialists.”¹⁴ Furthermore, having been the subjects from which the criteria were established, the anarchists became the victims of its application. In short, “anarchists were classified as either terrorists or insurrectionists, and during periods of social unrest they served as scapegoats.”¹⁵ The Lombrosians paved the way for the state to shift the point of focus from the crime to the criminal and back again, as they saw fit. In as much as anarchism in the late nineteenth century was often associated with the “cold-blooded assassin who attacks with dagger or bomb,” the anarchist became the criminal and the crime at one and the same time.¹⁶

It is in this context that the rise of the anarchist movement in Italy should be understood. Initially the anarchist movement under the Savoy monarchy had its spiritual roots in the same type of anarchist militarism that had helped bring about the *Risorgimento*. Its spirit was tolerated by those interested in overthrowing the monarchy. Following Unification, however, those who had passively supported the anarchists increasingly opposed them. To the anarchists, the Italian State came to be seen as an authoritarian impediment to liberty. As anarchist movement came to be associated with non-rational ideas — especially following the introduction of non-Italian thinkers such as Stirner and Nietzsche in the 1890s — its link with the *Risorgimento* weakened, despite the apparent similarity between its clandestine heroes and the heroes of the mythical *Risorgimento*. The anarchists’ antagonism towards authority in general and liberal monarchy in particular implied their rejection of not only local and regional authority, but also the Italian State itself. In short, the Myth of the *Risorgimento* had been expropriated as a governing paradigm and had to be purged of any association with anarchism: “anarchism and ‘anarchoid’ behaviors were identified in criminal terms, quite outside the protection of constitutional guarantees.”¹⁷ As will be seen later, in 1922 the fascists would substitute for the Myth of the *Risorgimento* their own Myth of the Fascist Revolution. In 1945, the communists would in turn substitute the Myth of the Resistance as the governing paradigm of Italian politics.

The story of the emergence of anarcho-individualism within the Italian anarchist movement begins in earnest following the collapse of the First International in 1882. Unfortunately, this is also the moment when, due to discontinuities of leadership and organization, the anarchist movement was fragmented into a collection of minority movements at times barely surviving within broader non-anarchist socialist and labor organizations. The Italian anarchist movement failed to create a lasting national orga-

¹⁴ Carl Levy, “Italian Anarchism, 1870–1926,” in *For Anarchism*, op. cit., 29.

¹⁵ Levy, “Italian Anarchism, 1870–1926,” op. cit., 29. Levy also notes that it is “singularly odd” that although the poet, criminologist, and anarchist positivist Pietro Gori “explained criminology in terms of environmental factors, stressing that the anarchist revolution would eliminate crime by destroying the cruelties of capitalism and the hierarchical society which accompanied it,” he endorsed and publicized Lombroso’s arguments (ibid., 37).

¹⁶ Woodcock, *Anarchism*, op. cit., 10.

¹⁷ Levy, “Italian Anarchism, 1870–1926,” op. cit.

nization of its own until the years just prior to the First World War. And within that movement, the anarcho-individualists were never more than a splinter group in terms of overall numbers. Meanwhile, the anarchist movement and the anarcho-individualists within it played a role in larger organizations on the Left such as the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) and its trade union federation, the *Confederazione Generale del Lavoro* (CGL); and, the syndicalist Chambers of Labor and the *Unione Sindacale*. Each of these organizations drew members away from the anarchist movement, particularly as the lure of elections increased.

In 1861, only 1.7 per cent of the Italian population was eligible to vote, a number which had risen to only 6.9 per cent by the turn of the century. By 1913, however, increasing numbers of male workers and peasants became enfranchised (23.2 per cent of the total population) and the anarchists had to deal with defections from a movement which openly rejected parliamentary participation. In much the same way that the anarchist movement itself retreated into regional strongholds after the collapse of the International, the study of anarchism also takes on a regional character, associated with its longstanding presence in such areas as Liguria, the Marches, Umbria, and Romagna, later focal points of revival. Lastly, the study of anarchism has its purely biographical side associated either with individual leaders or, conversely, infamous assassins. Above all the 1890s were characterized by assassination attempts [attentat!] . Among the victims were the President of France, the Prime Minister of Spain, the Empress Elizabeth of Austria, and, most famous of all, the Italian King Umberto, killed by Gaetano Bresci in 1900. There was considerable public sympathy for Bresci — Umberto had awarded General Bava-Beccaris a medal for his suppression of the Milanese bread riots in May 1898 — leading even Lombroso to write that Bresci's action “was neither the result of a degenerate personality nor that of uncontrollable passion but...the sad outgrowth of Italian politics.”¹⁸ Yet, if the 1890s were the years of the attentati, they were also the years during which Stirner and Nietzsche's thinking first had their impact on anarchist circles in Italy.

Until 1890 the name of Max Stirner was almost completely unknown in Italy, the rediscovery of his thinking having only occurred in Germany in 1884 when *The Ego and His Own* was republished in Leipzig. The dispersion of Stirner's ideas was due mostly to a hagiographical biography of Stirner written by the naturalized German of Scottish origin, John Henry McKay. Stirner's ideas first appeared in Italy in an article written by George Plechanov in 1894 in *Critica Sociale*. As Pier Carlo Masini, notes, however, “in reality, no Italian anarchists at that time were of the Stirner school, whose very name was ignored.”¹⁹ Nevertheless, by the turn of the century, the slow diffusion of Stirner's individualist ideas had struck a chord amongst several anarchists. One of them, Ettore Zoccoli, a student of Arturo Labriola at the University of Rome, had studied in Berlin and Leipzig, and was fluent in German. In 1901, he published *1 gruppi*

¹⁸ Ibid., 32.

¹⁹ Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani nell'epoca degli attentati*, op. cit., 195.

anarchici degli Stati Uniti e l'opera di Max Stirner [*Anarchist groups in the United States and the Work of Max Stirner*], and a year later, the first Italian translation of *The Ego and His Own*.²⁰ Even though two editions had appeared in 1900 in French, a language familiar to many Italian intellectuals at the time, it was Zoccoli's translation which prompted a series of articles over the next two years. Sem Benelli contributed "Un apostolo dell'anarchia (M. Stirner)" to *Rassegna internazionale* in June 1902, and Paolo Orano wrote "Max Stirner in Italia" for the *Rivista di filosofia e scienze affini* in December 1903. Zoccoli himself tried to provide an overview of these various reactions to Stirner's ideas in 1907.²¹ These and other articles found a favorable reception in anarchist circles, where Stirner's ideas were often misinterpreted or poorly understood, or transformed into an even more volatile mix with Nietzsche's ideas. Amongst the thinkers influenced by Stirner's ideas in the years following the turn of the century were Giovanni Papini and Giuseppe Prezzolini, later editors of *La Voce*, which had a considerable influence on Mussolini.²² Recalling those years Papini wrote

And as in all my adventures I never went half way, I didn't wait long to draw out the consequences of this negation of every principle and every rule. I encountered Max Stirner in that period, and it seemed to me I had finally found the only master from which one can not ask more...he destroyed in me all affectual ties to the family, the nation, the final obstacles to a correct attitude. I was an anarchist; I told myself I was an anarchist... I founded along with three friends an individualists group; I wrote the Proclamation of Free Spirits and we got drunk together on wine, hashish, and ferocious absurdities.²³

Prezzolini recalled in *L'Italiano inutile* a similar attraction for Stirnerian anarcho-individualism:

[T]he liberalism of my father brought me in a few leaps to anarchism, as was logical, and stripped the flesh off my bones. God, country, state, family, glories and duties, respects for the law, everything was crushed and dispersed,"²⁴

Of Stirner's *The Ego and His Own*, Prezzolini wrote that it was the most "liberating" because it "seemed to enunciate doctrines which had formed and nurtured themselves

²⁰ Ettore Zoccoli, *I gruppi anarchici italiani degli Stati Uniti e l'opera di Max Stirner* (Modena: G.T. Vicenzi, 1901); Zoccoli, *L'Unico e la sua proprietà* (Turin: Bocea, 1902).

²¹ Ettore Zoccoli, *L'anarchia. Gli agitatori. Le idee. I fatti* (Turin: Bocea, 1907).

²² For more on Papini, Prezzolini, and the contribution of the *voci* to Mussolini's thinking and the origins of the fascist movement see: Walter Adamson, *Avant-Garde Florence* (Cambridge: HUP, 1993).

²³ Giovanni Papini, *Un uomo finito* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1929): 80–81.

²⁴ Giuseppe Prezzolini, *L'Italiano inutile* (Milan: Rusconi, 1983) : 100

in our spirit and were only waiting for a simpler and more energetic formula to send each person running to their positions in an egocentric organization which was as perfect in doctrine as it was inhuman and hallucinatory in its reality.”²⁵ Like Papini, Prezzolini preferred to be called an anarchist “and among the anarchists which I came to here of, I liked the most risqué and individualist ones.”²⁶ In January 1902, however, Papini’s small group of anarcho-individualists disbanded and he wrote to Prezzolini, “I would like to be more Stirnerian than Stirner.”²⁷ A year later when he founded the magazine *Leonardo*, Papini wanted nothing more to do with his former anarchist friends or with the larger anarchist movement. The end of 1903 found him involved in editing the nationalist journal *Il Regno*, writing anti-socialist and anti-democratic articles. Nonetheless, as can be seen by the particularly bitter and polemical flavor of Stirnerian phrases such as “the Christian epidemic” which found their way into Rocca’s articles, Stirner continued to “light his path” for several more years.

The first treatment of Nietzsche in the Italian language was a review published in 1893 by E. Juvalta in the *Rivista italiana di filosofia* of R. Schellwien’s study of the relationship between Stirner and Nietzsche’s ideas.²⁸ From the beginning, Nietzsche and Stirner’s ideas were thought of as companion parts to a single ideological theme.²⁹ Following upon his translation of Stirner and his study on the influence of those ideas on anarchist groups in the United States, Ettore Zocchi also published *Federico Nietzsche. La filosofia religiosa. La morale. L’estético*, in which further comparisons to Stirner were made. Of interest here is not only that Nietzsche and Stirner were sometimes improperly compared and contrasted, but also that the preponderance of articles about them in the first decade of the century were published either by anarchists or philo-anarchists in anarchist journals. Having arrived in Italy almost as a single package of ideas, the Stirner-Nietzsche ideology was soon misappropriated by various prophets of individualism for political ends.

As indicated above, by the first decade of the century the Italian anarchist movement was extremely fragmented. In the period 1900–1914 alone, at least six major currents could be distinguished: 1) a central current of communists (in the economic

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Masini, *Storia degli anarchici Italiani! nell’epoca degli attentati*, op. cit., 196n2.

²⁷ Letter of 19 January 1902, cited in *ibid.*

²⁸ For more see Manuela Angela Stefani, *Nietzsche in Italia. Rassegna bibliográfica. 1893–1970* (Rome: Carucci, 1975). Stefani’s book is far from complete with regard to anarchist newspapers and journals. For more see: Leonardo Bettini, *Bibliografia dell’anarchismo*, 2 vols (Florence: CP Editrice, 1972).

²⁹ Articles about Nietzsche in the next few years included: Gustavo Bianchi, “Le idee di F. Nietzsche,” *Rivista popolare* (March 1895); Amadeo Monodotti, “Il superuomo,” *Critica Sociale* (November 1895); Renato Berthelot, “Federico Nietzsche,” *Il Pensiero* (1905); Antonino Puglia, “Federico Nietzsche e l’anarchismo,” *Il Pensiero* (1908); Luigi Fabbri “Individualismo e anarchismo,” *Il Pensiero* (1908); and, Benito Mussolini, “La filosofia della forza (postille alla conferenza dell’on. Treves),” *Il Pensiero Romagnolo* 48, 49, 50 (29 November, 6 and 13 December 1908), in *Scritti politici di Benito Mussolini*, ed. Enzo Santarelli (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1979): 99–109.

sense) centered around the leaders Errico Malatesta³⁰ and Luigi Fabbri³¹; 2) an anarcho-syndicalist current influenced mainly by Sorelian ideas; 3) anti-militarists and pacifists; 4) humanitarian educationalists, supporters of free-thinking and the movement for the *Università popolare*³², 5) local splinter groups in places like Carrara, La Spezia, tocona, and Castel Bolognese; and, 6) individualists influenced by Stirner, Nietzsche, and the entire range of “irrationalist” thought. On the one hand, there were elements which unified these various currents outside the constructs of traditional party organizations, including the development between 1890 and 1910 of a viable workers’ movement tending towards themes of worker autonomy and direct action. On the other hand, there was a broad division in Italian anarchism between socialist anarchists and individualists, a division which mirrored the original paradox on which classical nineteenth-century anarchism was founded. In addition, some anarchists considered themselves to be both individualists *and* anti-militarists, or individualists *and* humanitarian educationalists. The fact that the individualists shunned organizational structures meant that they refused to be classified. In addition, anarchism had another broad division: “organization-*alists*” and “anti-organization-*alists*.” Masini describes the anti-organizational anarchists as more concerned with means than with ends:

they conceive of anarchist action as a series of uninterrupted acts of violence, of rupture with state and authoritarian institutions carried out either by individuals or small groups, the pure expression of the spirit of popular

³⁰ Errico Malatesta (1853–1932) was a failed Neapolitan medical student who early joined the ranks of international socialism from the more traditional ranks of Republicans. He participated in the very first Bakuninist congress at Saint-Emier, France in 1872 and in nearly every anarchist-inspired movement and insurrection in Italy thereafter. Malatesta’s frequent exiles forced him to conduct nearly all of his political activities from abroad. In 1897 he founded *L’Agitazione*, the first (clandestine) newspaper of the Revolutionary Socialist toarchist Party, founded in 1891. His most important return to Italy was in 1913 when he returned to edit *Volontà* and later participated in the events of the “Red Week” [settimana rossa]. Malatesta opposed Italian intervention in the First World War from abroad. In 1919 he founded, along with Luigi Fabbri, Unanità Nueva and the organization which would later become the *Unione Anarchica Italiana* (UAI). After 1921 Malatesta and other members of the UAI were persecuted by fascist squads and disbanded. Malatesta ended his career in relative obscurity under constant surveillance by the fascist secret police.

³¹ Luigi Fabbri (1877–1935) joined the anarchist movement in 1907 at about the time Malatesta founded *L’Agitazione*. Fabbri and Malatesta met soon after for the first time. In 1903 Fabbri founded, along with Pietro Gori, *Il Pensiero*, one of the principal organs of the Italian anarchist movement until after the Italian War in Libya. In the years before the First World War, he helped establish the ideological basis for “libertarian socialism” in Italy on the organizational side of the anarchist movement. His most important intellectual contributions came in 1914–1916 in outlining the position of the anarchists opposed to intervention and in 1920–21 during the debates within the Socialist Party concerning the Russian Revolution. Fabbri opposed Bolshevism and Leninism, and rejected the idea of a dictatorship of the proletariat. Following upon the work of Malatesta, he founded the *Unione Anarchica Italiana*. After the fascist seizure of power he was forced into exile first in France, then in Uruguay.

³² *Università popolare*, was a fortnightly journal of political education directed at workers. Founded and edited by Luigi Molinari, its motto was: “The truth will make us free.”

rebellion, the more unorganized, the more genuine...No preordained program...no formal adhesions, no delegates, no deliberating congresses, no collective obligations.³³

As to the ends which they presumably could not ignore, these anti-organizationalists accepted the idea of a communal society (again, in the economic sense) but were elusive about details on how this society would be a significant break with the past. Their principal concern was to demolish the old order, and little emphasis was placed on questions of doctrine. For these anti-organizational anarchists, ideological concerns were secondary to the primacy of action. Continues Masini, “all the impulses to revolt, whether spontaneous or instinctive, which occur in society, assume in their eyes a revolutionary value.”³⁴

The organizationalists, on the other hand, emphasized the ends more than the means, that is, thought and behavior over action. They shunned the permanent nature of party organizations, and the violence which can also be produced and legitimized by these groups. In economics, they “rejected communism and collectivism as antithetical to anarchist forms of community, and tended towards a vaguely liberal solidarity.”³⁵ In theory, the organizationalists placed greater emphasis on questions of principle and on the philosophical bases of anarchist thought, particularly the original writings of Stirner and Nietzsche. In practice, however, it was often the anti-organizationalists who placed more emphasis on Stirner and Nietzsche (however badly misunderstood).

Individualists who sprung from both groups managed to fragment the anarchist movements into small followings, becoming often very charismatic “prophets” who offered their “disciples” a mix of Stirner, Nietzsche, and Sorel while exhorting the virtues of instinctive and violent direct action. Some historians divide the anarchist movement into organizationalists, anti-organizationalists, and individualists. This division, however, overlooks that fact that many individualists offered a mix of ideas from both camps, considering themselves, for example, both individualists *and* organizationalists, thus blurring the three part distinction.³⁶

Most of the individualists, in fact, considered themselves to be individualists *and* anti-organizationalists, further complicating what it meant to be anti-organizationalist. Among the individualist/anti-organizationalists, three major currents can be identified. First, there were the strict social anti-organizationalists, isolated individuals who gave absolute priority to the single individual and rejected any organizational forms as “cages.” Their polemical attacks were directed principally at the organizational anarchists, and they based their attacks on what they considered to be the “social reality

³³ Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani nell'epoca degli attentati*, op. cit, 194.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ For more on the various divisions within the anarchist movements see: Enzo Santarelli, *Il socialismo anarchico in Italia* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1973) : 178; and, Giorgio Sacchetti, “Comunisti contro individualist!. Il dibattito sull'organizzazione del 1907,” in “Armando Borghi nella storia del movimento operaio italiano ed internazionale,” *Bolettino del Museo del Risorgimento* (Bologna: Editcomp, 1990).

of the marginality of workers,” symbolized by the condition of Italian immigrants to the United States. The very isolated nature of these individuals meant that they were rarely able to move beyond solitary propaganda efforts which were “simple and often sterile.”³⁷ Second, were the followers of Giuseppe Monanni — founder and editor of the Florentine journal *Vir* — who considered themselves to be purely Stirnerian anarchoindividualists with some minor elements of Nietzsche.³⁸ Monanni and his colleagues remained in an intellectual and cultural world, putting forth an abstract form of “humanist anarchism” and revolution without proposing a means for realizing either objective. Monanni’s major contribution was as one of the most celebrated publishers on the Left in Italy, who brought Stirner, Kropotkin, Wilde, Romain Rolland, William Morris and the complete works of Nietzsche to the Italian public.³⁹ The third major current among the individualist/anti-organizationalists in the first decade of the century was a form of abstract individualism heavily influenced by Nietzsche and characterized by a strong emphasis on irrationalism. The “prophet” of this form of individualism was Massimo Rocca (pseudonym Libero Tancredi), who went on to distinguish himself first by his rabid polemical writings and his militarist and interventionists stances, and then by supporting of the fascist movement. Rocca “distilled” and transformed the ideas of Stirner, Nietzsche, Sorel, and others in ways which would have astonished these original authors. The intoxicating brew he produced was the single greatest influence on the young Leandro Arpinati, who would later become the leader of the Bolognese fascists, Mayor [Podestà] of Bologna, and Undersecretary to the Ministry of the Interior.

Massimo Rocca was born in Turin on February 26, 1884 and joined the anarchist movement during the pessimistic period following the Italian defeat at Adua in 1896. A printer by profession, he received his first prison sentence after printing a number of anti-militarist anarchist posters and leaflets for that year’s May Day celebrations.⁴⁰ He chose instead to escape to Paris where he worked as a printer and began his career as a highly polemical writer for the anarchist movement. In 1904, having decided that he could not contribute meaningfully to the movement from exile, he decided to return to Italy to serve his two-month prison sentence. Through 1905 he continued working as a printer in Turin, traveling frequently to Milan to address anarchist meetings on the “Philosophy of Anarchism.” In Turin he contributed articles to the local paper *Il grido del popolo* and to *Il grido della folia*, a Milanese weekly newspaper edited by Oberdan Gigli, Giovanni Gavilli, and Nella Giacomelli, which emphasized the individualist and anti-organizational aspects of anarchism. In May of 1905, his articles now frequently intercepted in the mail by the police, Rocca moved to Milan as editor of the

³⁷ Maurizio Antonioli, “Il movimento anarchico milanese agli inizi del secolo,” in *Anna Kuliscioff e l’età del riformismo. Atti del convegno di Milano-dicembre 1976* (Rome: Mondo Operaio-Edizioni Avanti!, 1978) : 283 .

³⁸ *Vir* was published from July 1907 to May 1908.

³⁹ Antonioli, “Il movimento anarchico milanese agli inizi del secolo,” op. cit., 284.

⁴⁰ ACS, CPC, b. 4362, f. “Rocca, Massimo.” Rocca has the dubious distinction of having two CPC files (1902–1919 and 1919–1943), that is, from both the Giolittian period and fascist periods.

paper. Under his leadership the newspaper began to take on a more and more belligerent tone, exalting regenerative violence and chaos; referring to dynamite as “holy”; and, condemning basic legal rights, humanitarianism, and ethics. In conferences and clandestine meetings throughout northern Italy and among the immigrant communities in Switzerland, Rocca described himself as “morally amorphous” and compared himself to Corrado Brando, the protagonist of D’Annunzio’s *Più che l’amore*, proclaiming “*il comodo mio*,” that is, the legitimacy of any action useful to the well-being of the individual. He and others like him distributed pamphlets and put up posters which spoke of rebellion against the “myth of positive evolution in society, against naturalism in science, society’s ingenuous faith in progress,” and the Left’s conviction that society was continuously on the “threshold of revolution.”⁴¹ By 1906, Rocca had distinguished himself within the anarchist movement with his extreme interpretation of Stirner and Nietzsche, an anarchist egoism bordering on megalomania that emphasized the most violent and authoritarian possibilities of both thinkers. Soon thereafter, however, dissenting opinions about the direction Rocca was taking *Il Grido della folia* forced him to quit as editor, and he moved to Rome, where he continued to spread what many anarchists considered a “sacrilegious and irreverent” doctrine.

In Rome he founded what has been described as “one of the most iconoclastic journals in the history of anarchism,” *Il Novatore Anarchico*.⁴² His reception by anarchist circles was generally hostile, especially among the organizational anarchists who he criticized mercilessly. Piero Gobetti later described Rocca as “typical of that type of Italian anarchist who writes libelous articles instead of using bombs and revolvers for which he excuses himself candidly with a doctrine of non-resistance to evil.”⁴³ At the April 1906 anarchist congress of Monino in Lazio (the province around Rome, supporters of Rocca’s newspaper, the novatori, started a massive fist fight during which pistol shots were fired and at least one person received knife wounds. Several anarchists were arrested, including Rocca, who was later tried and acquitted of attempted homicide.⁴⁴ Thereafter, Rocca and the novatori were kept under continuous police surveillance.

Despite their limited numbers, Rocca’s access to printing presses kept the novatori agenda at the forefront of the anarchist movement. The question of how to respond to them came to dominate debate, particularly their rejection of anti-militarism with their protest that “a war today is more fatal to the bourgeoisie than the proletariat and is a favorable occasion for starting a revolution.”⁴⁵ Lashing out at the organizationalists

⁴¹ Antonioli, “Il movimento anarchico milanese agli inizi del secolo,” op. cit., 283. Rocca was arrested and released several times for illegal distribution of pamphlets (ACS, CPC, b. 4362, f. “Rocca Massimo”).

⁴² Ibid. The first version of *Il Novatore Anarchico* was published from 7 April to 26 October 1906.

⁴³ Piero Gobetti, “Ritratto di Libero Tancredi,” *La Rivoluzione Liberale* (9 October 1923).

⁴⁴ ACS, CPC, b. 4362, f. “Rocca Massimo.” Rocca was acquitted due to insufficient evidence.

⁴⁵ Revachol [Massimo Rocca], “Pacifismo,” *Il Novatore Anarchico* (7 April 1906), cited in Gino Cerrito, *Dall’insurrezionalismo alla settimana rossa* (Florence: CP Editrice, 1977): 109.

(principally the syndicalists and socialist anarchists) within the anarchist movement, Rocca declared that anarchism

is neither a party nor an idea; but it is an enemy of both. It is the destroyer of all schools...It is the continuing rebellion for the triumph of liberty and of the unclassifiable ego...The old decayed maxims of Christianity: brotherhood, equality, and solidarity which today serve as battle arms for the new religious leaders (from reformist socialists to the anarchists of societal Jacobinism) are despised by anarchism, because these metaphysical abstractions only serve to keep men slaves to useless and damaging prejudices. Therefore, anarchism in the truest sense of the word is the revolt of the ego against altruism. Anarchism is a philosophical tendency; it is a manifestation of individualism, openly revolutionary, it wants each individual to push upward and outward, towards the radiating summits of knowledge and happiness. Anarchism recognizes no laws, morals, rights, orders, other than the single order of nature; the triumph, that is, the survival in all vital aspects of the most evolved, the best, the strongest...⁴⁶

Rocca's individualism can be seen as the fruit of his own personal rebellion and frustrated raging against the political and cultural status quo, and is consonant with a growing intellectual subculture in the first years of the century. In addition, his ideas took on the additional ideological baggage of Social Darwinism, from which he would eventually derive notions of Italy's racial superiority:

In all times throughout the universe, individuals have been divided into two categories: those who are slaves to the atmosphere in which they find themselves, and those who react against external circumstances and change the atmosphere. In the human species, the former constitute the majority, the amorphous collective lacking their own initiative in which individuals move about by inveterate force of habit...The others — the few — form a rebellious minority, in which the individual conserves his individuality...the audacious and irreducible minority who plants the seeds of struggle and violence, to overcome stasis and the death of society; who undermine the basis [of society] with open and ruthless criticism, and carry the revolution towards the new horizons of the future. We individuals desiring to elevate ourselves, to perfect ourselves will try to form a minority...This is our program, which can be expressed even more concisely in one word: demolish.⁴⁷

"Demolish!" [*Detnolire!*"] soon became the battle cry of the novatoriani. Rocca spent much of 1906 criss-crossing northern Italy giving speeches and conferences on themes

⁴⁶ Massimo Rocca [Libero Tancredi], *Sorgiamo!* (15 November 1908), cited in *ibid.*, 110.

⁴⁷ Massimo Rocca [Libero Tancredi], "Editor's note," *Il Novatore Anarchico* (7 April 1906), cited in *ibid.*, 110–111.

such as “Individual Action,” “The Fatherland and Revolution,” “The State and Liberty,” and, “Russian Literature and Revolution.” Due to Rocca’s efforts, the novatoriani enjoyed a period of prominence, even if Rocca continued to criticize his own followers as a “sheep-like” mass of humanity. That success came at considerable cost to Rocca’s health and in January 1907, he was hospitalized with “fever and facial paralysis.”⁴⁸ When he emerged three months later, he was penniless and unemployed and forced to accept a one-way train ticket to Turin from the carabinieri. In addition, the Rome newspaper *La Gioventù Libertaria* [Libertarian Youth], for which Rocca was a part-time editor, accused him of inappropriately channeling funds to the coffers of *Il Novatore*. Rocca was mercilessly attacked by other anarcho-individualists, including Monanni who accused him in the pages of *Vir* of “verbose individualism [born] on the margins of social impotence.”⁴⁹ The allegations of financial misconduct destroyed his reputation within the anarchist movement, even among the novatoriani. During the general strikes in Turin in October 1907, he tried in vain to regain the trust of his anarchist companions by carrying out various flamboyant acts of violence, but to no avail.

In a sense, the chickens had come home to roost, for by all accounts Rocca was anything but a likable character. For example, he would convince anarchist colleagues to pay for his meals in the local trattoria by railing against them during the meal with snippets of his Stirnerian-Nietzschean logic such as, “You pay for my lunch because you’re weak. I, on the other hand, am strong.” Rocca would later write, “That which many anarchists and subversives cannot or do not want to understand is that the force behind an authority or an exploitation does not depend either on the guilt or the will of the one who does it, but on the resignation of those exploited and those who let it happen to them.”⁵⁰ Once, however, a fellow anarchist with whom Rocca was dining retorted, “You convinced me. I want to be strong too,” and handed the bill to the waiter saying, “Separate checks, please.”⁵¹

Marginalized from the anarchist movement in Italy, by early 1908 Rocca had left for New York City, where he continued his propaganda work amongst the large immigrant communities in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. He contributed articles to anarchist magazines in Chicago and Paris, until he founded an American edition of *Il Novatore* in October 1910, subtitled “An Open Journal for All Energetic Young People Who Have Something New and Clever to Say.”⁵² Rocca’s sojourn in the United States produced a profound transformation in his thinking, fruit of his battle with not only the organizational anarchists and other currents of Italian anarchoindividualism, but of his experiences as an immigrant. These experiences would later influence his decision to

⁴⁸ ACS, CPC, b. 4362, f. “Rocca Massimo.”

⁴⁹ Maurizio Antonioli, unpublished notes on Massimo Rocca, Biblioteca Libertaria, Fondo Borghi, Castel Bolognese.

⁵⁰ Massimo Rocca [Libero Tancredi], “Studi su Max Stirner (La rivolta morale),” *Pagine Libere* 1 (1 and 15 March; 1 and 15 May 1911) : 367.

⁵¹ Camillo Bemerì, “Uomini e idee, Libero Tancredi,” op. cit.

⁵² This second version of *Il Novatore* was published in New York from October 1910 to May 1911.

join forces with the Italian Nationalist Movement and with certain revolutionary syndicalists in support of the Italian colonial war in Libya. While continuing to work as a printer, Rocca took time during his selfimposed exile to reexamine the intellectual origins of anarchoindividualism. First, he began work on a “kiss-and-tell” book entitled *Died anni di nazionalismo fra i sowersivi d'Italia* [Ten Years of Nationalism Among Italy's Subversives], a calumnious attack on his former anarchist colleagues published only in 1918.⁵³ The title alone hints that Rocca's experience in the Italian immigrant community had shaped his views towards a more nationalist pose. In the pages of *Il Novatore* he echoed the words of the “courageous” Corradini from the first Nationalist Congress held in December 1910 in Florence. He wrote of the necessity of “spreading nationalism among the Italian workers, reinforcing their class consciousness with a national consciousness [in order to] sweep from history this third Italy and create a fourth proletarian Italy, worthy...of its past traditions and its future glories.”⁵⁴ By the time of his American edition of *Il Novatore* ceased publication, Rocca was carrying out a campaign “in defense of the ‘vitality’ and ‘function’ of Mediterranean peoples against German military oppression.”⁵⁵

This period of re-examination also saw the publication of *Dio e cristianesimo* [God and Christianity], a transcript of a debate between Rocca and a Protestant minister in 1910 in Providence, Rhode Island.⁵⁶ Although Rocca participated in hundreds of conferences while in the United States, on this occasion he felt compelled to publish the transcript because of what he described as a “gross manipulation” of the rules of the debate which was supposed to allow each side “one hour to demonstrate the existence of God” during which his opponent “did nothing more than read a list of pre-written arguments.”⁵⁷ True to form, Rocca berated his opposition with a polemic against God and Christianity, declaring that his opponent's performance “demonstrated that all religions are the same and that modern evangelism...is more dangerous even than the already beleaguered Catholic faith because it serves...the same, insidiousness and hypocrisy against every progress, whether in the form of individual revolt, or in the form of social or collective revolution.”⁵⁸

Also during this period Rocca published his “Studi su Max Stirner (La rivolta morale),” in which he reevaluated Stirner to emphasize the most violent, authoritarian, and nationalistic possibilities in his writings.⁵⁹ Published in four installments between March and May 1911, this work is perhaps his most specific defense against the various contemporary critics of Stirner. It demonstrates his thinking at a time when he was

⁵³ Massimo Rocca [Libero Tancredi], *Died anni di nazionalismo fra i sowersivi d'Italia, 1905–1915* (Milan: Rinascimento, 1918) .

⁵⁴ Ibid., 38.

⁵⁵ Antonioli, unpublished notes on Massimo Rocca, op. cit.

⁵⁶ Massimo Rocca [Libero Tancredi], *Dio e cristianesimo* (New York: Biblioteca “Novatore,” 1911).

⁵⁷ Ibid., 4.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 48.

⁵⁹ Massimo Rocca [Libero Tancredi], “Studi su Max Stirner,” op. cit.

mid-way between an anarcho-individualism which drew heavily on classical anarchist theory, and what it would soon become! anarcho-individualism with overtly nationalist aims. Rocca's objective in these articles was to synthesize his thoughts regarding Stirner as they frequently appeared in the first ten editions of *Il Novatore Anarchico* published in Rome. He wanted to dispel the idea that "his thoughts were restricted to 'the egoism of Stirner' and the 'heroism of Nietzsche'," and he saw as his audience not only his critics and other detractors but also his "anarchist colleagues."⁶⁰

In a few short pages, however, Rocca went where Stirner dared not go, past the many criticism of the Unique One, and past the theoretical basis of the Union of Egos. "I am in the habit," wrote Rocca, "of considering not the theories expressed by the great philosophers, but also taking into account the general ideas which...take hold among the masses of their followers concerning a given argument."⁶¹ If Stirner's aim was to determine the consequences of taking Hegel seriously, then Rocca's aim was to determine the consequences of taking Stirner seriously. His method was to place criticisms of Stirner into two categories: those which suppose or fear that *all* men might become Unique Ones; and, those which imagine that the Union of Egos might become a dominating aristocracy of rebels. He dispatched both of these criticisms by indicating that "the individual must remember to be more man than philosopher...Intellect has often reasoned poorly; instinct, on the other hand, is never mistaken. Let us therefore liberate instinct."⁶² Instinct, according to Rocca, leads people to think of themselves as Unique Ones, to revert to their more "natural" state, rejecting the abstract structures of intellect. Rocca shamelessly grafted Nietzschean ideas about instinct to Stirner's unique One, writing that *The Ego and His Own* should not be thought of as "a system already closed within itself, but as a revealer of a will, an intention, a psychology...We will go above and beyond the author to a new historical atmosphere which his will intended [and] his alleged 'amoralism' will resolve in a superb and magnanimous 'moral revolt'."⁶³ Rocca described the practical results of this "moral revolt":

If tomorrow men all became Unique Ones...they would immediately begin to break the elementary bonds...which form the basis for individual competition and the limits which such competition can not go beyond: honesty, public opinion, etc. would be ruined in the face of a force of the strongest who do whatever they please. Soon enough...society would be transformed into a vast and terrible battlefield. Individuals would die of hunger to defend their meal. At which point the struggle, having exhausted everyone's energy, would produce an accord; and the accord could be made among equals, if during the war no one had to surrender.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Ibid., 314nl

⁶¹ Ibid., 315.

⁶² Ibid., 317.

⁶³ Ibid., 368.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 318.

Stirner's war of "all against all" would be fought among individuals until a stable equilibrium allowed the strong to prevail while the weaker submitted. Rocca goes beyond Stirnerian individualism and Nietzschean instinctualism by adding Social Darwinian principles of the survival of the fittest to produce this "natural" equilibrium. According to Rocca, even the forces of authority, "the police, state bureaucracies, the army, etc. etc. — would dissolve on their own, following the revolt of the individuals which compose them."⁶⁵ Although the individual would be "the only reality, and the only nonindividual reality would be universal chaos,"⁶⁶ Rocca goes on to state that "no man can live exclusively by himself."⁶⁷ Recognizing this in themselves, individuals would end their struggles between one another not only because an equilibrium of force had been reached, but also because "a man can not live without at least one friend."⁶⁸ Having declared this one-to-one relationship as the building block of society, Rocca has already seriously modified Stirner's original concept of the Unique One.

Rocca's vision of the struggle outlined above between individuals is shaped by a his notion of the positive consequences of violence. It is not clear whether Rocca was familiar with Georges Sorel's ideas about "regenerative violence," he did make reference to Sorel in various books. Like his use of Stirner, Nietzsche, and Darwin, he likely adopted Sorel's ideas then vulgarized them to a point where they were hardly recognizable beyond a few basic concepts. Of violence Rocca's wrote:

Violence is always revolutionary, even if used by conservatives, since it creates hate and revolt...The democratic anarchists and socialists blab about how violence is a bourgeois prerogative and is the antithesis of socialism and anarchism...The fact is that if the ruling classes today would let the mask of humanitarianism fall and proclaim openly and cynically pursue their...mean egoism, they would cut in half the length of their social dominance.⁶⁹

Rocca fused Stirner and Sorel to propose "violent egoism" as the true meaning of revolution. To this he added Nietzschean "will" as the force which moves individuals into violent conflict with one another. Lastly, Social Darwinism provided a model for a natural struggle between their wills leading to an equilibrium, a balance of power between violent egos.

Even the victors, exhausted by their enormous efforts would find it more convenient to come to some sort of agreement than revolt among themselves continuously. It is a process of decomposition and synthesis, consisting in

⁶⁵ Ibid., 318nl.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 319.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 365.

the demolishing of a hypocritical civilization, throwing it headlong into the abyss of barbarity to free itself from the scum to rise again, renewed.⁷⁰

Civilization, according to Rocca, no matter how exhausted from the struggles which had caused its destruction, would rise like the phoenix from the ashes in the form of a new society: “In the end, society, consolidating itself more and more, could even produce the democratic phenomenon of uniformity and peace at all cost, which represent the highest aims of social preservation and stability.”⁷¹ It is this striving towards a stable alternative to current society which Rocca felt made his view particularly Stirnerian. Rocca’s mix of Sorel, Nietzsche, and Social Darwinism brings us back to Stirner who, according to Rocca, never called for the absolute destruction of society; his very understanding of individuality would have required it to remain within some social structure. As a disciple of Hegel, Stirner understood that “everything pushed to its extreme generates its opposite...Stirner had to have understood that individuality cannot affirm itself except in relation to society.”⁷² Having determined to his own satisfaction that critics who labeled Stirner “the philosopher of anti-sociability and delinquency didn’t understand Stirner,” Rocca set out to find a set of ideas around which a society of strong individuals could gather. As will be seen, he settled upon Italian nationalism, then fascism.

Rocca returned from the United States in the summer of 1911 with a splash, giving speeches and writing articles for his third and final version of *Il Novatore*, published in Milan.⁷³ Again, the immediate target of his attacks were his fellow anarchists, one of whom pressed charges against him for defamation of character. When Rocca failed to present himself in court, the police classified him as “dangerous,” though charges were eventually dropped.⁷⁴ Also during this period Rocca contributed articles to the Florentine journal *La Lupa*, directed by Paolo Orano (with contributions from Arturo Labriola, Georges Sorel, Enrico Corradini, and Mario Missiroli), who proposed to reconcile syndicalism and nationalism. The two had met at Orano’s request, there being at the time a group of young enthusiasts of Rocca’s ideas in nearby Pistoia where Orano was a school teacher.⁷⁵ Their collaboration continued for several months then faltered following the event which would begin the definitive split between Rocca the rest of the anarchist movement: Italy’s war with Turkey over Libya.

Libya had been an *ide’e fixe* in Italy for almost three decades, and a favorable attitude towards colonial expansion re-emerged during the first decade of the century. Relative to the years of economic hardship and struggle following Unification, the

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 320.

⁷³ ACS, CPC, b. 4362, f. “Rocca Massimo.” This final version of *Il Novatore* was published from 29 July to 6 October 1911. Antonioli, unpublished notes on Massimo Rocca, op. cit.

⁷⁴ ACS, CPC, b. 4326, f. “Rocca Massimo.”

⁷⁵ Gino Cerrito, *L’antimilitarismo anarchico in Italia nel primo ventennio del secolo* (Pistoia: Edizioni RL, 1968) : 20n41

years of Giovanni Giolitti's leadership (beginning in 1903) were ones of unprecedented peace and prosperity. During the so-called "Giolittian decade" Italy underwent the transition towards mass democracy for the first time, challenging the economic, social, and political leadership of the bourgeois elite that had ruled Italy up to that time. Giolitti's leadership centered on the policy of *trasformismo*, a program of moderate reform based on building a broad centrist coalition which recruited from both Right and Left, including (for the first time) the working class, the Catholics, and the socialists. *Trasformismo* was designed to provide the stability necessary for the introduction of modern politics, including mass political parties, labor unions, universal suffrage, and rudimentary social welfare. Opposed to *trasformismo* were landowners, business elites, and many intellectuals who thought "a powerful and authoritarian state should keep order at home and make Italy respected overseas."⁷⁶ One way of gaining such respect was colonial expansion, and what had begun among intellectuals such as Prezzolini, Papini, and Corradini as a literary revolt began to coalesce around the Nationalist movement, particularly after 1910 when their first congress was held. Two principal arguments were put forth by the Nationalists and others who favored colonization. First, colonization would provide Italians with a means for avoiding the shame and disgrace of emigration, which Corradini considered "no more beneficent than death."⁷⁷ Second, the demographic question was intertwined with questions of national pride. One prominent demographer observed that like individuals, peoples "reach certain stages of development when they feel an overwhelming desire to express their personality, to assert their desire to command in the world."⁷⁸ At the first Nationalist Congress, Corradini combined these two factors with his "hatred for socialism and class warfare...in a theory that turned socialist doctrine on its head."⁷⁹ Using the slogan "proletarian nation," he suggested that Italy must be taught the value of international struggle through war, and that Italy as a nation had the right to exercise its strength to fulfill the demographic needs of its proletariat. Those in favor of colonial expansion set their sights on Libya.

Italians had been investing in banking, shipping, and agriculture in Libya since 1905, spurred on by similar British and French expansion from Egypt and Tunisia, respectively. The Bosnian crisis and the French expansion into Morocco over the Agadir incident, convinced many Italians that the time had come to strike at the decaying Ottoman Empire and test Italy's aspirations as a great power. War would become a test of national unity, though many Italians retained considerable doubts about Italy's ability to fight given the "peculiar" military victories of the *Risorgimento* and the disastrous defeat at Adua in Eritrea in 1896. Yet, when Italy finally moved to take

⁷⁶ Claudio Segre', *Fourth Shore*, op. cit., 17.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁷⁸ Corrado Gini, "Il fattore demografica nella politica coloniale," *Gli Annali dell'Africa Italiana* 4 (September 1941): 811, cited in *ibid.*, 5.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

over Libya in September 1911, patriots did not fail to notice that it fell on the fiftieth anniversary of Unification, and the country generally supported the effort.

Rocca immediately threw himself into the propaganda campaign, whipping up support for Italy's intervention together with several noted (soon ex-) revolutionary syndicalists with whom he had collaborated on *La Lupa*, including Arturo Labriola. They were looking for a synthesis between syndicalism and nationalism, and advocated proletarian support for the war because of the revolutionary effects the war would have on the Italian workers and Italian society. Labriola, who also supported the war for demographic reasons, put it this way:

O my comrades, do you know why the Italian proletariat is not fit to make a revolution? For precisely the same reason that is not fit to wage war. Let the proletariat get used to fighting seriously, and then you will see that it will learn to strike the bourgeoisie itself I... [War] will give us Italians a sense of our strength as a nation. Victorious or defeated, we will overcome all the dreadful superficiality of our customary opinions. War will impose on us new, more precise problems, having greater importance and more enduring consequences than those to which we are accustomed. It will be a tremendous and painful experience, but under that pedagogy we will remake ourselves.⁸⁰

Paolo Orano, originally tepid about colonialism, felt that the war would cause "the bourgeoisie and the proletariat to strengthen themselves, thereby rekindling the class struggle and paving the way for revolution."⁸¹ He eventually came to think enough of Rocca to write a flattering preface for his book *La Tragedia di Barcellona* [*The Tragedy of Barcelona*], a collection of Rocca's thoughts on the Catalan anarchist Francisco Ferrer y Guardia.⁸² Founder of the educational reform movement *Escuela Moderna*, Ferrer held responsible for the revolutionary agitation stirred up in Barcelona in 1909 against the conservative government of Antonio Maura. His execution by firing squad caused syndicalist uprisings in Barcelona and other Catalan cities, all of which were quickly stamped out. In Italy, a general strike was called to protest the action, along with demonstrations and meetings in many cities.⁸³ Although Rocca agreed with these thinkers on the issue of nationalism, *La Tragedia di Barcellona* showed that he wanted to preserve the "integrity" of his anarcho-individualism and had considerable reservations about Labriola and Orano's syndicalism. While Orano wrote of Rocca in

⁸⁰ Arturo Labriola, "La prima impresa collettiva della nuova Italia," cited in Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition and Italian Fascism*, op. cit., 103–104.

⁸¹ Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition and Italian Fascism*, op. cit., 104.

⁸² Paolo Orano, preface to Massimo Rocca [Libero Tancredi], *La tragedia di Barcellona* [also published as *La tragedia di Francisco Ferrer*], (Rome: Biblioteca "Novatore" 1911): 3.

⁸³ In 1913 Maura caused a break-down of the two-party system in Spain by refusing to cooperate with the Liberals because they had collaborated from 1907–1909 with non-monarchical parties (including the anarchists) and had shared in the furor unleashed by the execution of Ferrer.

the preface, “I am quite pleased he came to me,” Rocca advised the reader early in the book that “the sympathy I show towards the syndicalists of Barcelona in no way implies that I recognize an intrinsic revolutionary character in syndicalism.”⁸⁴ Rocca advocated reinforcing proletarian class consciousness with national consciousness, but considered himself to be “of that workers aristocracy of single individuals who know at any time how to lead the crowd and provide the strategic energy to lead in combat.”⁸⁵ With these ideas, Rocca brought the novatori (that is, supporters of his third and latest version of the paper) to Enrico Corradini’s Italian Nationalist Movement. Like Rocca, Corradini “saw history as a perpetual, quasi-Darwinian struggle among nations, with each nation understood as a distinct biological organism,”⁸⁶ and stressed themes of struggle, imperialism, and war to correct the irrationality and injustice of “the present distribution of the earth’s surface among nations or population groups.”⁸⁷ The Nationalists advocated grabbing whatever Italy could get with its “energy and will” to increase the overall land-mass under control of the nation. Corradini rejected the protests of other nations which “offered platitudes about peace and international law...fine ideals for countries that had already conquered empires.”⁸⁸ With a logic derived directly from Stirner, Rocca dismissed pacifism and international peace as nothing more than abstract ideas.

As indicated above, Rocca’s nationalism and support for the war in Libya was shaped by his own experiences in the United States, particularly the shame of emigration to a foreign land. Like many emigrants, Rocca thought the government considered emigrants as nothing more than a source of remittance payments for balancing the national budget. He was frustrated by the government in Rome which could not even ensure respectful treatment of its citizens in foreign countries. The seeds of this linking of morality, humiliation, and nationalism were also apparent in his “Studi su Max Stirner (La rivolta morale),” written during his self-imposed American exile. In these articles Rocca echoed Stirner’s criticism of morality as a “bunch of maxims slowly elaborated by public opinion by way of slow adaptation, a purely ideological superstructure that men believe and venerate blindly.”⁸⁹ Paraphrasing *The Ego and His Own*, Rocca wrote that “the moral influx has its origins where humiliation begins; in fact, it is nothing other than humiliation itself, a loss of courage.”⁹⁰ Rocca also borrowed from Stirner’s example of the child who is blindly taught morality, religion, and altruism:

In a word, I would teach that child, not to already live for himself...but to lower himself before the phantasm of duty. And that lowering of oneself can be done in the name of any dogma, as long as it is a preconceived and

⁸⁴ Massimo Rocca [Libero Tancredi], *La tragedia di Barcellona*, op. cit., 111n1.

⁸⁵ Rocca, *Dieci anni di nazionalismo fra i sovversivi d’Italia, 1905–1915*, op. cit.

⁸⁶ Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition and Italian Fascism*, op. cit., 120.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 121.

⁸⁹ Massimo Rocca [Libero Tancredi], “Studi su Max Stirner (La rivolta morale),” op. cit., 612.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

indisputable dogma: and the only result will be to empty the individual of any content of its own — including moral content.⁹¹

This is an extremely convoluted passage which shows Rocca's thoughts in transition. On the one hand, Rocca accepted Stirner's idea of the abstract concept of morality as a "spook" [fantasma], and that morality learned in childhood teaches the child to carry out its duty. On the other hand, he argued that one fulfills a duty only in the name of dogma (another fantasma), which empties the individual of moral content. It is as if, despite his Stirnerian critique of morality, he can't quite bring himself to imagine an individual completely devoid of morality. He can imagine a "moral revolt," in the form of an amorism in which learned morality is suspended, but not an individual completely devoid of morality. The morality which Rocca had in mind may not be Christian, but it involves an appeal at least the basic moral sense in any individual to stop a potentially unending war of all against all for the establishment of a community dominated by the strongest among the Unique Ones. For Rocca, humiliation is the wellspring of this morality. The humiliation of Rocca's immigrant experience in America forced him to rethink the intrinsic morality of the Unique One, including a new understanding of how one could reconcile their own individuality with the collective. The "Studi su Max Stirner (La rivolta morale)" began as a vitriolic attack on Stirner's critics, on Rocca's fellow anarchists, and on the ideology of contemporary society. It ended with a means for reconciling the individual with the collective which, nevertheless, Rocca justified with the (specious) paraphrasing of Stirner:

All that agrees with the written or tacitly imposed law is moral, since the state and the law are none other than the codification of a collective will. Whether that will is rational or irrational matters little; in every case one acts morally by obeying it, and immorally by detracting from its authority [dominio].⁹²

Stirner's quotation, originally meant to be a rejection of both morality in general and the invoking of morality to produce obedience to laws, is here taken out of context by Rocca for his own purposes.

Rocca's invoking of the collective will "whether rational or irrational" would eventually manifest itself in both an impassioned defense of the Italian Nation, and a call to expand Italy's colonial empire as a means to end the humiliation of Italians emigrating to foreign lands. For Rocca, arguments concerning the material value of Libya after the Italian victory were superfluous.⁹³ Libya was for Rocca a "highly revolutionary conquest," one which fused syndicalism and nationalism because it taught the armed

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ For more on the Italian colonization of Libya, which continued in fits and starts through 1942, see: Claudio Segré, *Fourth Shore* (Chicago: UCP, 1974); and, Maurizio Degl'Innocenti, *Il socialismo italiano e la guerra di Libia* (Rome: Riuniti, 1976). In Segre's opinion, "as a whole Libya was nothing

Italian proletariat how to make a revolution.”⁹⁴ Rocca was quick to point out, however, that the proletariat was not to be confused with unions and other workers collectives, “which represent and index rather than the cause of revolution which readies and manifests itself in the destructive violence of the amorphous crowd.”⁹⁵ In short, Rocca felt that Italy had confronted “bourgeois nationalism” with mass “proletarian nationalism” and won.

Rocca’s newfound militarism –or “patriotic anti-pacifism” — made him a heretic within the anarchist movement, which he continued to criticize. Rocca declared

The principal error of subversives is in considering militarism, imperialism and war as extraordinary and also removable phenomena...No! They are none other than a tragic heritage and ineluctable necessity...We consider serenely, without rhetorical declamations and pacifistic swoonings the causes and sacrifices these phenomena produce...In the war which the proletariat [fought] we discern good: the resolution of national problems... that is, the specter of social revolution...Throughout history, fifteen days of war are worth more than a half-century of pacifist evolution.⁹⁶

Through the end of 1911, Rocca tried unsuccessfully to earn his living through politics, traveling throughout Italy at the invitation of local anarchist groups who wanted to hear his “heretical” thoughts on anti-pacifism first hand. By January 1912, however, he had given up this effort and moved to Lugano, where he found work with the *Tipografia sociale*, contributing to the locally published journal *La Rivolta*. He gathered around himself a number of like-minded anarchoindividualists under the guise of the *Gruppo Internazionalista di Lingua Italiana* which held frequent meetings in his home “concerning tactics for action and participation in political and proletarian agitations.”⁹⁷ Rocca was attempting to develop a concrete theory which would reconcile his particular brands of anarcho-individualism, nationalism, and militarism with the potential strength of the organized anarchist movement. Through 1913, he brought these varying currents together in writing, first in *Dopo Tripoli e la guerra balcánica*

but an economic burden,” and did nothing to help resolve pressing economic and social problems beyond providing land and housing for the dispossessed of Veneto and the Po Valley (ibid., 184) . Nor did it help Italy’s demographic problems. At the peak of colonization about 110,000 Italians were living in Libya, equal to about one-quarter of Italy’s yearly increase in the metropolitan population. During the fascist regime, when other sources of emigration were closed, it “served as a comforting way to distract the Italian people from their grim lives in a world of dictatorship and economic depression” (ibid., 182). As for the Libyans themselves, comparing the more integrated and benevolent colonialization of the Italians to that of the British and French misses the point. Writes Segré, “as in so many other colonial countries, the Libyans gained the full benefits of the Italian colonization only after independence” (ibid., 185) . Libya became independent in 1951.

⁹⁴ Rocca, *Dieci anni di nazionalismo fra i sowersivi d’Italia, 1905–1915*, op. cit., 65ff.

⁹⁵ “Rocca, *La tragedia di Barcellona*, op. cit., 134.

⁹⁶ Rocca, *Died anni di nazionalismo fra i sowersivi d’Italia, 1905–1915*, op. cit., 59–64.

⁹⁷ ACS, CPC, b. 4362, f. “Rocca Massimo.”

[*After Tripoli and the Balkan Críéis*] and *L'Anarchismo contro l'anarchia* [*Anarchism Against Anarchy*] on which he had been working for at least three years.⁹⁸ Rocca's aim in the former book was to show that the recent Libyan War, though similar to the war in the Balkans which had secured pieces of territory from the Ottoman Empire, was different in that it was a revolutionary conquest on par with Italian Unification. Rocca conducted a whirlwind tour of Italian history leading to Mazzinianism and the *Risorgimento*, which he described as the "political consecration of nationality, the final coronation of a national reality already affirmed in economic and ethical spheres."⁹⁹ The purpose of this tour was to show that whereas the Libyan War built a "national proletarian consciousness," the war in the Balkans was an example of "monarchical-clerical-social-Austrian feudalism." Having fused class consciousness and national consciousness, Rocca had found the enemy he needed: Austria. Rocca's colonial aspirations presumably satiated by the conquest of Libya, he called for a foreign policy to address the problem of the *terre irredente*, the unredeemed "Italian" territories under Austrian control including Trieste, Trentino, and Istria (including Fiume). He advocated an aggressive foreign policy that would take these territories by force in a preemptive strike, warning that "we would not be talking today of socialism and anarchism if Austria were again in control Milan." "The resolution of nationalist problems," continued Rocca, "has been made impossible in Europe, at least by peaceful means,"¹⁰⁰

Rocca's advocacy of an aggressive Italian participation in what he saw as an immanent European conflict precluded any attempt to rejoin the anarchist movement and harness its organizational potential to his own theories. Camillo Berneri, who later became the intellectual and moral leader of the Italian anarchists in exile, declared flatly:

Massimo Rocca was never an anarchist. He was an individualist; which is not the same thing. There are an infinite variety of individualists, but they can be reduced to two typical categories. There are those who shout, "I don't give a damn about humanity," "My ego is the Unique One," etc., and who wear out their lungs and become famous, hiding behind Nero-like poses and Nietzschean and Stirnerian ruminations, an exasperating idealism and a tender heart...The other category is that of the *arrivistes*, bourgeois in the worst sense of the word. Poor, suffocated by their own mediocrity, full of the will to live, they end up as thieves, spies, or hack journalists. Or they end up masters, commanders, or men of politics. Libero Tancredi belongs to this category.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ "Massimo Rocca [Libero Tancredi], *Dopo Tripoli e la Guerra balcánica* (Lugano: Rinascimento, 1913); Massimo Rocca [Libero Tancredi], *L'Anarchismo contro l'anarchia* (Pistoia: Rinascimento, 1914). Rocca refers to the immanent publication of the latter book in *La Tragedia di Barcellona*, op. cit., lllnl, itself published in 1911 but probably written in 1910 soon after Ferrer's assassination.

⁹⁹ "Rocca, *Dopo Tripoli e la guerra balcánica*, op. cit., 19.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 280.

¹⁰¹ Camillo Berneri, "Uomini e idee. Libero Tancredi," *La Rivoluzione Liberale* (18 March 1924).

At the same time, his militarism was seen as less of a threat by the police in part because it helped to divide and weaken the anarchist movement, and because It was consistent with the more general mood in Italian society that Italy should prepare for a coming European conflict. Rocca might not yet have become mainstream, but he was no longer considered “dangerous,” and police surveillance was curtailed. Rebuffed by the anarchists, he was beginning to see that the chaos of the so-called organized anarchist movement was beginning to resemble anarchy. Soon after, he dropped the pseudonym Libero Tancredi and began writing under his own name. Although he would continue agitate in favor of Italian intervention in the First World War from within the anarchist movement, this was more a reflection of his long association with them than any common ideology. Despite repeated professions of anarchist faith, he would be physically attacked and hospitalized on several occasions by his “co-religionaries” in the years to come. The major ideological sticking point would continue to be his rejection of anti-militarism.

Chapter 3: The Anarcho-Individualists, Anti-Militarism, and the Intervention Crisis of 1914–1915

Following the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand at Sarajevo, Italy found itself in an awkward position. The majority of Italians were aware of the import of the showdown in the Balkans and opposed intervening on behalf of Austria-Hungary despite Italy's obligations under the Triple Alliance. Nevertheless, Italy invoked the Triple Alliance in the hope of gaining compensation for any territorial gains by Austria and to increase the chance of regaining the terre *irridente*. The tension between these two contradictory positions forced the Italian government to declare a position of neutrality in the developing European war. As the conflict escalated through the fall of 1914, Italy's choice became even more protracted and difficult. On the one hand, the Austrians wanted to avoid fighting on a third front and continued to offer attractive compensation for Italy's neutrality. On the other hand, the Italians recognized that intervening on behalf of the Entente might produce even more attractive territorial gains than those being offered by the Austrians.

In the months between August 1914 and May 1915 when Italy finally joined the Entente, public opinion in Italy underwent a profound shift from pro-neutrality to that of wide acceptance of the inevitability of intervention such that the Government's decision to intervene was not met with serious opposition. Among the first dissenters were anarcho-individualists such as Massimo Rocca, who favored intervention against "Italy's hereditary enemy and present rival in the Adriatic and the Balkans."¹ Other dissenters included some revolutionary syndicalists from the *Unione Sindacale Italiana* (USI) who eventually came to define themselves as anarchoindividualist during the interventionist debate. The USI, founded in 1912, was led by Benito Mussolini and counted more than 100,000 members. It had developed within the Italian Socialist Party as a reaction against both Giolittian *trasformismo* and against the tactics of the Party's reformist leaders, including Filippo Turati, Leonida Bissolati, and Ivanoe Bonomi. Turati maintained that the socialists should collaborate with Giolitti to

¹ Massimo Rocca, "La guerra aristocrática," *Utopia* (15 August — 1 September 1914)(Reprint, Milan: Feltrinelli, n.d.): 326; and, Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition and Italian Fascism*, op. cit., 105.

“facilitate the natural evolution” leading to collectivism, a position which alienated opponents in the Party who wanted to reconcile the positions of Marx and Sorel.² Against this tendency, the revolutionary syndicalists were unified by a set of loosely defined common principles including: a belief in the efficacy of violence and direct action; a belief in the class struggle as a conquest rather than an inevitable result of history; and, a belief that the general strike was the chief weapon of the working class, one which would strengthen their “will to revolution.” The ultimate goal of the general strike would be to bring about the final collapse of capitalism. Early revolutionary syndicalist leaders such as Arturo Labriola and Filippo Corridoni rejected the Socialist Party, and as a group were expelled from it in 1908. In the years to follow they found a “common ground with the Nationalists since both groups wanted to destroy liberalism, the Parliament, and the constitutional monarchy.”³ They also found common ground after 1912 with many anarchists. The anarchists had been rejected by the Socialist Party in 1892, but now recognized that the USI could provide them with the organizational structure necessary to reestablish contact with the masses and bring about a working-class revolution. However, the anarchists and revolutionary syndicalists disagreed on two major points: the role of trade unions and anti-militarism.

As Italy continued to industrialize in the first two decades of the century, the anarchists identified class conflict as the potentially most radical source for making a revolution, and trade unions were seen as a mechanism for transforming this idea into action. Unlike the revolutionary syndicalists, however, the anarchists feared the formation of a labor elite, and concentrated more on the development of a revolutionary consciousness among the members of the working class than on the negotiation of better wages through general strikes. In addition, the anarchists viewed the military, which received the largest share of the Italian budget, as defenders of capitalism and the liberal state. The anarchist congress in Amsterdam in 1904 had concluded with formation of the “International Anti-militarist Alliance,” whose motto was “neither a coin nor a man for militarism.”⁴ Added to this was a general antipathy towards the forces of order in Italy as the anarchists and revolutionary syndicalists who joined with them continued to be harassed as criminal “types.” The Libyan War of 1911 widened the divisions between not only the USI and the anarchists but also the USI and the reformist wing of the Socialist Party. As far as the anarchists and revolutionary syndicalists, including Mussolini, were concerned, the reformists “had violated two fundamental principles of socialism; they had supported the monarchy and a colonial war.”⁵ Particularly during the economic slump following the Libyan War the USI continued to offer the Italian working class a radical and revolutionary alternative to the reformist wing of the Socialist Party. By offering such an alternative, the anarchists

² Charles Bertrand, “Italian Revolutionary Syndicalism and the Crisis of Intervention: August-December 1914,” *Canadian Journal of History* 10, 3 (1975): 349.

³ *Ibid.*, 351.

⁴ Gino Cerrito, *L'antimilitarismo anarchico in Italia nel primo ventennio del secolo*, op. cit., 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 352.

and revolutionary syndicalists were able to maintain a loose agreement which held together the USI. As will be see, however, the debate over Italian intervention in the growing European conflict would reveal their irreconcilable differences.

The leading communist anarchist within the USI, Armando Borghi, had been trying already for several years to reconcile the revolutionary syndicalists to the anarchist position.⁶ A strong defender of the individual, he had a reputation as a non-conformist even within the anarchist movement. Yet, he distinguished himself both from Stirnerian anarcho-individualists — whose ideas he thought would have dogmatic and authoritarian outcomes — and those anarchists who negated society all together.⁷ For Borghi, “communist anarchism could not come about except through the harmonizing of collective and individual action with the goal of realizing a society in which, in addition to economic equality, all political powers were abolished: a society in which there was the ‘liberty of all individuals’.”⁸ As such, revolutionary anarchism according to Borghi was not interested strictly in the emancipation of the individual from society, but in the emancipation of society and the individual together. Borghi proposed the method of direct action by the working class, and refused to subordinate this idea to any party, any central organization, or any hope of electoral gain. From 1907 onward, he drew from his base of support in Bologna, where he founded and led the Autonomous Union of Construction Workers, and counted among his closest collaborators another anarchist from Romagna, Luigi Fabbri. Like many anarchists during this period, Borghi would pay a high price for his political convictions. He lived under constant police surveillance by a phalanx of under-cover spies which he derived considerable pleasure in unmasking. On several occasions he was subjected to the government’s well-known

⁶ Armando Borghi was born in Castel Bolognese in Romagna in 1802 in a traditionally republican family. His grandfather fought with Garibaldi in 1849, 1859, and 1860, and an uncle stabbed to death a local lawyer who had switched allegiance from the Republicans to the monarchists. From the age of sixteen Borghi involved himself in the anarchist movement and was frequently forced to change his residence to avoid police surveillance. In 1906, he was named editor of anarchist newspaper *Aurora* in Ravenna and a year later founded the first construction workers union in Bologna, which remained autonomous from the General Confederation of Labor (CGL). After a year of exile in France in 1912, he returned to Italy and became the most prominent anarchist leader within the USI. For more see: Armando Borghi, *Mezzo secolo d'anarchia (1898–1945)* (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1954); Armando Borghi, *Vivere da anarchici* (Bologna: Alfa, 1966); Armando Borghi, *Mussolini Red and Black* (New York: Freie Arbeiter Stimme, 1938); “Armando Borghi nella storia del movimento operaio italiano ed internazionale,” in *Bolettino del Museo del Risorgimento*, op. cit.; Yvon De Begnac, *L'arcangelo sindacalista (Filippo Coridoni)* (Verona: Mondadori, 1943); Rolando Balducci, “Armando Borghi, il ‘Bersagliere della rivoluzione’,” *Historia* 120 (November 1967): 58–65; Vittorio Emiliani, “Armando Borghi: dalla Romagna rossa e nera all’impegno sindacale,” in Vittorio Emiliani, *Gli anarchici* (Milan: Bompiani, 1973); Domenico Bartoli, “Armando Borghi,” in *I grandi di Romagna*, 32–33, ed. Mauro Todeschini (Bologna: Poligrafici, 1990); and, Gino Cerrito, *L'antimilitarismo anarchico in Italia nel primo ventennio del secolo*, op. cit.

⁷ For more on Borghi and anarcho-individualism see: Armando Borghi, *Il nostro e l'altrui individualismo. Riflessioni storico critiche su l'anarchismo* (Brisighella, 1907).

⁸ Fiorenza Tarozzi, “Armando Borghi organizzatore politica-sindacale a Bologna (1907–1911),” extract from the *Bollettino del Risorgimento* (Bologna: Editcomp, 1983): 25.

tactic of “preventive detention” prior to holidays such as May 1, which were traditionally marked by workers’ demonstrations. In September 1909 Borghi was arrested in Brescia and so severely beaten by the police that afterwards they were forced to rotate him from prison to prison for several weeks until his wounds healed.⁹

The role of trade unions, anti-militarism, and electoral participation versus direct action, would be the key issues confronting Fabbri, Borghi, and their revolutionary-syndicalist and anarchist followers in the years prior to the interventionist crisis. In their debates, the revolutionary syndicalist Maria Rygier would emerge as a leader offering new possibilities for channeling the growing discontent among the agricultural and working classes. She would participate sometimes as their ally, sometimes as a foe, and almost always contrary to the majority opinion.

Maria Rygier was born in Krakow (Austria-Hungary) in 1885, the only child of a wealthy cosmopolitan family. Her father was a sculptor who moved to Florence, became a naturalized Italian citizen, and over the years became successful enough to provide her with a generous monthly living stipend. After her mother’s death, her father moved to Rome, and Maria was educated in a Catholic monastery. Although her first published articles described peasant life in Poland and extolled the virtues of artists from the Polish aristocracy, both her writings and her actions thereafter were characterized by a radical anti-conformism.¹⁰ Before the age of twenty she began attending the meetings and conferences of the minority groups of the extreme Left, especially those emphasizing personal initiatives designed to topple the Giolittian liberal state through subversive action. In 1904 she moved to Milan where she played an active role writing and editing for Arturo Labriola’s *L’Avanguardia socialista*. At the Genoa Congress of 1905 she was elected secretary of the Socialist Party’s Federation of Office Workers and Private Shop Assistants, and organized propaganda for the Milanese Chamber of Labor.¹¹ Despite her continuing affiliation with the socialists — she contributed articles to *Avanti!* in Rome and to Polish socialist journals¹² — her own politics tended increasingly towards anarchism and revolutionary syndicalism. Eventually her anti-clericalism led to a falling out with many of her colleagues at *L’Avanguardia Socialista*, whose particular form of revolutionary syndicalism did not admit such “deviations.”¹³ In early 1906 she married Virginio Corradi, one of the leading voices of the Milanese revolutionary syndicalist movement, and was appointed editor of Labriola’s revolutionary-syndicalist newspaper *Lotta di Classe*.

During the tram-operators strikes in Milan during February and March 1906, local revolutionaries met frequently in the Rygier-Corradi apartment. One colleague, who

⁹ Borghi, *Mezzo secolo di anarchia*, op. cit., 109.

¹⁰ Maria Rygier, “In giro per la Polonia,” *Nuova Antologia* 184 (July-August 1902): 115–136; “Il giubileo di Sienkiewics,” *Nuova Antologia* 175 (January-February 1901): 688–701; and, “Maria Konopnicka nel suo giubileo,” *Nuova Antologia* 186 (November-December 1902): 107–114.

¹¹ ACS, CPC, b, 4505, f. “Rygier Maria.”

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Cerrito, *L’antimilitarismo anarchico in Italia nel primo ventennio del secolo*, op. cit., 14.

later described Maria Rygier as “contrary to her destiny as a woman,” said these meetings were “detested because of Maria Rygier’s refinements, but animated by Virginio Corradi’s good taste.”¹⁴ As the strikes continued and their potential as a revolutionary catalyst increased, Rygier came into contact with the revolutionary syndicalist Filippo Corridoni, who convinced her that they shared a common enemy: militarism. Working in a variety of underground locations — using a table-top roller press hidden in a traveling case complete with lettering, ink, and blotters — Rygier, Corridoni, and a local printer produced the fortnightly leaflet of the International Anti-militarist Alliance, *Rómpete le File!* The often still-wet leaflets were carried to the Rygier-Corradi apartment for editing, and were distributed clandestinely on the streets of Milan over the next few days. In composing the leaflet, Rygier and Corridoni drew heavily from the pages of Gustave Hervé’s *La Guerre Sociale*, which called for drastic measures to topple the military aristocracy and delegitimize prevailing nationalist sentiments. Hervé maintained that the proletariat had no country and should cease its complicity with the military and its wars.¹⁵ Echoing these words, *Rómpete le File!* was illegally distributed by sympathetic anarchist colleagues on the streets, in shops, during opposition political meetings, and in military barracks. In apocalyptic tones Rygier and Corridoni incited military recruits to acts of Insubordination and sabotage, and called for them to join striking tram-operators and workers on the other side of the barricades: “The new world will originate in our battle which will destroy everything in existence and reestablish cleanly and precisely the value of life.”¹⁶ The theme was anti-militarism, not pacifism, for both Rygier and Corradini realized that “one should not play at making a revolution if one does not feel the certainty of knowing how to be, at an opportune moment, extremely nasty.”¹⁷ As such, their anti-militarism, designed as a revolutionary propaganda arm, often so strongly sanctioned violence and reaction against the military as to confuse the original anti-militarist message.¹⁸

As noted previously, the political exclusion of anarchists by the forces of public order as criminal “types” was already widespread in Italy. Being an anarchist and a woman willing, if necessary, to be “extremely nasty” doubly marked Maria Rygier in the eyes of the police. Not that she took great pains to hide herself even among the anarchists and revolutionary syndicalists, where she was described as “unmistakable at

¹⁴ DeBegnac, *L’Arcangelo sindacalista (Filippo Corridoni)*, op. cit., 86.

¹⁵ Cerrito, *L’antimilitarismo anarchico in Italia nel primo ventennio del secolo*, op. cit., 15.

¹⁶ Ibid., 88.

¹⁷ Ibid., 89.

¹⁸ The confusion between anti-militarism and pacifism resulted not only from Ryger’s appropriation of Hervé, but in Herve’s writings themselves. Hervé, a revolutionary socialist, favored an “armed nation,” because, he argued, “the proletarian revolution will come about not against the military but with the military.” Hervé distinguished himself from anarchists because he favored retaining the military during a transitory period after the revolution in order to combat “both internal and external enemies.” For more see: Gustave Hervé, “Che cosa é la patria?” and “La religione della patria,” in *Dio e patria* (New York: Libreria G. Popolizio, 19–?): 103–109.

subversive public demonstrations and conferences.”¹⁹ In 1905 she was given a sentence of three months and twenty-two days for “inciting class hatred” in an article published in *L’Unione*, the newspaper of the Union of Office Workers and Private Shop Assistants. The sentence was later reduced to three months, then commuted all together.²⁰ In the summer of 1907, however, she was arrested twice: first, for pummeling a police officer with her umbrella during a Socialist Party demonstration against the clergy in Milan; and, second, for illegally publishing and distributing *Rómpete le File*.²¹ She was tried and sentenced in February 1908 to twenty months in prison for “exposing the Army to the hate and scorn of the citizenry.”²² Her self-defense at this and other trials and her stoic acceptance of her prison terms made her the unmistakable symbol of anti-militarism in Italy.²³ A colleague wrote to Borghi, “It is lovely that these recent acts of inflexibility in character come from a woman; this fulfills a double mission; it raises the depressed human spirit and reinforces the cause of emancipating women.”²⁴ Despite these laudatory words, most anarchists and revolutionary syndicalists were profoundly ambivalent about the participation of women in politics, and their behavior ranged from condescending paternalism to verbal and physical harassment. Rygier spent much of 1908 in a maximum security prison for women near Florence where she was described as “rebellious and undisciplined.” Despite increased surveillance by the prison wardens, she managed to smuggle out a letter to the local newspaper, *Il Secolo*, in which she requested transfer to a men’s prison as she was “convinced that women are treated worse than men in prison.”²⁵ Following her release in April she agitated for prison reforms, namely that women not be held in separate prisons but that they be given the same prison conditions as men.²⁶ Her time in prison had moved her even farther to the left, from revolutionary syndicalism to militant anarchism and “direct action.” In addition, she restarted her propaganda campaign in favor of “the right to vote for all women or for no one.” She had this begun this campaign in 1906 with the publication of a single issue of *Pro suffragio universale*,²⁷ but was interrupted by her involvement in the tram-workers’ strikes and her marriage to Virginio Corradi. In fact, their marriage

¹⁹ ACS, CPC, b. 4505, f. “Rygier Maria.”

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ugo Fedeli, “Gli anarchici! e la guerra,” *Volontà* 11 (15 May 1950): 688; and, Maria Rygier, *Autodifesa pronunciata davanti al Tribunale di Mantova il 27 ottobre 1909* (Bologna, 1912).

²⁴ Cerrito, *L’antimilitarismo anarchico in Italia nel primo ventennio del secolo*, op. cit., 17.

²⁵ ACS, CPC, b. 4505, f. “Rygier Maria.” Prison conditions must have been worse for women than men if Borghi was able to comment that during his years of hard work for the anarchist movement in Bologna he got no rest “except when prison allowed me some vacation” (Borghi, *Mezzo secolo di anarchia*, op. cit., 103).

²⁶ Through 1911 Rygier gave speeches at conferences on themes such as “The Italian Penal System and the Horrors of Women’s Reformatories” (ACS, CPC, b. 4505, f. “Rygier Maria”).

²⁷ *Pro suffragio universale*, 11 February 1906, a publication of the “League for the Protection of Women’s Interests.”

fell apart during this period and (for uncertain reasons) was annulled by the courts. Financial considerations undoubtedly played a part, as Rygier had lent Corradi and another of Labriola's collaborators on L'Avanguardia Socialista, Walter Mocchi, 25,000 Lire to open an automobile importing business which failed in less than a year.²⁸

Through 1909, anti-militarism continued to be the principal theme of Rygier's writings in *Rómpete le File I* which appeared on the streets of Milan infrequently through 1913. The majority of Italian anarchists accepted the anti-militarist position of leaders such as Borghi, Fabbri and Malatesta that "each anti-militarist should act according to their temperament and attitudes, in relation to the circumstances in which they operate and the historical moment of their actions."²⁹ Rygier, on the other hand, felt that women have both a right and an obligation to oppose militarism owing to the fact that they bore and raised the soldiers which the state subsequently taught "the art of killing."³⁰ She had considerable trouble finding support for this view among such "wavering" revolutionary syndicalists as Labriola and Orano, who were headed in a direction which would eventually lead to their support of the Libyan War. Recalling the first Congress on Direct Action held in Bologna in 1909 Rygier wrote:

If I had any collaborators who were not anarchists, they were only from among young revolutionary socialists to whom syndicalism, for which they had already begun to make sacrifices, had not yet become a mental habit...On no account did the authentic syndicalists want to approve the antimilitarist order of the day presented by the organizationalist anarchists...Had not Labriola repeatedly declared himself patriotic? And the same nationalism...had it not received the approval of Paolo Orano, one of the most fervid and original geniuses of syndicalism?³¹

While former syndicalist colleagues moved towards permitting militarism for patriotic and nationalist reasons, Rygier held to her stance that "the army is the prop for all state authority."³² She was fighting an uphill battle. Already in August 1908, while Rygier was in prison, the First Regional Hervéist Anti-militarist Congress had been held in Sienna during which a motion passed accepting in principal the nation's need for the military while also calling for control of it to pass into the hands of the working class.³³ She and other collaborators of *Rómpete le File I* remained under constant surveillance.

Faced with this situation, Rygier concentrated her efforts on writing articles for the newspaper *La Protesta Umana*. Published in Milan from 1902 to 1907, *La Protesta*

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Cerrito, L'antimilitarismo anarchico in Italia nel primo ventennio *del secolo*, op. cit., 12.

³⁰ Ibid., 13.

³¹ Maria Rygier, *Il sindacalismo alia sbarra* (Bologna: La Scuola Moderna, 1911): 24-25.

³² Maria Rygier, *Contro il voto e per l'azione diretta* (La Spezia: Tipografia "La Sociale," 1913): 23.

³³ Cerrito, *Dall'insurrezionalismo alia settimana rossa*, op. cit., 133nl43.

Umana favored individual action and direct confrontation with both state institutions and the military. Repeatedly sequestered by the police — one edition called for the occupation of the Duomo in Milan — the newspaper was lead by a series of increasingly intractable editors, including Massimo Rocca. To bring the paper under control, Giuseppe Monanni, editor of the Florentine anarcho-individualist journal *Vir*, and his companion Leda Rafanelli were brought to Milan.³⁴

By this time, Maria Rygier had gained a reputation as the “Luisa Michel of Italy,” addressing anarchist conferences in Milan, among the anarchist community-in-exile in nearby Lugano, and other locations across northern Italy. Many of these conferences ended in chair-throwing and violent fist fights. In January 1910, after spending two months in prison for “outrageous and violent language directed against public of-

³⁴ Leda Rafanelli was born in 1880 in Pistoia. During a brief stay in Egypt early in her life she not only came into contact with the emigrant anarchist community but also converted to Islam. During the first decade of the century she lived in Florence where she exercised a considerable influence on an entire generation of subversives. Her first “social novel,” *Un sogno d’amore*, was well received by both Paolo Orano and Filippo Turati. She founded a small publishing house together with her husband Luigi Poli, and was a frequent contributor to Monanni’s *Vir*. After moving to Milan, she helped found a series of anarcho-individualist newspapers including: *Sciarpa Nera* (1909–1910); *La Cuestione Sociale* (1909); *La Rivolta* (1909–1910); and *La Libertà* (1913–1915). During these same years she helped edit Stirner’s *The Ego and His Own* and several of Nietzsche’s works. She actively campaigned against the Libyan War and against Italian intervention in the First World War. Little is known about her activities during the fascist period, though she remained in Italy and appears to have concentrated on literary works and translating under various pseudonyms. After the fall of fascism she wrote a number of works on oriental philosophy and offered a mystical vision of feminism, syndicalism, and other social issues. She died in 1971. The forty letters exchanged between Mussolini and Rafanelli between March 1913 and October 1914 offer an insight into Mussolini’s private life while director of *Avanti!* For the most part, Rafanelli seems to have rejected Mussolini’s amorous overtures, and severed her relations with him following his abandonment of socialism in favor of interventionism. For more see: Pier Carlo Masini, introduction to Leda Rafanelli, *Una donna e Mussolini*, by Leda Rafanelli (Milan: Rizzoli, 1975). Rafanelli’s professional (and amorous) relationship with Mussolini is indicative of the future Duce’s contact with the anarchists. Mussolini undoubtedly had a certain sympathy for both anarchist ideas and the anarchist leaders in his home region of Romagna. From 1902 to 1904 while living in Switzerland, Mussolini collaborated with the anarchist Luigi Bertoni in the publication of *Le Reveil-Il Risveglio* and translated, free of charge, both Kropotkin’s *Le paroles d’un revolte* (for which Mussolini prepared a long and positive review) and *La grande révolution* [Benito Mussolini, “Luigi Bertoni,” *La Folia* (Milan) 25 August 1922, in *Opera Omnia*, eds. Edoardo and Duilio Susmel (Florence: La Fenice, 1951–63): IV, 195–196]. Although Mussolini, by his own admission, was no anarchist, he called Stirner and Nietzsche “those Dolomites of thought” and rarely attacked the anarchists [Benito Mussolini, letter to Cesare Berti, 3 November 1911, *Opera Omnia*, op. cit., IV, 257–58]. What Mussolini ultimately found attractive about anarchism was the anarcho-individualists and their ideology. Foremost among the anarcho-individualists before the First World War was Libero Tancredi, alias Massimo Rocca. Mussolini was no doubt familiar with Rocca’s articles in *Il Novatore* and *La Lupa*, though it is uncertain whether the two met prior to October 1911 when Mussolini held a private conference in Forlì sponsored by *La Lotta di Classe*. A shared authoritarian individualism would be the theme of their relationship over the next fifteen years.

ficials,”³⁵ Rygier was convinced by the anarchist leaders Armando Borghi and Luigi Fabbri to move to Bologna, where she immediately took up a conspicuous role in the local anarchist movement.³⁶ Her motives for moving to the capital of Emilia-Romagna could not have involved escaping police surveillance, for she soon held the first of several conference during which she excused the actions of Gaetano Bresci, the anarchist who in 1900 assassinated the King Umberto.³⁷ Following a similar conference in September 1910, Rygier was imprisoned for three months for the use of “violent and abusive language...inciting class hatred, and resisting arrest.”³⁸

Within a month of her release, she spoke at a USI congress on the revolutionary potential of direct action. An account of her experiences at this congress, which would mark her definitive break with the revolutionary syndicalists, were later published as *Il Bindicalismo alia abarra [Syndicalism on Trial]*. Subtitled “Reflections of an Ex-syndicalist,” this unrepentant explanation of her “conversion” to anarchism — though she had in practice been an anarcho-individualist for several years already — offers a perspective on Rygier’s personal political philosophy to that time. The agenda of the congress was to resolve the question of whether the revolutionary syndicalists should collaborate with the *Confederazione Generale del Lavoro* (CGL) and whether, having done so, the majority of workers would agree with this tactic.³⁹ Rygier dissented strongly, arguing that this would put the revolutionary syndicalists back where they started from, with the unions once again subordinate to the Socialist Party. “Syndicalism,” she wrote, “should be a method of action for the unions and...should come from the heart of the various economic organizations as a spontaneous result of the experience of the workers movement.”⁴⁰ According to Rygier, however, the syndicalist movement in Italy did not originate within the unions, but rather within a Socialist Party compromised by parliamentary reformism “propagated as a political theory by a group of disgruntled intellectuals.”⁴¹ Harshly criticizing the Socialist Party’s attempt to “pollute” revolutionary syndicalism and the unions with “electoralism,” Rygier lashed out at the intellectuals she felt had moved syndicalism away from direct action and reduced it to an “ideological nullity.”⁴² As far as Rygier was concerned, the 1910 syndicalist congress had only confirmed the intellectuals’ basic ignorance of both syndicalist theory and the revolutionary potential of direct action. The forms of direct action most readily available to the working class, according to Rygier were anti-militarism — in particular, refusing military service — and agitation in favor of prison reforms.

³⁵ ACS, CPC, b. 4505, “Rygier Maria,” 16 December 1909, “Sentence of the Court of Appeals of Brescia against Maria Rygier and Primo Manzotti.” Rygier was also sentenced for speaking out against the execution of Francisco Ferrer.

³⁶ ACS, CPC, b. 4505, f. “Rygier Maria.” See also: Borghi, *Mezzo secolo di anarchia*, op. cit., 108.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Borghi, *Mezzo secolo di anarchia*, op. cit., 103.

⁴⁰ Rygier, *Il sindacalismo alia sbarra*, op. cit., 4.

⁴¹ Ibid., 5.

⁴² Ibid., 15.

As noted above, the syndicalists were split on the issue of anti-militarism. With regard to prison reform, several leaders — who could not have been unaware of Rygier's own story — stated (apparently without irony) that it was not a relevant issue for the syndicalists “because prisons, except for extreme cases of political persecution, are not for conscientious workers, but for the dregs of society!”⁴³ Rygier's conclusion, one which moved her towards anarcho-individualism centered on acts of individual direct action, was that “syndicalism, when it is not union action...is reduced to a single passive exercise: write, write, write, with presumptuous dilettantism, insensitive to the fervor of the battles and the call of ideology.”⁴⁴

Rygier's break with the organizational anarchists and the revolutionary syndicalists made her one-woman crusade within the Bolognese anarchist movement even more difficult. In addition to her continued surveillance by the police, her former anarchist colleagues began to harass her both intellectually and sexually. Borghi, who had been jilted by Rygier after a brief romance,⁴⁵ led the attacks, most of which were directed not at Rygier's ideas or her intelligence, but at her femininity, her style of dress, and, later, her person. Wrote Borghi:

Understanding the lack of attention his daughter gave to personal dress, (Rygier's) father arranged for her stepmother's assistance, but she could do nothing to get her to dress properly...Rygier put on hats and dresses without the slightest idea how to wear them...One day I ran into her on Via Lame, mortified, on the verge of tears. The other young women had been making fun of her. “Armando,” she said, “what is it that makes me the object of such ridicule?” Her stepmother had sent her a hat and had indicated the front and back by pinning a card which said: “Front side”. Rygier had thrust it on her head at will, and on the back you could read the card which said “Front side.”⁴⁶

In later years Borghi maliciously described her as “egocentric [and] capable of hate more than affection...She was talkative and abandoned herself to windy, salacious and downright unsettling rigmarole. We were far from being saints; but I was often embarrassed by her words[...] I must add that I little trusted her sanity.”⁴⁷ As to his doubts about Rygier's sanity, attempts were made to “confirm” this using the same Lombrosian standards which had been used by the forces of authority with such effect against the anarchists themselves. Following Rygier's separation from Virginio Corradi she publicly accused him of impotence, “loudly recounting details of their honeymoon which would

⁴³ Ibid., 25.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 35.

⁴⁵ Borghi later denied that any such romance took place (*Mezzo secolo di anarchia*, op. cit., 108–109), a claim later refuted by Gino Cerrito (*L'antimilitarismo anarchico in Italia nel primo ventennio del secolo*, op. cit.).

⁴⁶ Borghi, *Mezzo secolo di anarchia*, op. cit., 108

⁴⁷ Ibid.

have embarrassed men not hardened [to such language] .”⁴⁸ Unconvinced of Corradi’s impotence, Borghi and Fabbri abducted Rygier and took her to the medical examining room of two friends, the University of Bologna gynecologist Dr. Ettore Bidone, and Dr. Nino Samaja.⁴⁹ Using as an excuse for the exam their concerns about her lungs, she underwent a forced gynecological exam after which she was publicly declared “female but impenetrable by any man,” the association between her anatomical “deformity” and her mental state deemed evident by Lombrosian standards.⁵⁰ In that Borghi himself had been beaten and physically abused by the police, one might expect that he would show more humane and “libertarian” treatment of others, especially a colleague. In 1911, he was billyclubbed and arrested by the police, then marched through the streets of Bologna by *torcicollo* –a rope around his neck — “like a dogcatcher uses in places where there is no humane society.”⁵¹ Perhaps Borghi failed to recognize that his verbal and physical aggression against Maria Rygier demeaned himself, as well.

Corradi’s “honor” had been “restored,” and although Rygier rose above the situation and continued to collaborate with her old colleagues, her propaganda took on a new tone. In January 1911, she spoke at a conference sponsored by the Milanese revolutionaries on the theme of “Women and Religion,” during which she attacked the Italian judiciary for pardoning “rapist priests and *carabinieri* assassins.”⁵² On other occasions she spoke on “Political and Religious Persecution Throughout History,” “Militarism and Nationalism,” and “The House of Savoy Before and After the Risorgimento.”⁵³ In September, however, the police caught up with her again. This time her crime was more egregious. While traveling on a train near Piacenza, a container she was carrying spontaneously combusted, filling the carriage with a foul stench and smoke. Inside the container were explosives. She was arrested in the act of attempting to throw the flammable materials and some “compromising documents” onto the tracks from the transom at the rear of the train. She was returned to Piacenza and held in prison for two months.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, the War in Libya had burst upon the national scene, occupying much of the attention of her anti-militarist colleagues, including Luigi Fabbri who

⁴⁸ Letter from Armando Borghi to Vittorio Emiliani, 1966, cited in Emiliani, *Gli anarchici!*, op. cit., 201.

⁴⁹ Bidone would later be the council clerk of the first Socialist City Council in Bologna. After World War II, Samaja would become the socialist vice-mayor of the town of Dozza near Bologna.

⁵⁰ Emiliani, *Gli anarchici*, op. cit., 202; Fiorenza Tarozzi, interview by author, Bologna, December 1991. Rygier’s marriage to Corradi having failed, her “hysterics” could also be “explained” by the prevailing contemporary notion that “female sexuality had to be suppressed [by marriage] , though in young women this gave rise to flightiness and even hysterical reactions. Hence, the common expression, still heard today: ‘Quei nervi sono da *maritar!*’ [‘Those nerves need a husband!’] “[Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women* (Berkeley: UCAP, 1992): 136.

⁵¹ Borghi, *Mezzo secolo di anarchia*, op. cit., 114.

⁵² ACS, CPC, b. 4505, f. “Rygier Maria.”

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ ACS, CPC, b. 4505, f. “Rygier Maria.” Borghi incorrectly recalls this event as having taken place in early 1913 (*Mezzo secolo di anarchia*, op. cit., 138).

had offered her temporary lodging upon her release from prison. On October 30, 1911 in the courtyard of a Bolognese military barracks, a newly-recruited worker protesting against forced departure for Libya shot and wounded his commanding officer in the shoulder. The worker's name was Augusto Masetti, and his cry of "Long live anarchism! Down with the war!" would catalyze the forces on the Left opposed to the war. The public outrage at Masetti's "sacrilegious act" of insubordination reached its peak when nationalist newspapers began demanding that not only Masetti, but anarchists and other anti-militarists be hanged for their responsibility by association.⁵⁵ Hoping to defuse the increasingly polarized situation, the Giolittian government applied Lombrosian anthropometric standards to Masetti, declared him insane, and locked him in a mental asylum. In so doing they were able to avoid a trial (and an almost certain death sentence), and any more bad publicity against the war. Indignation on the left was widespread. Mussolini, who would himself soon spend several months in a Forli prison for leading a protest against the war, wrote an editorial in *Lotta di Classe* which justified Masetti's actions and challenged others to follow this audacious example.⁵⁶

The most outspoken critic of the government and ardent defender of Masetti was Maria Rygier. Masetti was a personal friend, a taciturn and tireless worker in the Bolognese anarchist movement who scurried around the city on his bicycle distributing copies of *Rómpete le File!* For a special edition of the Bolognese anarchist paper *L'Agitators*, Rygier prepared an article which excused Masetti's actions as a reaction to resurgent nationalism, a preemptive act of violence, force meeting force. "In the violence of war," she wrote, "anarchist revolt flashes."⁵⁷ The tone of the article was so acerbic that their regular printer refused to touch it. Eventually a sympathetic anarchist, Mammolo Zamboni, agreed to print the sheets which were distributed by hand in order to avoid the postal service and possible censorship.⁵⁸ The reaction was immediate. The next day, using the extraordinary legal measures available now that the country was at war, the police invaded and damaged the presses of *La Scuola Moderna* publishing house and arrested Rygier, Fabbri, and all but a handful of Bologna anarchists. Borghi, who at the time was in Massa Lombarda attending a conference, escaped to Paris. In the trial which followed, both Borghi (in absentia) and Rygier — who tried unsuccessfully to take full responsibility for the articles — received sentences of three years. While in prison in Rome, successive attempts were made to force Rygier to undergo clinical

⁵⁵ Cerrito, *Dall'insurrezionalismo alia settimana rossa*, op. cit., 134. Rygier's campaign in support of Masetti eventually took on international proportions as pro-Masetti organizations were formed in Paris, London, Zurich, Geneva, Lausanne, Bern, Montevideo, New York, Philadelphia, and Cairo. The Masetti case was still fresh in the minds of many at the time of the Sacco and Vanzetti case in the United States during the Twenties.

⁵⁶ Borghi, *Mezzo secolo di anarchia*, op. cit., 117.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Mammolo Zamboni's son, Ateo, allegedly fired at Mussolini in 1927. An angry Bolognese mob lynched him on the spot.

tests to help explain her “hysterical character.”⁵⁹ The examining doctor, referred to in a report by the warden as a leading gynecologist from the University of Bologna, noted “genital problems from which the causes of her nervous [disorders] might stem.” When she showed herself to be “apprehensive” about a second attempt at a gynecological exam, sedatives were forced on her.⁶⁰

When Rygier’s sentence was commuted in December under a general amnesty to celebrate the Italian victory over Turkey, she immediately resumed her campaign for prison reforms.⁶¹ She also organized a national committee in support of Masetti, still being held in a mental asylum. She reasoned that if Masetti were crazy at the time of the act, he could not be held responsible for his actions and should be released or at least transferred to a private clinic. Mussolini, director of *Avanti!* since the revolutionary wing gained control of the Socialist Party at the July 1912 Congress, published daily accounts of Rygier’s protest. Her impassioned self-defense at her trial following the article in *L’Agitators* generated so much enthusiasm that a Maria Rygier Libertarian Women’s Group was founded in Parma in October 1912. Only eight editions of their newspaper, *La Donna Libertaria* were published through June 1913 in Forli under the direction of Adele Dervisi, Irma Guidaloni, and Marzia Rossi.⁶² The emphasis of the paper was to discuss issues which other anarchist papers treated only peripherally, “with the conviction that the revolutionary movement should essentially pivot on ‘practical’ problems to which women gave the most importance: anti-alcoholism, anti-clericalism, the problem of prostitution, problems in education and schooling, birth control, the struggle against militarism and against the war.”⁶³ Part of the newspaper’s preference for practical over theoretical and ideological concerns was due to “indignation in the face of the evident crisis of the Italian anarchist movement, characterized by the pedantic attitude assumed...by a large part of its publications whose debates, tormented by polemics for and against individualism, were paralyzing it.”⁶⁴ Later editions of *La Donna Libertaria* – renamed “the monthly journal of educational and libertarian women’s propaganda” — focused mainly on anti-militarist propaganda and the cam-

⁵⁹ ACS, CPC, letter from the Director General of Prisons and Reformatories (name illegible) to the Director General of Public Security, Ministry of the Interior (Rome), 28 September 1912.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Cerrito, *L’Antimilitarismo italiano in Italia nel primo ventennio del secolo*, op. cit., 23–24. Little is known about this newspaper and the women who ran it. Gino Cerrito apparently obtained access to a copy, but has not been forthcoming about details on where it is located. Neither I nor any other historians I have interviewed have been able to find a copy.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid. Ceritto maintains that another reason for the emphasis on practical matters was the “poor ideological comprehension” of the writers. His evidence for this claim is that Rygier, after whom the Parma women’s group was named, also lacked the capacity for understanding anarchist theory. This is contradicted by the fact that Cerrito’s book presents Rygier as one of the most eloquent and capable propagandists of anti-militarism and anti-electoralism in the anarchist movement during this period.

paign to free Masetti, and were circulated in north and north-central Italy, France, and Switzerland.⁶⁵

Through 1912 the anarchist movement continued to be centered around the anti-militarist campaign to free Masetti. One of the few dissenting voices was that of Massimo Rocca, still nominally an anarchist and invited to address anarchist meetings, but in practice excommunicated by members of the anarchist community. Maria Rygier provided a conspicuous exception. Although Rocca and Rygier's ideas on militarism sharply diverged during this period, especially in light of Rocca's unflinchingly nationalist support for the Libyan War, they met and became friends. On visits to Bologna to address anarchist conferences and meetings, Rocca was a guest at Rygier's apartment.⁶⁶ The split between Rocca and Borghi was well known, and it is possible that Rygier profited from her relationship with Rocca as a symbol of her independence from the Bolognese anarchists. Borghi and Rocca had met for the first time in July 1906 while the former was editor of the Ravenna anarchists newspaper *L'Aurora*. A group of local anarchists invited Rocca to speak to them in an attempt to lure him to Ravenna to take over editorial control of the newspaper from Borghi. Rocca spoke on his usual themes of Stirnerian and Nietzschean anarcho-individualism. Borghi described the scene as follows:

For two hours a weak and spitting monstrosity inflicted on us...a lucubration which he fobbed off as philosophy, and which seemed intended not to spread, but to defame the ideals of anarchism. According to him, we were the tail end of spineless anarchism, "small minded Christians," boils of humanitarian clericalism. Our communism...promoted the dominance of the dregs of society to the detriment of the Superman, which crushes the weak underfoot. Fortunately, a new Gospel had been revealed to humanity: the Gospel according to Stirner and Nietzsche...The new Gospel announced that everyone and everything must serve the needs and desires of the individual...Everything was fair game to the anarchist liberated from the fetters of "bourgeois moralism"...Someone yelled out that we ought to try a little Superman experiment by kicking this guy in the ass.⁶⁷

Borghi managed to retain his position as editor, and subsequently made clear his views on anarcho-individualism — "the difference between an-archia and ego-archia" — in *Il nostro e l'altrui individualismo* [*Our Individualism and That of Others*], with a preface by Leda Rafanelli.⁶⁸ Borghi felt that it was wrong to confuse "amoral individualism" with the doctrine of the authentic anarchists. The former, he maintained

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ ACS, CPC, b. 4362, f. "Rocca Massimo."

⁶⁷ Borghi, *Mezzo secolo di anarchismo*, op. cit., 77.

⁶⁸ Borghi, *Il nostro e l'altrui individualismo*, op. cit.

“exalts the triumph of immorality [while the latter] is motivated by a firm moral inspiration.”⁶⁹ According to Rocca’s definition of anarchism, wrote Borghi, “Nero, Caligula, and Napoleon could pass as anarchists. To be an anarchist one need only demand liberty for themselves, and stand ready to crush the liberty of others. No morality, therefore.”⁷⁰

Until she broke with Borghi’s organizational (communist) anarchists and with the revolutionary syndicalists, this distinction between moral and amoral (even immoral) anarchism was shared by Maria Rygier.⁷¹ Her move towards anarcho-individualism, while it did not involve a rejection of morality, tout court, was characterized by a shift in emphasis towards the struggle of groups and individuals for predominance over others and the right of individuals to make their own choices. Nevertheless, through 1912 and into 1913, she continued to find common ground with the communist anarchists on such issues as anti-militarism and anti-electoralism, contributing to such anarchist newspapers as *La Demolizione*, *L’Agitators* in Bologna, and *Il Ribelle* in Milan. Her pamphlet *Contro il voto e per l’azione diretta* [*Against the Vote and in Favor of Direct Action*], also published in this period, is a concise and eloquent statement of the anarchists position against electoral politics and parliamentary participation.⁷² According to Rygier, the Italian people had paid the price for universal manhood suffrage (introduced in the general elections of 1913) with their participation in the Libyan War. Even though the elections provided the majority for Giolitti, it soon became clear that it would no longer be possible to control Italy using his tactic of *trasformismo*. For Rygier, Giolitti’s tactic of enlarging the vote was designed to compromise the revolutionary parties in Italy by offering them participation in the political process, and to provide a mandate for the continued policy of forcing compromise between organized labor and industrialists. “Electoral politics saps the revolutionary energies of the opposition parties,” she wrote, “The Italian people, educated through the insurrectional actions...of the Mazzinians, made aware of their own force by the unforgettable epic of the Garibaldian volunteers, has been, in little more than fifty years of parliamentary life, corrupted, cowed, and put to sleep.”⁷³ Although the socialists had been strengthened by the elections, Rygier also protested against their program of nominating protest candidates, for those who

want to call themselves socialist revolutionaries, struggle in a irremediable contradiction...One can not carry on the class struggle for economic equality in the legislative chambers...Therefore, wanting to participate in

⁶⁹ Borghi, *Mezzo secolo di anarchia*, op. cit., 78.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 79.

⁷¹ Between 6 April 1913 and 25 May 1913, Rygier and Borghi’s polemical attacks on each other grew to such proportions that the Bolognese anarchist weekly *La Barricata* published a supplement called *Canaglie Rosse*, almost exclusively dedicated to their debate.

⁷² Rygier, *Contro il voto e per l’azione diretta*, op. cit.

⁷³ Ibid., 6.

the electoral races while following the principles of the class struggle is nonsensical.”⁷⁴

Rygier called instead for improvements for the working class to be gained through direct action “to reinforce their revolutionary energy, rather than obtaining [improvements] through the state with electoral compromises and surrender.”⁷⁵ She lashed out at each of the parties — Liberal, Socialist, Republican — at the army, at the monarchy, and at the Church. “Fight with your own strength, scare the government, and you will obtain what you want,” she wrote, “A few days of revolutionary action are worth more than years of electoral politics.”⁷⁶

During 1913 Massimo Rocca spent much of his time struggling through eleventh-hour changes on *L’Anarchismo contro l’anarchia* to bring the work, begun as early as 1910, into line with his current thinking.⁷⁷ By the time it reached the anarchist community in mid-1914 the full-extent of Rocca’s “dissident” anarchism was quite well known. In the introduction, addressed specifically to Arturo Labriola, Rocca declared defiantly that “the true disciple is the one who dares to contradict the master,” and set off on a long and arduous journey through some five-hundred pages of idiosyncratic analysis of nearly every aspect of revolutionary theory on the Left. He took on Comte, Godwin, Stirner, Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin, Malatesta, and Marx. He criticized socialism, liberalism, syndicalism, “communist utopianism,” capitalism, consumerism, and, of course, anarchism, in addition, he commented on the Church, the Bourgeois, the State, the economy, class struggle, and “mistaken ideas about revolution.” It was a chaotic collection of Rocca’s ideas culled from his writings on everyone and everything, with varying tones and writing styles reflecting the periods during which the constituent pieces were written. The “explanatory” introduction, conclusion, and footnotes acted as a frame, containing and providing consistency to the widely ranging set of opinions. They were the only parts of the book which could be clearly identified as having been written at the time of publication, that is, in the months preceding the outbreak of the First World War. While Rocca in *L’Anarchismo contro l’anarchia* is still clearly influenced by the same Stirnerian tendencies apparent in his “Studi su Max Stirner” of 1911, much of what was being suggested in the earlier work is now presented as historical fact.

“The development of agriculture creates the first juridico-political society,” wrote Rocca, and with the first partitioning of tribal lands “arises the first authority, sanctioned by respect and by the force of the collective.”⁷⁸ But, he noted, the subsequent

⁷⁴ Ibid., 12.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 20.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 21.

⁷⁷ Rocca, *L’Anarchismo contro l’anarchia*, op. cit. This book may have had one of the worst publication records in history. Almost no one seems to have read it or, if they did read it, deemed it unworthy of detailed comment. In part this is due to the time of publication in mid-1914, when the pace of events turned public attention towards newspapers and the shifting opinions of political leaders.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 458.

increase in population made it necessary to cultivate less-fertile lands, putting different tribes in contact. In the war which ensued, the central authority was reinforced, as well as “the dominance of the victors over the vanquished...which generates the first class society.”⁷⁹ For Rocca, each of these classes had certain rights which had to be maintained through violence. In that the “most revolutionary classes are also the most conscious of their new rights,” they should therefore be disposed to the use of violence for “revolutionary” ends. Yet, wrote Rocca, “the anarchists who deny all this, admit it on the sly, when they admit to the social necessity of protecting themselves from ‘crazies’ by closing them in sanitariums,” only to find themselves the victims of “Lombrosian evaluations” which earned them sentences “out of proportion to the crimes committed.”⁸⁰ Establishing the principle of rights based on competitive violence led Rocca to the conclusion that “anarchy, understood as a society without norms, is impossible.”⁸¹ Anarchism was not a form of revolt against anything specific, but rather “a revolt in the most general and ethical sense of the term...like national rebellion of a people against the foreigner; like the current rebellion of the classes against capitalist privilege; like, finally, the struggle of the individual to affirm individuality against the party, the group, against the whole society.”⁸² As such, Rocca identified the opposition of the individual to the collective as the source of “the impotence and uncertainty of the anarchists,” the internal contradiction that had to be overcome if they wanted to become the builders of a new society. For Rocca, “the irreconcilable can be reconciled” by aligning the individual both with their class — for the purposes of making the revolution — and with the nation — for the purpose of continuing that revolution as an integral part of society: “Far from subordinating revolt and violence to some pre-established end, anarchism’s essence is entirely in this violence and this revolt.”⁸³ Thus, Rocca established the primacy of anarchy (chaos) over anarchism (a political ideology or movement) as well as the “minority” disposed to violence and chaos which will prevail over the collective ideology or movement. “In every great historical, artistic, or scientific movement,” he wrote, “before swaying the majority which allows it to triumph, is an avant-garde minority which intuitively and foresees.” Furthermore — and here the reference would not have been lost on his contemporaries

Even before the minority there often existed a single individual...whose exquisite sensitivity and acute observations permitted him to analyze the present and distinguish the tendencies which had just arisen, almost always as a reaction. And he was the innovator [il novatore] of the thinking which crushed underfoot the prejudice...All these individualists — the anarchists — these minorities, constituted an aristocracy which renewed themselves

⁷⁹ Ibid., 458–59.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 464.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., 476.

⁸³ Ibid., 400.

continuously; an aristocracy that fought against everyone and everything, often succumbed, but in succumbing, dominated.⁸⁴

A more succinct statement of how Rocca saw himself as an important historical actor even before the First World War could probably not be found. This attitude would inform his actions for the rest of his life. In fact, Rocca would become one of “the very few innovators [novatoriani] who would assist in the victory of their own innovations,” namely the fascist movement.⁸⁵

The militarism and nationalism, so completely spelled out in *L'Anarchismo contro l'anarchia* would further mark Rocca as a heretic within the anarchist movement. Though he boasted of his “excommunication from all the reunited assemblies of anarchism,” through early 1914 he tried desperately to reenter the movement, perhaps still hoping to harness the organization to his own program. Labriola described Rocca as “one of the most cultivated and complete political writers in the country,” and opined that “Your friends, the anarchists, must be very proud of you.”⁸⁶ Yet, nothing could have been farther from the truth. Despite the diplomatic efforts of former Turinese colleagues such as Mario Gioda, the anarchists treated Rocca with uncommon disdain.⁸⁷ In July 1914, he petitioned the organizing committee of the upcoming Florence Congress to allow him to speak. Despite the conciliatory tone of his written request to put behind them “a ten-year long struggle,” he finished by saying that he was not to blame for the falling out between himself and the rest of the anarchist movement.⁸⁸ The request to speak was flatly refused.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 482.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Rocca, *L'Anarchismo contro l'anarchia*, op. cit., xiii.

⁸⁷ Mario Gioda (b. Turin 1883-d. Turin 1924) was founder of the Turin *faacio*, and later was another of the anarcho-individualists to favor intervention in the First World War. Like Rocca, he was a printer who educated himself and graduated to the ranks of polemical journalism. In 1903 he unsuccessfully tried to start a newspaper called *Il Marciapiede* which he himself described as “stillborn.” By the time of Rocca’s attempt to rejoin the anarchist movement, however, he was director of the Genovese newspaper *Tribuna del Popolo*. He joined the ranks of interventionists immediately following Mussolini’s “conversion,” and volunteered in the First World War soon after Italy’s entry. On account of frail health he was demobilized and reactivated twice (in 1916 and in 1918). Although he never saw action during the war, he busily wrote and distributed pro-war leaflets to the soldiers near the front and back in Turin. A “fascist of the first hour,” he would re-emerge alongside Rocca in the so-called “Revisionist Crises.” He was among the first fascists to suggest that the movement’s propaganda disassociate itself from the “overcrowded cities” in favor of “the tranquility of the countryside” dedicating itself to agriculture. He was also one of the first propagandists of the idealized women’s role as mother, child-bearer, and “multiplier” who would fill the world with future defenders of the Fatherland.” “Woe betide women,” wrote Gioda in his flowery verse “if they seek pleasure as an end in itself which takes away from maternity, rebelling against the great mission for which God put them on this earth!” His greatest contribution to fascist propaganda was his death due to illness in September 1924, which allowed the fascists to transform him into a martyr and divert attention from the Matteotti crisis. For more see: Giovanni Croce, *La vita di Mario Gioda* (Turin: Impronta, 1938); Paolo Spriano, *Storia di Torino operaia e socialista* (Turin: Einaudi, 1972); and, Giancarlo Carcano, *Strafe a Torino* (Turin: La Pietra, 1973).

⁸⁸ Berneri, “Domini e idee, Libero Tancredi,” op. cit.

Meanwhile the political situation in Italy had greatly changed. Salandra had become Prime Minister in April 1914 following the resignation of Giolitti a month before. Salandra proved to be even more conservative than Giolitti, still seen by the Left an insidious broker behind parliamentary maneuvers. He came to power as a representative of the growing strength of the Right and immediately stymied further attempts at democratization while strengthening private, entrepreneurial interests in the economy. In order to do this, it was necessary to strengthen the state, uphold law and order, and undermine Giolitti's policy of conciliation with the Left. Salandra also inherited a difficult economic situation. With industrial output slowing, relations between labor and industry were strained by an all-time high in unemployment and an unprecedented aggressiveness on the part of the managers and factory owners. Salandra's tough attitude led to direct confrontation in June 1914, culminating in the events of the *settimana rossa*, or "Red Week." The Republicans, socialists, and revolutionary syndicalists all joined the anarchists in anti-militarist demonstrations coinciding with government celebrations of Constitution Day, June 7. Salandra, fearing that the issue of anti-militarism would provide the catalyst for the formation of a "Red Bloc," ordered the local Prefects to prohibit the demonstrations. The anarchists, led by Borghi, hoped that the demonstrations would begin an insurrection that would spread throughout Italy.⁸⁹ The underlying tactic was to provoke Federal soldiers into firing on the crowds of demonstrating workers so that one or more of the workers would be killed. In so doing, they would create a martyr, a propaganda arm to show that the state was reactionary, right-wing, and opposed to the workers and their movements. This demonstration of the ulterior motives and real nature of the State would result in a counter-reaction in the form of a mass uprising of workers.⁹⁰ As George Woodcock notes, this is a standard anarchist tactic: "the weak provoke; the strong unwillingly expend themselves."⁹¹ Although Red Week did not develop into a nation-wide insurrection, over one million workers participated — particularly in Romagna and the Marches — making it the largest and most intense workers movement up to that time in Italy. The salient point about the demonstrations is that the workers "proved to be more radical than their leaders had anticipated...the masses had surpassed the leadership in revolutionary fervor."⁹² Anarchists such as Borghi were not prepared to accept the consequences of their tactics. In the weeks to follow, many of the traditional leaders became followers, creating a void soon filled by leaders more disposed to accept the outcome of revolutionary tactics. One of these leaders was Benito Mussolini, who in July 1914 in the pages of his journal, *Utopia*, openly stated, "Italy needs a revolution and it will have one."⁹³ For Mussolini and others like him, the Red Week was a dearly lost opportunity. Opposition

⁸⁹ "Charles Bertrand, "Italian Revolutionary Syndicalism and the Crisis of Intervention," op. cit., 354–55. For more on Borghi's participation see: Armando Borghi, *Vivere da anarchic!*, op. cit., 111–118.

⁹⁰ Zeffiro Ciuffoletti, interview by author, Florence, April 1992.

⁹¹ Woodcock, *Anarchism*, op. cit.

⁹² Bertrand, "Italian Revolutionary Syndicalism and the Crisis of Intervention," op. cit., 355.

⁹³ Benito Mussolini, "La settimana rossa," *Utopia* (15–31 July 1914) Reprint, op. cit., 319.

to the war in August 1914 should have provided the Left with a similar possibility of creating class unity and political revolution, but the subsequent collapse of the Second International dashed any such hopes.

As the intervention crisis developed, attention turned towards the newspapers for the almost daily shifts of opinion among Italy's political leaders. Although Mussolini's "conversion" to interventionism in October 1914 was considered one of the most conspicuous conversions during the interventionist crisis, the most publicized until that time was that of Maria Rygier, who declared herself in favor of intervention in early August only a few days after the outbreak of hostilities. The sources of this conversion can be dated from as early as the summer of 1913, when Rygier began expanding her political horizons, traveling abroad to London, Paris, Lyon, Nice, and Marseilles where she made contacts with not only Italian anarchists in exile, but also the most influential local anarchists. Among these leaders was Gustave Hervé, whose conversion to interventionism would be one of the strongest blows against the unity of the Left in France. Hervé's influence on Rygier was crucial, but only manifested itself later, during the intervention crisis. In the meantime, there was considerable tension in her thinking between her public anti-militarist campaign to free her friend Masetti and her private acceptance of Hervé's views on intervention. Despite her break with the revolutionary syndicalists and her estrangement from Borghi, she continued to have a considerable influence within the anarchist movement. Her reputation earned her equal billing at conferences with leaders such as Errico Malatesta, recently returned from exile in London. In November 1913 she was still leading the pro-Masetti anti-militarist campaign, for which she was arrested and imprisoned. When her father died a month later leaving her his entire inheritance, she was still serving the sentence in a Bologna prison and was not allowed to attend his funeral.⁹⁴

It is not clear to what extent Maria Rygier was personally involved in the revolts of the Red Week. Towards the end of the week, however, she was intercepted in a car at the French border while assisting the escape of a fugitive colleague involved in the uprising. Two weeks later she was criss-crossing Italy speaking out against "the State, the bourgeois, and the dynasty," after which she only narrowly escaped arrest by crossing the Austrian border to Innsbruck and onto Paris.⁹⁵ On July 24 she spoke in Lyon at an anarchist conference, voting in favor of the order of the day "protesting the sentencing and imprisonment of [Masetti] and calling for the proletariat to keep alive the agitation until he is liberated."⁹⁶ Within two weeks, however, her public position regarding intervention had completely changed, and was now in line with her private views. Hereafter, her campaign for Masetti was secondary to the larger conflict and the responsibilities she thought Italy had a moral obligation to fulfill. The earlier influence of Hervé on Rygier became apparent only at this time. She returned to Bologna, and soon

⁹⁴ ACS, CPC, f. 4505, b. "Rygier Maria."

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

after began speaking at conferences along the Adriatic coast in favor of intervention in the war and “The Proletariat and the War,” much to the bewilderment of Borghi and other anarchist colleagues.⁹⁷ Subsequent conferences were held throughout the month culminating in a commemoration of those anarchists who fell in the fighting against the Austrians in Serbia during which she “spoke against neutrality and for the necessity of martyrs against Austria.”⁹⁸ On August 22 she wrote a letter — signed by several other anarchists and revolutionary syndicalists — which summarized her pro-interventionist stance and the reasons for her “conversion”:

Our solidarity and help for France and heroic Belgium are, to me, obligations which can not be set aside, deriving as much from our role as civilized men, as from [our role] as internationalists...Men of action adapt their work to the prevailing conditions and know that all truths are relative, responding to the circumstances of life and themselves according to the way these [circumstances] change...This concept of relativity is true for war. When we preached to the Latin people a disinterestedness about any form of national defense, we intended to combat reactionary and imperialist patriotism and the injustices of colonial conquests, and we could not foresee that in the center of Europe four million socialists would be ready to join with the brigantine enterprises of their Kaiser and would forget the brotherhood which should have united them with the proletariat of evolved nations...If, for the love of theory, we want to assert that it does not matter whether or not France becomes a province of the German Empire, we can not stand by unmoved by the anguish of unarmed people, the majority of which are proletarians...Doctrinal aberration is preferable to the embarrassment of confessing, as many have done, that they want France’s victory, but they do not want to contribute by putting Italy to the heroic and generous test...Subversives who pretend to justify such a contradiction between their sense of sympathy for France and the stated proposal of non-intervention in the war, with the pretense that they want their precious existence to serve a revolutionary cause, are apostles of vileness.⁹⁹

Of particular importance was Rygier’s comment that “men of action adapt their work to the prevailing conditions and know that all truths are relative.” Rygier’s situational ethics ordered her priorities such that Italy’s collective obligation to intervene in the war became relatively more important than the freeing of one individual, Masetti.

⁹⁷ Ibid. A year later Rygier gave a full account of her “conversion” and the reaction of her anarchist colleagues in *Sulla soglie di un’epoca. La Nostra Patria* (Rome: Libreria Politics Moderna, 1915): 7–30.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ “Maria Rygier, letter to Alceste De Ambris (leader of the USI whose interventionist stance would soon lead to his being replaced by Borghi), 22 August 1914, cited in Ugo Fedeli, “Gli anarchici e la guerra.” op. cit., 625. For more on the power struggle between Borghi and De Ambris see: Bertrand, “Italian Revolutionary Syndicalism and the Crisis of Intervention,” op. cit.

For Rygier, the collective could become more important than the individual in moments of crisis and revolution. A similar situational ethics would shape her support of the fascist seizure of power.

Among those who would immediately welcome Rygier's arrival in the interventionist camp was Massimo Rocca, who had already shown his growing admiration for Maria Rygier in *L'Anarchismo contro l'anarchia* when he wrote:

Only in Bologna, and not for very long, thanks...to the militant valor of Rygier, the anarchists have succeeded in exercising a certain influence on the mass of workers and the citizens in general. I believe, though, within the anarchist movement Rygier represents the exception that confirms the rule, and I have the bitter conviction that, notwithstanding her admirable sacrifices, the results which she has obtained will not go beyond the influence of her own personality.¹⁰⁰

To the time of her conversion, however, they had bitterly disagreed about militarism. Rocca had been in favor of the Libyan War and opposed the pro-Masetti campaign. In response to Rygier's antimilitarism, in 1912 he wrote "I exalt in my own revolutionary spirit to think of the six or seven hundred thousand bayonets which will soon be applied inexorably and enthusiastically against Turkey, threatening its disappearance from Europe."¹⁰¹ Now, however, they found themselves on common ground, in favor of intervention against the Austrians.

Rocca must have also recognized in Mussolini something of his own interventionist faith, for it was the former's polemical attacks which forced the latter to abandon the Socialist Party's position of *ne aderire ne sabotare*. On October 7, the front page of *Il Resto del Carlino* (the principal daily newspaper of Bologna) carried an article by Rocca entitled, "The Director of *Avanti* I Unmasked. A Man of Straw. Open Letter to Benito Mussolini." Rocca blasted Mussolini:

I accuse you exactly...of not having known how to give the newspaper you edit...a definite direction, one which might have been erroneous, but would not have produced the enormous contradiction which you are now consolidating to the detriment of the Socialist Party, not to mention the nation...Using the pretext of military unpreparedness, you had begun to hand over the reins of *Avanti*/ to your co-editors and co-directors in the Party, and...when the preparations were complete and there was no longer a pretext, you no longer wanted or dared change tone...and admit that you were, then, a director made of straw...You followed a direction which you

¹⁰⁰ Rocca, *L'anarchismo contro l'anarchia*, op. cit., 2.

¹⁰¹ Massimo Rocca [Libero Tancredi] , "La sconfitta dell'Europa," *La Rivolta* (October 1912), cited in Fedeli, "Gli anarchici e la guerra," op. cit., 606. Rocca's 1960 book of the same title is a review of twentieth-century Italian foreign policy and only briefly discusses the interventionist crisis.

knew was damaging, and you, I repeat, knew and know how ruinous Italy's neutrality has already been and will be. Whence, disoriented between the two private and public opinions, you sought out all pretexts for reconciling them and absolving yourself in front of your friends and yourself...Your entire campaign is based on this mental reticence: the certainty or the hope that –in spite of you — the government will declare war...Until you clarify your position, in a burst of sincerity which will have pleasing consequences, I tell you that your work, at present, is politically dishonest.¹⁰²

As Renzo De Felice points out, “Mussolini was really on the ropes; in his response to Rocca and in the debate which followed, his defense, notwithstanding his apparently certain and scornful tone, was weak and contradictory, that of a man still uncertain fearful of ‘crossing the Rubicon’.”¹⁰³ After much debate and deliberation, he finally did cross on October 18, with the clamorous publication of his article “From Absolute Neutrality to Working and Active Neutrality.” Wrote Mussolini,

We have had the quite singular privilege of living during the most tragic hour in the history of the world. Do we want to be –as men and as socialists — passive bystanders to this grandiose drama? Or do we not want to be — in some way and in some sense — protagonists?¹⁰⁴

Within days Mussolini had given over control of *Avanti/* and was making preparations for his pro-interventionist newspaper *Il Popolo d'Italia*, which appeared on November 15. That he received initial funding for this newspaper from the director of *Il Reato del Carlino*, Filippo Naldi, seems likely given that Naldi had offered Rocca the chance to publicly attack Mussolini's neutrality in the pages of that respected national paper.¹⁰⁵ Later, another explanation was offered by Maria Rygier. In 1926, in a pamphlet entitled “Mussolini Informer for the French Police or The Hidden Reasons Behind His ‘Conversion’,” she claimed that Mussolini had been a paid informant of the French secret police in the Haute Savoie in 1904 after being expelled from Switzerland with a false passport.¹⁰⁶ For 200 francs a month Mussolini spied on other Italian emigrants, in particular his socialist “comrades.” Ten years later, seeing that he was

¹⁰² Massimo Rocca [Libero Tancredi] , cited in Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il rivoluzionario, 1883–1920* (Turin: Einaudi, 1965): 255.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 256.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. , 260.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 275. De Felice writes that “...knowing Mussolini's psychological state, Naldi wanted to save time and force Mussolini to declare himself openly.” Martin Clark writes that *Il Popolo d'Italia* “was financed initially through Filippo Naldi...who used funds provided by big industrial firms and possibly by the government. From early 1915 onwards the French press office in Rome provided much of the cash, although the British and Russians also contributed” [Clark, *Modern Italy, 1871–1932*, op. cit., 183] .

¹⁰⁶ Maria Rygier, “Mussolini informatore della polizia francese o ragioni occulte della sua ‘conversion’,” in Benito Mussolini. Quattro testimonianze, ed. Renzo De Felice (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1976) : 187–200. The article first appeared as “Mussolini indicateur de la police frangaise ou les raisons occultes

already on a list of paid informers, the French were able to force Mussolini's hand in their attempt to find someone to split the Italian Socialist Party and "create discord and confusion regarding" its policy of nonintervention in the war. As such, wrote Rygier, it was not difficult for the French "to find the fiery interventionist beneath the mask of the 'absolute neutralist'."¹⁰⁷

Whether Mussolini's "conversion" to intervention was based on sincere conviction or whether he received assistance from the French is not certain. In any case, he soon became the leader of the interventionist movement in which the anarcho-individualists coalesced. In addition to Rygier and Rocca, other anarcho-individualists included: Attilio Paolinelli in Rome, who published a single issue of *La Sfida* in October 1914¹⁰⁸; Edmondo Mazzucato, who later became a *sansepolcrista*, one of the "fascists of the first hour" present when Mussolini founded Fascist Party in 1919 in Piazza San Sepolcro in Milan¹⁰⁹; Rocca's Turinese colleague Mario Gioda who later founded the Turin *fascio*¹¹⁰; and Oberdan Gigli, who in the years before the war had collaborated with Pietro Gori and Luigi Fabbri on *Il Pensiero*, and with Giuseppe Monanni and Leda Rafanelli on *La Rivolta* and *La Liberta'*. In December 1914 Rygier convinced Gigli to write the manifesto of the anarchist-interventionists, which read:

Our duty, therefore, is to resolutely oppose moderate and conservative European forces which are attempting a political and economic regression in the avant-garde countries. Our internationalism truly crosses borders; it does not recognize the comfortable and utilitarian neutrality of the government; it wants to know the pains and hopes of all peoples who defend their liberty. Neutrality today is for everyone just contemptuous national egoism; it is the exact negation of internationalism...All wars of liberation are our wars and now we are responding with enthusiasm and with love to the painful call of France. Time is pressing...The Government knows

de sa 'conversion',' (Brussels: Imprimerie Coopérative Lucifer, 1928). Rygier originally attributed this information to Pierre Charpy, editor of the Parisian newspaper *Le Flambeau*. In an article published in *Il Risorgimento Liberale* immediately following the Second World War (29 July 1945), however, she wrote that the head of the French masons, Maurice Monier, had obtained the information directly from Mussolini's file at the *Sûreté Générale*. For more see: De Felice, *Mussolini il rivoluzionario, 1833-1920*, op. cit., 37.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 190. Rygier also claimed that at the last minute Mussolini threatened to blackmail both parties by revealing the nature of the negotiation and had to be paid off with "a big wad of bank notes."

¹⁰⁸ For more see: Murizio Antonioli, "Il movimento anarchico Italiano nel 1914," *Storia e Politica* 2 (April-June 1973): 247n34.

¹⁰⁹ For more see: Edmondo Mazzucato, *Da anarchico a sansepolcrista*, (Milan: Omero Marangoni Editore, 1934).

¹¹⁰ Pier Carlo Masini, "Gli anarchici italiani tra 'interventismo' e 'disfattismo rivoluzionario'," *RSS* 5 (January-March 1959): 209. Masini also lists Roberto D'Angio, Antonio Agresti, and Edoardo Malusardi as less significant anarcho-individualists-turned-interventionists. Agresti, Masini claims, "was never an anarchist but called himself one so as to qualify as an anarcho-interventionist."

its way and we know ours. We must act for our France, for the France of liberty and revolution.¹¹¹

As the conflict spread and France appeared in danger of being overrun, such appeals by the interventionists attempted to link their cause to other just wars fought by Italy against reactionary states. Their symbols became Garibaldi and Amilcare Cipriani, the latter a living veteran of the Paris Commune and a revolutionary “subversive” who had spent long years in prison in the 1880s. Pier Carlo Masini describes the ideology of the anarchist-interventionists as: “antiimperialist in the single sense of anti-Teutonic, and anti-militarist in the single sense of anti-spiked-helmets; anti-autocratic...anti-Hapsburg, in favor of solidarity with Republican France and with attacked peoples (Serbia and Belgium); intellectually disdaining ‘vile neutralism,’ for ‘easy-chair neutralism,’ for ‘decrepit socialism’; confusedly hoping for the prospect of revolutionary upheaval by means of a ‘regenerative war’; and, in favor of the revolt of the irrational against humanitarian, pietist, and quietist conceptions of democracy.”¹¹²

Until Italy’s intervention, Rygier, Rocca, Gioda, Gigli, and Paolinelli all collaborated on the Milanese interventionist weekly *La Guerra Sociale*, in which they attacked the continuing neutralist position of Borghi, now leader of the USI.¹¹³ Borghi took control of the USI after the previous leader, Alceste De Ambris, declared himself in favor of intervention by posing the question at a syndicalist conference, “What would we do should western civilization be threatened with suffocation by German imperialism and only our intervention could save it?”¹¹⁴ By the time Italy declared war on Austria in May 1915, the anarcho-individualists had made quite a name for themselves. In addition to De Ambris, they had as company Arturo Labriola (nicknamed “*Capriola*,” or “somersault” for his ideological flip-flop¹¹⁵), Filippo Corridoni (who at the outbreak of the war was in prison), and the recently-expelled reformist leader of the Socialist Party, Leonida Bissolati.¹¹⁶ Rygier and Rocca were inseparable companions, traveling throughout northern Italy and Switzerland holding private and public conferences. In mid-August they brokered an agreement between the syndicalist-interventionists and

¹¹¹ Fedeli, “Gli anarchici e la guerra,” op. cit., 626–627. Fedeli also offers a complete list of the signatories of this manifesto.

¹¹² Masini, “Gli anarchici italiani tra ‘interventismo’ e ‘disfattismo rivoluzionario,’” op. cit., 211.

¹¹³ *La Guerra Sociale* was published from 20 February to 24 April 1915. Edited by Edoardo Malusardi the newspaper’s Garibaldian motto was, “It is useless to hope for justice except from the bore of a carbine.”

¹¹⁴ Fedeli, “Gli anarchici e la guerra,” op. cit., 623. De Ambris’ position in the revolutionary syndicalist movement was already rather ambiguous. Elected to parliament as a “protest candidate,” he subsequently held onto his seat with extreme tenacity. Rygier blasted De Ambris for his parliamentary participation in the pages of *Contro il voto e per l’azione diretta*, op. cit., 18–19. For more on the Borghi-De Ambris succession see: Bertrand, “Italian Revolutionary Syndicalism and the Crisis of Intervention,” op. cit.

¹¹⁵ Emiliani, “Armando Borghi: dalla Romagna rossa e nera all’impegno sindacale,” op. cit., 203.

¹¹⁶ For a more complete list of those (anarchist and non-anarchist) who “crossed the Rubicon” into the interventionist camp see De Felice, Mussolini *il rivoluzionario, 183–1920*, op. cit., 288.

the Republicans to found the first *Fascio rivoluzionario d'azione internazionalista* in Milan. In December the group reconstituted itself as the national association of *Fasci rivoluzionari interventisti*.¹¹⁷ In October, Rygier and Rocca traveled together to Nice where Rygier volunteered for the Red Cross. She worked for several weeks in a local military hospital before the local authorities learned of an outstanding warrant for her arrest in Italy and forced her to quit.¹¹⁸ She returned to Italy only in January after the declaration of a general amnesty by the Government on December 29.¹¹⁹ Rocca volunteered for the French Foreign legion in the so-called "Garibaldi Regiment" of Italian volunteers at the rank of lance corporal.¹²⁰ In February an unconfirmed report listed him as critically wounded at the Battle of the Argonne.¹²¹

Back in Italy, the Government's official position continued to be that of neutrality. Rygier's pro-interventionist demonstrations and speeches often contained offensive reference to the monarchy, and drew the attention of the authorities, especially when these remarks were published in national newspapers.¹²² Other women who had remained in the anarchist movement continued to express their exasperation with Rygier in the pages of the anarcho-feminist journal *L'Alba Libertaria*.¹²³ She continued to be suspected of mental instability. Followed by undercover police to Geneva in early 1916, the frenetic pace of her activity and continued contact with "subversive elements" led the authorities to conclude that "she is not in full possession of her mental faculties."¹²⁴ Soon after she declared herself to be "of the republican faith," and officially joined the Republican Party. From numerous residences in Italy she made propaganda trips to France and Switzerland, and during the war acted as Secretary General of the *Fascio di difesa nazionale* in Rome.¹²⁵ In mid-1916, Rygier and a group of Belgian women refugees in Marseilles founded an anti-German newspaper called *I Calpestati*. Edited by a certain Marie Henri, it was described by the police as being "generally of a commercial nature."¹²⁶ At the end of the year, she was nominated Secretary of the Rome and Province Trades Union Council, and moved permanently to Rome. However, she was soon forced to resign from the position after being judged "incapable of handling the job."¹²⁷ Although the stated reason for her resignation was her behavior during a

¹¹⁷ Cerrito, *L'antimilitarismo anarchico in Italia nel primo ventennio del secolo*, op. cit., 38.

¹¹⁸ ACS, CPC, f. 4505, b. "Rygier Maria."

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ ACS, CPC, telegram from Italian Consulate (Nice) to the Ministry of the Interior (Rome), 27 October 1914; and, ACS, CPC, b. 4362, f. "Rocca Massimo."

¹²¹ ACS, CPC, telegram from Italian Embassy (Paris) to the Ministry of the Interior (Rome), 15 February 1915.

¹²² ACS, CPC, b. 4505, f. "Rygier Maria"; and, ACS, CPC, memorandum from Prefect (Milan) to Ministry of the Interior (Rome), 30 January 1915.

¹²³ Cerrito, *L'Antimilitarismo italiano in Italia nel primo ventennio del secolo*, op. cit., 42.

¹²⁴ ACS, CPC, b. 4505, f. "Rygier Maria."

¹²⁵ Rygier, "Mussolini informatore della polizia francese..." op. cit., 195.

¹²⁶ ACS, CPC, b. 4505, f. "Rygier Maria."

¹²⁷ Ibid.

local bricklayers' strike in which she punched one of the striking workers, she was also accused of not having fully abandoned her "anarchist and revolutionary tendencies."¹²⁸ Despite her pro-interventionist stance and membership in the Republican Party, she apparently continued to "spread revolutionary ideas in the workers' centers and among women."¹²⁹ A police report on her activities in Marseilles stated,

Rygier is still, therefore, that great impulsive person of the past, and still someone capable of exciting passions, provoking insane actions, moving the masses and, given her nervous temperament, could one day or another — when new facts and different orientations excite or disappoint her — take up again her life as an agitator with the same violence as in the past. Perhaps the only thing that could prevent her from becoming again such an active element in the subversive and revolutionary camp is...that she likes the new atmosphere in which she now finds herself, even from a moral point of view, obtaining sufficient satisfaction for her vanity and her conceit...which in her are not lacking.¹³⁰

In the end, the authorities apparently decided that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." That is, her interventionist efforts began to coincide with the tactics of the Italian government, including the often independent forces of authority. The shifting focus of the war towards the possible redemption of the regions of Trento, Trieste, Istria, and Fiume engaged her energies through 1917, and she was given a special passport to travel in France carrying out a propaganda campaign. In 1919 she was made Secretary of the Committee for the Italian Annexation of Fiume and Dalmatia, a position which sufficiently legitimized her in the eyes of the authorities that police surveillance was stopped.

Rocca reappeared in early February 1915 in a French military hospital near Paris, uninjured but recovering from a high fever.¹³¹ He was to spend the next two months in a "concentration camp for Italian volunteers" near Troyes until the Garibaldi Regiment was disbanded and he was forced to return to Milan.¹³² He took up temporary work at the Sansogno publishing house, contributing *Il Mare Adriático* to their "People's Library" series.¹³³ In this "instructional pamphlet" he asserted the "function" of the Mediterranean peoples against "German military aggression," and proclaimed Italy's

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ ACS, CPC, memorandum from Italian Consulate (Marseilles) to the Ministry of the Interior (Rome), 25 July 1916.

¹³¹ ACS, CPC, b. 4362, f. "Rocca Massimo."

¹³² ACS, CPC, memorandum from Prefect (Milan) to Ministry of the Interior (Rome), 19 March 1915.

¹³³ Massimo Rocca [Libero Tancredi], *Il Mare Adriático* (Milan: Biblioteca del Popolo Sansogno, 1915).

“natural right” to the conquest and development of the Dalmatian coast.¹³⁴ As Italy’s neutrality continued, Rocca’s tone became even more aggressive. Speaking at a conference on the theme of “Class and Nation,” he asserted the genius of a “new Italian people tempered by war,” and of an Italian imperialism without “German conceptions of discipline,” but fruit of the country’s youthful and vital forces, “inevitable in young organisms.”¹³⁵

In early September Rocca re-enlisted, this time in the Italian 7th Division of the 93rd Infantry, which was immediately transferred to the Austrian front.¹³⁶ A year later he was back in a Milan in a military hospital recovering from acute tonsillitis accompanied by whitened throat polyps and pleuritis.¹³⁷ Although he was judged fit to return to his division’s local barracks, he was given a six-month demobilization in order to fully recover. At the six-month review, however, he was deemed still unfit for service and given another year’s leave. In fact, he never returned to active service, and returned to full-time work for Sansogno.¹³⁸ Through the end of the war Rocca continued to carry his one-man propaganda campaign across northern Italy. Like Rygier, at war’s end he no longer found himself an object of police surveillance, for he had turned his attention towards the campaign for the redemption of Istria and Dalmatia. Unlike Rygier, he based Italy’s claims as much on ethnographic and racial criteria as on linguistic and historical criteria.¹³⁹

In “converting” to a pro-interventionist position, the anarchoindividualists had an influence which was magnified beyond their relatively small numbers. There are several reasons for this. First and foremost, they were excellent propagandists with often long experience supporting the causes of a radicalized minority, including experience with police surveillance, persecution, and unlawful arrest. Second, they had access to printing presses. Rocca, Gioda, and Mazzucato were printers by trade while others were familiar with the techniques of clandestine production and distribution of newspapers and pamphlets. Using these techniques, they managed to disrupt the Italian Left, particularly the anarchists and revolutionary syndicalists who were, for example, forced to postpone their national Congress to January 1915 in order to clarify their position. The failure of the position which the revolutionary-syndicalists eventually took, that of “revolutionary defeatism” — hoping that a defeat of the Italian state would unleash the revolutionary potential of the war — would weaken them in the eyes of many in the

¹³⁴ Rocca wrote, “Italy can only really live on the condition that political and economic unity coincides with geographic and geologic [unity]; that terrestrial Italy is completed by maritime Italy; that alongside ‘Italian land,’ there exists the invulnerable ‘Italian sea’” (Rocca, *Il Mare Adriatico*, op. cit., 7).

¹³⁵ Massimo Rocca, “L’imperialismo garibaldino,” *RdC* (14 March 1915); and, ACS, CPC, memorandum from Prefect (Milan) to Ministry of the Interior (Rome), 31 March 1915.

¹³⁶ ACS, CPC, letter from Prefect (Milan) to Ministry of the Interior (Rome), 7 September 1915.

¹³⁷ ACS, CPC, letter from Prefect (Milan) to Ministry of the Interior (Rome), 29 October 1916.

¹³⁸ ACS, CPC, b. 4352, f. “Rocca Massimo.”

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

postwar period.¹⁴⁰ Lastly, the anarcho-individualists-turned-interventionists developed a symbiotic relationship with a leader of national importance whose conversion shocked many on the Left and Right: Benito Mussolini. Mussolini was willing to overlook differences of opinion to win allies in the interventionist campaign. Rocca, for example, was seen as “the able and daring obstetrician” of Mussolini’s interventionism,¹⁴¹ and was subsequently embraced by Mussolini. Before fully declaring himself in favor of intervention, Mussolini had used Rocca to maintain contact with the more extreme Left-interventionist groups which had founded the *Fasci rivoluzionari d’azione internazionale*, a tactic which had blown up in Mussolini’s face when Rocca published his “Man of straw” article.¹⁴²

As we shall see, Rocca and Rygier later shared the fate of other “non-futurist literati” such as Papini, Prezzolini, and many of the intellectuals who collaborated with *La Voce* in Florence. As described by Walter Adamson, the *vocianti* “were almost immediately faced with a new choice: to cooperate with these new movements (like fascism) and ultimately do their bidding or return to a more traditional notion of privatis-tic, non-avant-garde intellectual.”¹⁴³ Rejecting Papini’s route of “apolitical privatism,” however, both Rygier and Rocca would take the former course of cooperating with Mussolini both in the interventionist movement and later in the fascist movement. Although Rocca’s agreement with Mussolini’s nationalist aims would be more limited than Rygier’s, both would continue to recognize enough of their own ideas in the fascist movement to provide their salient, early support.

¹⁴⁰ Cerrito maintains the dissenting opinion that the interventionism of the anarcho-individualists stimulated the anti-militarist campaign by acting as a “reagent in the process of clarification [of their position], and reduced the number of followers of the Theory of the Unique One” (Cerrito, *L’Antimilitarismo italiano in Italia nel primo ventennio del secolo*, op. cit., 66).

¹⁴¹ Rocca repeated this claim in *Died anni di nazionalismo fra i sowersivi d’Italia, 1905–1915* (Milan: Rinascimento, 1918).

¹⁴² De Felice, *Mussolini il rivoluzionario, 1883–1920*, op. cit., 253.

¹⁴³ Adamson, “Modernism and Fascism: The Politics of Culture in Italy, 1903–1922,” *MR* 95 (April 1990): 388.

Chapter 4: The First World War and the Roots of the Postwar Crisis

The Austrian offensive of October 1917 which led to the Italian defeat at Caporetto on the Isonzo River and the catastrophic retreat back through Veneto to the Piave River brought to light the army's horrendous mismanagement and poor leadership.¹ After more than two years of war the Italian army had counted 800,000 men killed, wounded, or taken prisoner out of a total 2,200,000 men. The army had been reduced to a state of total prostration and exasperation.² The immediate scapegoat for the defeat at Caporetto was the Socialist Party whose formula, *ne aderire ne sabotare*, many claimed had led to defeatism and effectively provoked a "military strike" in the trenches. Yet, stories about the progress of the war trickled back from the front to feed into a more general and widespread mood of discontent. The previous August, 40 striking workers were killed and another 200 wounded during a workers revolt in Turin against cost-of-living increases.³ The real cause of the defeat, despite the antisocialist assertions put forth by the commanding General, Cadorno, was that Cadorno himself, along with the Italian military command, had underestimated the importance of the dispatch of German troops to the Italian front in September and October. As such, the Italians misinterpreted the Austrian offensive as a bluff. The reasons for this misinterpretation were compounded by faulty military intelligence and a lack of precautionary measures including: poor attention to the juxtaposition of Italian troops relative to the Austrians; insufficient secondary reserves; general lack of preparation for gas attacks; and, poor communications between the front lines and the general command which allowed initial defeats along the Italian defensive line to snowball into a panicky general retreat.⁴ As individual groups were cut off and surrounded by the advancing Austrian troops,

¹ The village of Caporetto was the location of a weak salient on the Italian front holding the natural defensive line of the Isonzo River. Caporetto (now in Slovenia) changed hands several times during the war, but the coordinated attack in October 1917 was the most decisive Italian defeat of the First World War. In only a few days, 700,000 soldiers were killed, wounded, taken prisoner, or went AWOL, and 3,000 pieces of artillery, 3,000 machine guns, and 1,700 mortars were lost. For more see: Paolo Alatri, "L'interventismo e la guerra," in *La disgregazione dello stato liberale* (Milan: Teti, 1982): 31.

² Ibid.

³ For more see: Paolo Spriano, *Storia di Torino operaio e socialista*, op. cit., 416–53.

⁴ For more see: Ronald Seth, *Caporetto: The Scapegoat War* (London: MacDonald, 1965); and, Mario Silvestri, *Caporetto. Cha battaglia e un enigma* (Milan: Mondadori, 1984). For a good account of the poor leadership, miserable conditions, and low morale in the trenches see: Emilio Lussu, *Dh'anno sull'altiplano* (Turin: Einaudi, n.d.).

many succumbed to the illusion that the war was over.⁵ The retreat lasted three days during which the Italians lost over 100 miles of territory. Although actual cases of insubordination were few, “Caporetto was the fatal result of all the errors accumulated in more than two years of war by those who lead the army and, at the same time, a clear demonstration of how estranged the masses were from the ideology and rhetoric of the interventionist forces.”⁶ The defeat caused a shakeup of both the military (Cadorno was replaced by Diaz) and the government (Boselli was replaced by Orlando), with improved communications between the two and a general agreement about how the war should be conducted. Morale improved steadily through the Spring of 1918, in part due to the decline in casualties from 520,000 killed or wounded in 1917, to 144,000 in 1918.⁷

The success of the defensive battles along the southern bank of the Piave in June 1918, followed by the counter-attack at Vittorio Veneto in November were due to both the improved state of the Italian military and to the collapse of the Austrian Army.⁸ Orlando played down the latter point fearing a popular outcry against the general mishandling of the military during the conflict.⁹ Conservative forces in the government also feared the possible “ingovernability of the masses to that time kept under control by strong military discipline.”¹⁰ Lastly, the government did not want to diminish world opinion regarding Italy’s contribution to the Allied effort and thereby jeopardize its irredentist claims in Dalmatia, Trento, Trieste, and Friuli. As such, even before the Versailles Treaty, the idea of the *victoria mutilata*, the “mutilated” victory was already in the air.

Popular reaction to the war and its aftermath varied from region to region and reflected the continuing fragmentation and localization of politics in Italy. In the region of Emilia-Romagna centered around Bologna, where Rocca, Rygier, Borghi, Fabbri and other anarchists had based their campaigns for and against the war, attention had been centered for several years on the reorganization of the agricultural labor market and the so-called *lotta delle trebbiatrici*, the “battle of the threshing machines.”

Since Unification, government reclamation projects in the Po Delta swamps which dominate the northern half of Romagna, steadily increased the amount of flat, arable land. As control of the land generally remained in the hands of large owners, the labor market consisted mainly of braccianti, or day laborers. In the hilly and mountainous regions long under cultivation on the Adriatic flank of the Apennines, the land was

⁵ For a good example see: Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *L’alcova d’acciaio* (Reprint, Milan: Serra e Riva, 1985).

⁶ Alatri, “L’interventismo e la guerra,” op. cit., 32.

⁷ Ibid., 33.

⁸ Royal Italian Army, Report *by* the Comando Supremo on the Battle of Vittorio Veneto (24th October — 4th November 1918) (Rome: Royal Italian Army, 1918).

⁹ The final cost of Italy’s participation in the war was 571,000 killed, 451,000 wounded, and 117,000 taken prisoner or otherwise unaccounted for (Alatri, “L’interventismo e la guerra,” op. cit.).

¹⁰ Ibid.

mainly cultivated by *mezzadri*, or sharecroppers. Throughout the nineteenth century, population increases maintained a downward pressure on wages, which remained low while prices rose. After the turn of the century, population was increasing rapidly, and as sharecropping and tenancy arrangements were eliminated, the population of landless day laborers without contracts (*braccianti*) increased.¹¹ In this context, there arose a political division between the Republicans, supported by the *mezzadri* in the hills, and the Socialists, supported by the *braccianti* in the plains. Similar political divisions existed in other parts of norther Italy. In Romagna and particularly in the Apennine river valleys south of Forli, however, the *mezzadri*—in other parts of the country aligned with various conservative parties affiliated with the Church — were somewhat left of center and supported the Republicans. And, while the national Socialist Party put forth a program little different from that of the local Republicans, the Forli Socialists, led by Mussolini, were carrying out a class war with the support of the disenfranchized *braccianti*.¹² In short, in the Forli region both the *mezzadri* and *braccianti* were much farther to the left than in many other parts of Italy.

The struggle became particularly bitter in the province of Forli, and occupied much of the attention of Mussolini's socialist newspaper, *Lotta di Classe*, during these years. According to Borghi, "the rich Republican landowners profited from this rivalry...by pitting the *mezzadri* against the poorest *braccianti*, and in so doing assured themselves the farm vote."¹³ To complicate matters, the local prefects and other federal authorities had strict orders not to cross swords with the Socialists, who had enough power to ignite a counter-reaction in this anti-clerical and anti-monarchical region. The historical residues of heavy-handed governance within the Papal States combined with extreme poverty to make Romagna a "political volcano." The poverty, a result of increasing population and an overburdened labor market, forced hundreds of young laborers to travel widely, often abroad, in search of work. As can be seen in the case of Mussolini's misadventures among the Italian emigrant community in Switzerland, one consequence of these sojourns was that the young sons returned to their native Romagna with diverse and often radical political ideologies.¹⁴ Among these ideologies was anarchism. Noted Borghi:

We anarchists had a strong influence on the workers' movement in the cities and the countryside. There was no agitation where we were not also

¹¹ For more see: Elizabeth D. Whitaker, "Bread and Work: Pellagra and Economic Transformation in Turn-of-the-Century Italy," *Anthropological Quarterly* 65, 2 (April 1992): 84. The distinction between *braccianti* and *mezzadri* became blurred over time. Notes Whitaker, however, "most families included a combination of types of workers. Sharecropping families not only hired *braccianti* as needed, but also sent some of their laborers out as *braccianti*; as they lost their contracts they became *braccianti* themselves."

¹² Borghi, *Mezzo secolo d'anarchia*, op. cit., 110–111.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

present. There was no village in the plains and up in the Apennines, where our message hadn't arrived.¹⁵

Referring to the sources of Mussolini's anarchist sympathies, Pier Carlo Masini writes, "Mussolini carried in his blood — and even in his name — an inheritance of internationalism with traces of Costianism, Ciprianism, and above all Romagnolism."¹⁶

Among the most conspicuous leaders, besides Mussolini, to emerge from this complicated political situation was Torquato Nanni.¹⁷ Nanni was born in April 1888 in Santa Sofia, a small village located only a few miles over the historical border between the Papal States and the Grand Duchy of Tuscany.¹⁸ Nanni joined the Socialist Party at a young age while attending the classical lyceum in Forlì. In 1908 he obtained his diploma in jurisprudence from the University of Urbino, having completed examinations in Italian and Greek, History and Geography, and Physics and Chemistry.¹⁹ He began his political activities as a local correspondent for *L'idea Socialista*, the newspaper of the Forlì Socialist Party, in which he attacked the moderate and reformist leadership of Santa Sofia's communal administration.²⁰ He held private conferences in nearby villages and was described by the police as "extremely intelligent" but "poor with words and fanatical."²¹ In October 1906 he was a delegate to the Socialist Party

¹⁵ Ibid., 104.

¹⁶ "Masini, Introduction to Leda Rafanelli, *Una Donna e MuBBolini*, op. cit., 16.

¹⁷ In the first half of the twentieth-century Romagna arguably produced more radical politicians of national stature than any other region in Italy. For example, another important socialist leader to emerge from Romagna at this time was Nicola Bombacci. Born in Civitella di Romagna in 1879, like Mussolini he began as an elementary school teacher before becoming a syndicalist and actively participating in the Socialist Party. A maximalist from the outset, in 1910 he was elected Socialist Party Secretary. In 1921, together with Bordiga and Terracini, he signed the motion at the Livorno Congress which gave birth to the Italian Communist Party. By 1928, however, he had begun to cooperate so closely with his former Romagnan friends in the Fascist Party that he was expelled from the PCI. Through the 1930's he was an ardent fascist, and in 1944, lured by Mussolini's illusory "socialist" programs, served as Minister of the Interior during the Italian Socialist Republic (Salò). He was captured and executed by partisans at Dongo in 1945 together with Mussolini, Claretta Petacci, and other prominent fascists. For more see: Domenico Settembrini, "Nicola Bombacci," in *I grandi di Romagna*, 31–32, ed. Mauro Todeschini, op. cit. On his early career see: Serge Noiret, *Massimalismo e crisi dello stato liberale. Nicola Bombacci (1879–1924)* (Milan: Angeli, 1982).

¹⁸ In the years prior to Unification, Santa Sofia was the first stopping off point of an informal "underground railroad" which carried political exiles and other "subversives" into the relatively safer territory of the Grand Duchy. For more see: Angelo Varni, "La Romagna toscana tra '800 e '900," in *Torquato Nanni e il movimento socialista nella Romagna toscana*, ed. Lorenzo Bedeschi (Rimini: Maggioli, 1982): 13–25. Although Santa Sofia was geographically more closely linked with Romagna, it remained officially within Tuscany until 1924 when Mussolini redrew the border so that the source of the Tiber River would fall within his home region.

¹⁹ Lorenzo Bedeschi, "Nanni fra giornalismo e politica," in *Torquato Nanni e il movimento socialista nella Romagna toscana*, ed. Lorenzo Bedeschi, op. cit., 47.

²⁰ ACS, CPC, f. 3482, b. "Nanni Torquato."

²¹ Ibid.

National Congress in Rome, and three years later at the Prato Congress was elected to the central committee of the Party's National Federation.

During this same period he founded and directed the fortnightly anti-clerical newspaper of Romagnan-Tuscany, *Da Scopa*, which later changed its name to *La Fonte*.²² *La Scopa* published not only political pieces but also articles on philosophy, sociology, and literature. Other contributions came from Pietro Nenni, Pietro Gori, Romolo Murri, Roberto Ardigö, Luigi Fabbri, Giacinto Serrati,²³ Rinaldo Rigola,²⁴ and Maria Rygier. In 1910, Nanni published a lively correspondence between Mussolini, then editor of *L'Avenire del lavoratore* in Trento, and Giovanni Papini, Giuseppe Prezzolini, and others involved with the publication of *La Voce*.²⁵

In an adjacent printing office Nanni produced a steady stream of socialist propaganda, and showed himself adept at understanding and exploiting not only the multiplicity of imported political forms but also the atypical alignments specific to the valleys south of Forli. The national leaders of the Socialist Party, Turati and Treves, were proposing the formation of a "block of popular parties," an idea which contrasted

²² *La Scopa* was published fortnightly from 31 January 1909 to 2 January 1912 in Santa Sofia. Afterwards, it was published weekly in Forli as *La Fonte*, "Avante-gard newspaper," until 19 October 1912. An outline of the newspaper's objectives was not published until the second edition in an article entitled "Il nostro programma," *La Scopa* I, 2 (14 February 1909), (ASS).

²³ Giacinto Serrati (1876–1926) was a socialist leader from Onegalia who began his career as editor of a socialist journal for Italian immigrants in the United States. He returned to Italy in 1911 and became director of *L'Avanti!* after Mussolini's expulsion, leading the Socialist Party's anti-interventionist campaign. He was imprisoned for his involvement in the labor unrest in Turin in 1917. From 1919 onwards, he and Bombacci were among the main proponents of the maximalist current within the Socialist Party. Unlike Bombacci, however, he remained within the PSI after the founding of the PCI.

²⁴ Rinaldo Rigola (1868–1954) began his political career as a member of the Socialist Party, but an early interest in labor organization led him to join the organizationalist anarchists and revolutionary syndicalists. In 1897, faced with arrest and certain imprisonment, he escaped to France where he founded an expatriate cell of the Socialist Party, and for several years his politics remained uncertain and contradictory. By 1910, however, he was elected to parliament, became a columnist for *Avanti!*, and adhered to the Socialist Party's reformist wing and its collaboration with the Confederazione Generale del Lavoro (CGL). He opposed Italy's intervention in the First World War and, later, the fascists' attempts to replace the unions with corporativist labor organizations. From 1925 to 1929 he carried on a lively and sometimes bitter correspondence with Nanni concerning the publication of *Bolscevismo e fasesino al lune áella critica narxista. Benito Mussolini* (op. cit.) and Leandro Arpinati e il fascismo bolognese (op. cit.). Until his death, Serrati also corresponded with Nanni and Rigola on this same topic, with particular emphasis on the Socialist Party's response to fascism. When the fascists dissolved the CGL, Rigola founded the National Association for the Study of Labor Problems and the journal *Problem! di Lavoro* (1927–1940). The association intended to offer an ongoing critique of corporativism, but over time lost its autonomy and ended by supporting the fascist regime. The memory of Rigola's collaboration hindered his attempts to reestablish contacts with socialist colleagues in the postwar era. He died in Milan in 1953. For more see Ch. 7, p. 42ff.

²⁵ Lorenzo Bedeschi, "Nanni fra giornalismo e politica," op. cit., 48–50.

directly with the ideas Mussolini was putting forth in *La lotta di Classe* in Forlì.²⁶ Mussolini thought that reconciling the ideological differences between the groups which might comprise such a block would result in a compromise that would distract the more revolutionary and militant elements from the ultimate aims of socialism. Nanni disagreed, firmly convinced that the class struggle in Romagna was a local phenomenon and that only in the region did the Republican Party have such significant support. In effect, Nanni's interpretation was correct, but Mussolini had his sights set higher, to the national level, where he hoped to gain control of the Socialist Party and guide it in a direction more in line with the polarized political situation in Romagna. While Mussolini maintained that "socialism is a force for the moral elevation of the individual and the collective,"²⁷ Nanni took the view that "idealism...can be the noble inheritance of single individuals, not of parties."²⁸ Nevertheless, a pattern for Nanni's relationship with Mussolini had been set, and the former's political behavior over the next ten years would be determined by successive attempts to combine his desire to follow the charismatic leadership of Mussolini while retaining his own socialist principals. In the short term, Nanni's able handling of the alignments peculiar to Romagna did not escape the notice of others within the Socialist Party hoping to keep Mussolini in check. His ability to distinguish friendship and politics also allowed him to maintain contact not only with Mussolini, but also leaders even farther to the left such as Armando Borghi, Luigi Fabbri, and Maria Rygier.²⁹

Nanni's collaboration with Mussolini and his ambivalence about the Socialist Party must be seen in a larger context. Nanni was a product of his times, and like many intellectuals on the Left, he tried to find a means for reconciling his classical and humanist education with modern forms of political thought.³⁰ Through the years of Giolittian *trasformismo* many intellectuals such as Nanni fixated on the "perpetual crisis" of the Liberal State, finding a scapegoat in the form of the urban bourgeoisie when in fact Italy was undergoing fundamental steps towards political modernization that were also taking place elsewhere in Europe. Although Nanni's affection for the

²⁶ Despite differences of opinion with Mussolini, Nanni was a frequent contributor to *La Lotta di Classe*, which he described as "brilliant, pugnacious, passionate." "One didn't read it," he wrote. "One devoured it...It was the throbbing heart of the party" (Nanni, Benito *Mussolini*, op. cit., 12).

²⁷ Benito Mussolini, *La Lotta di Classe* (29 January 1910).

²⁸ Iorquato Nanni, *La Scopa* 2, 42 (27 October 1910), ASS.

²⁹ For example, Nanni in *La Scopa* debated with Borghi and Rygier in *L'Agitatore* over the issue of how to define the politics of Francisco Ferrer. Borghi and Rygier called him "an anarchist until death," while Nanni referred to him as "an insurrectinist republican." (Cited in Giuseppina Cavallucci, ughetta Cavallucci, and Oscar Bandini, "Torquato Nanni: un socialista nella crisi del primo dopoguerra," *SC* 4, 2 (1978): 246). For more on Fabbri during this period see: Gianpiero Landi, "Intervista a Luce Fabbri," and "Il ruolo di Luigi Fabbri," both in *A (Rivista Anarchica)* 11, 7 (October 1981): 28-38 and 39-42; and, Luce Fabbri, letter to author, July 1992.

³⁰ Although it is difficult to know how Nanni evaluated the various authors he read, his personal library at Santa Sofia includes many books whose margins are crammed with notes and comments. Among the most heavily-consulted authors are Sorel, Le Bon, Jules Guesde, the complete works of Marx and Engels, Lenin, Mario Missiroli, Prezzolini, Papini and, of course, Mussolini.

culture of rural Romagna also led him to similar views about the urban bourgeoisie — Nanni called Giolitti “a faithful watchdog of our bourgeoisie who kept him in power because he knew all too well how to [protect] the interests of the dominant class”³¹ — his work on *La Scopa-La Fonte* shows that his principal scapegoat was the Catholic Church. Perhaps the only organization with the means for carrying out a reform of the Giolittian status quo, the Socialist Party, was unwilling to participate independently at the parliamentary level, where the unresolved question of their attitude towards the Catholic Church made collaboration with them difficult. Nanni was therefore doubly frustrated: by the inaction of the Socialist Party, and by the Roman Problem. While Prezzolini would later share Croce’s belief that all existing political ideologies were dead,³² Croce criticized Parliamentary socialism and majoritarian democracy by which socialism was losing its ability to “regenerate” Italian society. Intellectuals everywhere were searching for a fully integrated political program that might function as a substitute for religion, for faith. For these thinkers, liberalism, reformist socialism, and democracy itself were insufficient substitutes. The mistake from the outset, however, was their search for metaphysical solutions in party platforms and political economy. Nanni made this very mistake, and ended up in the Twenties accepting the most abstract and amorphous of political movements: fascism.

In 1910, Nanni was charged with “anticlerical activities” related to the publication and distribution of *La Scopa*. The Socialist Party sent him abroad along with Serrati to Switzerland and Germany for a series of conferences in Lausanne, Bern, Basel, Saint Gallen, and Rheinfelden.³³ During his absence, Pietro Nenni, at that time an employee in the local land-registry office, took control of *La Scopa*.³⁴ When he returned in July, Nanni was appointed to the town council and resumed his work with *La Scopa*,

³¹ Torquato Nanni, *La Scopa* 1, 23 (19 December 1909), (ASS).

³² Adamson, “Modernism and Fascism,” op. cit., 389.

³³ ACS, CPC, f. 3482, b. “Nanni Torquato.” Nanni apparently completed his itinerary without a passport, even though he was under constant surveillance by the very authorities who had deprived him of it due to his “slandorous” journalism. During this campaign Nanni gave 25 speeches on several topics including: “Socialism and Organization”; “Francisco Ferrer and The Modern School”; “Mazzini and Socialism”; and, “Socialism and Science.” [For more see: Ernesto Toschi, “Le lotte politiche a S. Sofia e la figura di Torquato Nanni,” Laurea thesis (University of Urbino, 1974): 88.]

³⁴ Pietro Nenni (1891–1980) joined the Republican Party at the age of seventeen. In 1911 he joined with Mussolini but refused to join the Socialist Party. A fervent interventionist, in 1916 he was made editor of the Bolognese interventionist paper *Il Giornale del Mattino*. After the First World War he left the Republican Party and in 1921 joined the Socialist Party, eventually becoming director of *Avanti!*. He was one of the founding members of the Bolognese *Fascio di combattimento*, but opposed its turn away from republicanism. He was later threatened on many occasions by the fascists, and went into exile in France where he was elected Socialist Party Secretary, a position he held from 1931 to 1938. He was arrested by the Germans during the Second World War and extradited to Italy where he was imprisoned until July 25, 1943. In the postwar period he helped form the first center-left government (1963), was made Vice-President of the Council, then Foreign Affairs Minister. In 1970 he was nominated senator for life. (For more see: über Dondini, “Pietro Nenni,” in *I grandi di Romagna*, 105–108, ed. Mauro Todeschini, op. cit.).

speaking out against the Libyan War.³⁵ Nanni also spoke out against Mussolini's arrest for organizing an illegal public demonstration which began in the public gardens of Forlì and moved to the city's train station to prevent the departure of troops for Libya. Mussolini would be tried and imprisoned for his actions. In January of 1912 Nanni was elected mayor of Santa Sofia,³⁶ and the following autumn he married Rosina Grifoni, a member of a wealthy local family. In November, as a correspondent for *Il Giornale del Mattino*, he traveled to Petrasso with General Ricciotti Garibaldi's military expedition to the war between the Greeks and the Turks.³⁷

Following Mussolini's coup at the Congress of Reggio Emilia, in which he took effective control of the Socialist Party, Nanni accepted a full-time position with *Avanti!* in Milan, returning to Santa Sofia twice a month to retain his position as mayor. His more significant contributions to the paper included reviews of Prezzolini's *La Francia e i francesi nel secolo XX*³⁸ and Papini's *Un uomo finito*.³⁹ Referring to *Leonardo* Nanni wrote in his review, "it seemed to radiate a new light," which illuminated the path of a "generous handful of young audacious [ones], scholars, and subversives."⁴⁰ It is clear that Nanni considered himself to be part of that handful, carrying out a similar program of cultural regeneration with *La Scopa*. To concretize his position within the Socialist Party he founded a critical journal called *La Fiaccola*, subtitled "The New Paths of Socialism."⁴¹ The use of the plural "paths" is indicative, because despite Nanni's tendency towards the more radical socialism of Mussolini, the paper also included contributions by reformist Socialists such as Claudio Treves and Amilcare Cipriani. Nanni, on the other hand, wrote:

The Reggio Emilia Congress has resuscitated us...More than a decade of reformist practices have carried our party from the illuminated paths of propaganda and faith, to the dark ways, to the tortuous and oblique paths of compromises...[O]ur action can have no other value...besides that of the action of critique, disintegration, and offensive.⁴²

Nanni, who maintained that "idealism...can be the noble inheritance of single individuals," declared that "socialism...is a faith, an idea," and put this idealism to practice

³⁵ Notwithstanding Nanni's opposition to the war, he permitted the publication of an editorial by Papini in favor of the war. *La Scopa*, 3, 38 (9 November 1911).

³⁶ Nanni would hold the position for nearly a decade until the fascists ousted him just prior to the March on Rome. See Prologue, above.

³⁷ ACS, CPC, b. 81106, f. "Nanni Torquato."

³⁸ Torquato Nanni, *Avanti!* (2 August 1913).

³⁹ Torquato Nanni, *Avanti!* (4 July 1913).

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ *La Fiaccola* was compiled in Santa Sofia and printed in Florence. Only two editions seem to have been published, on 15 and 31 January 1913. (ASS).

⁴² Torquato Nanni, *La Fiaccola* (15 January 1913).

during the national elections of October 1913, actively campaigning for the Socialist Party.⁴³

In March 1914, Mussolini offered him a position as editor-in-chief of his Forlì paper *La Lotta di Classe*. A few months earlier, however, the Socialist Party had officially declared the incompatibility of socialism and masonry. When it was revealed that Nanni's long-standing request to join the masons had only recently been approved, he was forced to resign his positions both at the *Lotta di Classe* and *Avanti*/.⁴⁴ His collaboration with Mussolini would nevertheless continue. In his letter of resignation Nanni wrote: "Put at the crossroads between masonry and socialism...! choose socialism without hesitation...! could have concealed my position...as a mason; but my conscience found that repugnant."⁴⁵ The extent of Nanni's participation a few months later in the events of the *settimana rossa* is uncertain, though he was charged along with ten others by the local authorities in Santa Sofia with "private violence."⁴⁶ The charges were later dropped under the general amnesty offered by the Italian Government seeking national solidarity at the outbreak of the First World War.

During the intervention crisis, Nanni played the double-game of opposing the Socialist Party line of *ne aderire ne sabotare* while keeping his membership in the party. He continued to collaborate with Mussolini at *Avanti* I and engaged in propaganda activities within the Socialist Party. Nanni initially rejected the arguments of syndicalists (such as Labriola) and anarchoindividualists (such as Rygier and Rocca) who transferred the concept of a nation-wide struggle between the working class and the ruling classes to an international struggle between poor nations and plutocracies. Yet, when Mussolini joined the interventionists Nanni sent a telegram which said, "In the name of many comrades from Romagnan-Tuscany, I express complete solidarity with your behavior and confirm to you our unchanging esteem and affection."⁴⁷ Mussolini responded:

I highly appreciated your telegram of solidarity. The only one which arrived from Romagna, where I've done more than a little for socialism. Instead they have bombarded me with orders of the day, before even knowing my thoughts which you share.⁴⁸

By late autumn Nanni was collaborating on Mussolini's *Il Popolo d'Italia*,⁴⁹ and co-editing the newly-founded Bolognese interventionist newspaper, *La Riscossa*, directed

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Toschi, "Le lotte politiche a S. Sofia e la figura di Torquato Nanni," op. cit., 101–102.

⁴⁵ Torquato Nanni, "Personalalia," *La Lotta di Classe* (2 May 1914).

⁴⁶ ACS, CPC, b. 3482, f. "Nanni Torquato."

⁴⁷ Torquato Nanni, *Il Popolo d'Italia*, 15 November 1914.

⁴⁸ Nanni, *Bolscevismo e fascismo...* op. cit., 188. The date of Mussolini's response is 25 October 1914.

⁴⁹ There is considerable disagreement regarding Nanni's collaboration with *Il Popolo d'Italia* in which several of his articles were published. Some sources maintain he mailed his contributions from Santa Sofia; others testify to his having worked in the offices of the newspaper; still others indicate

by Maria Rygier and Guido Bergamo.⁵⁰ On November 28, in an article in *Il Popolo d'Italia* entitled “An Idea Put to the Test of History: Internationalism,” Nanni declared himself in favor of intervention.⁵¹ Making use of the same heroes of the Paris Comune being used by the anarcho-individualists, he wrote:

Around here the men who founded the first socialist cells all derived from the patriotic tradition...Typical, not singular, is the case of Amilcare Cipriani. It is strange how after 50 years of propaganda and discussion...internationalist ideology has maintained an elusive nebulousness: we have already seen what Marx and Engels thought of the Franco-German War of 1870. Karl Marx, after having put forth some 22 years previously the cry, “Workers of the world unite”...assumed an attitude of perfect chauvinism.⁵²

For Nanni, nations and the conflicts between them historically preceded classes and the class struggle. Participation in the war confirmed nationalism’s place before class conflict in the evolution of society. Nanni called on the traditions of the Myth of the *Risorgimento* and the democratic traditions of postUnification Italy to criticize the “error” of the Socialist Party’s neutrality. He would later assert that by failing to participate in the war, the Socialists effectively handed over control of the government to the parties of the bourgeoisie, and left themselves vulnerable to attack by all the interventionist forces in the postwar period.⁵³

Meanwhile, his own double game continued. In January 1915, he addressed a Socialist Party conference in the nearby town of Civitella di Romagna. Speaking on the theme of unemployment, he was nearly arrested for “instigating the crowd to violence.”⁵⁴ At the same time he even began to criticize Mussolini for not having brought a more significant majority of the Socialist Party into the interventionist camp.⁵⁵ He

that he was editor-in-chief. As to the latter, Mussolini did apparently offer him the position (Nanni, *Bolscevismo e fascismo...* op. cit., 195), but Nanni stated at later dates that he “declined the offer” and “renounced [any position] decisively.” Mussolini’s comments do not greatly clarify the matter. In a letter in 1925 to Serrati, Nanni himself attributed his abduction by the local fascists in 1922 to Mussolini’s comment, “Torquato Nanni was an interventionist, he was with me at the origins of *Il Popolo d'Italia*, but if he is now an enemy, treat him that way...” [Letter from Torquato Nanni to Giacinto Serrati (1 May 1925), ASF,FS]. However, Renzo De Felice reports the same comment as, “It is true that [Nanni] was editor-in-chief of *Il Popolo d'Italia...*” [Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il fascista I* (Turin: Einaudi, 1966): 385n2.]

⁵⁰ Cavalluci, Cavallucci, and Bandini, “Torquato Nanni: un socialista nella crisi del primo dopoguerra,” op. cit., 253.

⁵¹ Torquato Nanni, “Una ideologia al cimento della storia,” *Il Popolo d'Italia* (28 November 1914).

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Nanni, *Bolscevismo e fascismo...* op. cit., 215ff.

⁵⁴ ACS, CPC, b. 3482, f. “Nanni Torquato.”

⁵⁵ Zeffiro Ciuffoletti and Gian Luca Corradi, “Nanni nel periodo della guerra,” in *Torquato Nanni e il movimento socialista nella Romagna toscana*, ed. Lorenzo Bedeschi, op. cit., 73–74.

nevertheless continued to benefit from his personal relationship with Mussolini, publishing the first biography of the future *Duce*, a brief pamphlet published in Florence by *La Voce*.⁵⁶ Still nominally a member of the Socialist Party, he could maintain contacts with the leadership of the country's largest working-class organizations while commenting repeatedly in the pages of *La Riscossa* on the errors of those very leaders:

The tactical error of the Socialist [Party] officials is this: incapable of preventing the war, they should have taken the initiative and imposed it...Had they done the work of Socialists, they would have dragged in...not only the proletariat, but the whole nation, and in so doing carried out an act of a dominant class, demonstrating that in a given moment, socialism can impose itself on everyone...

Afterwards, it would have again taken up its place and its work, but by a great gesture would have gained the respect, esteem and fear of its adversaries.⁵⁷

When the Socialists asked him to clarify his role within the party, however, he had yet another change of heart, which he later described as follows:

Mussolini knows better than any one that if I did not follow him entirely at that time, one can not attribute it only to this blessed nostalgia which ties me to my dear mountains of Romagna; but above all to the affection and discipline which ties me to the party. I have always been of the opinion that no matter how many errors the party commits...one must stay with it, in homage to the sincere faith which inspires its followers. Leaving the party betrays the enormous majority of men humble in their good faith.⁵⁸

But leave he would from May 1919 to July 1922 when he felt the Party's tactics were leaving them prey to the fascists and other transformed interventionist groups.

1917 was a critical year in the First World War, one which also saw the collapse of the Czarists regime in Russia and the entrance of the United States in the war. In August there were food riots in Turin as the economic and psychological strain of the war increased, peaking with the defeat at Caporetto. These events, combined with the successful Bolshevik Revolution in Russia convinced many on the Left, including Nanni, that a revolution in Italy was possible. As one historian puts it, "The nation was frightened, disorganized and leaderless. If the Socialist Party and the *Unione Sindacale Italiana* had moved rapidly, the people might have accepted them and their calls for peace."⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Nanni, Benito *Mussolini*, op. cit.

⁵⁷ Torquato Nanni, "L'errore tattico della ufficialità socialista," *La Riscossa*, 1, 4 (4 April 1915).

⁵⁸ Nanni, *Bolscevismo e fascismo...* op. cit., 195.

⁵⁹ "Charles Bertrand, "War and Subversion in Italy: 1917-1918," *Historical Reflections* 2 (197S): 113.

These events were critical for Nanni, forcing on him difficult practical and ideological choices. He would later recall that the First World War constrained

all Italians... to make a terrible examination of their consciences. From there began the new history of Italy...Those...who from the voice of their consciences refused to take their own interests into account — whether man or whether a party — from that moment signaled their own defeat.⁶⁰

On the local level, he returned to Santa Sofia as the Socialist mayor, struggling for the rights of agricultural workers and presiding over the rebuilding of the town, recently destroyed by an earthquake.⁶¹ On the national level, his interventionist position and his collaboration with Mussolini and *Il Popolo d'Italia* strained to the breaking point his relationship with the Socialist Party. It was his relationship with Mussolini which proved particularly difficult. Mussolini had begun to see beyond the local level while Nanni had not. Mussolini's interventionism and participation in the war can be seen as a shift from supporting a localized brand of socialism centered on the class war, to a national brand of socialism. Though this shift in emphasis might involve compromise between reformists and maximalists, Mussolini made it clear in a January 1916 interview with Nanni that this did not necessarily have to be the case. Reporting for *Il Giornale del Mattino*, Nanni talked with Mussolini in Milan while the latter was on a brief leave from the front.⁶² In response to Nanni's question, "What do you think of Italian Socialism?" Mussolini responded:

The exodus of its best elements continues, and this would be even greater if the cooperatives and [local] administrations didn't continue to be attractive circles...The leaders don't add up to much. Their way of thinking is that of the recent speech by the Honorable Treves: status quo. But a day could come in which the base [of the Party] tests the practical consequences of these theoretical sermons and then the leaders could find themselves in an embarrassing situation. Then we'll see them...denying any responsibility, like at Turin after the general strike last May...Our socialism, therefore, can call for and obtain...that which has been obtained in France; that which is about to come to the Labourites in England.⁶³

Mussolini's interpretation places Italian Socialism on par with other socialist movements trying to reap the benefits of having supported the ruling classes in a bloody and protracted conflict. He describes Italy's political future with eerie prescience:

⁶⁰ Nanni, *Leandro Arpinati e il fascismo bolognese*, op. cit., 37.

⁶¹ For more see: Maruizio Degli'Innocenti, "La cultura amministrativa socialista," in Torquato Nanni *e il movimento socialista nella Romagna toscana*, ed. Lorenzo Bedeschi, op. cit., 27–45; and, Oscar Bandini, "Nanni amministratore," in *ibid.*, 133–48.

⁶² Torquato Nanni, "Conversazione di guerra con Benito Mussolini," op. cit.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

Even if the Socialist deputies become 200 instead of their actual 45, I would be happy: in the first place, because quality would be damaged by quantity; and then, the more of them there are, the more difficult it will be to come to an agreement. In fact, I would like them to be exactly half plus one of the 503 in Montecitorio [the Parliament], because then we could all take part in the comedy of proclaiming socialism by parliamentary decree, as if leading the multitudes to believe “evangelically” in a new religion...Those who seek [the International] at Zimmerwald are blind. Europe is divided into two big camps.

Nanni apparently understood Mussolini’s shift in focus from the local to the national when he wrote the concluding words of his biography of Mussolini: “It is therefore a great fortune that in this historic hour he does not speak only to a single party but to the entire nation.”⁶⁴

Whereas Mussolini’s relocation from Romagna to Milan involved a shift in political scope from the local to the national, Nanni relocated to Milan but, in a sense, never left Romagna. As will be seen, Mussolini also retained elements of his early thinking, particularly in his attempts to transplant elements of Romagna culture into the fascist movement. That the practical scope of Nanni’s politics was much more limited is revealed by his decision in 1918 to return permanently to Romagna as provincial counselor for the Socialist Party and other forces on the Left. It would not be his last oscillation.

Nanni’s return to socialism in 1918 and his physical return to Santa Sofia are understandable given that he hoped to fuse the focus of his political thinking, the Myth of the First Paris Comune (proclaimed 13 July 1789) with the revolutionary possibilities opened by the success of Lenin and the Bolsheviks. Coming as it did two weeks after Caporetto, the Bolsheviks’ defeat of Kerensky sent a shock wave through the Left in Italy, and “altered the thinking of the anarchists as well as the revolutionaries within the PSI.”⁶⁵ Nanni was among those exhilarated by the Bolsheviks’ success in transforming the conflict between capitalistic nations into a social revolution. At the same time it put extreme interventionists such as Mussolini, De Ambris, Rocca, and Rygier in a corner, for suddenly Italy had the possibility of a separate way out of the war: “The Bolsheviks had produced peace; something the Italians desperately needed and wanted.”⁶⁶ The interventionists responded by demanding that “defeatism” be eradicated and threatened to destroy it themselves if the government dragged its feet.

One of the ways in which they planned to do this was through the Committee of Public Safety. Formed in mid-March 1917, it was composed principally of members of the pro-war French rite of Italian Freemasonry, including members of Parliament,

⁶⁴ Nanni, Benito Mussolini, *op. cit.*, 23.

⁶⁵ Bertrand, “War and Subversion in Italy: 1917–1918,” *op. cit.*, 114.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

Alceste De Ambris, several top members of the military, and Maria Rygier.⁶⁷ Their aim was to force the government to proceed more effectively with fighting the war, including if necessary putting in motion a plan to execute the king and hold the royal family hostage while General Cadorno and Bissolati were made head of a dictatorial regime.⁶⁸ Rygier acted as one of the most active of the Committees propagandists, planning campaigns against anti-war demonstrators and coordinating the publication of interventionist papers to demand “a policy of severe government repression of ‘subversives,’ whom they defined as anyone who disagreed with the Committee of Public Safety.”⁶⁹ Other recommendations to the government included: preventive detention; warnings to priests and Catholics against supporting the Pope’s 1916 peace plan; and that all German citizens be jailed, their possessions confiscated and their property be given to the widows and orphans of Italian war dead.⁷⁰ As indicated above, the government survived the war by benefiting from a surge of patriotism following Caporetto, and “in part because of [its] vigilance with regard to the subversive and revolutionary groups in the country.”⁷¹ Rygier, once the subversive, was now calling for the preventive detention of those opposed to the war, and the potential destruction of all civil liberties.

Despite their failure to benefit from the war as the Bolsheviks had done, a similar revolutionary atmosphere continued in the immediate postwar period. As the possibility of a spectacular coup d’état passed, Nanni shifted his focus to alternative forms of economic and political organization which might turn the tide. The Russian proletariat led by Lenin was for Nanni a prime example of “direct democracy” that would restore liberty to the Russian people, “workers councils” forming a substitute for electoral politics and the “centralized bourgeois State.”⁷² Nanni saw the Russian Revolution as the logical completion of the French Revolution, a revolution from below which destroyed the centralized State and substituted the commune as the new prototype for social organization. Wrote Nanni:

All the force of the revolution was concentrated in the municipalities of the cities and villages, for which the prototype was the revolutionary Paris Commune...Every district was an independent force, a furnace of revolutionary activity. The comuni were the spirit of the revolution: without these furnaces spread over the territory, the revolution would have never had the force to overthrow the *ancien regime*, to repel the German invasion, to regenerate France.⁷³

⁶⁷ Ibid., 107–108.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ De Felice, Mussolini *il rivoluzionario, 1883–1920*, op. cit., 349.

⁷¹ Ibid., 105.

⁷² Nanni, *Bolscevismo e fascismo...* op. cit., 135.

⁷³ Ibid., 136.

Nanni hoped that the least common political denominator of such a revolution in Italy would be the *comune*, the historically strong and independent municipality of his native Romagna. Whereas his work in rebuilding earthquake-ravaged Santa Sofia derived from his responsibility as mayor, he also saw the possibility of transforming the *comune* into a nucleus for revolutionary activity. His vision of the revolutionary potential of the *comune* derived from a long tradition in Romagna of municipal independence and libertarian and anarchist ideals, particularly the experience of Andrea Costa.⁷⁴

Nanni also interpreted the French Revolution as a bourgeois revolution that, once having taken power, “excluded the proletariat from any effective sovereignty and threw it back into its ancient slavery.”⁷⁵ According to Nanni, the proletariat must also overthrow the “constitutional process that has signaled the triumph of the bourgeois” by transferring power from the state to the *comune*, “from reactionary centralization to free regional and municipal autonomy, to the spontaneous federations based on workers’ councils.”⁷⁶

The reconstruction of Santa Sofia so fully occupied Nanni that he apparently lacked the time to comment fully on the relevance of the D’Annunzio’s September 1919 occupation of Fiume. Nor did he comment fully on the possible relationship between the *Carta del Carnaro*, the “constitution” of the annexed city which “not only contained an original syndicalist structure but also anticipated the demands of mass politics.”⁷⁷ The occupation of Fiume would seem to have been an opportunity to see whether his ideas about the revolutionary potential of the *comune* would hold true in practice. He did send a telegram to Prime Minister Orlando expressing his support for D’Annunzio,⁷⁸ and he would later comment that “the Nation is Fiume; there only burns a pure flame of Italian-ness there.”⁷⁹ It is ironic that he made these comments in the context of

⁷⁴ Costa was a much-revered political leader from Emilia. Though he began his career as an anarchist, he moved to the ranks of the parliamentary Socialists. For more see: Fernando Manzotti, “Andrea Costa,” in *X grand! di Romagna*, ed. Mauro Todeschini, op. cit., 49–52; and, Ettore Rotelli, “L’autonomia comunale nel socialismo di Andrea Costa,” in Aldo Berselli, ed., *Andrea Costa nella storia del socialismo italiano* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1982): 109–132.

⁷⁵ Nanni, *Bolscevismo e fascismo...* op. cit., 137.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Michael Ledeen, *The First Duce: D’Annunzio at Fiume* (Baltimore: JHUP, 1977): 163.

⁷⁸ This telegram was later republished in Torquato Nanni, *Sulla breccia: con mano ferma e coscienza tranquilla* (Santa Sofia: Tipografia dei Comuni, 1923): 5.

⁷⁹ Torquato Nanni, *La gente di mare e Giuseppe Giuletti* (Bologna: Capelli, 1925): 41. Giuseppe Giuletti was born in Ravenna in 1876. He founded the FILM in 1909, gaining important benefits for the seaman who belonged to it. He was an interventionist supporter of Mussolini, member of the *Fascio di Azione Rivoluzionaria* (founded by Rocca), and volunteered for the Italian Navy in the First World War. Although he supported D’Annunzio at Fiume, his union ties made him a target of the fascist squads, and in 1926 he was arrested on charges of having embezzled FILM funds. Despite being declared innocent, he was exiled on Sardinia and only returned to Italy in exchange for an agreement to fulfill propaganda activities for the regime. After the fall of fascism he became a parliamentary deputy of the Republican Party. He died in 1943.

praising Giuseppe Giuletti — leader of the Italian Federation of Merchant Marines (FILM) — for ordering the freighter *Persia*, originally headed for Russia with a load of arms to be used against the Bolsheviks in the Russian Civil War, to be diverted to D'Annunzio at Fiume.

In many ways the Socialist Party's response to the occupation of Fiume was the last straw for Nanni. In May 1919, he published his letter of resignation from the Party in *Il Giornale del Mattino*. He cited the Party's inability to recognize that "execrable Anglo-American capitalism" was attempting to violate Italy's national rights at Fiume.⁸⁰ It became clear that, beginning with his interventionist stance, Nanni's ideas were no longer compatible with the Party line. At the same time, he was implicated by association with the more radical interventionists such as Mussolini and De Ambris who had begun to consider organizing their own squads to eliminate "defeatism." Although they did not appear as a threat during the war, by 1919 these excombatants had transformed themselves into fasci di combattimento and were determined to make the government fulfill its promises to the workers and peasants who had served at the front. In so doing they would bring down the system of liberal democracy in Italy.

By the time of the fascists' rise to power, Nanni had developed a hybrid form of socialism that involved an often contradictory mix of populist appeals and intellectual theory; international, national, and local politics; and, personal politics deriving from his own experiences, especially with regard to his relationships with Mussolini and, as we shall see, Leandro Arpinati. Since 1914 Nanni had been involved with a group of radical interventionists who were politically isolated from the more moderate interventionists with whom he would have likely been associated had not his interventionism derived from his relationship with Mussolini. In the Twenties, these personal relationships, combined with his own ideas about a possible alliance between capital and labor would attract him to fascism. Critical of the Socialists to the point where he had felt compelled to resign from the Party, and associated with Mussolini and the other "fascists of the first hour" with whom he did fully agree, Nanni was caught in a trap. It was a trap from which he would never escape.

⁸⁰ Torquato Nanni, *Il Giornale del Mattino*, 14 May 1919. The date of the letter is 12 May 1919. For more see: Giuseppe Giuletti, *Pax Mundi. La Federazione Marinara nelle bufere fascists* (Naples: Rispoli, n.d. [1945–46?]; and, Ledeen, *The First Duce*, op. cit.

Chapter 5: The Rise of Fascism in Emilia-Romagna (1918–1919)

By the end of the First World War, many Italians believed that Italy was in a revolutionary situation and that a powerfully directed movement on the Left might successfully harness the growing class conflict to its own ends. Three organizations looked like possible vehicles for this potential revolution: the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), the anarcho-syndicalist *Unione Sindacale Italiana* (USI), and the revolutionary syndicalist *Unione Italiana del Lavoro* (USD). For many different reasons, none of them succeeded in converting the revolutionary moment into a outright revolution. The socialists rejected the ideology of both the anarchists and syndicalists as primitive, and worked for long-term gains through the parliamentary process. On several occasions they rejected calls for a united front on the Left that might topple the weak liberal democratic governments of the postwar period. Socialist leaders, including Torquato Nanni, were initially convinced of the revolutionary potential of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and by the tactics being used by the Left in Germany. By mid-1918, however, Nanni had returned as mayor to help rebuild his native town of Santa Sofia. Though he participated as a regional councilor for PSI's national directorate, his own efforts were concentrated on the possibility of transforming the local *comune* into the functional equivalent of "workers councils," that is, a nucleus for making the revolution analogous to the first Paris Commune. He and others were soon disillusioned by the PSI's tactic of doing everything in their power to control the masses and prevent insurrection.¹

The anarcho-syndicalists of the USX were wedded to the idea of by-passing short-term gains and going immediately for the revolution by means of a nation-wide general strike. Several attempts were made, culminating in the general strike of July 20, 1919, which, however, failed within two days. There were several reasons for the failure. First, key reformist leaders of the PSI such as Serrati, Treves, and Turati opposed the strike. Second, the strikers failed to gain the support of war-veterans who "detested both the PSI and the USI because they believed that they [the ex-combatants] had won the war despite the defeatism of the Left."² Third, there was a general lack of direction in

¹ Roberto Vivarelli, *Il dopoguerra in Italia e l'avvento del fascismo: 1918–1922* (Naples: Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Storici, 1966).

² Charles Bertrand, "The Biennio Rosso: Anarchists and Revolutionary Syndicalists in Italy, 1919–1920," HR 9,2 (1982): 386.

the anarchist movement as leaders such as Borghi were placed in preventive detention during the strike.³

Following the strike the revolutionary syndicalists were essentially without leadership as Alceste De Ambris came to agree with Mussolini and other “fascists of the first hour” who in March 1919 founded the Fascist Party in Piazza San Sepolcro in Milan. De Ambris embraced Mussolini’s view that the working class should turn its attention and energy towards renewing the Italian nation.⁴ DeAmbris subsequently supported D’Annunzio’s capture of Fiume in September 1919, and hoped that it might become the focal point of revolution. Having thus embraced the imperialism that the occupation of Fiume implied, he and other UIL leaders began to sound more like fascists than syndicalists.⁵ The anarchist movement in general was also weakened by the previous defections of interventionist-anarchists such as Rygier and Rocca, whose propaganda activities were sorely missed, especially in their former stronghold of Bologna. In fact, between 1915 and 1920, no significant anarchist newspapers or journals were published in Emilia-Romagna.⁶ Rygier had completely abandoned all ties with the anarchists since the early stages of the interventionist crisis. Her activities during the war with the Committee for Public Safety were followed in the postwar period by a position as secretary of the Committee for the Italian Annexation of Fiume and Dalmatia. She also founded and directed the Anti-Bolshevik Union of Rome and the Italian Federation of Civic Alliances.⁷

Rocca worked for the Sansogno publishing house through the end of the war. He turned his considerable energy towards propaganda for the *Fasci d’Azione Rivoluzionaria*, which he had helped found in the early days of the interventionist crisis. The 105 *fasci* had initially grown to 90,000 members, but soon dissolved as many volunteered, as had Rocca, first in the Garibaldi division, then in the regular army. Rocca’s initial calls for workers to crusade against German militarism eventually transformed itself into a call for a nationalist-populist movement that might transcend parliamentary liberal democracy. Although the importance of these *fasci* was limited following Italy’s intervention, they did bring together

frustrated leftists determined to develop new strategies, and [put] them into contact with alienated, non-proletarian, young people who were just becoming politically active. At Ferrara [50 miles north of Bologna in Emilia], for example, the movement brought together older syndicalists like Sergio Pa-

³ Ibid., 390.

⁴ De Felice, *Mussolini il rivoluzionario, 1883–1920*, op. cit., 503.

⁵ Bertrand, “The Biennio Rosso,” op. cit., 388.

⁶ Mauro Casarini, “Contributo all storia del movimento anarchico a Bologna nel primo dopoguerra,” in *Bolletino del Museo del Risorgimento* (Bologna: Editcomp, 1983); and, Mauro Casarini, “Il problema operaio in *Sorgiamo!* settimanale dell’Unione Anarchica Emiliana Romagnola,” *Volontä* (July-August 1978): 260–270.

⁷ Rygier, “Mussolini informatore della polizia francese...” op. cit., 195.

nunzio, who headed the local *fascio*, and young dissidents like Italo Balbo and Dino Grandi. These new alignments would survive the war.⁸

In the immediate postwar period, he concentrated on the restitution of the terre irridente, emphasizing “why Italy, for ethnographic, historical and linguistic reasons, deserves Dalmatia.”⁹ Rocca and Rygier continued to exert an influence over the interventionists owing to their propaganda skills and access to printing presses and journals of opinion. A minor member among Rygier’s Bolognese anarcho-turned-interventionists was a young railway electrician named Leandro Arpinati. Arpinati would ultimately fuse elements of Rocca, Rygier, and Nanni’s thinking with his own experiences in his native Romagna to carry currents of anarcho-individualism into the fascist movement... and to the highest levels of power.

Leandro Arpinati was born on February 29, 1892 in Civitella di Romagna, only a few miles north of Nanni’s home town of Santa Sofia, just within the confines of Romagna.¹⁰ His family lived well, half the extended family being involved in the cultivation and harvesting of grapes, while the other half owned or rented most of the wine cantinas in the town.¹¹ Following an agricultural accident, his father, Sante Arpinati, a vineyard worker by trade, opened a combination osteria, wine cantina, and hotel. A fervent socialist and active member in the local party, his osteria soon became “the forge of ‘subversion’ in Civitella, where the first meetings of the socialist section were held...as the first current of rebellion swept the Romagnan countryside.”¹² Sante Arpinati’s *asteria* soon became the meeting place for the local “reds,” while the “yellows,” the Republicans, met in a different location. Although Sante Arpinati was little versed in “scientific socialism,” his son grew up surrounded nightly by “subversive socialists” developing a form of home-made politics.

Like Mussolini and countless other youths from Romagna, Arpinati was forced by the relatively poor conditions of his native region to search for work in other, more developed areas. In 1904, at the age of twelve, Leandro was sent to work as a dishwasher in a Turinese hotel.¹³ His first sojourn in Turin was brief however, owing to homesickness, and he was back in Civitella within a year. Arpinati attended the local school and soon got involved in politics by founding the local socialist youth section. Apparently his socialism had an authoritarian tinge: “Having founded the Francesco Piccini Young Socialists’ Club,” wrote Nanni, “he wanted to be its leader, but without

⁸ David D. Roberts, “Fasci di Azione Rivoluzionaria,” in *Historical Dictionary of Fascist Italy*, ed. Philip Canistraro (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982): 199.

⁹ ACS, CPC, f. 4362, b. “Rocca Massimo.”

¹⁰ ACC, “Registro degli Atti di Nascita,” Father: Sante Arpinati; Mother: Lucia Sansavini.

¹¹ Arpinati’s daughter Giancarla Arpinati Cantamessa rejects the notion that her grandparents were “poor workers” (Arpinati mio padre, op. cit., 33). Nevertheless, Arpinati lived in one house with his entire extended family, including five brothers and sisters, three of whom died in infancy (ACC, “Foglio di famiglia”).

¹² Torquato Nanni, *Leandro Arpinati e il fascismo bolognese*, op. cit., 17.

¹³ Ibid., 10–19

control of the ‘executive council’.”¹⁴ As an active member of the young socialists club, Arpinati was also an acquaintance of Nanni’s with whom he shared anti-clerical sentiments. Though unemployed, Arpinati took the opportunity to apprentice himself to a Milanese electrician sent to Civitella to convert a water mill into an electrical generating Station. When the electrician returned to Milan, Arpinati was left in charge of public lighting for the town and was called to complete similar work in nearby towns, including Santa Sofia, where he often met with Nanni.¹⁵ Soon after he found work as a mechanic at the San Giorgio Works in Pistoia, where he would remain for two years.¹⁶ In 1909 he was once again in Turin working as a mechanic at the Diatto automobile factory where he participated in several metallurgists’ strikes.¹⁷ It was during this period that Arpinati came into contact with a little-known anarchist by the name of Limon, also from Romagna, who introduced him to anarchist theory and induced him to become an anarcho-individualist.¹⁸ Arpinati apparently insisted on the term “individualist” as a “complement to the first, which according to him was insufficient.”¹⁹ Arpinati instinctually placed his emphasis on the primacy of individuality, perhaps the only conceptual theme that subsequently held together Arpinati’s often contradictory career. As a result, he wrote to his socialist comrades in Civitella to erase his name from the membership rolls of the Francesco Piccini Club because he had “become an anarchist.”²⁰

For Arpinati, socialism had apparently failed. To understand that this was the reason for his turn to anarchism, we must rely on the testimony of Torquato Nanni who wrote that Arpinati was disillusioned by the “purposeless factionalism” of the Socialist Party, of the “reformists and revolutionaries, integralists and syndicalists” which had

¹⁴ Ibid., 16.

¹⁵ Agostino Iraci, *Arpinati l’oppositore di Mussolini*, op. cit., 4. Iraci served as Head of the Cabinet within the Ministry of the Interior under Arpinati. Born near Rieti in 1893, he served in the First World War as an officer in the infantry. After the war he began work as a lawyer and upper school teacher in Umbria. He was one of the founders of the Umbrian *fascia*, carried out many punitive expeditions, and in 1921 was included in the Central Committee of the PNF. He held various posts within the party until 1923, when he was elected Vice-President of the Association of Italian Municipalities. In 1926 he was made Prefect of Campobasso, then Udine, before moving in 1928 to the Ministry of the Interior. Iraci worked closely with Arpinati until the latter’s downfall in 1933, after which he was considered an “enemy of the regime.” In the postwar period he lived mostly from agricultural holdings accumulated during the fascist period, published books and articles, and served as President of the Liberal Party in the region of Perugia. Iraci remained one of the most vocal defenders both of Arpinati (who he inaccurately describes as a “classical liberal”) and his conduct at the Ministry of the Interior. He carried out a long and detailed correspondence with Arpinati’s daughter Giancarla Arpinati Cantamessa including an eleventh-hour conversion to Catholicism which sheds light on the topic of “defascistification.”

¹⁶ Iraci, *Arpinati l’oppositore di Mussolini*, op. cit.

¹⁷ Duilio Susmel, “Leandro Arpinati. Il ras del pallone,” *Domenica del Corriere* 69, 36 (29 August 1967): 17.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Iraci, *Arpinati l’oppositore di Mussolini*, op. cit.

²⁰ Nanni, Leandro Arpinati e il *fascino bolognese*, op. cit., 22.

reduced the party congresses to a “nauseating battle of words.”²¹ Wrote Nanni in his biography of Arpinati:

Anarchism...is the only possible political religion given that, due to its very critical essence, it knows how to maintain an adequate distance from the prosaic life we are constrained to live every day...Man is a religious animal first, before being a political animal; when materialist logic comes to negate heavenly paradox, he is naturally lead to believe the more incredible possibility of utopia on earth. Anarchism is a religion that has, even itself, ascetics and prophets...He who has met Errico Malatesta can believe again in the apostle and his mission...For many youths, anarchism in the stagnant period of Italian politics was a good discipline for the spirit. Taken up as if in a mystical halo, and fixing their gaze on the golden dream of perfect humanity, they endeavored to make their individuality conform to the luminous path: and succeeded in educating their minds, hearts, and spirits in an effort to better themselves.²²

Arpinati’s anarcho-individualism therefore had a utopian strain, a response to socialism having compromised itself with day-to-day politics: “Socialism was losing the suggestion of an undisputed and indisputable faith in order to make way for the complicated game of special interests, [and] youths with a bit of spirit who didn’t want to abandon themselves to sectarianism, exalted in the utopia.”²³ Arpinati conformed to Nanni’s description of the self-taught anarchist who mixed “Stirner, Nietzsche, Bakunin, Marx, and often Feuerbach and Schopenhauer with other alcoholic drinks filled with fantasies such as ‘Social Revolution’...a tasty breakfast...that few are able to digest; which gives most people certain indigestion and a hangover.”²⁴ Arpinati did not remain in Turin for long. His activities among the Turinese anarchists brought him to the attention of the police, who registered him as being “of good moral conduct, but in political matters professing anarchists ideas without being considered dangerous.”²⁵

Fearing that their son had fallen to bad influences, Arpinati’s parents forced him to return to Civitella in late 1909, where he had a falling out with his socialist father. Arpinati counted himself as the only anarcho-individualist in the local anarchist cell, which accepted him despite his often unorthodox views.²⁶ Then, an unrelated episode increased his stature in the town. One day, in a fit of insanity, a local carpenter nearly

²¹ Ibid., 21.

²² Ibid., 22–23.

²³ Ibid., 22.

²⁴ Ibid., 24.

²⁵ ACS, CPC, f. 198, b. “Arpinati, Leandro.”

²⁶ Domenico Girelli, unpublished notes from an interview by Gianpiero Landi, Paris, 19 February 1983, Biblioteca Libertaria, Castel Bolognese. Parts of this interview relating mostly to Girelli’s later years were published as “Ricordando Domenico Girelli,” A (Rivista *anarchica*) 183 (June-July 1991) : 50–51.

beat his sister-in-law to death in the streets of the town and dragged her to his home where he also threatened to kill his wife and another women in the house. Arpinati, armed with a pitchfork, entered the house through second-story window and disarmed and immobilized the man.²⁷ As a known anarchist, this act of bravery brought the anarchists in general into high esteem in the town, where their actions until then had been limited. Arpinati nevertheless continued to have violent encounters with his father, yet, it proved impossible to bring him back into the fold as the young Arpinati openly accused the heads of the local socialist party of hypocrisy, speaking out in his father's osteria against the way "their actions were too often in contrast with the ideas they boasted about professing."²⁸ More than once, father and son almost came to blows, but the son remained unrepentant saying, "You can punch me around, but the truth remains the same."²⁹

These episodes demonstrate the primacy of the individualist component of Arpinati's anarcho-individualism and that from a young age Arpinati was formulating a not just political views but a whole political morality. Wrote Nanni of Arpinati:

He does not know how to conceive of a divorce between politics and morality...He always says what he thinks: calls a spade a spade. He doesn't have an opinion for himself and an opinion for others: he could think out loud. His politics are inspired by the conscience, and come from the heart.³⁰

It not possible to determine which anarchist texts Arpinati read at an early age, nor is it possible to determine the anarchists thinkers with whom he came into contact.³¹ His actions in life would, however, take him beyond the balanced definition offered above of anarchism being "a system of social thought aiming at fundamental changes in the structure of society and particularly...at the replacement of the authoritarian state with some form of non-governmental cooperation between free individuals."³² Arpinati produced at the individual level a set of politico-moral principles culled from the political ideologies made available to him. What was important in the above definition is the emphasis on fundamental changes in the structure of society through cooperation among individuals. As we shall see, this does not necessarily mean "free" cooperation nor does it mean the "replacement of the authoritarian state." The story of his wanting to control the young socialists of Civitella hints that although he may have wanted free relations between individuals, he conceived of himself as being somehow morally superior and able to decide for others. As such the more basic definition

²⁷ Iraci, *Arpinati l'oppositore di Mussolini*, op. cit., 5.

²⁸ Arpinati Cantamessa, *Arpinati mio padre*, op. cit., 35.

²⁹ Nanni, Leandro *Arpinati e il fascismo bolognese*, op. cit., 26.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Arpinati read and distributed *La Libertä*, *La Protesta Umana*, *L'Agitazione*, and *Il Seme* (Girelli, interview by Landi, op. cit.).

³² Woodcock, *Anarchism*, op. cit., 9.

of anarchism deriving from the Greek *anarchos* seems more appropriate: “without superiors.” Even from an early age, Arpinati was developing moral categories which he considered superior. These would eventually lead him not only to reject collectivist curbs on his free will, but also lead him to believe he was capable of deciding on behalf of others what was best for them. Arpinati’s period as a socialist — the result, more than anything, of his father’s strong socialist convictions — would be followed by a lifetime of anti-socialism, anti-communism, and anti-collectivism. The complex set of anarchoindividualist ideas he developed during this period would be further shaped by events which would force him to swim against the current for nearly the rest of his life.

Through 1910 and 1911, Arpinati took anarchism very seriously, despite his young age. The group of young anarchists in Civitella were led by Arpinati and Domenico Girelli³³ and had a small meeting place with a library. Girelli described Arpinati as “a good-looking young man, a head taller...and a bit more ambitious and arrogant [than the rest of us] .”³⁴ He contributed articles to the Roman anarchist newspaper *L’Alleanza Libertaria*, organ of the “Italian Socialist-Anarchist Alliance”³⁵ The purpose of the newspaper was to act as a collection point for the many voices in the Italian anarchist movement in an attempt to coordinate an overall strategy and ideology. Ultimately it came to be dominated by the organizational anarchists. As such it found itself in direct conflict with the anti-organizational anarchists and the anarcho-individualists, including Massimo Rocca [Libero Tancredi] from whom “the anarchist press still accepted periodic collaboration until 1911, even if during and after the War in Tripoli one can

³³ Domenico Girelli (1893–1991) began as one of the protagonists of the Civitella anarchist movement, and remained an anarchist his entire life. Although he lived with his family in France at the time, his father convinced him to return to Italy for military service in 1913. On leave in Civitella in June 1914, he participated in the events of the *settimana rossa*. He fought in the First World War and was taken prisoner by the Austrians at Caporetto. After the war he worked as a mechanic for Ansaldo in Genoa and took part on the 1920 factory occupations notable for the workers’ success in continuing production. Soon after, he took part in the theft of armaments from a military barracks and escaped into exile in France, where he lived and worked for the rest of his life. A volunteer in the Spanish Civil War, he was imprisoned for transgressing the non-interventionist stance of the Popular Front. During the Occupation he was again imprisoned by the Gestapo, while his only son was sent to a concentration camp in Germany, from which he never returned. Following the Liberation he was imprisoned a third time for hiding weapons given to him by former Resistance fighters. His final years were spent in Paris where he survived on the post *hoc* financial assistance offered by the French Government to Italian political exiles (Gianpiero Landi, “Ricordando Domenico Girelli,” op. cit.).

³⁴ Girelli, interview by Landi, op. cit.

³⁵ *L’Alleanza Libertaria*, organ of “L’Alleanza socialista anarchica italiana,” (1 May 1908–20 October 1911), constituted at the Anarchist Congress of Rome in 1907. [Biblioteca dell’Archiginnasio, Bologna, Fondo Fabbri 80; and, Biblioteca Universitaria Alessandrina, Rome; Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence.] For more see: Leonardo Bettini, *Bibliografia dell’anarchismo*, vol. I, *Periodic! e numeri unici anarchici! in lingua italiana pubblicati in Italia (1372–1971)* (Florence: CP Editrice, 1972): 214–15; Emilio Falco, “*L’Alleanza Libertaria* e il convegno anarchico di Rome del 1911,” in *Bollettino del Museo del Risorgimento* (Bologna: Editcomp, 1983): 33–44.

already talk of an end to any misunderstanding.”³⁶ Arpinati’s contributions to the *Alleanza Libertaria* were most likely published under the rubric of “From Anarchist Italy,” a third-page collection of notes from anarchist cells throughout the country.³⁷ Arpinati during this period was undoubtedly a follower of the brand of anarcho-individualism being espoused by Rocca, that is, he was a “Tancredian.”³⁸ Although Rocca’s ideas during the years from 1909 to 1914 were undergoing a transformation, it is possible to identify several ideas which were later shared by Arpinati including: “transformation of the state and public life by means of a ‘moral revolution’; subordination of the Party to the State; equality of citizens before the law; acceptance, with some reservations of an ‘enlightened despotism,’ that is, of a Duce, but one which after some time should withdraw and, at any rate, act only for the good of the Nation.”³⁹ As to the carrying out of this “moral revolution,” Nanni confirms that Arpinati

conceived of anarchism from an ascetic point of view: as an internal conquests, before being an external conquest. He placed the morally strong individual at the service of society; when everyone feels within themselves morality, justice, goodness, etc., like a natural habit, men will no longer need laws and carabinieri.⁴⁰

Although Civitella was long noted for its anarchist sympathies — the town bell was rung and the children let out of school upon hearing the announcement that Bresci had killed the king — many families admonished their children for associating with the renegade young anarchists who sometimes found themselves in trouble with the law. On one occasion Arpinati ran the risk of imprisonment for desecrating a small chapel in the countryside.⁴¹ On another occasion he was “picked by lots for the job of

³⁶ Cerrito, *Dall’insurrezionalismo alia settimana rossa*, op. cit., 127.

³⁷ “Dall’Italia anarchica.” Arpinati published under various pseudonyms including “Vittorio Neri” and “un rivoluzionario.” Although the *Alleanza Libertaria* contained section notes from Civitella di Romagna, it is not possible to directly attribute any particular contribution to the young Arpinati. Giancarla Arpinati Cantamessa recalls an old anarchist colleague visiting her father in the 1930s with a back issue of the paper “over which they laughed at his youthful enthusiasm and bad grammar” (interview by author, Malacappa, May 1992). Similarly she wrote that her grandfather [Arpinati’s father, Sante]...“while remaining a fervent socialist, read to his friends the articles his son wrote in the anarchist newspapers and was very proud” (Arpinati mio *padre*, op. cit., 35).

³⁸ Confirmation of Arpinati’s “Tancredianism” comes from at least three sources: Domenico Girelli (Girelli, interview by Landi, op. cit.); Agostino Iraci who notes, “The general ideas held by Rocca...were, and subsequently remained, those of Arpinati” (Arpinati *l’oppositore di Mussolini*, op. cit., 52); Pier Carlo Masini, “L’individualista in camicia nera,” *L’Humanità* (22–23 January 1970); and, in correspondence between Masini and Giancarla Arpinati Cantamessa while researching the third volume of *Storia degli anarchici italiani (1892–1939)* (Unpublished, AGAC and telephone interview by author, June 1992).

³⁹ Iraci, Arpinati 1 *‘oppositore di Mussolini*, op. cit.

⁴⁰ Nanni, Leandro Arpinati e *il fascismo bolognese*, op. cit., 27. Nanni’s choice of the ambiguous word “habit” [abito] is probably not a coincidence for it can also refer to a priest’s cassock.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 27–2S.

assassinating the king.”⁴² Arpinati placed a high value on personal relationships and never missed an opportunity to solidify his association with other anarchist cells. On one occasion (the circumstances are not entirely clear) he visited Torquato Nanni in Santa Sofia and found himself in a scuffle during which he singlehandedly fought off a dozen or more *carabinieri* as he tried to protect the flag of the local cell.⁴³ Police surveillance of Arpinati also continued owing his continued collaboration with the *Alleanza Libertaria*, subscriptions to other anarchist newspapers, and his presence at anarchist conferences sponsored by the local cell.⁴⁴

Arpinati met Mussolini for the first time on March 13, 1910. He was 18 and Mussolini the young, 27 year-old Secretary of the Socialist Federation of Forlì. It was not an all together amicable encounter. Campaigns for the hotly contested local elections had brought the struggle between Republicans and Socialists in the Forlì region to a head. Fights between various factions had resulted in several deaths on both sides. The leader of the Republicans, Augusto Guadenzi, and the Socialist candidate, Mussolini, championed the causes of the sharecroppers [*mezzadri*] and day laborers [*braccianti*], respectively. The tension was centered on the substitution of *braccianti* by threshing machines, an issue which brought Mussolini’s revolutionary socialist activity to what might be considered a high water mark. On the wall of *Lotta di Classe* there was an enormous picture of Marx, while Mussolini declared: “I’m doing everything I can to maintain the revolutionary pressure. We are not very parliamentarian. Not long ago we refused to attend a conference on universal suffrage.”⁴⁵

In January 1910, Andrea Costa died of old age, providing the Romagnan Socialists with a unique opportunity for capitalizing on the myth of the much-revered Socialist leader from Emilia.⁴⁶ The Socialists of Civitella named a new covered market after

⁴² Giorgio Pini, “Signoria di Arpinati,” in Ragazzo del ’99, unpublished manuscript, Ing. Franco Manaresi, personal papers, Bologna, 135. Pini was an interventionist, a veteran of the First World War, and a fascist journalist. He was an early *squadrista* in the Bolognese *fascio*. He was director of *L’Assalto*, *Il Resto del Carlino* and, after 1936, *Il Popolo d’Italia*. During the Italian Socialist Republic (Salò) he was considered a moderating influence as Minister of the Interior. He was one of the founding leaders of the neo-fascist Movimento *Sociale Italiano* (MSI) in December 1946. Pini’s comment about Arpinati was made in reference to the latter’s obsequiousness to the king during ground-breaking ceremonies for the Littoriale Stadium on 12 June 1925.

⁴³ Nanni, Leandro Arpinati e il fascismo bolognese, op. cit., 33.

⁴⁴ ACS, CPC, b. 196, f. “Arpinati, Leandro.” Domenico Girelli confirms that despite their distance from Bologna, the Civitella anarchists were able to convince many important anarchists and socialist to speak in Civitella including: Pietro Gori, Domenico Zavattero, Saviero Merlino, and Giovanni Gavilli, (Girelli, interview by Landi, op. cit.). Borghi claims to have spoken in every village in the region at one time or another (*Mezzo secolo di anarchia*, op. cit., 104). It is also possible that Arpinati and his colleagues travelled to nearby cities of Romagna to hear other speakers. Rocca, for example, did a one-man propaganda tour of Emilia-Romagna in September 1910 (ACS, CPC, b. 4362, f. “Rocca Massimo”).

⁴⁵ Borghi, *Mezzo secolo di anarchia*, op. cit., 112.

⁴⁶ A late eulogy for Costa by Amilcare Cipriani coincided with the anniversary of the Paris Comune of 1871, to which an entire issue was also dedicated [“19 Marzo-29 Maggio 1871, La Comune di Parigi,” *Lotta di Classe*, I, 11 (19 March 1910)].

Costa and invited Mussolini to speak at the inauguration. To Arpinati and his anarchist colleagues there could be no greater heresy than to name the market after an anarchist-turned-parliamentary socialist.⁴⁷ Unable to find a local printer for their posters criticizing Costa and protesting the naming of the market after him, they were forced to post a few hand-written bills near the doorway of the theater where Mussolini was to speak.⁴⁸ When their actions were brought to his attention Mussolini substituted his prepared speech with a direct message to the young anarchists. “Comrades I Citizens I” he shouted, “Imitate the example of Andrea Costa.” Then, paraphrasing Stirner, he said, “Let the dead bury the dead!” Wrote Nanni, “then he jumped down from the stage amidst a delirious crowd that had understood.”⁴⁹ An account of the speech was reprinted in *Lotta di Classe* and accompanied in the following weeks by other criticisms of the Civitella anarchists.

Nanni noted, however, that “Mussolini, deep down, was spiritually very close to those young idealists.”⁵⁰ Within a matter of days, in fact, he had mended fences with the Civitella anarchists who began to collaborate in Mussolini’s electoral campaign. If the often random collection of articles which appeared in *Lotta di Classe* during its first two years (1910–1911) are an indication of Mussolini’s own views at the time, then it can be said that he was looking for support for his newspaper wherever he could find it and made little distinction at this time among anarchists, syndicalists, and socialists provided they were unified in their opposition to the local Republicans. For their part, Arpinati and his anarchist colleagues had much in common with Mussolini at that time including:

a common sense of revolt against society’s injustices, a disposition towards eliminating them with violent means, and an invocation of something new. They didn’t realize that they might differ as to what this “something new” might be. On the basis of this feeling, the two found much common ground for working together.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Naming the market after Costa and the choice of Mussolini as orator were both considered affronts to the Civitella Republicans with whom the Socialists shared minority power on the town council. The Republicans favored naming the market after Antonio Fratti, a Forlì Republican who had been killed in the Greek war for independence. The choice of Costa led to the collapse of the Socialist-Republican coalition, with the Republicans gaining power in the subsequent byelections. Arpinati supported neither the Republicans nor the Socialists (Natale Graziani, *La chiusa d’Ercole* (Forlì: Ed. Camera di Commercio, Industria, Artigiano e Agricoltura, 1979): 249–251.

⁴⁸ Torquato Nanni, *Leandro Arpinati e il fascismo bolognese*, op. cit., 30. The Communal Archives of Civitella di Romagna confirm the details of the speech as well as the town council’s debate concerning the naming of the market, but no reference is made to the anarchists’ protests.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 31. Iraci maintains that “Mussolini’s speech was not so concise, and that he rather inveighed against Arpinati and his friends, calling them ‘jackals’...Then he left, cursing and threatening” (Iraci, *Arpinati l’oppositore di Mussolini*, op. cit., 6).

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Iraci, *Arpinati 1 ‘oppositore di Mussolini*, op. cit., 8.

Arpinati was obviously fascinated with Mussolini and his political prestige, while Mussolini saw Arpinati as a capable ally. From the start Arpinati and Mussolini used the *tu* form of address when speaking with each other, something which would not change even as Mussolini rose to power and demanded that all and sundry address him with either the *voi* form or as Duce.⁵² Although Mussolini was unable to convince Arpinati to return to the socialist fold, the anarchists did collaborate with the socialists in defending the rights of the local *braccianti*.⁵³ Arpinati and his fellow anarchists acted as informal body guards for Mussolini during the remainder of the electoral campaign, on one occasion escorting him to crash a Republican rally unwisely held in a predominantly socialist town. The crowd clamored for Mussolini to say a few words despite the fact that it was a Republican event, upon which Mussolini, with a single gesture, compared the Republicans to the white mule on which he had traveled to the rally.⁵⁴

Arpinati also collaborated further by contributing to Mussolini's *Lotta di Classe*, writing a cynical attack on the celebrations held by the local Republican Party:

These Republican, poor fakes or fools, were carried away by the celebrations, still gathered together like so many sheep, like children at First Communion, all with red weathercocks in their buttonholes, hats, on bicycles, on wagons, on the heads of the horses and donkeys...These were certainly not only two great days of Republican propaganda, but also of instruction and intellectual and psychological elevation of the individual. For proof it is enough to know that forty Republicans returning home to Civitella came across...two anarchists and two socialists who, without malice, were singing Addio Lugano [an anarchist hymn] — the infuriated Republicans got down from their carts and bicycles and fell on the four unfortunates with heavy insults and a few punches. This is Republican civility, these are the militants of the Republican state.⁵⁵

It is not entirely fair to say that Arpinati became a “follower” of Mussolini at this time. Although Arpinati and his colleagues accompanied Mussolini to several rallies, they were never drawn into Mussolini's socialist clique and maintained an autonomy of their own. In fact, Girelli maintained that Arpinati hoped might Mussolini “might come over to the anarchist movement with a majority of the socialists.”⁵⁶ Furthermore,

⁵² Susmel, “Il ras del pallone,” op. cit.

⁵³ Borghi, *Mezzo secolo di anarchia*, op. cit., 110. Iraci suggests that Mussolini never tried to convince Arpinati to return to the Socialist Party because “Mussolini at that time was a party dissident and might even have liked to have had someone around him with ideas similar to his, but not tied to the party” (letter from Iraci to Arpinati Cantamessa, 29 February 1968, AGAC).

⁵⁴ Nanni, Leandro Arpinati *e il fascismo bolognese*, op. cit., 32.

⁵⁵ Leandro Arpinati [pseud. “Un rivoluzionario”], “Corrispondenze,” *Lotta di Classe* 41 (15 October 1910). Confirmation that Arpinati wrote this article comes from Masini, “L'individualista in camicia nera,” op. cit.

⁵⁶ Girelli, interview by Landi, op. cit.

as the number of Civitella anarchists who considered themselves anarchoindividualists increased, they began to repudiate strict organizational structures and did not always recognize Arpinati's leadership or share his affection for Mussolini. Arpinati continued to cultivate his friendship with Torquato Nanni, busy during this time with the publication of his anti-clerical newspaper *La Fonte*. Nanni's anti-clerical attacks can be seen as a tactic of providing a "force de frappe by which he could penetrate and create democratic turmoil among the people of the Apennine mountains still sensitive to the authority of the clergy."⁵⁷ Nanni hoped to stimulate the peasants of Romagna towards political action, principally towards socialism. He attacked the Church in a region which still felt strongly the effects of being a part of the Papal States. For an area with such a high level of illiteracy, it might be said that many of the abstract notions of the socialist movement were beyond the purview of most newly enfranchised electors. Anticlericalism, therefore, offered an omnipresent "enemy" easily identified by Nanni's polemics. Wrote Nanni, "We combat clericalism, politicized Catholicism...But combating clericalism does not mean combating religion."⁵⁸ Which is to say, he was attacking clericalism, not faith, a tactic Arpinati supported. Raised in a fervently socialist household without religious education, Arpinati agreed with both the content and the strategy of Nanni's anti-clericalism.⁵⁹ Anarchism for Arpinati provided a substitute faith, a political program which blended with his own ethical structure to form a distinct political morality. Whether or not Arpinati rejected the Catholic Church he was sufficiently Christian in his demeanor that many around him remarked that he was "a perfect Christian who knows how to be one without the formal mark of religion."⁶⁰ Both Nanni and Arpinati's political tergiversations were therefore a search for a substitute for the void they helped create with their attacks on the Church. Anarchism and then fascism's attraction for Arpinati was based on "fundamental human instincts," particularly the need for faith.⁶¹ Into the void Arpinati substituted a personal political morality, first in the form of anarcho-individualism, and then in the form of fascism. Years later following the fascists' electoral disaster in 1919, Mussolini consoled himself with similar thinking: "To us, the doomed ones of individualism, there is nothing

⁵⁷ Bedeschi, "Nanni fra giornalismo e politica," op. cit., 49. This view is corroborated by Malcolm Sylvers, "L'anticlericalismo nel socialismo italiano dalle origini al 1914," in *Movimento operaio e socialista* (May-August 1970): 175-189.

⁵⁸ Torquato Nanni, "Spiegazioni ai cattolici," *La Scopa* 2 (1909).

⁵⁹ Girelli recalls that the Civitella anarchists were so strongly anticlerical that the anarchist members of the town marching band convinced the others to refuse to play, even for pay, in religious ceremonies. On one occasion in the late 1890's, a Civitella anarchists apparently ambushed a religious procession in which men were carrying an effigy of the Madonna on their shoulders. Unable to defend themselves, they were stabbed with knives in the thighs and buttocks (Girelli, unpublished notes from interview by Landi, op. cit.).

⁶⁰ The remark was made by Padre Tacchi Venturi upon Arpinati's departure from Rome in 1933 (letter from Agostino Iraci to Arpinati Cantamessa, 4 November 1967, AGAC).

⁶¹ Ibid.

left, for the dark present and the gloomy tomorrow but the ever consoling religion...of anarchism!"⁶²

In late March, 1910, Arpinati's father died after a paralytic seizure caused him to fall from his bike, rupturing his spine.⁶³ As the eldest son, Leandro was left with the responsibility of providing for his three brothers and sisters, including the payment of heavy family debts. Arpinati's brother left in search of work while he stayed in Civitella doing his best to make ends meet. Despite the obsequious letters sent to each of their creditors asking for extensions, the family was unable to hold on to their osteria.⁶⁴ A family friend with connections at the National Railways was able to recommend Arpinati for a job as an electrical apprentice and in the summer of 1910 he left Romagna, holding down a series of jobs in Turin, Reggio Emilia, Pistoia, and finally in Bologna.

Arpinati was as deeply affected by his first experiences in Bologna as he had been by his first experiences in Turin. He had left Civitella di Romagna with a set of values common to this region with its small *comuni*, municipalities with strong roots in the countryside. He was repulsed not only by the bourgeois demeanor of the Bolognese people, but also by what he saw as the state of paralysis and disorder to which the city had been reduced by labor unrest.⁶⁵ In Bologna, he enrolled in the technical night school "Ars et Labor," where he obtained a diploma in 1917.⁶⁶ While attending night school he met Rina Guidi, whom he married in June 1921.⁶⁷ In November 1918 he enrolled in the engineering faculty of the University of Bologna, but only took a few courses in which he received modest grades.⁶⁸

Despite any affinities he may have had with Mussolini, further collaboration came to an end as Arpinati joined the Bolognese anarchist movement. His initial involvement was passive owing to his heavy work schedule. These were fervent times for the Bolognese anarchists led by Armando Borghi and Luigi Fabbri, with the frequent intervention of Maria Rygier and Massimo Rocca. First, ideological divisions among the anarchist-organizationalists in Bologna had led the establishment of two separate Chambers of Labor, "one of socialist inspiration and another...of anarcho-syndicalist inspiration" (the so-called "Old Chamber of Labor"):

⁶² Benito Mussolini, "Divagazioni. Lo'ora e gli orologi," *Il Popolo d'Italia* (6 April 1920), cited in *Opera Omnia*, op. cit., XIV, 398.

⁶³ "Corrispondenze, Civitella di Romagna, Lutto socialista," *Lotta di Classe* I, 12 (26 March 1910).

⁶⁴ Several of these letters have been preserved by Giancarla Arpinati Cantamessa (AGAC). Although Arpinati paid off each of these debts in full over the following years, the family finances declined precipitously. This decline would not be halted until his rise to power in the fascist movement.

⁶⁵ Giancarla Arpinati Cantamessa, interviews by author, Malacappa, May and July 1992; and, Torquato Nanni, Jr., interview by author, May 1992.

⁶⁶ As an indication of the family's ongoing financial troubles, Arpinati was able to attend this school only through the intervention of its director who allowed him to attend for free (*ibid.*).

⁶⁷ ACC, "Registro degli Atti di Nascita," married 8 June 1921 to Norina Guidi.

⁶⁸ Susmel, "Il ras del pallone," op. cit., 17.

For the anarchists, working within the union structure did not so much mean immediately setting about the successful attainment of the various worker's economic agendas as it meant taking advantage of the working masses in opposition to bourgeois capitalism and the state. Class consciousness and clashes during strikes in which the anarchists sought to involve the masses were instruments for preparing the proletariat for the ultimate conflict.⁶⁹

As a leader on the anarchist-syndicalist side of this split, Borghi continued to be concerned with coming to terms with the tension between individual action and collective organization.⁷⁰ Other important themes being pursued were collective-bargaining tactics, anti-militarism, and electoralism. The question of electoral abstentionism had become paramount, and had in many ways led to the original split among the organizationalists at the Congress of December 1910. On one side were the organizationalists who would eventually adhere to the *Unione Sindacale Italiana* (USD in Modena in 1912. They "upheld the necessity of participation in political life by presenting their own electoral candidates and the compatibility between the principles of syndicalism and electoral practices."⁷¹ On the other side were the unionized workers loosely organized around the *Società Operaia* "who openly declared themselves in favor of abstentionism in order to direct all their activities to giving a new impulse to workers organizations."⁷² Consistent with his individualist tendencies, Arpinati was profoundly ambivalent about both groups, particularly about the potential for collective solutions by unions or workers' groups of any kind. Anti-union and anti-organizational, Arpinati would be marked as a "scab" among the Bolognese anarchists as he consistently voted against strike action.⁷³ These same anti-union tendencies would continue throughout his life.

Maria Rygier took up permanent residence in Bologna in June 1910, and afterwards came into frequent contact with Arpinati. Maria Rygier not only shaped Arpinati's later interventionist stance, but demonstrated to him the importance of journalistic propaganda in any political movement. Although Massimo Rocca was in the United States through 1909 and 1910, his ideas and the ideas of those involved with *Il Novatore Anarchico* had a strong influence among the "Tancredian" anarcho-individualists. Arpinati continued to count himself among these "Tancredians," though he was a relatively unimportant member of the anarchist movement, a penniless railway worker

⁶⁹ Mauro Casarini, letter to author, Bologna, 22 June 1992.

⁷⁰ Tarozzi, "Armando Borghi organizzatore politico sindacale a Bologna," op. cit., 24.

⁷¹ Tarozzi, op. cit., 30-31n5.

⁷² Ibid. The *Società Operaie* were among the first socialist workers organizations in Italy, and actively promoted by Mazzini who participated in their national congress in November 1871 in attempt to make the scope of the organization more international. Nanni described Bologna's *Società Operaia* as "thriving and aggressive" (Leandro Arpinati e *il fascismo bolognese*, op. cit., 49.)

⁷³ Arpinati Cantamessa, interview by author, Malacappa, July 1990.

sometimes relying on the hospitality of other anarchists for food and lodging. For example, he was a frequent guest of the Zamboni family, the youngest of whom, Ateo Zamboni, would be accused of trying to assassinate Mussolini in 1927.⁷⁴ In June 1910, Arpinati and a number of like-minded Bolognese anarchists announced in the pages of *L'Agitatore* their intention to form a group of "libertarian, anti-organizational anarcho-individualists."⁷⁵ The announcement was accompanied by a note that "the majority of the anarchists...favor the syndicalist organization proposed by Armando Borghi." The splinter group apparently held only a few meetings before disbanding.⁷⁶

Massimo Rocca returned to Milan from the United States in the summer of 1911, espousing his version of Stirnerian anarchoindividualism and support for the Libyan War. Early 1912 found him in Lugano working as a printer at the *Tipografia Sociale*, but he still exerted a strong influence in certain circles with his calls for Italy to take over the terre *irridente* and eschewing antimilitarism. Although a "Tancredian" anarcho-individualist, Arpinati did not share Rocca's militarist opinions. Rather Arpinati convinced the other Civitella anarchists to show their support for Rygier's campaign to free Masetti by smearing the walls of the town with graffiti such as, "Free the Political Prisoners" and "Down With Militarism."

Through 1912 and 1913, Arpinati worked full time as an electrician for the National Railways, and was promoted to the status of technician maintaining switching lamps in the railyard. The strikes and demonstrations of the settimana *roasa* of June 1914 found him in Civitella. Upon hearing of the unrest in the urban centers of Romagna, Arpinati and seven or eight other anarchists carried out their own acts of rebellion during the week.⁷⁷ Girelli scaled the outer walls of the tower over the city hall and placed both a symbolic "tree of freedom" and a black and red anarchist flag on the lighting rod.⁷⁸ The local authorities were unable to remove either symbol for several weeks.⁷⁹ Opposite city hall they used a boards and ropes to bar the doors and rolling shutters of the barracks of the *carabinieri*, who were apparently unable to escape for six or seven days.⁸⁰ Later, during a meeting at Arpinati's house it was learned that several shops had remained

⁷⁴ Girelli, interview by Landi, op. cit. Arpinati's association with the Zamboni family would make him a principal suspect for having organized this assassination attempt.

⁷⁵ "Comunicato," *L'Agitatore* (19 June 1910).

⁷⁶ *L'Agitatore*, 19 June, 26 June, 33 July, 17 July, and 24 August 1910. The anarcho-individualists' problems in organizing themselves were compounded by the difficulty the newspaper had in finding a stable printer, with the result that the paper (and their announcements) often appeared on the streets the day after the meetings were held.

⁷⁷ Girelli names Arpinati, Gemelli, Caero, Querzoli, and Giuseppe Calcina (Girelli, interview by Landi, op. cit.). Only Girelli and Arpinati have files with the police either in Civitella, Forli, or Rome. Girelli's file lists only an application for a seasonal permit to carry a hunting rifle (ACC, Archivio dei Carabinieri, f. "Girelli Domenico").

⁷⁸ The anarchists tried to place these two symbols of the movement in conspicuous places during demonstrations and popular uprisings.

⁷⁹ Girelli, interview by Landi, op. cit.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

opened during the general strike, as had the Church. Girelli promptly went out to nail shut the doors of the Church, and had the following exchange with the priest:

“Hey, asshole ¹⁸¹ What are you doing?” “Closing the doors of the church I” “But the church isn’t just some shop.” “As far as I’m concerned, it’s a pigsty.”⁸² Apparently there were no reprisals for their actions.

On the one hand, there was a government order to not provoke the demonstrators. Balandra was aware of the revolutionary potential of creating a martyr on the revolutionary Left. In addition, actions taken elsewhere were by comparison much worse than those in Civitella. In Ravenna, General Aiardi was taken prisoner by angry revolutionaries, who locked him in a room and fed him starvation rations. In another village near Civitella the revolutionaries forced the local priests to undress in public, don the dirty clothing of a *bracciante*, and ride around the village on a donkey.⁸³ In Bologna, the events of the *settimana rossa* did not reach the fever pitch they did in Romagna, in part due to the actions of the socialist city government which cooperated with the Local *carabinieri* and squads of agrarian landowners and nationalists.⁸⁴

Arpinati returned to his job with the National Railways just in time for the outbreak of the First World War. The Intervention Crisis of 1914 was a turning point for Maria Rygier, Massimo Rocca, Torquato Nanni, and Arpinati, all of whom eventually took a prointerventionist stance. It was also the first step for each towards the fascist movement in that each was able to link the political morality implicit in their similar but independent brands of anarcho-individualism with nationalism. The decision to favor interventionism required each of the anarcho-individualists to reevaluate the potential application of their political morality. Each eventually favored a moral defense of the nation over internationalism.

Despite his anti-militarism at the time of the Libyan War in 1911, Arpinati’s “Tancredianism” led him to join Maria Rygier and Massimo Rocca in supporting Italian intervention. Wrote Nanni of Arpinati:

In August 1914...Italy seemed to be without spiritual guides. The ruling classes and the dominant parties did not succeed in embracing the national panorama. The conservatives, as they had during the Risorgimento, did not feel the Italian historical pulse;...the socialists exchanged internationalism for anti-nationalism and were themselves so narrow-mindedly conservative as to not understand that the Nation is, other than an economic organism, also, and before all else, an *ethical organism* [author’s emphasis]...Italy...now a great power, seemed to be struck dumb before the greatest human tragedy ever.⁸⁵

⁸¹ The Romagnolo word used was *burdel*.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Casarini, letter to author, op. cit.

⁸⁵ Nanni, Leandro Arpinati e *il fascismo bolognese*, op. cit., 38.

The few anarchists-turned interventionists immediately found themselves marginalized from the anarchist movement and from the Bolognese in general, who only a year before voted for a socialist city government which maintained the position of *ne aderire ne sabotare*. Arpinati found himself excluded from the railway workers' union for his refusal to support a general strike against intervention. Wrote Nanni of Arpinati,

In a flash of intuition his spirit anticipated that revision of all human values — social, ideological, moral — which the war had brought with it; but at the same time he was stamped with the mark of infamy and betrayal by his comrades and had to undergo humiliation to defend, from the mudslinging and intimidating violence, the purity and generosity of his sacrifice.⁸⁶

Arpinati's interventionism was marked neither by journalistic activity nor by public justification of his position, but rather by immediate action. Even before the unified anarchist-interventionists published their first manifesto in *Il Giornale del Mattino* on September 14, he was involved in a scuffle with anti-interventionists in the Piazza Nettuno in downtown Bologna.⁸⁷ He took to brush-cutting his hair — when his head was not bandaged — so that opponents could not “immobilize his head while others punched him in the face.”⁸⁸ By late September he was needed to act as an informal bodyguard for the Belgian, Lorand, as he addressed a hostile crowd of neutralists from the Socialist Party. After the fistfight which broke out, fifteen interventionists, including Arpinati, spent the night in jail.⁸⁹

A week later, on October 5, 1914, Arpinati accompanied Rocca and Rygier to the tumultuous meeting of the anarchist union, *Società Operaia*. The three interventionists wanted to speak on the topic of the “Moral of the War.”⁹⁰ They also intended to “table a motion for a friendly debate with their comrades, but what opened the discussion ... was the forgetting of acclaimed humanitarian principles and a common political past.”⁹¹ Rygier gave the opening speech, then as soon as Rocca came to the podium, the crowd of about two hundred started booing.⁹² A general fistfight broke out between the anarchists and the three interventionists, during which chairs were thrown onto the stage. Arpinati responded by throwing them back. For over an hour the crowd assaulted the stage. Rocca was hit on the head with a chair and suffered minor injuries.⁹³ Arpinati was knocked unconscious and bleeding, at which point a corridor was made through the crowd for them to exit to a waiting ambulance. Rocca and Rygier departed for Milan the same evening, while Arpinati was hospitalized overnight. Apparently he

⁸⁶ Ibid., 39.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 40.

⁸⁸ “Arpinati Cantamessa, Arpinati mio padre, op. cit., 37.

⁸⁹ “Nanni, Leandro Arpinati e il fascismo bolognese, op. cit.

⁹⁰ ACS, CPC, b. 4505, f. “Rygier Maria.”

⁹¹ Arpinati Cantamessa, Arpinati *mio padre*, op. cit., 40.

⁹² ACS, CPC, b. 4362, f. “Rocca Massimo.”

⁹³ Ibid.

used his anarchist pseudonym “Vittorio Neri” so as not to upset his mother, though it undoubtedly helped him get past the *carabinieri* stationed at the emergency room entrance.⁹⁴ It is not clear who started the fight, but the reasons for it seem clear. As the former leader of the international anti-militarist campaign in favor of Masetti, Rygier’s interventionist stance was particularly galling to the Socialists. In addition, she had shown on several occasions in the past a marked proclivity for making obnoxious and derogatory remarks about her political opponents. In 1909, for example, she was tried in Brescia for holding an illegal public conference following the execution of Francisco Ferrer. When the carabinieri tried to disband the meeting, she stood on the podium inciting the crowd to resist arrest, calling the police marshal in charge “a disgusting imbecile, coward, scoundrel, and thug, [and] that she wouldn’t hesitate a minute to kill him if she had a revolver.”⁹⁵ With his head bandaged, Arpinati attended interventionist rallies again the next day and a week later, both of which were similarly interrupted by violence. On October 18 Mussolini himself came to address the Bolognese leadership of the Socialist Party, but his contradictory (and evolving) position of privately favoring intervention while publicly opposing it, forced him to remove his name at the last minute from the list of speakers.⁹⁶

A month later the first edition of 12 *Popolo d’Italia* carried a telegram of greeting and support from the Bolognese interventionists, now led by “Vittorio Neri,” and “exultant because the open heart of Benito Mussolini was not deaf to the nation’s call.”⁹⁷ Wrote Nanni of “Vittorio Neri”:

For several months he is remembered as being everywhere there was an affirmation of Italian-ness and a confrontation with the rage of the most violent neutrality...Anyone who has a taste for compiling a list of the conflicts in which he is remembered to have taken part would have to legitimately conclude that the most ardent Vittorio Neri received a lot thrashings. But it is just as true that from receiving them, Vittorio Neri learned how to give them.⁹⁸

Nanni himself was often in Bologna to meet with Arpinati, Guido Bergamo, and Rygier as they collaborated with the fortnightly interventionist newspaper *La Riscossa*. The interventionists were unified in their opposition to the neutrality of the workers movements and envisioned a different role, as outlined in the inaugural edition of *La Riscossa*.

The proletariat can not be above the nation which is neither bourgeois nor proletariat: class can not be left apart from the nation without falling into

⁹⁴ Nanni, *Leandro Arpinati e il fascismo bolognese*, op. cit., 44.

⁹⁵ ACS, CPC, b. 4505, “La R. Corte D’Appello di Brescia, Sentenza contro Manzotti Primo e Rygier Maria, 16 December 1909.”

⁹⁶ Ibid., 41.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 42.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

an abyss, towards death. In fact, recent events have given the terrible lie to Marxist internationalism...The International can live again only on the condition that the Italian people join unconditionally in the struggle for national and human claims...To war, today, to war: Austria must fall together with Prussian militarism. Tomorrow's victory must signal the triumph of nationalities.⁹⁹

For the interventionists, therefore, nationalism was a response to a higher moral imperative than internationalism.

Arpinati's requests for volunteer service in the First World War were "systematically rejected" for three reasons. First, he was the eldest son of a widow. Second, his service as an electrical engineer in the important railway center of Bologna was considered to be of national importance.¹⁰⁰ Lastly, he was listed in police files as a "militant anarchist."¹⁰¹ His lack of war experience would stigmatize Arpinati within the fascist movement in the years to come. Even after his fall from power in 1933, graffiti on the walls of Bologna could be found saying, "DID ARPINATI FIGHT IN THE WAR? NO 1"¹⁰² Through the war he continued his service with the National Railroads, collecting around himself a group of workers among whom he continued to "propagate his ideas."¹⁰³ Even before the official founding of the Fascist Party, however, Arpinati had aligned himself with Mussolini. That is, he gave his verbal consent, a function of their close personal relationship, while involving himself actively only in fits and starts over the next year. During a brief visit to Bologna in May 1918 to inaugurate the flags of the local organization of ex-servicemen and war cripples, Mussolini met Arpinati in the streets. "Well, Leandro, are you with me?" Mussolini asked. "I am and will be with you," responded Arpinati. Nothing more.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, Arpinati's individualist and anti-organizational tendencies led him to keep a certain official distance from the fascists. He was not present at the March 23 meeting in Piazza San Sepolcro in Milan which saw the constitution of the first *Fasci di combattimento* nor, as we shall see, was he a member of either the first Bolognese *fascio di combattimento* or the first Directive Council.¹⁰⁵ This did not mean that his actions didn't increasingly support the fascists' overall anti-socialist program. In July, Arpinati demonstrated his anti-union tendencies by refusing to participate in the general strike called by Railway Machinists and

⁹⁹ "'Presentiamo le armi,' *La Riscossa* I, 1 (11 March 1915).

¹⁰⁰ Arpinati Cantamessa, *Arpinati mio padre*, op. cit., 37-38.

¹⁰¹ This reason for Arpinati's rejection appears in both the first and second drafts of Iraci's *Arpinati l'oppositore di Mussolini* (op. cit.) . In an exchange of letters between Iraci and Giancarla Arpinati Cantamessa while Iraci was preparing his book, she asked that Iraci not include this explanation. The "offending" passage about Arpinati's anarchism does not appear in the final version (AGAC),

¹⁰² Arpinati Cantamessa, *Arpinati mio padre*, op. cit.

¹⁰³ Agostino Iraci, first and second draft of *Arpinati l'oppositore di Mussolini* (AGAC).

¹⁰⁴ Nanni, Leandro *Arpinati e il fascismo bolognese*, op. cit., 101.

¹⁰⁵ This conflicts with numerous later biographies designed to enhance and solidify Arpinati's image as a "fascist of the first hour."

Electricians Union to protest the actions of the Allied Powers against Russia. At a meeting the evening before the strike he explained that it was “crazy for a people like us without reserves to lend themselves to certain international games...I’m going to keep working and no one is going to stop me.”¹⁰⁶ A fistfight broke out immediately. As indicated above, the strike failed in Bologna in part because the socialist city council called for the occupation of the city by the army and placed most of the anarchist leaders, including Borghi, in preventive detention. A few days after the failed strike, in an article to *Il Giornale del Mattino*, Arpinati responded to critics who claimed he had single-handedly undermined the strike by insulting the crowd and starting a scuffle which shook the “bonds of disciplinary duty.”¹⁰⁷ Wrote Arpinati to the union leaders,

I have always been indulgent with those who, incapable of making their way in bourgeois society, seek a comfortable bed for themselves through workers’ organizations...The goals for which this strike was called...didn’t convince anyone, notwithstanding the way *Avanti* I played up to all and sundry and exalted the solidarity of the peoples... The railway workers ...refused to get involved in a struggle destined to be a truly...fruitless and inconclusive parade, damaging to everyone and in particular the workers who don’t have savings for tomorrow. You didn’t want to take account of the state of mind of the individual union member, continually pervaded by the fear of appearing insufficiently red; you contented yourselves with the cheers of those union members because it was convenient, but you new better than I that the great majority of the railway workers was against the strike. You knew better than I that a man within the four walls of his home is very different and reasons much better than in public, but you didn’t ask their opinion [Arpinati is referring to vote asked for by the union members but refused by the leaders], because you already knew the response would be against your plans...which seek to drag even the mass of railway workers into a lowly party game. The mass of railway workers rebelled.¹⁰⁸

Arpinati continued the “revolt” against socialism which had led him to anarcho-individualism. Yet, this revolt was taking on an increasingly ethical character based on his own political morality. This “moral revolt” would lead him definitively into fascism. This full participation would come only later. In the meantime, he followed his own program, one which did not preclude his travelling on at least one occasion during this period carrying messages to D’Annunzio at Fiume.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Arpinati Cantaraessa, *Arpinati mio padre*, op. cit.

¹⁰⁷ Leandro Arpinati, “Polemiche e discussioni sul mancato sciopero ferroviario,” *Il Giornale del Mattino* (30 July 1919).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Arpinati Cantamessa, interview by author, Malacappa, May 1992. That Arpinati traveled to Fiume during the occupation is confirmed by dated photographs (AGAC).

By the autumn of 1919, Torquato Nanni was fully occupied as mayor of Santa Sofia but had officially distanced himself from the Socialist Party. Maria Rygier was working as Secretary of the Committee for the Italian Annexation of Fiume and Dalmatia, and closely following the development of the fascist movement. Massimo Rocca was busily carrying out propaganda in favor of the annexation of Fiume, which he saw as a potentially revolutionary situation which coincided with his own views about Italy's historical rights to the Adriatic, within two years Nanni and Rygier would find themselves giving their tacit support to Mussolini, and heavily criticizing the political left, especially the parliamentary Socialists. Arpinati and Rocca would become important leaders in the fascist movement, carrying out "punitive" expeditions against the socialists with a violence almost unprecedented in Italian politics.

Their shift from the radical Left to the radical Right was not unforeseeable. Rocca even proposed that such a shift might take place, that an "elite group" on the revolutionary left might move over to the "revolutionary right." Wrote Rocca in *L'Anarchismo contro l'anarchia*,

those whose heart one day beats for national revolt might today beat for another, different revolt; since they appreciate and love one another, even when they struggle in opposing camps, for the reason that only those who have faith appreciate faith in others...These people have always accepted and boasted about being responsible for their own actions, in which their conscience was enough to support them; — and their situation has always been tragic, morally and materially, representing the ineluctable clash between collective resistance and individual fate.¹¹⁰

Arpinati and Rocca would later justify the fascist seizure of power in just these terms: a "moral revolt," against socialism and a "counterstrike" against the socialists. As fascists, Arpinati and an "elite" minority would continue to physically defend their ideas in the same way they had done while militant anarchists and then as interventionists. Perhaps his greatest contribution to the fascist movement, however, would be his attempt to "normalize" the movement by redirecting the energies of this violent minority as it became a destructive majority. While Rocca would also contribute to the "normalization" of fascism, his major contribution would be to successfully rearticulated the revolutionary rhetoric and fervor of the extreme Left in terms acceptable to the extreme Right which would also identify itself as an elite minority with a "superior ethical value."¹¹¹ But, even within this minority, Rocca would make a sharp distinction, one which Arpinati would later respect:

It is...useful to note the difference between single rebels and the great mass of subversives...It is necessary to distinguish between those who know how

¹¹⁰ Rocca, *L'Anarchismo contro l'anarchia*, op. cit., 482–83.

¹¹¹ *ibid.*, op. cit., 484.

to be uniquely themselves, and to impose on themselves the internal law of responsibility which guides them, and when necessary, restrains them. These are the only ones who have the right not to obey the law. The others, eternally juvenile...deserve the intervention of social coercion to force them to submit to the consequences and responsibility of their actions, which they do not know how to freely take.¹¹²

In the years to come, Arpinati and Rocca would find that fascism had become a quagmire in which trying to distinguish between these two groups had become impossible.

¹¹² Ibid., 484nl

Chapter 6: The Seizure Of Power in Bologna (1920–1922)

The “Two Red Years” [*biennia rosso*] of 1919 and 1920 would see unprecedented gains for the extreme Left in Italy, and the beginning of the formation of an opposing camp on the extreme Right. As the social and economic situation worsened through 1919, the Socialist Party and other parties on the left “seduced many workers into believing that a revolution was possible,”¹ while Mussolini and his *fasci di combattimento* gained the strength needed to destroy the liberal system which had been in place since Unification. Both camps were ultimately interested in realizing the utopia which seemed possible in the postwar period but which had failed to materialize. In September 1919, the government in Rome officially opened up most of the uncultivated land in Italy, and allowed the peasants to occupy it. In southern Italy this had few repercussions owing to the relative scarcity of arable land. In the northern Italian plain however, landowners felt that the government was prepared to abandon the sanctity of private property. The crucible for their reaction was Emilia-Romagna. Here, the revolutionary Left concentrated on fomenting rebellion in the industrial centers, working in the factories in collaboration with striking workers. However, they failed to rally the peasants and agricultural workers to their organizations, thus creating an urban-rural gap. Wealthy landowners and industrialists bridged this gap by enlisting the support of ex-servicemen who remained hostile to the revolutionary organizations which they still held responsible for the wartime atmosphere of defeatism.²

¹ Bertrand, “The Biennio Rosso,” op. cit., 401.

² The post-Second World War literature on the social and economic reasons for the rise of fascism in Emilia Romagna — particularly the urban-rural gap — is enormous, though none treat the topic from the perspective of the fascists. Among these works are: Alessandro Roveri, “Aspetti della lotta politica da 1919–1926,” in *Storia dell’Emilia-Romagna*, ed. Aldo Berselli, 3 (Bologna: University Press, 1977): 609–631; Luciano Casali, ed., *Bologna 1920. Le origini! del fascismo* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1982), particularly Pier Paolo D’Attore’s, “Gli agrari bolognesi dal liberalismo al fascismo,” 115–168, which was followed by “Conservatismo agrario e fascismo negli anni venti: linee di ricerca sull’area padana,” *SC* 151–152 (September 1983) : 41–63; Paolo Nello, “L’evoluzione economico-sociale, la struttura agraria, le origini! del fascismo a Bologna (1880–1920),” *SC* 7, 3 (1982): 443–462; Brunella Dalla Casa, “Il movimento operaio e socialista a Bologna dall’occupazione delle fabbriche al Patto di pacificazione,” in *Movimento operaio e fascismo nell’Emilia-Romagna*, ed. Luciano Casali, (Rome: Riuniti, 1973): 3–68; Angela De Benedictis, “Note su classe operaia e socialismo a Bologna nel primo dopoguerra (1919–1920),” in *ibid.*, 69–134; Giampaolo Venturi, “Bologna,” in *Il Partito Popolare in Emilia-Romagna*, Vol. I, *Le esperienze provinciali*, Alessandro Albertazzi and Giorgi Campanini, eds. (Rome: Edizioni Cinque Lune, 1983);

In the Emilian capital of Bologna, the scene of much of Rygier and Rocca's anarchist and interventionist activities, the war had brought fundamental transformations. The first elections with near universal manhood suffrage, held in October 1913, had opened the vote in Bologna to some 12,000 *braccianti*; 9,000 factory workers; and, 4,000 office workers for the first time.³ The clamorous success of the Socialist Party brought down the centerright City Council dominated by large agricultural interests for the first time in since Unification. Bologna became known as the "Red City," characterized by a tension between landowners, *braccianti*, and *mezzadri*, and exacerbated by the new leaders who put forth a program of "bread and work" based on the "rigid and systematic politics of class."⁴

Following the defeat at Caporetto, however, Bologna found itself officially within the war zone, and a few short months was transformed from a secondary agricultural center into one of the most active and important cities in Italy. It was a north-south railway knot, the main break-of-bulk center for the northern Italian plain, and a center for military hospitals, command centers, and soldiers on leave. The socialist City Council cooperated fully with the central government in controlling the city's food supplies, and chalked up numerous successes. In short, the City Council showed itself to be "not only a model of democratic administration in a time of exasperating centralism, but also a center of socialist propaganda bustling with innovations."⁵ For members of the center-right political opposition, the interventionist crisis had already failed to split apart the Bolognese socialists. Now, in addition, the tangible administrative successes of the City Council meant abandoning any hope that the socialists might fail once in power.

Luigi Arbizzani, "L'avvento del fascismo nel bolognese, 1920-1922," *Movimento operaio e socialista* 10, 2-4 (April-December 1964): 83-102 and 253-275; Ignazio Masulli, "Society e politica a Bologna dal 1914 al dopoguerra," in *La Resistenza in Emilia-Romagna*, single ed. for the 25th anniversary of the Liberation (Bologna: Deputazione Emilia-Romagna per la Storia della Resistenza, May 1970); and, B. Uva, "La crisi del massimalismo e la nascita del fascismo a Bologna," *Pagine Libere* 2 and 3 (July and November 1961). Although its large scope necessarily delimits its detail, the best English-language study is: Anthony Cardoza, *Agrarian Elites and Italian Fascism: The Province of Bologna, 1901-1926* (Princeton: PUP, 1982). There are several analagous studies of the urban-rural gap elsewhere in the province. For Parma see: Bruno Casonato, "Agli inizi del fascismo parmense," in *Movimento operaio e fascismo nell'Emilia-Romagna*, ed. Luciano Casali, op. cit., 293-324. For Modena see: Pietro Alberghi, *Il fascismo in Emilia-Romagna. Dalle origini alia Marcia su Roma* (Modena: Mucchi, 1989); and, Ilva Vaccari, "Il sorgere del fascismo nel Modenese," in *Movimento operaio e fascismo nell'Emilia-Romagna*, ed. Luciano Casali, op. cit., 247-292. For Ferrara see: Paul Comer, *Fascism in Ferrara, 1915-1925* (London: OUP, 1975) . For Forli see: Elio Santarelli, *I repubblicani forlivesi negli anni tra le due guerre mondiali. Fascismo-Resistenza (1919-1945)* (Imola: Grafiche Galeati, 1977); Walter Zanotti, "Lotte operaie nel primo dopoguerra in provincia di Forli e gli origini del fascismo," in *Movimento operaio e fascismo nell'Emilia Romagna 1919-1923*, op. cit., 207-246; and, Luciano Marzocchi, "La nascita del partito comunista in provincia di Forli," in *Movimento operaio e fascismo nell'Emilia Romagna 1919-1923*, op. cit., 175-206.

³ Pier Paolo D'Atto, "La Politica," in *Bologna*, ed. Renato Zangheri (Bari: Laterza, 1986): 115.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 123.

As the socialists continued to live the contradiction of *ne aderire ne sabotage*, however, they came increasingly into conflict with other members of the opposition, including Radicals, Republicans, Liberals, and the Masons.⁶ The latter group were led by Pietro Nenni, editor of *Il Giornale del Mattino*. Together with Mario Bergamo, (whose brother, Guido, founded *La Riscossa*), Nenni founded the first Bolognese *fascio di combattimento* on the evening of April 9, 1919. Arpinati was not present at the meeting.⁷ The activities of the first *fascia* were extremely limited and ideologically much farther to the left than Mussolini's Milanese *faacio*. In fact, at the same time, a local section of the Popular Anti-Bolshevik League was founded in antithesis to the *fascio*. In the summer of 1919, the Fascist Provincial Secretary, Giulio Sillaro, attempted to reconstitute the *fascio* in terms more acceptable to the right by handing over control to Lieutenant Garibaldo Pedrini, secretary of the Anti-Bolshevik League, while Sillaro himself volunteered under D'Annunzio at Fiume. The nomination of Pedrini, still in active service with the local Army Corps command, was "interesting proof of the benevolence with which the Army viewed the fasci, even at a time when the civilian authorities were still rather distrustful of their 'subversive' tendencies."⁸ With the direction of the *fascio* more solidly directed towards the right, many new members joined, including Arpinati and Mario Ghinelli, who officially joined during the meeting of September 26, 1919. Ghinelli was another so-called "interventionist who didn't intervene," a colleague of Arpinati who worked in the workers' cafeteria at the railway station. Meanwhile, on trips to his home town of Civitella, Arpinati and his anarchist-turned-interventionists friends were harshly received by their former anarchist comrades, most of whom had fought in the war.⁹

Within weeks of joining the *faacio*, Arpinati had turned his political energies towards moving it ideologically towards the right, that is, towards Mussolini. Leaders such as Bergamo, however, still hoped to forge an alliance with the parties on the center-left which had favored intervention. At the first Fascist National Congress in

⁶ For a detailed study of the fortunes of the Bolognese socialists during the First World War see: Nazario Sauro Onofri, *La grande guerra nella città rossa. Socialismo e reazione a Bologna dal 1914-1918* (Milan: Gallo, 1966).

⁷ Despite affirmations to the contrary by fascist biographers (and thereafter cited endlessly in the literature), Arpinati was not a member of the first Bolognese *fascio*. Exhaustive proof is offered by Fiorenza Musiani Tarozzi, "Il primo e il secondo 'Fascio di Combattimento' di Bologna nelle carte dell'Archivio riservato del Gabinetto di Prefettura (1919-1920)," in *Atti e memorie della Deputazione per la storia della patria e per le provincie di Romagna* 23 (1972): 341-346. In addition, Nazario Sauro Onofri has traced the successive restatement of this falsehood in the literature [Onofri, *La strage di Palazzo d'Accursio. Origin! e nascita del fascismo bolognese, 1919-1920* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1980)].

⁸ Adrian Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power: Fascism in Italy, 1919-1929*, 2d. ed. (Princeton: PUP, 1983): 58. For more see: Luigi Arbizzani [pseud. Giuliani Brizzi], "Document! sulla repressione dell'antifascismo nel 1921," in "Fascismo e antifascismo nel bolognese, 1919-1926," Eighth Quaderno of *La Lotta* (Bologna, 1969).

⁹ Girelli, interview by Landi, op. cit. Although Arpinati and Girelli never spoke to one another again, during the toughest years of Girelli's exile in France, Arpinati intervened on behalf of Girelli by finding his sister a job which she, however, refused.

Florence in October Arpinati met with Massimo Rocca.¹⁰ The two of them remained opposed to the position of the Bolognese fascists and in favor of Mussolini, though this later led to Arpinati being excluded from the Directive Council of the Bolognese *fascio*.¹¹

Following the Congress, supposedly fearing an attempt on his life on the Florence-Bologna train, Mussolini drafted Arpinati, Rocca and a few other loyalists to drive him over the mountains to Bologna by way of Faenza. Near Faenza the car in which they were driving crashed through the gates of a railway crossing and into a ditch, injuring all the passengers except Mussolini.¹² Within days of the supposed attempt on Mussolini's life, it was decided that Arpinati would set up and lead special squads of body guards for Mussolini and the other fascist speakers.¹³ In the weeks to come they made appearances in Milan, Monza, Pavia, Rimini, and Ancona. On November 13 at Lodi, a violent scuffle broke out between these body guards and a group of socialists at a pre-election rally during which one person was killed and several wounded. Arpinati was hospitalized and spent 46 days in jail for his complicity in the events.¹⁴

Defeated by the "Mussolinian" faction at the Florence Congress, on the eve of the elections the intransigent Bolognese *fascio* turned to the Left, replacing Pedrini with new secretary drafted from the ranks of the anarcho-syndicalists. The subsequent elections were a disaster for the Bolognese fascists, whose total numbers dwindled to six, including Ghinelli "a butcher...a few students, veterans, and local merchants who did not share their republican predecessors' intransigence hostility towards the older forces of order in the city."¹⁵ Nenni himself, "when he saw that fascism was influenced by economic agrarian interests, abandoned what was then the losing party."¹⁶ With Arpinati still in prison, the only remaining member of the Directive Council was Mario Bergamo, who represented Bologna at the National Congress in Milan at the end of November. There the *fascia* solidly backed Mussolini, "approving unanimously a document which obliged them, in the name of the working class, to struggle to the last man against the PSI."¹⁷ On April 11, 1920, one year after the founding of the first *fascio*, the second Bolognese *fascio di comba Ctimento* was founded, with the Fascist National Committee giving Arpinati responsibility for the eastern half of Emilia-Romagna. In late May he replaced Mario Bergamo on the National Committee, and the Bolognese *fascio* came

¹⁰ Ibid. Girelli's testimony places the two for the first time in the same place, though they may have met previously on other occasions.

¹¹ Onofri, *La strage di Palazzo d'Accursio*, op. cit.

¹² Girelli, interview by Landi, op. cit.

¹³ Onofri, *La strage di Palazzo d'Accursio*, op. cit., 04.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Cardoza, *Agrarian Elites and Italian Fascism*, op. cit., 298. Nanni also confirms that there were only six members of the *fascio* at this time (Leandro Arpinati e *il fascismo bolognese*, op. cit., 103-104).

¹⁶ From an undated written declaration by Girogio Pini, cited in Onofri, *La strage di Palazzo d'Accursio*, op. cit., 25.

¹⁷ Ibid., 89.

directly under his control.¹⁸ Arpinati's subsequent election to the Directive Council signaled a new "Mussolinian" orientation for the *fascio* and provoked the mass resignation of the Republicans and the rest of the right-wing led by Pedrini.

Arpinati saw the general situation in the province quite differently from his predecessors, a view he shared with Torquato Nanni. The First World War had come and gone in the Bolognese countryside, but little had changed for most agricultural workers particularly in the rich arable lands north of Bologna known as the *bassa bolognese*. For decades socialist unrest in the form of boycotts, sabotage, and work-stoppages had periodically brought the provincial and city economies to a standstill. The protagonist of many of these strikes was Giuseppe Massarenti from the nearby town of Molinella, which had become a symbol of agricultural unrest in the province. Time and again the landowners had arranged for Massarenti's imprisonment, only to see him re-emerge after the war "like a ghost from the distant past."¹⁹ with the cry of "land to those who work it," he and other socialist organizers after the war stood poised to profit from the Government's decision to open up dormant lands to the peasants. Their tactic was to create a (fragile) alliance between braccianti and *mezzadri*, by which the latter rejected the traditional collective contracts with the landowners and called for renegotiation on a farm-by-farm basis.²⁰ This marked an altogether new and different tactic from that being pursued in the Forlì region where the socialists uniquely championed the cause of the braccianti. Nanni described the situation as follows:

Then the incredible happened. Rural socialism, notwithstanding its many exaggerations put itself in risky territory, which is contrary to logic and good sense. The braccianti abandoned the economically managed lands and left them uncultivated...This crazy sabotage directed not against a single class, but against the general well-being, had to nourish the seeds of discontent.²¹

With the *mezzadri* on strike and the *braccianti* unwilling to act as "scabs," thousands of farms went un-harvested, with terrible economic consequences for an already ailing economy. Despite his own position as a rural socialist leader, Nanni blamed the victims,

¹⁸ Ibid., 91.

¹⁹ Ibid., 99. Giuseppe Massarenti (1867–1950) founded the first association of braccianti in the *bassa bolognese* including one of the first experimental agricultural cooperatives in Italy. He started cooperative schools, workshops, and training centers at Molinella and was elected several times to Parliament. After the *settimana rossa* he escaped into exile at San Marino, followed by long years of struggle in poverty until he re-emerged as a leader during the *biennio rosso*. Massarenti was particularly mistreated by the fascist squads, who later declared him crazy and "imprisoned" him in a number of psychiatric hospitals. After the Second World War he again took control of the cooperatives in Molinella, expanding them to cover thousands of acres. He died in 1950. For more see: Armando Borghi, *Vivere da anarchici*, op. cit., 296; and, Cardoza, *Agrarian Elites*, op. cit., 54–67 and 346–379.

²⁰ Nanni, Leandro Arpinati e il *fascismo bolognese*, op. cit., 66.

²¹ Ibid., 77–78.

and condemned both the *braccianti* and *mezzadri*. For Nanni, as for Arpinati, the landowners had little choice but to respond:

The landowners...with their backs against the wall, practically forced to decide between life and death, gave the appearance of conceding. But against this most violent revenge they prepared — not knowing how they would do so or when — a legitimate defense.²²

Whether the situation was in reality as polarized as Nanni describes is not the issue. Nor is it ultimately significant whether the landowners were actually strapped financially by the sabotage and the unrenewed agricultural contracts. The important point is that this is the way the situation was perceived at the time by those on both the Left and Right. This included Arpinati and the other members of the Bolognese *fascio*. Wrote Nanni of the general situation:

Three authors of different political schools, guided by the same objectivity in their investigations, judged this situation having seen it develop day by day. Luigi Fabbri, anarchist; Rodolfo Mondolfo, socialist; Mario Missiroli, liberal. Well, they all more or less explicitly came to the single conclusion, which has been confirmed to me by old socialists of proven faith: in Bologna you could no longer survive!²³

To them, Bologna had become “unlivable” due to the extremism of the socialists, an assessment of the situation which was used to legitimize the fascist “counter-attack.”²⁴

As leader of the *fascio*, Arpinati was determined to do something about it, though he had little or no means with which to act. Aside from a few sparsely attended meetings in the homes of *fascio* members, through the winter of 1919 and early spring of 1920, the fascists were reduced to almost total inactivity. Meanwhile, the exodus of the Republicans continued, “repelled by Mussolini’s ties to wealthy business interests, the growing militarization of the movement, and its increasingly single-minded emphasis on violent resistance to Bolshevism.”²⁵ Arpinati held to the Mussolinian line, but waffled about accepting financial help from the landowners.²⁶ Following the violent general strike in April 1920 — called to protest the killing of eight workers by the *carabinieri*

²² Ibid., 78.

²³ Ibid., 92.

²⁴ This view quickly came to dominate fascist historical interpretations including: Guido Bergamo, *Il Fascismo visto da un repubblicano* (Rocca S. Casciano: Cappelli, 1927); Marcello Gallian, *Arpinati politico e uomo di sport* (Rome: Pinciano, 1928); Mario Missiroli, *Una Battaglia perduta* (Milan: Corbaccio, 1924); Giorgi Pini, *Le Legioni bolognesi in armi* (Bologna: L’Assalto, 1923); Guida Rossi, *Le Memorie di una vecchia zitella* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1934); Eduardo Savino, *La Nazione Operante. Profili e figure di ricostruttori* (Milan: Corso Vittorio Emanuele, 1928); and, D. Zanetti, *L’Anima nella buffers* (Bologna: Galleri, 1934).

²⁵ Cardoza, *Agrarian Elites and Italian Fascism*, op. cit., 298.

²⁶ Onofri, *La Strage di Palazzo d’Accursio*, op. cit., 217.

— wealthy Bolognese landowners formed the Bolognese Civil Defense Association, and “asked the *fascio* for help in the creation of a ‘civil volunteer force’ for action in case of strikes.”²⁷ Arpinati’s uncertainty continued, as revealed in a letter to the Fascist National Secretary, Umberto Pasella:

It is perhaps superfluous to say that I would have wished to adhere [to the Civil Defense Association] without ado...but several of our good friends are not of the same opinion...It is certainly true that these Bolognese bourgeois...never made a move until, with the last strike, they felt their security and their pockets were threatened; but should we, for this reason, accept the money-arm which is so necessary for our battle, and which these bourgeois — granted, from fear alone — are offering us at this moment?²⁸

Arpinati may have felt that the bolognese *faBcio* could go it alone, despite its small numbers. On May Day the fascists paraded through Bologna singing the movement’s fight song, *Giovinezza*, and taunting the socialists. Much to Arpinati’s surprise and delight, the socialists did not respond to this challenge to “the myth of [their] invincibility in the public squares of the city.”²⁹ Arpinati wrote to Pasella, “The local socialists showed exasperating calm; the Chamber of Labor remained hermetically sealed all day. I am convinced they will never make the revolution.”³⁰ While Arpinati’s experience as an anarchoindividualist may have led him to positively assess the potential of a committed and radicalized political minority against a more formidable majority, Pasella was not so easily convinced. Only in September when Pasella threatened to cut off funding and replace him, did Arpinati finally agree to join with the Civil Defense Association.³¹ Through the summer, however, owing to the fact that the city had emptied of students, the *faacio* had very little to contribute in terms of overall members. Arpinati himself “had withdrawn from the movement in disappointment” and returned for a short vacation to Civitella “to await the return of the students.”³² Ghinelli and others

²⁷ Lyttelton, *Seizure of Power*, op. cit., 59. For more on the increasing “Mussolinian” stance of the fascist movement including the increasing cooperation with industrialists and landowners see: *ibid.*, 50–58.

²⁸ ACS, MRF, b. 24, f. 113, s.f. 58, “Carteggio del Comitato Centrale dei Fasci, Bologna,” letter from Arpinati to Pasella, 26 April 1920. This letter has been mis-translated by every English-language study of the rise of fascism in Bologna. Arpinati’s use of the doubtenegative with the subjunctive in the last interrogative statement has led many to incorrectly translate this line as the declamatory phrase, “should we...not accept the money-arm which is so necessary for our battle...?” Such a translation leads to the incorrect conclusion that Arpinati favored cooperation with the landowners as early as the Spring of 1920, rather than six months later in September.

²⁹ Cardoza, *Agrarian Elites and Italian Fascism*, op. cit., 299.

³⁰ ACS, MRF, b. 24, f. 113, s.f. 58, “Carteggio del Comitato Centrale di Fasci, Bologna,” letter from Arpinati to Pasella, 4 May 1920.

³¹ Onofri, *La strage di Palazzo d’Accursio*, op. cit., 217.

³² ACS, MRF, b. 24, f. 113, s.f. 58, “Carteggio del Comitato Centrale di Fasci, Bologna,” letter from Arpinati to the Comitato Centrale dei Fasci, 26 August 1920.

who remained in the city complained about Arpinati's passivity as the activities of the *fascio* ground to a halt once again.³³

At the same time, the fall of the Nitti government and his replacement by Giolitti "revived conservative hopes throughout the country in a restoration of law and order under government auspices."³⁴ In the province of Bologna, Nitti ordered the requisition of crops threatened by strikes and appointed a governmental committee to arbitrate labor disputes. Suddenly, the possibility that order might be restored by the central government seemed to preclude the need for cooperation between the fascists and the Civil Defense Association. By the fall of 1920, however, the government's attempts at mediation had been rejected, and interest in the fascists was renewed as the possibility of strike action during the harvests became clear. As Arpinati had hoped, the take-off period of Bolognese fascism occurred as soon as the students returned. On September 20 the first armed squad of fascists made its appearance on the streets of Bologna. Following a procession and wreath laying ceremony in support of "Italian Fiume," the fascists turned on a group of young socialists. Although the socialists apparently fired the first shots, the return volleys from the fascist killed a young worker. Impressed by the fascist "victory," the Civil Defense Association put Arpinati in charge of organizing the armed squads, who were soon after joined by the Nationalists.³⁵ In September and October 1920, membership in the *fascia* rose from 20 to over 300.³⁶ By late October, Arpinati had completely reorganized the *fascia* and could announce to the National Committee that "Bologna was no longer the black sheep of Italian fascism."³⁷ Mussolini's *Il Popolo d'Italia* wrote, "Arpinati... assures us that as far as his city can be considered the most refractory due to the socialist saturation which dominates it, the *fascia* is in a period of reawakening and reorganization. A meeting place had even been found a propaganda restarted; it should not be ruled out that in the future the Red City will give us a few surprises."³⁸

On October 20, in order to distinguish the new Bolognese *fascio di combattimento* from the first *fascia* of 1919, Arpinati announced the opening of the new fascist headquarters. On November 4, they celebrated the second anniversary of the ending of the war by publishing the charter of the Bolognese fascists in the inaugural issue of the their newspaper, *L'Assalto*. The first three articles of the charter read as follows:

Art. 1. The Bolognese *fascio di combattimento* has been founded for the City and Province of Bologna.

³³ By complaining about Arpinati, Ghinelli may have been trying to undermine Arpinati to his own advantage. The inactivity of the *fascio* was probably exacerbated by the famous yearly vacation exodus of the *bolognesi* in late August, during which the population of the city is reduced by more than half.

³⁴ Cardoza, *Agrarian Elites and Italian Fascism*, op. cit., 299–200.

³⁵ Onofri, *La strage di Palazzo d'Accursio*, op. cit., 220.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 221.

³⁸ *Il Popolo d'Italia* (12 October 1920), cited in ibid.

Art. 2. The program is: the defense of the last national war. The valorization of the victory. Resistance and opposition to the theoretical and practical degenerations of politicized socialism, that is, Bolshevism.

Art. 3. *The fasci* are not legalitarian at all cost, nor illegal a priori. In normal times, legal measures; in abnormal times, means adapted to the circumstances. They do not preach violence for the sake of violence, but repel every violence by going on the counterattack.³⁹

The situational morality of Article 3 struck a chord with many current fascists looking for a pretext for a justified response to the “socialists’ excesses.” Yet, it was Article 2 which appealed the most, particularly among ex-servicemen and former members of D’Annunzio’s fighting force in Fiume, who joined the fascists in large numbers through the autumn. They were further angered by Giolitti’s decision to withdraw from Albania at a time when they felt Italy should be maintaining a foothold on the Dalmatian coast. The Italian Army had been in Albania since 1914, but by 1920 even the Army wanted out as reports of Italian losses appeared in the newspapers daily. Not so the ex-servicemen, who saw it as a matter of pride now that the Government had chased D’Annunzio from Fiume.⁴⁰ On June 26, 1920, active troops from two of the Army’s best divisions mutinied, refusing to board ships in Ancona bound for Tirana. The anarchists called a general strike in support of the mutineers and within 24 hours the city was in revolt. The Socialist Party called a meeting of all the “revolutionary groups” in Italy, but refused the anarchists’ motion to take full advantage of the situation in Ancona. When the PSI refused to support the anarchists, “the Ancona rebels greeted this message with howls of indignation. They were on the barricades and the PSI, a member of the Third International, would not lift a finger to help them.”⁴¹ When the revolt collapsed on June 30, Arpinati took it as further proof that the socialists would not make a revolution. His personal experience with the Bolognese anarchists would not allow him to accept the explanation that the revolt had failed because of a few “anarchist fanatics.” This assessment was borne out when the Socialist Party approved the brutal methods used by the government to suppress the rebellion. Little did they know that within a few months the fascists would use similar measures against them.

³⁹ *L’Assalto* I, 1 (4 November 1920). For more on *L’Assalto* see: Nazario Sauro Onofri, *I giornali bolognesi nel ventennio fascista* (Bologna: Moderna, 1972): 137–165.

⁴⁰ While much attention has been given to the occupation of Fiume, there are no studies which follow what might be called the fascist “myth of Dalmatia and Albania.” Albania continued to be a sore spot for the fascists for the next two decades. Mussolini’s invasion in April 1939 is most often attributed to his panicky desire to occupy territory before Hitler controlled most of Europe. Mussolini’s view of war as a means for grabbing land is considered a lesson from the First World War. But, the invasion of Albania in particular disproves the adage “once bitten twice learned.” The Italian Army met fierce and continuing resistance which eventually required the assistance of the Germans, drawing troops from the Russia to the distant Balkans and pushing Hitler’s war on the Eastern Front into the disastrous winter of 1942–43. For more see: Ismail Hadaré, *The General of the Dead Army* (New York: New Amsterdam, 1991).

⁴¹ Bertrand, “The Biennio Rosso,” op. cit., 394.

As leader of the refounded Bolognese *fascio* with its new charter, Arpinati quickly set about forming an armed anti-socialist guard for the coming municipal elections, although he later explained the presence of squads as follows:

In the electoral struggle [the fascists] participated actively not as a political group; rather, they organized and divided themselves into squads and groups to guarantee the freedom of all to vote. As such, the elections came off without incident.⁴²

Although the fascists threatened to publish the names of anyone who did not vote, it became immediately clear that the squads would do more than protect voting rights.⁴³ On October 14 a group of anarchists demonstrating in front of the largest of Bologna's military barracks exchanged fire with soldiers and policemen. Five people were killed including two police officers. During the funeral for the officers, a group of fascists led by Arpinati himself moved to the front of the procession with the Italian flag, demanding that passing citizens "pay homage to the national symbol."⁴⁴ At the center of the city they sacked and burned a socialist bookstore and started firing into a nearby restaurant frequented by socialists, killing one and injuring three bystanders.⁴⁵

As the strength of the fascists grew, they found renewed support from other quarters. Agrarian leaders from the nobility such as the Marchesi Luigi and Giuseppe Tanari, leaders from the emerging middle class such as Dino Grandi,⁴⁶ and other leaders from the city bourgeoisie "agreed on the need to stop once and for all and with any means the proletarian advance."⁴⁷ They formed the so-called Committee for Peace, Liberty, and Work — labeled "the bloc of fear"⁴⁸ — which put forth a list of political candidates for the upcoming elections. While the fascists did not officially join the Committee they supported it enthusiastically. By the end of October the meaning of Arpinati's threat to guarantee voting rights became clear as his squads provided armed protection for the Committee's election rallies in the city and in socialist-dominated areas in the countryside. The rhetoric of the Committee's electoral campaign was particularly inflammatory, even racist:

⁴² Camera dei Deputati, *Atti parlamentari*, Legislatura XXV, sessions 1919–1921, "Commissione parlamentare per l'accertamento dei fatti avvenuti a Bologna," (Rome: Camera dei Deputati): 156.

⁴³ Onofri, *La strage di Palazzo d'Accursio*, op. cit., 243.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 233–34.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Dino Grandi was a young lawyer and landholder from nearby Mordano di Romagna near Imola. He began his career as a propagandist for the Italian Nationalist Association, then as an interventionist before serving as an officer in the First World War. For more see: Dino Grandi, "Letter to Duilio Susmel," *Domenica del Corriere* 40 (3 October 1967): 4; Dino Grandi, *Il mio paese. Ricordi autobiografici*, ed. Renzo De Felice (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1985); CDG; Paolo Nello, *Dino Grandi. La formazione di un leader fascista* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1987); Guido Nozzoli, "Dino Grandi. Il trionfo della furbizia," in *I ras del regime* (Milan: Bompiani, 1972); and, Gabrielle Invernizzi, "Dino Grandi tra fez e la feluca," *Historia* 120 (November 1967): 5–32.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 237.

⁴⁸ Cardoza, *Agrarian Elites and Italian Fascism*, op. cit., 304.

Victory in Bologna means giving a decisive blow to the body of Bolshevism which has been transplanted in Italy like a Mongolian invasion: it means solemnly affirming that beneath the warm and radiant Italian sun the offensive plant which has taken root in the desert-like Asiatic steppe will not prosper.⁴⁹

Although the Prefect soon realized “that from various cities and from Fiume in particular, armed men were arriving in Bologna to carry out acts against socialist elements and their meeting places and newspapers,”⁵⁰ the overall attitude of the carabinieri towards the fascists in the months to come was one of passive complicity.⁵¹

Attempts by the Fascist National Committee to deter Arpinati from involving himself with the Committee for Peace, Liberty, and Work failed, for he was successfully playing a double game. On the one hand, his collaboration with the local agrarian elites made him financially independent of the Fascist National Committee. On the other hand, he claimed independence from the landowners by officially “cutting any contact with the conservatives and with all the various and multiple categories of the interested bourgeoisie.”⁵² On the eve of the municipal elections, the fascists also made it clear that if the socialists were to win, they would ignore the results of the voting and would not allow the red flag to fly from Palazzo d’Accursio, Bologna’s city hall, as it had done in 1914. The fascists launched a massive propaganda campaign in which the red flag was made the potent symbol of all the fears of the conservative elements in the city.

The elections, however, confirmed the citizens’ support for the socialists, who called for a massive celebratory demonstration in Piazza Maggiore in front of the Palazzo d’Accursio on the evening of November 21. In the days leading up to the demonstration, the city became an armed camp, with both the fascists and socialists stockpiling munitions in the *fascia* headquarters and City Hall, respectively. The entire city prepared for a showdown, ostensibly over the issue of the red flag. On November 20, the fascists placed posters and distributed leaflets throughout the city saying,

Sunday, women and all those who love peace and quiet should stay at home, and if they value the *patria* should display the Italian Tricolor from their windows. On the streets of Bologna, Sunday [November 21] there should be only fascists and Bolsheviks.⁵³

⁴⁹ Il Progresso (31 October 1920)

⁵⁰ ASB, Carteggio Riservato del Prefetto, Cat. 7, f. 1, 1919, cited in *ibid.*, 240.

⁵¹ For more on the role of the forces of authority in the fascist seizure of power in Bologna see: Luigi Arbizzani [pseud. Giuliano Brizzi], “Documenti sulla repressione dell’antifascismo nel 1921,” in “Fascismo e antifascismo nel bolognese, 1919–1926,” *op. cit.*; and, Onofri, *La strage di Palazzo d’Accursio*, *op. cit.*, 244–246 and 266–268. Onofri maintains that the Prefect Poli met secretly with Arpinati in the days before the battle of Palazzo d’Accursio to relay information about the socialists’ preparations.

⁵² Giovanni Pesce, *La marcia dei rurali. Storia dell’organizzazione sindacale fascista degli agricoltori* (Rome: Pinciana, 1929) : 114.

⁵³ An original copy of this poster can be found in the AGAC.

As crowds of supporters gathered in front of Palazzo d'Accursio on Sunday evening, Arpinati and his squads muscled their way into strategic positions at the comers and exits of Piazza Maggiore. When the newly elected mayor, Ennio Gnudi, a Communist railway worker known to Arpinati, stepped onto the balcony, the fascists fired first at him, then into the crowd. Arpinati, armed with a revolver, fired at the windows of the Palazzo.⁵⁴ The socialists responded by throwing hand-grenades, many of which landed in the crowd, well short of the fascists' positions. The explosions caused the crowd to panic and rush towards the protection of the large door and portico of the Palazzo, increasing the socialists' fear that they were being assaulted. Inside the council chambers, unidentified gunmen fired into a group of city councilors, killing the war veteran and Nationalist, Giuliano Giordani. The final toll was nine dead in the piazza and several dozen wounded.⁵⁵

The death of Giordani provided Arpinati with exactly what he wanted: a martyr.⁵⁶ In the weeks to follow, fascist propaganda worked to manipulate the events and turn public opinion in their favor. The socialists came to be held accountable for Giordani's death and were effectively prevented from taking their seats in the city government. Arpinati had gambled that such a tactic might work, a lesson learned from the *settimana roaaa* of June 1914. The anarchists' tactic during the uprisings of the *settimana roaaa* had been to provoke the army into killing one of the workers and, in so doing, create a martyr. This demonstration of the ulterior motives and real nature of those in power would justify a counterreaction.⁵⁷ In the case of the events of the Palazzo d'Accursio, Arpinati used a similar mechanism: provoke the death of a fascist (or in the case of Giordani, someone who could be made to seem fascist); create a martyr; reveal the socialists as reactionaries; and, trigger a massive reaction which might allow the fascists to take power. The tactic worked perfectly, as not only fascist sympathizers but also many socialists were subsequently willing to condone the fascists' actions.

Arpinati and his fascist squads set to work aggravating, beating, and spitting upon socialist city councilors in the streets, calling them *pus*.⁵⁸ Other squads roamed the city making sure that "anyone who was or even seemed socialist was beaten, vilified,

⁵⁴ Although there has been considerable debate over who fired the first shots, enough eye-witness among the fascists themselves have now been collected to confirm that the fascists fired first. For more see: Nazario Sauro Onofri, "1913–1922, un decennio storico per Bologna: dalla rivoluzione rossa alia reazione nera," in *Bologna 1920*, edited by Luciano Casali, op. cit., 77–78 and 92f62.

⁵⁵ For a detailed account of these incidents see: Onofri, *La strage di Palazzo d'Accursio*, op. cit., 279–290; Enrico Bassi, "I fatti di Palazzo d'Accursio," *Critica sociale* 6 (1961): 153–155; L. Battistelli, "I fatti di Palazzo d'Accursio e l'assassinio di Giordani," in *Eighth Cuaderno of 'La Lotta'* (Bologna: 'La Lotta,' 1969); Vico Pellizzari, *L'eccidio di Palazzo d'Accursio* (Milan: Mondadori, 1923); and, Concetto Valente, *La ribellione antisocialista di Bologna* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1921).

⁵⁶ The "fascistification" of Giordani continued for many years. See, for example: Alberto Del Fante, *Giulio Giordani. Martine del fascismo* (Bologna: Galleri, 1934).

⁵⁷ Zeffiro Ciuffoletti, interview by author, Florence, April 1992.

⁵⁸ A pejorative term used to refer to members of the Socialist Party. *Pus* is a play on words meaning both a garbling of the letters "PSI" and, as in English, "pus."

insulted.”⁵⁹ When the socialists called off a general strike to protest the fascists’ actions on the pretext of not wanting to provoke further violence, it was taken as a sign of submission. Violent actions continued against socialist councilors and spread into the countryside, and the *fascio*, with Arpinati at its head, “became the most important political force in the city.”⁶⁰ The passivity and sometimes outright approval by the *carabinieri* coincided with public opinion, including the views of Catholic organizations favoring resistance to socialist violence and wealthy citizens who began collecting substantial sums of money for the *fascio*. By March, membership in the *fascio* rose to between five and eight thousand.⁶¹ Arpinati’s success should not be attributed solely to the financial support of the urban elites and rural landholders. The first occupational category to support the fascists in Bologna was the public employees, then the teachers’ union, followed by white-collar workers in the provincial bureaucracy.⁶² In short, the fascist reaction “only succeeded because it was backed by a united movement of the urban middle classes against socialism.”⁶³ As elsewhere in Italy, “at the end of 1920, economic hardship as well as the threat of socialism brought about the mobilization of the middle classes behind fascism.”⁶⁴

By the spring of 1921, the fascists’ strong-arm tactics had ended the socialists’ decade-long control of the city, making Bologna the first city effectively under fascist control, over a year before the March on Rome. As Renzo De Felice points out, “If...one wants to determine a precise date for the beginning of the new fascist course, no other date but 21 November 1920 can be singled out.”⁶⁵ But the conquest of the countryside came more slowly and violently, “with punitive expeditions carried out by the fascists from the city; this was the pattern not only in Bologna but in most provinces of the Po Valley, and also in Tuscany and Umbria.”⁶⁶

As violence in the countryside increased, Arpinati was torn between a desire to harness the self-generating violent impulses of his *squadristi* at the grass-roots level, and questions about what the role of violence should be in the fascists’ national strategy. In Emilia-Romagna he justified violence against the socialists as a response to the crippling agricultural strikes. In fact, the number of agricultural strikes in Italy

⁵⁹ Cardoza, *Agrarian Elites and Italian Fascism*, op. cit., 308.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, op. cit., 61. Between October 1920 and January 1921, 20,000 members resigned from the Socialist Chamber of Labor (D’Attore, “La politica,” in *Bologna*, ed. Renato Zangheri, op. cit., 140).

⁶² “Cardoza, *Agrarian Elites and Italian Fascism*, op. cit., 321.

⁶³ Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, op. cit., 60–61.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ De Felice, *Mussolini il rivoluzionario, 1883–1920*, op. cit., 656

⁶⁶ Ibid., 61. In the neighboring city of Ferrara, Balbo and his squads would take control of the countryside much more violently and decisively than did Arpinati. As such, by the end of 1921, the fascists in Ferrara outnumbered and overshadowed the Bolognese fascists.

in 1920 was higher than in any other country in Europe.⁶⁷ Furthermore, he justified violence in the city as a response to the socialist's intention to use Bologna as a nucleus for revolution.⁶⁸ However, these means-ends justifications for Arpinati's violence suffice only to a certain degree, for as Alberto Aquarone has pointed out, "the punitive expeditions in the heyday of sguadrismo, the systematic use of violence and its programmatic glorification served not only to annihilate the opponent, but also...for self fulfillment as such."⁶⁹ Fascism mixed both instrumental and expressive violence such that the significance of sguadrismo "consists not merely in its acts of violence or in its terrorist threat to political opponents, but equally to the appeal and fascination the ideology and practice of violence possessed for large sections of Italian youth."⁷⁰ Although most *squadristi* lacked Mussolini's theoretical understanding of the use of violence, the ideas of Nietzsche and Sorel, however vaguely understood, were common currency in anarchist circles and well known to Arpinati.⁷¹ New fascist recruits were either familiar with the effectiveness of violence from the war or, having been too young to participate, were willing to embrace violence as a satisfying means to an end. Along with fascist journals and newspapers — which Arpinati closely controlled — speeches by prominent leaders at clubs and rallies became the principal means of spreading these ideas. Before their violent forays, fascist squads held ritualistic meetings which included patriotic speeches with a reiteration of the past wrongdoings of the "social-communist enemy," a justification of the need for revenge, and the singing of patriotic songs, many from the war.⁷²

One would expect that fascist violence would have been unacceptable to most Bolognese citizens. Though the amount of violence from 1920 to 1922 was unprecedented in the region, it never seems to have been at the center of political debate, except amongst

⁶⁷ Adrian Lyttelton, "Fascism and Violence in Post-War Italy: Political Strategy and Social Conflict," in *Social Protest, Violence and Terror in Nineteenth-and Twentieth-century Europe*, ed. Wolfgang Mommsen and Gerhard Hirschfeld (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982): 258.

⁶⁸ Iraci wrote: "One could, from the point of view of legality, contest the right of the fascists to annul with force the result of the elections, but one can not deny that, in those days, in Bologna, legality no longer existed, and that since the end of the war the social-communists had based their supremacy on intimidation and violence; and therefore one explains how reaction also based on violence appeared legitimate. Violence calls for violence." Iraci then proceeded to deny that the fascists committed acts of violence at the battle of Palazzo D'Accursio (*Arpinati l'oppositore di Mussolini*, op. cit., 21). Giancarla Arpinati Cantamessa echoed this view when she wrote, "War is war." She was, however, less sanguine about her father's activities as a sguadrista (*Arpinati mio padre*, op. cit., 41–45).

⁶⁹ Alberto Aquarone, "Violenza e consenso nel fascismo italiano," *SC* 10, 1, (June 1978) : 147.

⁷⁰ Jens, Peterson, "Violence in Italian Fascism, 1919–1925," in *Social Protest, Violence, and Terror in Nineteenth-and Twentieth-Century Europe*, op. cit., 283.

⁷¹ Mario Missiroli, "Arpinati e Sorel," *Il Borghese* 41 (10 October 1957): 570–571.

⁷² For example, sonnets were composed in honor of Arpinati's bravery as a squadrista: Lodovico Zamboni [pseud. M. Da Lovoletto] , "Leandro Arpinati. Sonetti di M. Da Lovoletto" (Bologna: Tip. Mammolo Zamboni, 1923), AGAC.

those who belonged to labor movements and parties of the Left.⁷³ One of the reasons for this is that the *squadristi* tended not to strike at prominent socialist figures. Instead they concentrated on killing small socialist functionaries in an attempt to prove to the population the dangers involved in membership.⁷⁴ At the national level, debates in the Senate during those years reveals that “the subject of political violence seems to have bypassed large sections of public opinion almost unnoticed.”⁷⁵ In Bologna, large sections of the power elites in industry and agriculture were directly involved with supporting the fascists, while public opinion in general seemed unable to comprehend the phenomenon of fascism:

This is evident particularly where the extent and implication of non-constitutional, illegal uses of violence were concerned. Relegated to the local news pages under headings similar to those of common crimes, it seems that the events of that time were often not regarded as “political” in the strict sense, but as *bruta cronaca*.⁷⁶

In the long term, Arpinati knew this could not last. Whereas in nearby Ferrara “the violence, intolerance, and authoritarianism characteristic of the rural *fasci* were never to be erased from the movement,”⁷⁷ in Bologna, Arpinati was ultimately able to eliminate the violence and much of the intolerance. In the struggle within the fascist movement between violence as a temporary political instrument and violence as a permanent ritualistic feature, he would be one of the first voices calling for moderation and “normalization.” Especially during the second wave of violence following Matteotti’s murder, Arpinati was able to control his *squadristi*. This is in marked contrast to many fascists for whom “the desire...to magnify the extent of the ‘tyranny’ from which they claimed to have saved Italy resulted in much exaggeration and distortion of what went on in the years immediately after the war.”⁷⁸

Arpinati had other reasons for later wanting to play down the role of violence in the fascist seizure of power. As numerous eyewitnesses attest, Arpinati himself was responsible for some extreme acts of violence in the early years. Nanni himself stated that “in Bologna, fascist violence has a style and someone who is responsible for it,”⁷⁹ and

⁷³ The Bolognese historian Paolo Nello notes that “one can not create a mass movement — even if it is victorious — with violence alone; one needs — and there was — consensus” [Paolo Nello, “La violenza fascista overso dello squadristo nationalrivoluzionario,” SC 8, 6 (December 1982) : 1024] .

⁷⁴ Peterson points out that the importance of the “demonstrative” aspects of fascist violence is hidden in the relatively low number of actual homicides. According to statistics collected by the Socialist Chamber of Labor, between January and May of 1921 there were 191 violent acts between fascists and socialists, with 19 deaths in the province of Bologna (“Violence in Italian Fascism, 1919–1925,” op. cit., 280). As Simone Weil points out, however, “Statistics are probably not the point in such a matter. The point is the attitude towards murder.”

⁷⁵ Ibid., 285.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 286.

⁷⁷ Corner, *Fascism in Ferrara*, op. cit., 102–103.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 96.

⁷⁹ Nanni, *Leandro Arpinati e il fascismo bolognese*, op. cit., 130.

described Arpinati as “the first, the most methodical, the most violent, the most inexorable of the Bolognese *squadristi*.⁸⁰ For example, in December 1921 during a fascist rally in Ferrara, Arpinati and Balbo’s *squadristi* engaged in a gunfight with socialists in the center of the city, with fatalities on both sides.⁸¹ In January, accompanied by his future wife and her parents, Arpinati took part in a funeral commemoration for a fallen fascist in Modena during which another gunfight broke out and at least two fascists were killed. Arpinati himself was injured in the ankle.⁸² In March he was arrested and jailed in Milan for carrying a concealed weapon. He was transferred to prison in Italo Balbo’s stronghold of Ferrara, where he was released after three days. Furthermore, in the basement of the *fascia* headquarters in Bologna Arpinati had primitive dungeon:

It really was a true dungeon where fascists who committed acts of violence that might too easily have escaped the justice of the courts were locked in, tied up, and punished. For worse crimes [Arpinati]...allowed Justice to run its normal course.⁸³

On one occasion he apparently determined that three *squadristi* under his command were responsible for murdering a socialist in nearby Calderara di Reno. When the three confessed to the crime, Arpinati locked two of them in the dungeon with a revolver each, saying: “An hour to shoot yourselves. If not I’m taking you to the authorities.” The third immediately turned himself over without trial by fire, and the others were turned over an hour later.⁸⁴ Others report that the dungeon was used mostly for torturing political opponents including one socialist who claimed that Arpinati personally extracted five of his teeth with a pair of pliers.⁸⁵ Although Arpinati may have been “the most methodical and most violent” of the Bolognese *squadristi*, Nanni assures us that he “never lost control of himself,”⁸⁶ hinting at the primacy of instrumental over expressive violence that would shape Arpinati’s later attempts to “normalize” Bolognese fascism’s most violent elements. That would come later. In the mean time, Arpinati’s squads roamed the streets of Bologna and the surrounding countryside beating up opponents and force-feeding them doses of cod-liver oil.⁸⁷

⁸⁰ Ibid., 101.

⁸¹ Arpinati Cantamessa, *Arpinati mio padre*, op. cit., 42.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 43. Even though this account is suffused with a sense that Arpinati “felt responsible for the actions of his own men,” one has the impression that Arpinati was concerned less with legality than with disciplining *squadristi* who disobeyed strict orders about when and where to strike.

⁸⁵ Onofri, *La strage di Palazzo d’Accursio*, op. cit., 283nl00. That the dungeon was used by Arpinati against socialists as well is corroborated by Nanni (*Leandro Arpinati e il fascismo bolognese*, op. cit., 147–48).

⁸⁶ Nanni, *Leandro Arpinati e il fascismo bolognese*, op. cit., 101.

⁸⁷ After the publication of *Arpinati mio padre*, Giancarla Arpinati Cantamessa received many letters from her father’s former victims, including one who wrote: “Add this unforgettable tid-bit to your book. The undersigned, Quinto Vecchi, still suffers from the consequences of the cudgelings [manganellate] received by killers under your father’s orders” (AGAC).

In a university city like Bologna, the import of the fascists violence could not have been lost on the intellectual elite. One of the salient features of fascism noted by Hannah Arendt, however, is the appeal of this often aestheticized violence to intellectuals:

[The fascists] preference for terrorism over all other forms of political activity attracted the intellectual elite and mob alike, precisely because this terrorism was so utterly different from that of earlier revolutionary societies...The temporary alliance between the elite and the mob rested largely on the genuine delight with which the former watched the latter destroy respectability.⁸⁸

A Bolognese intellectual who fits this description quite well is Mario Missiroli, who became a life-long friend of Arpinati.⁸⁹ Missiroli was born in Bologna in 1886 and began his writing career with the Bolognese weekly *Don Chisciotte* and Paolo Orano's Florentine review *la Lupa*. Following the First World War he edited the Liberal periodical *Il Tempo* and in 1918 became editor-in-chief of *Il Reato del Carlino*.⁹⁰ Although he was forced to resign from *Il Secolo* in 1921 after writing a number of anti-fascist articles, he began to re-evaluate his negative view of the fascists through the mid-1920, the period of his closest relationship with Arpinati.⁹¹ Throughout, Missiroli considered himself a member of the Liberal Party, and much credit has been given to him for "liberalizing" Arpinati by acting as "a sort of intellectual councilor."⁹² Several years older than Arpinati and with a far greater cultural and intellectual background, Missiroli made a strong impression on Arpinati:

Arpinati was new to politics, Missiroli was already deeply an expert...It was Missiroli...who posed to him the great questions of moral and social life, knew how to respond to his questions and, above all else, suggest those works...in which he could find the foundations for his thinking and his conduct.⁹³

⁸⁸ Hannah Arendt, *The Origina of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1951): 351

⁸⁹ For more on the relationship between Arpinati and Missiroli see: Gaetano Afeltra, *Missiroli e i suoi tempi. Splendori e debolezze di un uomo ingegno* (Milan: Bompiani, 1985); Mario Missiroli, "Leandro Arpinati," in *Gente di coscienza* (Milan: Riccardo Ricciardi, 1972): 38–45; Iraci, *Arpinati l'oppositore di Mussolini*, op. cit., 110–113; Enrico Mattei, "E morto Mario Missiroli a ottantotto anni," *Il Tempo*, 30 November 1974.

⁹⁰ For more on Missiroli's tenure at *Il Resto del Carlino* see: Dino Biondi, *Il Resto del Carlino, 1885–1995. Un giornale nella storia d'Italia* (Bologna: Poligrafici, 1985): 169–174.

⁹¹ Although Missiroli never held any important posts in the fascist government, he wrote a number of influential books in support of Mussolini and the regime. Following the Second World War he directed *Il Messaggero* in Rome and *Corriere della Sera* in Milan, and worked hard on his political and intellectual rehabilitation. Only after a long and difficult correspondence did Missiroli keep his promise to Giancarla Arpinati Cantamessa to write the preface to *Arpinati mio padre* (AGAC). This preface was republished in Missiroli's *Gente di coscienze* (Milan: Riccardo Ricciardi, 1972). Missiroli died in November 1974.

⁹² Afeltra, *Missiroli e i suoi tempi*, op. cit., 22.

⁹³ Iraci, *Arpinati l'oppositore di Mussolini*, op. cit., 112.

Missiroli set Arpinati the “homework” of reading, among others, Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, Pantaleoni, Pareto, Mosca, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Kant, Hegel, Croce, and Gentile.⁹⁴ It is impossible to know which of these texts influenced Arpinati and in what way, or how they shaped what Missiroli later described as Arpinati’s “naturally liberal and profoundly human spirit, ever mindful of its anarchist roots.”⁹⁵ Arpinati spent vast sums of money on the acquisition of a library for the new *casa del fascio* in Bologna, which also included a votive chapel dedicated to the “martyrs of fascism.” Yet, Missiroli’s particular form of liberalism allowed him to take some rather peculiar turns, ones which Arpinati made, as well.

In March of 1919, following the same amnesty which separately pardoned Rygier, Rocca, and Nanni of criminal charges for their political extremism in the pre-war period, Missiroli wrote a widely publicized article on “Violence.”⁹⁶ The article discusses what, if any, should be the reaction of the Liberal Party to the effect of the amnesty on the agrarian struggles in Bologna which “go beyond the limits...of common rights, standing the law on its head, provoking real and true crimes that the penal code foresees and addresses with severe sanctions?” His response is grounded in the view that “in Bologna anything goes, everything is allowed, on the condition that it takes place on a level of intelligence and probity.”⁹⁷ Intelligence and probity inform his assertion that “against the natural tendency for anarchy within the liberal principle, liberty must find a remedy and a limit,” that is, one can not live in perpetual anarchy.⁹⁸ Missiroli’s influence on Arpinati becomes clearer when seen it in terms of shaping Arpinati anarcho-individualism in practice, and in terms of Rocca’s assertion that “anarchy, understood as a society without norms, is impossible.”⁹⁹ Missiroli wrote that the paradox of the Liberal State is that it must

resolve, by means of the art of governing, the conflict of interests, without transcending into civil war. The job of the Liberal State is to reduce to equilibrium opposition forces which, left to themselves, would lead to anarchy. It is a matter of limits;...it is a matter of...maintaining order with the carabinieri, and even...a knowledgeable use of proletarian violence...It is a matter of accepting violence as a means at the service of the state.¹⁰⁰

In the short term Missiroli would conclude that the amnesty demonstrated the inability of the Liberal State to do its job, that is, to accept violence as a just response. As such, the amnesty only served to pardon the Left in the agrarian conflict, thereby

⁹⁴ Ibid., 85.

⁹⁵ Missiroli, “Arpinati e Sorel,” op. cit., 570.

⁹⁶ Mario Missiroli, “Violence,” republished in *Oha Battaglia perduta* (Milan: Corbaccio, 1924): 39–44.

⁹⁷ Missiroli, “Arpinati e Sorel,” op. cit., 570.

⁹⁸ Missiroli, “Violenza,” op. cit. 41–42.

⁹⁹ Rocca, *L’Anarchismo contro l’anarchia*, op. cit., 464.

¹⁰⁰ Missiroli, “Violenza,” op. cit., 43.

increasing tension, not reducing it. In the long term, he would use the same logic to delegitimize the Liberal State for failing to mediate the conflict between the socialists and fascists from 1920 to 1922. stemming from this condemnation of the Liberal State would be his justification of the fascists' use of violence, culminating in their coup d'état, the March on Rome.¹⁰¹

Another prominent intellectual, based in Romagna but making frequent trips to Bologna, was Arpinati's old friend Torquato Nanni. Through the *biennio rosso* Nanni worked on the reconstruction of Santa Sofia and the development of the Socialist Party in the surrounding region of Romagna. As to the rise of the Bolognese *fascio di combattimento*, Nanni agreed with Arpinati that "fascism is a spontaneous generation of the Italian youth and its rise and affirmation are due first of all to the degeneration of the Italian socialist movement."¹⁰² Nanni had hoped that the maximalists within the Socialist Party would build a "greater consensus among the same bourgeoisie which surround the...Labour Government in England."¹⁰³ Echoing Arpinati's conviction that the socialists "will never make the revolution," Nanni felt that "intransigent maximalism" had failed to take advantage of the revolutionary momentum in Italy following the Russian Revolution, and that the socialists lacked the courage to either reform or revolt. "Revolution," wrote Nanni later, "was only a word which exalted the multitudes and scared the bourgeois."¹⁰⁴ Nanni was increasingly of the opinion that "radicalism and fascism" grew out of the same historical moment following the First World War, and had the socialists not aggravated the situation with their maximalist rhetoric and agricultural strikes, "fascism would have become the 'mature conscience' of a new democracy, as Mario Missiroli hoped."¹⁰⁵ Although Nanni's theoretical work in the years 1919–1924 focused on the long-term project of "illustrating 'Bolshevism' and 'fascism' as two moments...in the evolution of capitalism towards socialism,"¹⁰⁶ he concentrated in the short term on the problem of violence in the fascist seizure of power. First, he criticized the socialists, whose mistake was in "not organizing the violence they

¹⁰¹ Mario Missiroli, "La violenza e i doveri dello stato," in *Il fascismo e il colpo di stato dell'ottobre 1922* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1966). This essay is a restatement and a clarification of his views on violence which borrows heavily from the 1919 article on violence. In the later article he specifically states, "I wanted to show the anarchist absurdity of pure liberal doctrine, which can not save itself from the extreme consequences of liberalism."

¹⁰² Pesce, *La marcia del rural!*, op. cit., 112. As an indication of the confluence of Nanni and Arpinati's thinking during these years, Nanni later made an almost identical statement: "Fascism...was the spiritual revolt of the Italian youth, maturing and becoming aware of itself through the intervention and the war" (Leandro Arpinati e il fascismo bolognese, op. cit., 97).

¹⁰³ Ibid., 252.

¹⁰⁴ Nanni, *Bolscevismo e fascismo al lume della critica marxista*, op. cit., 247. When this book was published in 1924, it was received with great interest by the Italian press and reviewed by newspapers and journals on the left and right. A conspicuous exception was Mussolini's *Il Popolo d'Italia*, which did not even announce its publication (Cavallucci, Cavallucci, and Bandini, "Torquato Nanni. Uh socialista e la crisi del primo dopoguerra," op. cit., 260).

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 257.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 14.

preached and exalted for two years... Organized violence might have brought...about a bloodier battle of the factions — which history would always have justified — but never a vulgar assassination [he is referring to Giordani] for which no one wants to or can assume responsibility.”¹⁰⁷ Then, in words similar to Missiroli’s, Nanni justified the violence of the Bolognese fascists as a “counter-attack,”

a psychological reaction...to the chaos and excesses of the maximalist-communist movement [which] had to come [emphasis in the original]; but it could have come in a different form. Either as a pure and simple police reaction, if the Liberal State had known how to handle itself; or as a rebellion of vandeian bands, at one time the enemies of revolution and progress.¹⁰⁸

For Nanni, “revolution and progress” were on the side of Arpinati’s movement, “that spontaneous generation of Italian youth” which because of the consensus which he felt it represented, “could not be...a vehicle of reaction.”¹⁰⁹ Nanni further justified the fascists’ violence by comparing it to the much greater violence of the French Revolution:

History admits, justifies, and even exalts ‘terror,’ when this leads to progress; as when the butcher...Robespierre meant to sweep the past —by that point exhausted and unwilling to get on its way — under the carpet...The *manqanello* (a cudgel used by the *squadristi*) ...is a joke compared to the blade of the guillotine which got rid of both the monarchy and feudalism. And so Napoleon again took a hold of and went beyond revolution, inserting it in European life.¹¹⁰

Ultimately, however, Nanni and Arpinati thought they saw in fascism a substitute faith, and that the violence of the *squadristi*, unlike the “anonymous violence” of the socialists, was “violence in the service of faith”.¹¹¹

The violence of these first *squadre* is not only ‘surgical,’ ‘tempestuous,’ and ‘cavalier’; it is something more. It is ‘spirit’ which separates itself from a dissolving organism: it is the juice of life, rapidly consecrated by destiny.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Nanni, Leandro *Arpinati e il fascismo bolognese*, op. cit., 129.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 97. Nanni’s choice of the word “vandeian” is particularly appropriate. It refers to the series of insurrections in the decades following the creation of the Vendée department (1790) when the Local authorities tried to raise their quota of troops in accordance with central government orders. The “vandeian bands” ultimately became associated with “devotion to altar and throne... valor (or cruelty) and fidelity (or backwardness)” [Samuel F. Scott and Barry Rothaus, *Historical Dictionary of the French Revolution, 1789–1799* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1985): 1000–1003] .

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 97.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 98.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 129.

¹¹² Ibid., 104. The choice of the word “cavalier” [cavalleresca] is noteworthy, for it is a word often used by Italian historians (during and after the fascist period) to describe Arpinati and Nanni’s “core values,”

Thus, by the summer of 1920, Nanni had already thought through his justification for fascist violence.

Increasingly, however, his double game became more difficult. He officially remained outside the Socialist Party until July 1922, but continued to be considered the “socialist” mayor in a Socialist Party enclave and did not publicly outline his sympathy for the fascists.¹¹³ As such, the Florentine fascists led by the Umbrian lawyer Odett Santini, launched a campaign against Nanni, accusing him of illegal speculation and profit from the funds intended for the local Builders Union of the earthquake-ravaged zone. At the same time, the Bolognese weekly *La Riscossa* – which began as an interventionist paper but was now firmly in the hands of the fascists — began a smear campaign against Nanni, claiming that he was “inciting the militants in his party to systematically attack and beat the few fascists in the region.”¹¹⁴ In response to Santini’s accusations, Nanni later published a pamphlet entitled “*Sulla breccia: con mano ferma e coscienza tranquilla*” [“On the Moves With a Steady Hand and a Clean Conscience”], in which he offered testimonies and documentation which exonerated of any wrong doing.¹¹⁵ It is in this context that we must understand Nanni’s abduction by the violent local and Florentine fascists outlined in the Prologue. In February 1921, Nanni was made editor-in-chief of Mussolini’s old socialist newspaper, *lotta di Classe*,¹¹⁶ and published a series of articles chronicling the actions of the fascist squads in the region. This angered the local fascists who were, of course, unaware of Nanni’s growing disillusionment with the Socialist Party. While on a trip to Florence in late 1920, he was attacked and “beaten until bloody and left for dead on the street.”¹¹⁷ On another occasion when Nanni spoke out against the fascists for murdering a local syndicalist leader, *squadristi* surrounded a restaurant where he was dining. Only the timely intervention of the *cabinieri* prevented the *squadristi* from assaulting the restaurant. The attacks worsened through 1921 — especially after Mussolini declared “if he [Nanni] is now an enemy, treat him that way”¹¹⁸ — culminating in his kidnapping during the March on Rome when Arpinati rushed from Bologna to rescue him. As the prologue indicates, Nanni

ideological tergiversations notwithstanding. In the same way that their lives were shaped by events in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, so too was the meaning of the word *cavalleresco*. In the nineteenth century the meaning of the word was similar to the English word “chivalrous”: upstanding, having high moral rectitude, and following an unwritten code of honor. Its twentieth-century definition is much closer to the English word “cavalier”: haughty and disdainful. As we shall see, both meanings apply to Arpinati.

¹¹³ See Prologue, above.

¹¹⁴ Cavallucci, Cavalluci, and Bandini, “Torquato Nanni. Un socialista nella crisi del primo dopoguerra,” op. cit., 267.

¹¹⁵ Torquato Nanni, *Sulla breccia: con mano ferma e coscienza tranquilla* (Santa Sofia: Tipografia dei Comuni, 1923).

¹¹⁶ Nanni held this position from 1 February to 7 May 1921 until the Socialist Party split and the newspaper became the official organ of the Forlì branch of the Italian Communist Party.

¹¹⁷ Gambetti, *Gli anni che scottano* op. cit., 126.

¹¹⁸ Letter from Torquato Nanni to Giacinto Serrati (1 May 1925), op. cit.

only managed to survive these difficult years due to Arpinati's continuing patronage. Following the kidnapping, in fact, Arpinati sent his wife and daughter for an "extended visit" to Nanni's villa in Santa Sofia as a message to the local fascists.¹¹⁹

Arpinati's run-in with the Florentine fascists was indicative of larger problems brewing within the fascist movement even before the March on Rome, problems which would become clearer in the Revisionist Campaign of late 1923 and early 1924. At the center of the difficulties was a growing conflict between elite urban fascism and populist agrarian fascism.¹²⁰ As the ranks of the Bologna *fascio* continued to swell, three leaders began to emerge, each with different views on the future of Bolognese fascism: Leandro Arpinati, Dino Grandi, and Gino Baroncini. At first, Baroncini, a young surveyor from Imola, was the most powerful of the three. As leader of the increasingly powerful rural *faaci* and their agricultural unions, he joined forces with the agrarian landholders in the province. But he was held in check by Arpinati's huge power base in the city and Grandi's rural power base centered around Imola in eastern Emilia. Lastly, all three had to consider the influence of campanilismo, that is, "the autonomous influence of certain squad commanders who exercised virtually unchecked power in their respective communes."¹²¹ fascism had spread during 1921 as a series of local initiatives encouraged by the urban *faacio* which "allowed each *fascio* to tailor its appeals and policies to fit the particular needs and concerns of its immediate constituents."¹²² Although Arpinati had been the chief proponent of a coalition to join the interests of the urban *fascio* and the agrarian landholders, he was now responding to challenges to his personal authority from Grandi and Baroncini. In a move against these two, Arpinati supported gathering the various fascist factions as a force autonomous from the agrarian landowners. Unfortunately, his call "to cut all contacts with the conservatives and various... factions of the bourgeoisie...and represent all of the people" was unsuccessful.¹²³

Unlike Arpinati, Grandi came relatively late to the Bolognese *fascio* (September 1920) and built his power base as director of *L'Assalto*. Arpinati even accused Grandi of being an opportunist who had "never taken part in punitive expeditions."¹²⁴ In fact, Arpinati had done much of the dirty work for such landholders, only a few of whom participated personally in the fascist seizure of power. As the tension in Bologna grew, a few scuffles even broke out between Arpinati, Grandi, and Baroncini's squads.¹²⁵

¹¹⁹ Arpinati Cantamessa, interview by author, Malacappa, July 1992.

¹²⁰ Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, op. cit., 72–74.

¹²¹ Cardoza, *Agrarian Elites and Italian Fascism*, op. cit., 389.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Pesce, *La marcia dei rurali*, op. cit., 112.

¹²⁴ ASB, Gabinetto riservato di Prefettura, b. 7, f. 1, 1921, cited in Onofri, *I giorni bolognesi nel ventennio fascista*, op. cit., 147. Again, the tension between instrumental and expressive violence in Arpinati can be seen. Grandi was fully absolved by the Court of Assizes on 1 December 1947 for his actions as a fascist. A copy of the sentence can be found in CDG, b. 145, f. 194, s.f. 1, ins. 3, cited in Nello, *Dino Grandi*, op. cit., 103.

¹²⁵ Nello, *Dino Grandi*, op. cit., 155.

The ultimate success of the fascists in rural areas was based on “breaking up the precarious unity [the socialists had created] between braccianti and *mezzadri*, permitting the [latter] to continue their march towards individual emancipation, now entrusted to market forces rather than the class struggle.”¹²⁶ Although this was the most powerful tactic available to the fascists, it was not available to Arpinati, whose power base was in the city. In that it was available to Baroncini and Grandi, their power increased enormously relative to Arpinati. Yet, Grandi recognized that such a tactic might lead to the fascists being considered reactionary “white guards,” and instead saw fascism as the promoter of a new form of “national syndicalism” that would replace the socialists’ agrarian unions.¹²⁷ Grandi later described his difference of opinion with Arpinati as follows:

[Arpinati] had been an anarchist, he was a convinced antisocialist, anti-union, anti-Social-Democrat... I was Mazzinian, a syndicalist and a convinced corporativist, I intended fascism to be the “heir” to and continuator of socialism and a new “national democracy” that could have risen from the ruins of Liberalism.¹²⁸

While this ideological division might have held true in the long term, in the short term, Grandi saw agrarian fascism as a means for consolidating power among provincial landholders like himself. The fascists’ ability to split the alliance between braccianti and *mezzadri* developed into wellspring of support and consensus from newly-established small peasant proprietors and eventually resulted “less from fascist coercion than from voluntary and even enthusiastic conversion.”¹²⁹

On the eve of the March on Rome, Arpinati’s power in Emilia-Romagna had been eclipsed by Grandi, actively promoting “national syndicalism,” and Baroncini, whose practical skills in organizing *faaci* in the countryside made him “second only to Roberto Farinacci [in Cremona] among the *ras* or paramilitary bosses of provincial fascism.”¹³⁰ The rise of the two other leaders had come directly from the tactic of splitting the *braccianti* and *mezzadri*, a tactic unavailable to Arpinati and the urban *faacio*. Embittered and disillusioned by the infighting, Arpinati withdrew from the movement during the

¹²⁶ D’Attore, “La politica,” in *Bologna*, ed. Renato Zangheri, op. cit., 142.

¹²⁷ Nello, Dino Grandi, op. cit., 95.

¹²⁸ Dino Grandi, “Letter to Duilio Susmel,” op. cit.

¹²⁹ Cardoza writes that according to census data, “by 1921 the extraordinary convergence of supply and demand in the local land markets had begun to have a significant impact on the structure of property holding in the province. The number of peasant proprietors, which had fallen in the first decade of the century, more than doubled between 1911 and 1921, with much of the increase taking place in 1920–21. Well before fascism arrived in the countryside, the new small landowners had provided some of the most tenacious resistance to...and often had borne the brunt of the leagues’ boycotts and violence. [They] were drawn to a movement...that promised to defend their recently acquired property and status and to liberate them from the economic restrictions and burdens imposed by the socialist leagues” (*Agrarian Elites and Italian Fascism*, op. cit., 321–22).

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 331.

winter of 1921–22, taking with him a number of followers who tore up their membership cards declaring that “they didn’t trust fascism without Leandro Arpinati.”¹³¹ In the late winter Arpinati put in his name for land concessions in the Italian colonies in Libya and concentrated on the study of agriculture.¹³² Although many, including his new wife, thought his withdrawal was permanent, events on the national stage would soon bring him back into the movement.

¹³¹ Arpinati Cantamessa, Arpinati *mio padre*, op. cit., 45–46.

¹³² Ibid., 46.

Chapter 7: Normalization and Consensus-Building in Bologna (1923–1929)

Three issues shaped conflicts within the fascist movement in 1921, and continued to have repercussions following the March on Rome: Mussolini's return to his so-called "republican tendencies"; the Pact of Pacification; and, the transformation of the movement into a national party, the *Parti to Nazionale Fascista* (PNF). In Bologna, ideological differences during the early years of the *fascio* saw the departure of many Republicans such as the Bergamo brothers who did not want to be associated with a movement which increasingly resembled a reactionary "white guard." Arpinati and Grandi considered themselves republican — the latter even described himself as a "Mazzinian" — but their particular form of republicanism was hard to define. Like Mussolini, they were appealing to a vague Italian patriotism rather than the mix of liberal and nationalist ideas with which Mazzini had come to be associated. Given that the Republicans were Mussolini's foe in the early socialist years in Forlì, his embracing of republicanism at this point can therefore be seen as a means for consolidating his position among the "fascists of the first hour," including Arpinati, Grandi, and the "majority of the fascists in Bologna [who] seem to have had vaguely republican sentiments."¹

Through the Spring and Summer of 1921, the conflict between Arpinati, Grandi, and Baroncini continued. The Congress of Emilia-Romagna fascists in Bologna in April revealed Grandi's view that rather than "exhausting itself in and of Mussolini," the movement should "expressly guarantee much larger interests and ideas."² Grandi was attempting to reassert the agrarian populist over the urban elitist tendency within the movement, and by the end of the Congress — he with the support of Baroncini — had emerged as regional political secretary, while Arpinati barely retained his position as the city political secretary. Arpinati's decline was made all the more bitter a month later when he failed in his bid for a Parliamentary seat, while Grandi succeeded.³ The

¹ Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, op. cit., 72.

² Nello, *Dino Grandi*, op. cit., 104.

³ The elections were a huge success for the fascists in Emilia-Romagna, who joined with the nationalists to form the majority in Bologna, Ferrara, Ravenna, and Forlì (ibid., 115–16). Arpinati failed to campaign seriously for the elections, a mistake he would not repeat in 1924. Thereafter, he served in Parliament continuously from 1924 to 1934. A year after the May 1921 elections, a Parliamentary vote supported by the Popular Party and the Socialist Party would invalidate the election of Grandi,

immediate consequence of Grandi's rise to power was the reorganization of the Bolognese fascio along the lines of Balbo's Ferrarese *fascio*, that is, positions of prominence were given to those of the agrarian populist tendency. Arpinati not only lost control of the Bolognese squads, but saw the emergence of Grandi's view of "national syndicalism hegemonized by fascism."⁴

As fascism swept through the countryside in 1921 with varying amounts of support from agrarian landholders, it had become increasingly difficult for Mussolini to control the movement and consolidate its collective gains. In the Summer of 1921, with the support of the majority of fascist deputies, he proposed the Pact of Pacification with the Socialist Party by which both sides agreed to end the violence immediately and respect each other's economic organizations.⁵ Now in control of the Bolognese *fascia* Grandi and Baroncini — leading representatives of the populist agrarian tendency — immediately opposed the Pact, convinced that it would favor the socialist leagues. This intransigence was due at least in part to the memory of the violence encounters with socialists in seizing power in Emilia-Romagna.

However, strong support for the Pact came from the urban elite fascists, including Massimo Rocca, one of the founding members of the Rome *fascio di combattimento*, who emerged during as fascism's leading economic propagandist. He also rose to prominence as the leader of the "revisionists" in the First Revisionist Campaign of 1921–22, and aimed his attacks against republicans within the movement. With rhetoric that reflected his anarcho-individualism, he asserted the anti-State tendencies of Grandi's "national syndicalism," and called for "the defense of free enterprise and the demand for the dismantling of wartime controls."⁶ Mussolini shared many of Rocca's views, including an "elitist" conception of fascism. Unlike Rocca, however, Mussolini's elite also included the middle classes "who felt that they were differentiated from the masses,"⁷ Rocca's more exclusionary elitism meant leadership by a select few at the top of hierarchy, what came to be known as the fascist *gerarchia*. The debate eventually came down to a struggle between so-called "revisionists" and "intransigents":

The intransigents, dissatisfied with the compromise which had underlain the formation of the Mussolini government, wanted the radical elimination of non-fascists from political life; the revisionists wanted to reconcile the

Farinacci, and Bottai because they were under the required age of 30 (*ibid.*, 165). This highlights how the fascist movement was dominated by young men. In the case of Bologna, for example, most squad members were between the ages of 16 and 26 (Cardoza, *Agrarian Elites and Italian Fascism*, *op. cit.*, 320).

⁴ Nello, Dino *Grandi*, *op. cit.*, 118.

⁵ Cardoza, *Agrarian Elites and Italian Fascism*, *op. cit.*, 332.

⁶ Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, *op. cit.*, 51.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 73.

“revolution” with historical continuity, and urged a policy of reconciliation with at least some of the other parties.⁸

In the short term, Rocca and the “revisionists” would find a place within the movement. In the long term, however, his “revisionism,” would lead to his ouster in 1924. Arpinati, who shared Rocca’s ideas about an elite few leading the masses, would avoid Rocca’s fate (in the short term) by consistently siding with Mussolini.

In August 1921, as Grandi, Balbo, Farrinacci, and six hundred other representatives from across northern Italy met in Bologna to repudiate the Pact, Arpinati met with Mussolini in Milan to reaffirm his support and to denounce Grandi’s intransigence.⁹ Despite their huge display of support, concluding in Balbo’s “March on Ravenna,” Grandi was not prepared for a confrontation with Mussolini. At the end of September Arpinati and other supporters of Mussolini met to discuss the growing rift between themselves and the agrarian elements of the movement, openly considering the possibility of “immediate revolutionary activity.”¹⁰ As negotiations continued into November, Mussolini was eventually forced to give into the agrarian fascists and repudiate the Pact. Though Arpinati counted himself among the urban elites and had supported Mussolini’s refutation of the Pact, this and other conflicts disillusioned him and precipitated his temporary withdrawal from the movement altogether.

Arpinati agreed with Mussolini that the squads were only a political instrument and realized that violence as an end in itself would have to be brought under control in order for the movement to further develop. Like many of the urban fascists, for Arpinati

violence against the socialists had been linked...to an intense patriotism and a vague rebellion against all authority. As a result, they tended to view the growing involvement of the propertied classes, with their crude economic objectives, not only as a threat to the prestige and influence of the city fasci, but also as a corruption and distortion of fascism’s mission of national redemption.¹¹

Arpinati could see that the violent and illegal methods used by the fascists could not be used indefinitely. Mussolini’s repudiation of the Pact, however, strengthened the position of violent agrarian leaders such as Augusto Regazzi from the smaller towns

⁸ Adrian Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, op. cit., 151. Debate between the revisionists and intransigents began in force in the summer of 1923, and came to a head in September and October. It simmered through the winter and flared up again in April-May 1924.

⁹ Nello, *Dino Grandi*, op. cit., 133.

¹⁰ Ibid., 139.

¹¹ Ibid., 328. For Arpinati’s comments concerning fascism’s “mission of national redemption” see: ACS, MRF, b. 24, f. 113, s.f. 58, “Carteggio del Comitato Centrale di Fasci, Bologna,” letter from Arpinati to Pasella, 19 August 1921.

of Emilia-Romagna, who “had an obvious vested interest in maintaining the climate of violence and illegality that had brought them to power and legitimized their rule.”¹²

For Arpinati the final blow came when Mussolini, in exchange for his disavowal of the Pact of Pacification, received the support of the agrarian fascists for the creation of the Fascist National Party. Arpinati declared himself openly opposed to the transformation of the movement into a party. His position reflected his anti-party tendencies from anarcho-individualism, and was also a bid to regain control of the Bolognese *fascia* from Grandi. Grandi’s position was that the formation of the party was only a formality, a step on the way to fascism’s larger aim of “laying the foundation for a new regime of national labor democracy, involving the masses in the life of the state and endowing the state with a new ruling class.”¹³ Like Rocca, Arpinati favored free-enterprise and free trade. As the struggle continued Rocca gained Mussolini’s ear and dampened his original enthusiasm for transforming the State into a collection of powerful syndicates and corporations.¹⁴ Mussolini thus began to favor a “new liberalism...bound up with the defense of the middle-class consumer and tax payers.”¹⁵ In the months following the March on Rome, therefore, while Arpinati may have found himself in a secondary position among the Bolognese fascists, important aspects of his political and economic views were consistent with leaders at the national level. In February 1922 Mussolini directly appealed to Arpinati by letter saying, “You must take up your position again,” and by mid-March, he was again involved as a strong ally of Mussolini in debates about the future of the movement.¹⁶

The conflict over the direction to be taken by the fascist movement resurfaced during the Second Revisionist Campaign of 1923–24. Fascism to this point had been a loose organization of “fascisms,” a heterogeneous collection of ideas and motivations generally centered around provincial ras such as Arpinati, Grandi, and Baroncini in Bologna; Italo Balbo in Ferrara; Roberto Farinacci in Cremona; Mario Gioda in Turin; and, Massimo Rocca in Rome.¹⁷ The principal leader of the revisionists was Rocca, now on the National Directorate of the Fascist National Party.

¹² Cardoza, *Agrarian Elites and Italian Fascism*, op. cit., 332–33. It is difficult to determine exactly when Arpinati began to tone down and repudiate his violent acts. Although this transformation occurred through 1922–23, both Torquato Nanni, Jr. and Giancarla Arpinati Cantamessa maintain that the death of his close friend Giancarlo Nannini during the days of the March on Rome (see Prologue, above) was the turning point (Torquato Nanni, Jr., interview by author, S. Sofia, May 1922; and Giancarla Arpinati Cantamessa, interview by author, Mälacappa, July 1992).

¹³ Nello, Dino Grandi, op. cit., 143.

¹⁴ Lyttelton attributes Mussolini’s temporary lack of enthusiasm for “corporative representation” to its being “too much bound up with the Charter of Carnaro and the D’Annunzian mystique” (Seizure of Power, op. cit., 74).

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ The photo reproduction of the letter appears in Arpinati Cantamessa, *Arpinati mio padre*, op. cit., between pages 48 and 49.

¹⁷ Nanni early noted that “rather than writing of ‘fascism,’ one should speak of various and often contradictory ‘fascisms’” (Leandro Arpinati e *il fascismo bolognese*, op. cit., 96).

In *L' Anarchismo contro l'anarchia* Rocca had expressed his view of anarchism as an endless struggle between elite groups of individuals. Rocca had written that only this minority

is worthy of inheriting the mission...It refuses any stabilized regime...Only in this way can anarchism reconcile itself with anarchy, only on the condition that [this minority] becomes a myth, deprived of useless positivist content: the supreme myth of the negation of any dominion of man over man.¹⁸

Rocca carried his vision of a “mythical” minority to the heart of the Revisionist Campaign and saw the Party not as an elite minority, but as a “fascist oligarchy.” He and the revisionists hoped to improve the “superior ethical value” of this oligarchy, and called for “reform of the party to precede reform of the State.”¹⁹

While consolidating power on the local level in Bologna, Gino Baroncini also came to prominence on the national level as the leader of the intransigents who, “while in theory admitting the necessity for ‘normalization’ of the Party, wished to postpone it until control of the State was complete.”²⁰ Through the Fall of 1923 the intransigents called for repressive legislation and an end to parliamentary government, and orchestrated a campaign against Rocca and the revisionists.²¹

Arpinati sided with the revisionists, but with his own theory for how the fascists could legitimize their power, one which sprung from his anarcho-individualist past and his own political morality, tempered by his experience of the strong comuni of provincial Romagna. He opposed the strengthening of the PNF and its corporatist aims which included the imposed settlement of labor disputes and controlled access to employment. Given his experience in Bologna during the *biennia rosso*, he continued to see these as “socialist” methods. In that the fascists led by Arpinati had gained effective control of Bologna well before the catalyzing March on Rome, he was perhaps more aware than other provincial ras of fascism’s potential for controlling the State. Yet, he and the other revisionist were caught in a practical dilemma: “their moderate neo-liberal views demanded that they press for greater freedom of expression, and this implied, as well as the tolerance of other national groups, the creation of inner-party democracy.”²²

Arpinati, Rocca, and the revisionists were opposed to such inner-party democracy, in part due to a sense that they had superior abilities, and in part because they wanted to maintain “a monopoly on important positions to ensure that [the revolution] was not betrayed.”²³ Arpinati was willing, in theory, to allow criticism of the movement

¹⁸ Rocca, *L'Anarchismo contro l'anarchia*, op. cit. 485.

¹⁹ Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, op. cit., 152.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Cardoza, *Agrarian Elites and Italian Fascism*, op. cit., 114.

²² Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, op. cit.

²³ Ibid.

and (limited) access to positions of power by competent citizens. He also supported Rocca's tactic of appealing directly to Mussolini, maintaining that the "party could only fulfill its function of restoring authority to the state and serving as a nucleus of a new elite if it was 'hierarchically organized at the orders of the Duce'."²⁴ For the time being, therefore, Arpinati trusted Mussolini's political morality to coincide with his own. Later, he would lose such confidence.

Underlying this debate was a fundamental distinction between authoritarianism and totalitarianism:

In authoritarian regimes the "good citizen" is the patient, obedient subject; in the totalitarian regimes he is required to participate...by joining the party. In the first case, the concept of good citizenship is a bureaucratic one, derived from the experience of administration; in the second case it is ideological and political, derived from the experience of party conflict.²⁵

The most immediate attempt to legitimize the fascist seizure of power by providing a positive "experience of administration," was Arpinati's work in Bologna. The second was Rocca's proposal to develop bureaucratic organizations operating alongside the often byzantine Italian government. Rocca's program involved the so-called Competence Groups [Gruppi di competenza], endorsed by Mussolini in the organizing articles of the fascist Party in December 1921:

Article 15. The Competence Groups have the goal of grouping fascist intelligence and capacities according to specialized attitudes and talents, in such a way as to render possible the study of whatever political, economic, or social problems may interest the nation, the region, the province, or the commune, and guaranteeing... a minimum of talent and practical success to the study itself...[T]he final result of the Competence Groups will be to offer a most useful selection, both in the field of ideas and in that of the men who will have to apply those ideas on a practical level.²⁶

The Groups were designed to recruit talented people to fascism who might otherwise have avoided joining the Party. Rocca clearly intended the Competence Groups as a talent search in the hopes of creating his elite minority on the basis of merit and "superior ethical value."²⁷ In the short term, his plan was simply to involve talented people in the advancement of fascism through organizations outside the State bureaucracy without involving them in politics. In the long, term, however, "Rocca hoped...they would become the nuclei for a new parliamentary body which would represent the various

²⁴ Ibid., 153.

²⁵ Ibid., 149.

²⁶ Michael Ledeen, *universal Fascism* (New York: Fertig, 1973) : 7.

²⁷ For more see: Massimo Rocca, *Il primo fascismo* (Rome: Volpe, 1964): Chs. 4-6.

scientific and technological organizations of the nation, from businesses to factories, universities to trade unions.”²⁸

In the end, the gruppi were never formed. Against Rocca’s “oligarchy of competence” was an “improvised oligarchy of the movement” including men such as Baroncini, who had come to power through politics and violent political intimidation and “resented the claims of Rocca and the Groups to provide the cadres of the new ruling class.”²⁹ Further opposition to the Groups resulted from their close association with unpopular ras such as Mario Gioda, a former anarcho-individualist colleague of Rocca now leader of the Turin fascio and responsible for fatti di *Torino* of December 1922 in which eleven workers were murdered and twenty-seven injured.³⁰ The majority agrarian element of fascism distrusted any attempt by the elite urban fascists to constitute a ruling minority. The agrarian populists dominated the movement as many new recruits joined from rural areas of the Northern Italian Plain where the fascists’ tactic of dividing the braccianti and *mezzadri* had proven effective. Despite the revisionists strong appeal to Mussolini, even Rocca was unable to counteract the shift of power towards the agrarian fascists that had taken place in the movement.

Rocca’s view that the party should not come between Mussolini and the Nation lost out, even though it was Mussolini’s dictatorial intervention which saved Rocca from expulsion in October 1923. Adrian Lyttelton maintains that in the short term “the failure of Rocca brought with it the defeat of the only concrete programme for giving some substance to fascism’s technocratic claims.”³¹ In the end, corporativism failed because it was based on the impractical notion of the existence of an independent class of managers distinct from both state bureaucracy and big business. Yet, the fascists’ corporativist plans were a modified version of Rocca’s economic policies, and it was Rocca — with his vision of the Mussolinian dictatorship — “who was the true prophet of the final shape and role of the party.”³²

As indicated above, Gino Baroncini became the unofficial leader of the intransigents during the Revisionist Campaign, an outspoken opponent of Rocca and the revisionists. In so doing, however, he also became the primary target of party officials in Rome who wanted to reduce the power of the local ras. In Bologna he came into increasing conflict with Dino Grandi, who strongly opposed his attempts to take over *Il Resto del Carlino* in the summer of 1923. In addition, as a leader of the agricultural syndicates, Baroncini wanted to create a separate economic force to challenge the agrarian landholders, many of whom supported Grandi. These and other “indiscretions,” including violent threats and attempts to create an autonomous power base, did not escape the notice of Mussolini, who, in effect, sandbagged him. First, he ordered Baroncini to attack Grandi with any means at his disposal, principally by bringing up Grandi’s

²⁸ Ledeen, *Universal Fascism*, op. cit., 8.

²⁹ Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, op. cit., 154.

³⁰ For more see: Giancarlo Carcano, *Strane a Torino*, op. cit.

³¹ Ibid., 153.

³² Ibid.

earlier opposition to the Pact of Pacification which, in retrospect, had diminishing his standing in Bologna. Then Mussolini did a switch and “re-evaluated his thinking about Grandi,” thereby putting Baroncini in a bad light. Lastly, Mussolini replaced Bologna’s Prefect, Aphel, loyal to Baroncini, with Arturo Bocchini, to whom Mussolini “had given instructions to work for Baroncini’s overthrow.”³³ With local and national interests opposing him on all sides, Baroncini was forced to resign from the Party.³⁴ Meanwhile, Baroncini’s discrediting of Grandi meant that despite the wishes of the Bolognese landowners, Grandi could not take control of the Bolognese *fascia*. With all the cards in his hands, Mussolini was free to appoint Grandi as Undersecretary to the Ministry of the Interior.³⁵ While this transfer coincided with Grandi’s larger ambitions in Rome, it also opened the way for Arpinati, who had lain low during the Revisionist Campaign and the Baroncini-Grandi feud. Profiting from his close relationship with Mussolini and his unflinching support during the Pact of Pacification, Arpinati was appointed political secretary of the provincial federation, or *federale*, and emerged in March 1924 as the sole leader of the Bolognese fascists.³⁶

He immediately went to work strengthening his position and that of the Party during the elections on April 6, 1924. These elections were the first conducted under the new conditions of the Acerbo Laws, by which the list of candidates that received the largest number of votes, provided it was more than 25 percent of the total cast, would win two-thirds of the 535 seats in the Chamber of Deputies. Unwilling to lose his bid for Parliament as he had done in 1921, Arpinati directed a massive propaganda campaign in the newspapers, and personally oversaw the fascists’ plans for electoral intimidation.³⁷ In a circular to the Fascist Electoral Committee he urged them to “visit

³³ Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, op. cit., 185. Bocchini went on to become the first director of the Fascist Secret Police, the OVRA, in September 1925, a position he held through Arpinati’s tenure as Undersecretary to the Ministry of the Interior. For more see: Domizia Carafoli and Gustavo Padiglione, *Il Viceduce. Storia di Arturo Bocchini capo della polizia fascista* (Milan: Rusconi, 1987).

³⁴ Giorgio Pini, interview by Nazario Sauro Onofri, cited in *I giornali bolognesi nel ventennio fascista*, op. cit. 129n74. Baroncini would remain out of politics for many years, only rejoining the PNF in October 1935 at the time of the Italian invasion of Ethiopia.

³⁵ For an exhaustive look at the roles played by smaller leaders in the province at this time see: Pini, *Ragazzo del '99*, op. cit., 137.

³⁶ “Un colloquio con Edoardo Rotigliano. I propositi e l’azione del Commissario straordinario,” *L’Assalto* (29 December 1923); and, “Il nuovo Direttorio,” *L’Assalto* 4, 8 (11 March 1924); and, “L’On. Arpinati nominate reggente della Federazione Provinciale Fascista,” *RdC* (11 March 1924). Rotigliano, who interviewed Arpinati for the job, commended Arpinati for his work in the early years of fascism when he claimed it “had to be violent.” Rotigliano added, “This religious faith which presided over the construction of *casa del fascio* must preside over all the manifestations of fascism.” Any practical differences of opinion between Arpinati and Grandi were soon forgotten. As soon as Grandi was nominated Undersecretary he sent a cordial telegram to the Bolognese fascio in which he recognized Arpinati as “the creator and leader of the fascist movement in this province” [“Il saluto dell’on. Grandi ai fascisti! di Bologna,” *Il Popolo d’Italia* (5 July 1924)].

³⁷ Much of the confusion about Arpinati’s past (ie. describing him as the founder of the first *fascio* and a *sansepolcrista*) began with the inaccurate biographies produced for this electoral campaign. See, for example, “L’Assalto presenta i candidati del fascismo. Leandro Arpinati,” *L’Assalto* 4, 11 (15 March

each elector in his home to ask him how he will vote.”³⁸ Having obtained “a promise that [the elector] will vote for the National List,” the fascists then sent a facsimile of the voting card “properly” filled out, with precise instructions that this was exactly how it should be done. Furthermore, wrote Arpinati, “on voting day, it wouldn’t be bad if a half hour before the opening of the polls, an elector known by all...were reproached for *voting’ against* us [emphasis in the original] ...It is implicit that no desertions should be allowed.”³⁹ Not surprisingly, the fascists scored a huge victory in the elections, placing them in control of Parliament, and effectively ending parliamentary government as it had operated since Unification. From then onwards, Italy’s Parliament would be known as the “Fascist Parliament.”

The murder of the Socialist Party deputy Giacomo Matteotti in June 1924 brought together the various forces who refused to admit the legitimacy of the fascist victory and opposed their taking power in Parliament. Even before Matteotti was murdered for speaking out against the fascists, the idea of what became known as the Aventine Secession, the secession of the Opposition from Parliament, was circulating in the Chamber of Deputies. Arpinati responded to the crisis, which threatened to paralyze the fascist movement, by being among the very first to rush to Mussolini’s side. For his unwavering support in pointing him down the road towards dictatorship, Mussolini later named the Bolognese fascists his “10th Legion,” in memory of the first legion to faithfully follow Julius Caesar across the Rubicon.⁴⁰ By the time of the collapse of the Secession and Mussolini’s famous speech of 3 January 1925 in which the dictatorship was proclaimed, Arpinati’s career was on the rise. In July he had organized a Fascist Congress in Bologna, followed by a Congress of the Fascist Provincial Federation. In August he had been elected to the National Directorship of the PNF and to the Grand Council. On October 14 he had been present at a crucial meeting of the Grand Council in which he again showed his strong support for Mussolini and the dictatorship. In late January 1925 he was made Extraordinary Commissioner of the Province of Forlì, including his home town of Civitella. Lastly, in April he organized the first Congress of Fascist Intellectuals in Bologna, which concluded with a manifesto drawn up by Giovanni Gentile, who emerged from the Congress as the official philosopher of fascism. The manifesto approved the January measures and the state of emergency by stating that, “all constitutional liberties in the most liberal states have been suspended when particular reasons proved it necessary, and all theoreticians and defenders of liberty have recognized the legitimacy of similar measures.”⁴¹ By the summer of 1925, as

1924); “L’opera di Leandro Arpinati,” *L’Assalto* 4, 13 (29 March 1924); and, “I candidati della lista nazionale. Arpinati,” *RdC* (1 April 1924).

³⁸ ISRER, “Dossier Arpinati-Nanni, Sez. I, b. 5, Bologna, “Circolare Riservata.”

³⁹ Ibid. On 2 April 1924, Arpinati also sent a follow-up telegram asking for a progress report on “application of the system of electoral controls” outlined in the circular.

⁴⁰ Alberto Giovannini, “La storia fatta in casa,” *Il Borghese* II, 70, 14 (4 April 1968): 704; and, Alberto Giovannini, *Il Rifiuto dell’Aventino* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1966): 299–300.

⁴¹ Alastair Hamilton, *The Appeal of Fascism* (New York: Macmillan, 1971): 56.

Mussolini continued the gradual consolidation of the fascist dictatorship in Rome, Arpinati consolidated his power base in Bologna, where he was the undisputed party *federale*.

Arpinati's former anarcho-individualist colleagues Massimo Rocca and Maria Rygier suffered a different fate. Rygier's support of the fascists began to waver in mid-1920, when Mussolini announced the incompatibility of fascism with masonry. A member of a French masonic lodge since her travels during the Interventionist Crisis, Rygier reacted strongly to Mussolini's anti-masonic position and decided, on the contrary, that the only remaining organization that might save Italy from dictatorship were the masons.⁴² After she publicly declared her position, police surveillance, interrupted for several years, resumed. In December 1922 her apartment was ransacked by fascist squads who, she claimed, were looking for papers in her possession which indicated that Mussolini had been an informer for the French secret police.⁴³ In a petition to the Chamber of Deputies later that month, she accused General De Bono, head of the police, and the Minister of the Interior, of "complicity in an act of private violence and responsibility in a scandalous abuse of power."⁴⁴ Over the next three years Rygier wrote scores of articles against Mussolini and the regime for Italian and French newspapers. She continued to insist that the fascists were afraid to imprison her because they knew she had compromising documents and information about Mussolini. In January 1926, after publishing "The Plundering of the Italian Proletariat" — an article she considered "one of the least ferocious in a series"⁴⁵ — she was arrested and locked in a mental ward for three days.⁴⁶ Through her doctor it was made clear that Mussolini was extremely exasperated by her actions, and that his next step might be to "suppress her without a formal trial."⁴⁷

The continuing influence of Lombrosian standards on Italian criminology is apparent, that is, the focusing not on the crime as an infraction against the law but on a criminal as a behavioral type identified for political exclusion and quite outside any constitutional guarantees. In fact, in 1921, Enrico Ferri, one of Lombroso's brightest students, was invited by the Minister of Justice to prepare a new criminal code. Although its implementation was delayed by the fascist rise to power, he was later invited to serve on a new judicial reform commission headed by the Fascist Minister of Justice, Alfredo Rocco. In the resulting code, adopted in 1930 and still in force, "personal history and past criminal record were taken into account in sentencing, rep-

⁴² Bruno Di Porto, "Maria Rygier o della passionalità," *Il Pensiero Mazziniano* 46 (July-September 1991): 82.

⁴³ Maria Rygier, "Mussolini informatore della polizia francese o ragioni occulte della sua 'conversione'," op. cit., 198.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 194. See also: Maria Rygier, "Petizione alia Camera dei Deputati ed al Senato del Regno presentata da Maria Rygier il 28 dicembre 1922" (Rome: Tip. Aureliana G. Dracony, 1922).

⁴⁵ Rygier, "Mussolini informatore della polizia francese..." op. cit.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 196.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 197.

resenting an important shift in attention from the juridical...abstraction of crime to the biological, historical, entity of the individual criminal.”⁴⁸ Recognizing that the fascists intended to use similarly insidious legal procedures against her, Rygier went into exile in France soon after her release from the mental ward. While in exile she wrote *La Franc-massonerie italienne devant la guerre et devant le Fascisme*, a detailed account of the history of the European masonry, culminating in its opposition to fascism.⁴⁹ She would remain in Paris through the end of the war, returning to Italy only after the Liberation in 1945.

Massimo Rocca renewed his revisionist propaganda during the electoral campaign in March 1924, insisting that the intransigents within the Party had themselves become the functional equivalent of a “political oligarchy.” Following the electoral victory in April, however, his opponents were in a better position to force his expulsion from the Party. The subsequent success a month later showed that the intransigents “still had a notable capacity for resistance to Mussolini’s campaign for greater discipline.”⁵⁰ After Matteotti’s murder Rocca tried again to attack the intransigents, and came to be considered an “anti-fascist.” Subsequent aggression by fascist squads forced him into exile in France in 1926, where he was stripped of his Italian citizenship and membership in the Fascist Parliament. Even in exile he hoped that Mussolini might “return” to what he saw as the fascist program of 1919. As mentioned above, despite the early rejection of Rocca’s ideas, the basic components of his thinking were, in fact, at the center of fascist intellectual debate and played a major role in the fascist theory of the Corporate State.

Back in Bologna Arpinati worked not only to carry out Mussolini’s directives for “normalization” but also to directly apply on the provincial level Rocca’s plan for including competent individuals in the fascist program without requiring political participation. That is, he applied Rocca’s plan of demonstrating fascism’s competence within the limitations of the “orders of the Duce.” Gathering together technicians for his massive public works programs and intellectuals for his *Università fascista*, he succeeded in “giving substance to fascism’s technocratic claims.” Arpinati also had his own vision of the fascist movement, and began in the Fall of 1925 to demonstrate his bureaucratic skills to a populace that only a few years previously had voted overwhelmingly for the socialists. As we have seen, Arpinati favored the authoritarian “experience of administration” to the establishment of a totalitarian regime. In Bologna, he would bring together an emphasis on pragmatism with Torquato Nanni’s concept of political economy based on the indivisible unit of the comune, resulting in what might be described as a traditionalist version of Marx’s famous prophecy that politics would be replaced by the “administration of things.”

⁴⁸ Pick, “The Faces of Anarchy,” op. cit., 82.

⁴⁹ Maria Rygier, *La Franc-massonerie italienne devant la guerre et devant le Fascisme* (Paris, 1929).

⁵⁰ Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, op. cit., 238.

Arpinati's first task in the months following Matteotti's murder was to reign in the "second wave" of squad violence by the smaller *ras* in the Bolognese countryside. Arpinati had become more moderate in the years since the "first wave" of squadristo.⁵¹ In November of 1924 Mussolini had sent a circular to all the provincial *ras* ordering them to dissolve the squads, stop all illegal activities, mend fences with former political enemies, and "clean up" the party by eliminating members who failed to fall into line.⁵² Some *ras* immediately resigned in protest from their positions in the central government. Balbo, for example, resigned his temporary job as commander of the Fascist Militia. Arpinati, however, understood that the center of gravity of fascism had moved from the provinces to Rome, and carried out Mussolini's orders to the letter. In his campaign against the local *ras*, he again had the support of the landowners and the police, who now saw the violent actions of the "second wave" as simply illegal. In Molinella, for example, he took on the local leader Augusto Regazzi who resisted attempts to absorb his squads into the Party. Over the next few years Arpinati successfully created a rift between Regazzi and his provincial power base and removed him from his post on the Provincial Directive Council. Once out of power, Regazzi was blackballed by the fascists and forced into a state of penury. In 1931, he threatened to publish a memo attacking Arpinati in which he outlined the extent of his "persecution." Faced with the publication of the memo, Arpinati tried to get him certified insane, a cruelly ironic action coming from a former member of the anarchist movement familiar with this method of dealing with political "subversives."⁵³

Arpinati's was not a simple case of blindly following orders. As early as October 1923, after his brief absence from the movement, he declared his support for "normalizing" fascism and his aversion to the more radical methods of the provincial leaders. Arpinati even denied having taken part in violent actions himself. Stated Arpinati:

Bolognese fascism in general is coming to be considered a gathering of cudgelers, of violent types incapable of pursuing any serious proposal for public work, incapable of understanding the moral value of socially elevating work that brings together the spirits and material actions of those who decorate themselves with the name of *squadristi* and turn themselves towards concrete objectives for the collective good...I have always been opposed to every form of violence; and this attitude was reproached in other times even by those who today pose as defenders of legality...And I have continued to be the implacable flogger of any sort of violence, irreducible asserter of a method of organization and propaganda aimed at making fascism an affirmation of the people. While I give to my fellow citizens...daily

⁵¹ Nello, *Dino Grandi*, op. cit., 217–18; and, D'Attore, "La Politica," in *Bologna*, ed. Renato Zangheri, op. cit., 143–44.

⁵² See Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, op. cit., 168–69.

⁵³ NARA, MP (T586), Box 1067, f. 242/R, "Bologna Fascism, Augusto Regazzi," p.h. 72, Neg. Frames 064702–26.

proof of my inflexible will in not tolerating unworthy actions which dishonor the Party, I have not missed a single opportunity for the city and provincial organizations of fascism to acquire the trust of the people. In other words, our organization should not be considered a private club; instead of creating and maintaining barriers which keep it far from the every citizen, which moreover make impossible any political rapprochement... I have broken down old barriers such that everyone can approach us, from the intellectual to the most humble, because through our life, our work, our advice, our support, they will know us better, will think highly of us, and love us.⁵⁴

Here, we can see Arpinati's conception of an authoritarian fascist movement in which, to repeat, "the concept of good citizenship is a bureaucratic one, derived from the experience of administration." For Arpinati, the experience of fascist administration would so closely conform with the wishes of the Individual within the Nation as to make the individual as citizen indistinguishable from the Nation. Thus, while directly confronting the squads and *fasci* responsible for illegal actions, he also "inserted many former dissident fascists into comfortable, but politically harmless positions in the state administration or the private sector."⁵⁵ By re-channeling the energies of these former *aquadristi* towards jobs offering the possibility of personal advancement within the Party, they were "increasingly absorbed in the performance of routine bureaucratic tasks."⁵⁶ Arpinati's overall aim was "the social and political restoration of traditionalism, but he contemporaneously worked towards a recomposition of the entire bourgeoisie from its original characteristics."⁵⁷ Politically this meant including Republicans, Catholics, Nationalists, ex-servicemen, and conservative Liberals in the ruling bureaucracy. Socially this meant including state office workers, farmers, landowners, industrialists, and students. At the same time, Arpinati never broke completely with original thinkers from diverse political backgrounds whose support for fascism was always considered heretical by their colleagues. Among these were the anarchist Mamolo Zamboni, socialists such as Torquato Nanni, and Liberals such as Mario Missiroli.

Arpinati's work of cleaning up the Party of recalcitrant members took on a different tone than in other areas of Italy. On the one hand, he was interested in eliminating the violence and embracing disparate elements that might be opposed to the movement. On the other hand, his individualist tendencies resurfaced in his refusal to require Party membership of those working under him and in his tolerance of dissident points of view. One of the more conspicuous examples of this tolerance is the case of Leo Longanesi, best known as the founder and editor of *L'Italiano* and Omnibus. Along with Ardengo

⁵⁴ "Le funzioni del Fascismo nella vita locale. Un'intervista romana con l'on Arpinati," RdC (11 October 1923) .

⁵⁵ Baroncini, for example, was given a top jobs in an agricultural insurance company.

⁵⁶ Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, op. cit., 302.

⁵⁷ D'Attore, "La política," in Bologna, ed. Renato Zangheri, op. cit., 44.

Soffici and Curzio Malaparte, Longanesi represented agrarian populist fascism as it manifested itself in art and literature in the late Twenties and early Thirties. As the movement transformed itself into the regime, Longanesi and other members of what came to be known as the *strapaese* movement became committed not to the “real fascism of the regime but to an idealized picture of heroic and uncorrupted rural or small-town virtue.”⁵⁸ More specifically, Longanesi found in fascism the possibility of reconstructing Italy after the model of his native Romagna, with its cultural base in the nineteenth century, its economic base in agriculture, and an overall disdain for bourgeois values, modernity, and parliamentary democracy.⁵⁹ Longanesi wrote that the fascist movement is composed of

ruffians, violent people, married people, braggarts... vaguely fanatic people who agitate for no particular reason against all that they don't understand, more than anything else from a natural need to exalt themselves and rail against something: unable to clearly formulate their own ideas, they condemn those of others: in continuous personal rivalries, yesterday anarchists, tomorrow police informers, today individualists, tomorrow communists, against God but Christian because Christ was the first socialist, readers of pamphlets, debtors, eternal idlers and inventors of systems for winning at roulette, living in perennial and confused fanaticism. Emilia, and Romagna in particular, are filled with such people...and Mussolini, in certain respects, is the best example of this sort of person.⁶⁰

Inasmuch as such a model for fascism involved innumerable contradictions, it was inevitably unrealizable, but then Longanesi felt that the “fascist revolution headed by Mussolini was capable of miracles.”⁶¹ Longanesi became a close friend of Arpinati in the earliest years of the Bolognese *fascia di combattimento*, and led numerous “punitive expeditions” against socialists in the *bassa bolognese*. The two shared similar political ideas, having been raised in a similar political atmosphere. “I lived my adolescence,” wrote Longanesi, “in the shadow of anarchy: my father's orderly was an anarchist, my French teacher was an anarchist, my grandfather's colleague was an anarchist, and all the small artisans who worked for us were anarchists.”⁶² And like Arpinati, Longanesi's politics always retained “a personalized and unrepeatable commingling of anarchism and conservatism — opposite poles of a contradictory political coherence.”⁶³

⁵⁸ Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, op. cit., 391.

⁵⁹ For more on Leo Longanesi see: Fausto Pezzato, “Leo Longanesi,” in *I g-randi di Romagna*, 82–84, ed. Mauro Todeschini, op. cit.; Indro Montanelli and Marcello Staglieno, *Leo Longanesi* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1985); and, “Numero special dedicate a Leo Longanesi,” *Il Borghese* 41 (10 October 1957).

⁶⁰ Leo Longanesi, *In piedi e seduti (1919–1943)* (Milan: Longanesi, 1948): 50–51.

⁶¹ Montanelli and Staglieno, *Leo Longanesi*, op. cit., 33.

⁶² Leo Longanesi, “Vecchi anarchici,” *Gazzetta del Popolo* (8 August 1948): 3, cited in *ibid.*, 34.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

In the pages of *L'Italiaaao*, Longanesi came to be known for his satirical intransigence, for his unbridled criticism of fascism's attempts at normalization, and for his outspokenness in general. He was the author of the Vade-mecum *del perfetto fascista* [*The Vade-Mecum of the Perfect Fascist*], a book dedicated to Arpinati and other "perfect fascists,"⁶⁴ and coined numerous profascist slogans including "The Duce is always right." Yet, his own "eleventh commandment" was "Believe But Disobey," a cynical distortion of Mussolini's slogan "Believe, Obey, Fight." Cynical, caustic, obnoxious, and anti-conformist, Longanesi's mission was to unmask the contradictions not only of Italian culture and society but of Italy's "flaccid, ignorant, rhetorical" ruling class: "L'Italiano came to specialize in the mockery of established institutions and persons, in the deflation of the pomposities, pretensions and evasions of official culture...it became favorite reading for anti-fascists."⁶⁵

No doubt Longanesi's personal relationships with Mussolini, Arpinati, and other "fascists of the first hour" from Emilia-Romagna, allowed him survive within the regime despite his critical and caustic remarks. Through the years of heaviest fascist censorship, *L'Italiano* and *Omnibus* constantly tested the limited permissiveness of the regime.⁶⁶ Longanesi wrote, "Freedom of the press is necessary only for journalists who don't know how to write,"⁶⁷ but through the late Twenties and early Thirties it was Arpinati who guaranteed Longanesi and *L'Italiano* not only protection from excessive censorship, but the financial support of Carlo Ballerini, director of *Il Resto del Carlino*.⁶⁸

Arpinati's control over Bologna's principal daily (he held the newly-created position of Administrative Director) is indicative of the larger control he had over the city and the province by the late Twenties. In December 1926 he was named *Podestà* of Bologna, a new position which replaced the powers previously held by the mayor, the City Council, and the Municipal Executive Committee. Arpinati's decisions were subject to the approval of the Prefect and the Provincial Administrative Committee, but he effectively exercised total control over political matters in the city. In the countryside, he presided over a partnership with the local landholders, who "benefited enormously from the elimination of popular suffrage and free party competition."⁶⁹ The Provincial Administrative Committee and the upper levels of the Fascist Provincial Federation were also dominated by young commercial farmers, many of whom were Arpinati's close friends. Furthermore, the internal struggles between Grandi and Baroncini had

⁶⁴ Leo Longanesi, *Vade-mecum del perfetto fascista seguito da dieci assiomi per il milite owerò awisi ideali* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1925).

⁶⁵ Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, op. cit., 392.

⁶⁶ For more on these journals see: Nazario Sauro Onofri, *I giornali bolognesi durante il ventennio fascista*, op. cit., 172–186.

⁶⁷ Leo Longanesi, *La sua signora* (Milano: Rizzoli, 1958): 22, cited in *ibid.*, 172.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 176–77; and, Biondi, *Il Resto del Carlino, 1885–1985. Un giornale nella storia d'Italia*, op. cit., 198–201.

⁶⁹ Cardoza, *Agrarian Elites and Italian Fascism*, op. cit., 432.

been forgotten and their followers soon gave full support to Arpinati. Among the more vocal supporters was Longanesi who wrote of Arpinati:

It is not authority, it is not rank, nor the office which makes us respect him: in that case we would be State employees. He is the only one among us fascists of Emilia and Romagna, who deserves, for his courage and political qualities, to be our leader...Obeying him means listening to the most native inclinations of our race, and rediscovering the tradition of our civilization as builders, merchants, and silent constructors...Arpinati is the man Mussolini can count on today and tomorrow...This is our faith, and also...our force.⁷⁰

Not everyone shared Longanesi's enthusiasm. Giorgio Pini wrote that Arpinati "dominated without rivals the Bolognese situation...and in a few years concentrated power in his own person."⁷¹ "On account of my independent spirit," continued Pini, "which always inhibited me from courting big names...I never took part in Arpinati's court."⁷² Nevertheless, Pini was one of the principal recipients of the Arpinati's clientelism, being nominated editor of *L'Assalto*, with Arpinati retaining overall control.

With effective control over the province, Arpinati set to work "breaking down the barriers," which prevented the masses from approaching the fascist movement. Through 1926 and 1927 he carried out a campaign against all forms of corruption, profiteering, and *arrivisme* within the municipal and provincial governments, with varying success.⁷³ More importantly, he became the "tenacious, silent builder"⁷⁴ of fascism in Emilia-Romagna, determined to restore orderly functioning to the province he felt had been mismanaged for almost fifteen years, first by the socialists then by the turmoil of the fascist seizure of power. Arpinati understood even before Mussolini what was needed to legitimize the fascist movement, and he was conspicuously aware that transforming the movement into a Party and then into a regime might cause a popular reaction if it were not accompanied by substantial results. His success in the passive mobilization

⁷⁰ Leo Longanesi, "Leandro Arpinati," *L'Italiano* 3, 1-2 (15 February 1928).

⁷¹ Pini, *Ragazzo del '99*, op. cit., 138.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Allegations of fiscal irresponsibility were first made against Arpinati in 1921 when he was accused of embezzling funds from the Bolognese *fascio* (Onofri, *La strage di Palazzo D'Accursio*, op. cit., 222 and 226n56). Later he was accused of extorting money from Bolognese merchants to fund the construction of the Littoriale Stadium, for which no accounts were ever presented. Arpinati's failure to render proper accounts for the stadium was used against him by the fascists themselves, who listed it among the accusations against him when he was chased from power in 1933. Though difficult (if not impossible) to prove, the issue of financial impropriety remains if we consider that the position of Podestà was honorary and non-paying; and, in 1921 Arpinati was nearly peniless while in 1934 was able to finance the purchase of the farm at Malacappa. For more see: Nazario Sauro Onofri and Vera Ottani, eds., *Dal littoriale allo stadio. Storia per immagini dell'impianto sportivo bolognese* (Bologna: Consorzio Cooperative Costruzioni, 1990).

⁷⁴ Benito Mussolini, "Al Deputate Leandro Arpinati," *Il Popolo d'Italia* 252 (21 October 1923), cited in *Opera Omnia*, op. cit., XX, 360.

of the masses, for providing a modern version of Roman bread and circuses was total. In addition to making *L'Aasalto* and *Il Reato del Carlino* fascist propaganda arms, the socialist's case *del popolo* were converted into case *del iascioi* and, nursery schools and summer camps formerly run by the Socialists were brought under the purview of the *Balilla* and the much-expanded *Opera Nazionale per la Protezione della Maternità e l'Infamia* (ONMI).⁷⁵ Other works included the construction of the Littoriale Stadium — at the time the largest sporting complex in the world — and the *Università Fascista*, whose library was housed in the grandiose *casa del fascio*.

Arpinati also excelled in associating fascism with sports such as soccer, swimming, boxing, and cycling. The aims of building consensus through “recreational” channels are well-stated by Adrian Lyttelton: “First,...[they] were good material for the propaganda of the regime abroad; second, these initiatives aimed to imprint upon the popular mind...an impression of the beneficence and ubiquity of the regime; third, they could be used as channels and instruments for direct political propaganda and for reinforcing social discipline.”⁷⁶ Accordingly, “Arpinati's” Littoriale Stadium and Bologna's championship soccer team made Emilia-Romagna the center of Italian sports. As president of the Italian National Soccer Federation, Arpinati was also credited with the restructuring which produced three World Cup Championship teams.⁷⁷ In March 1927 he was also a made the Commissioner of the Italian National Olympic Committee (CONI). Although Arpinati had a strong personal interest in sports, he also saw the advantages of identifying himself with sporting heroes officially encouraged by the regime.⁷⁸ That he succeeded in doing so while appearing to be above politics is noteworthy. In early 1927 *Autarchia* magazine could describe Arpinati as follows:

[T]he first *Podestatà* of a center like Bologna is its first squadrista — and he is not that by force but by consensus. Leandro Arpinati is not a *Podestatà* without prejudice...but he is superior to any prejudice. His fellow citizens expect from him the most rigid and disinterested impartiality.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ For more see: Elizabeth D. Whitaker, “Italian Fascism and the Regimentation of Infant-Feeding Practices,” Ph.D. Dissertation, Emory University, in progress. Although ONMI existed before Arpinati, he expanded the organization considerably, first in Emilia-Romagna, then at the national level.

⁷⁶ Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, op. cit., 402.

⁷⁷ For more see: Antonio Ghirelli, *Storia del calcio italiano* (Turin: Einaudi, 1954): 67–151, especially ch. 9, “Arpinati al lavoro.” Ghirelli modified his negative treatment of Arpinati for the second edition of this book in 1968. In preparing this edition he carried out a detailed correspondence with Giancarla Arpinati Cantamessa in which she disputed Ghirelli's statements line-by-line (AGAC).

⁷⁸ Arpinati was an avid fan of car racing, and competed in several editions of the *Mille Miglia* car race in his own custom-built Alfa Romeo coupé complete with a fascist emblem on the grill. He was the frequent topic of articles in *Sport Fascista*, the *Gazzetta dello Sport*, and Bolognese sporting journals such as *La Girandola Sportiva*. In June 1925, in a crash during the race he was badly injured, permanently impairing the use of his right arm. For more on Arpinati and sports see: Marcello Gallian, *Arpinati politico e umomo di sport* (Rome: Pinciano, 1928); and, Onofri and Ottani, eds., *Dal littoriale allo stadio*, op. cit.

⁷⁹ “Il Podesta, di Bologna,” *Autarchia* 5 (January-February 1927): 36. Subtitled “The New Local Administrations,” *Autarchia* was published between 1927 and 1930 as a fascist propoganda organ de-

Yet, while his programs helped build consensus by providing the general population with “circuses,” as the world economic situation worsened he and other fascist leaders were increasingly forced to provide “bread” as well. Arpinati’s long history of opposition to unions and syndicalism emerged with his opposition to corporativism. Yet, he was caught in a contradiction. On the one hand, he offered a rhetorical defense of small peasant farmers and the traditional rural values of the Romagnan countryside. On the other hand, he opposed unions and accepted the support of wealthy businessmen and large landholders. By the late Twenties, too much of his power depended on these groups for him to turn against them.⁸⁰ While favoring these large agricultural and business interests, however, he opposed the basic notions of corporativism. Soon after emerging in March 1925 as *federale* of Bologna he restated his opposition to Grandi’s State-controlled national syndicalism:

Fascism has had its say about making people work and keeping workers employed, above all, in doing so giving industries the possibility of developing and enriching the Nation...An increase in salary can not come without an increase in production...Fascist [labor] organizers should thus concern themselves not with increasing salaries...but in creating jobs for as many workers as possible...For these ideas I am considered anti-syndicalist. If being anti-syndicalist means not forcing union membership on a worker without him even being conscious of the act...if it means being against the systems and theories of the past, if...it means being against those who want to inhibit the economic development of our people...! am an anti-syndicalist.”⁸¹

Arpinati’s evaluation of fascism as the defender of free enterprise was consistent with Massimo Rocca’s earlier anti-syndicalist view.⁸² By the late Twenties, however, Mussolini had not overcome the contradiction inherent in his 1919 speech in Piazza S. Sepolcro when he declared: “As regards economic democracy, we stand on the basis of national syndicalism, and against interference of the State in so far as this desires to assassinate the process of the creation of wealth.”⁸³ Arpinati felt that any State intervention would inhibit the creation of wealth, and rejected the idea of corporativism

signed to support the 1926 administrative reforms. One of these reforms created the position of *Podestà*. Another eliminated the right of citizens to vote for City Councils.

⁸⁰ Cardoza, *Agrarian Elites and Italian Fascism*, op. cit., 435–46. Writes Cardoza: “Despite its rhetorical defence of small peasant property and its glorification of traditional rural values, the regime created a set of institutional structures that consistently favored big landowners and farmers over the little man after 1926.”

⁸¹ “La conferenza dell’on Leandro Arpinati alia Bolognina,” *RdC* (24 May 1925), cited in Luigi Raffa, “Squadristi e sindacalisti,” in *Bologna 1920*, ed. Luciano Casali, op. cit., 231n38. Nanni wrote of Arpinati, “It is true, he is an enemy of syndicalism which means only ‘quantity,’ ‘wages,’ ‘salary,’ ‘membership,’ ‘bureaucracy’” (*Leandro Arpinati e il fascismo bolognese*, op. cit., 152).

⁸² Rocca maintained these views even after his fall from grace [Massimo Rocca, *Fascismo e finanza* (Naples: Ceccoli, 1925) : 159–163] .

⁸³ Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, op. cit., 51.

as a new form of state intervention that could create wealth while appeasing organized labor and promoting free enterprise.

In this regard Arpinati differed from Torquato Nanni, who by the late Twenties had become quite enthusiastic about a fusion of the interests of capital and labor in fascism. Through the Twenties Nanni remained in Santa Sofia, carrying out his publishing activities and hoping that Mussolini might return to his socialist roots. Though still persecuted by the intransigent fascists of Romagna, he continued to “assert the possibility that socialist and fascist ideology might produce a means for surpassing capitalism.”⁸⁴ From 1925 to 1927, he outlined his position in a long correspondence with Giacinto Serrati — who remained within the PSI after the founding of the PCI⁸⁵ — and Rinaldo Rigola.⁸⁶ In this exchange of letters Nanni would go beyond the tepid “Mussolinianism” first outlined in *Bolscevismo e fascismo* to assert that fascism in power had succeeded in reigning in and absorbing its most violent tendencies and was heading towards a new form of politics altogether.

Nanni rejected the Marxist interpretation that Mussolini was a “puppet” of the bourgeoisie, and viewed the “idealist revolt” of fascism as a revolution by the middle class hemmed in by both the bourgeoisie and a rising proletariat. While the fascist may have come to power by profiting from the tension between these classes, Nanni felt that the conditions had sufficiently changed for Mussolini to steer the movement towards the Left, that is, towards the right wing of socialism. Serrati ridiculed such an interpretation. Nanni’s error, according to Serrati, was that he continued to see Mussolini “with the eyes of someone who still loves him,” to which Nanni agreed that Mussolini “had magical qualities for recognizing the intentions of the masses.”⁸⁷ As such, the work of Mussolini and the fascists, according to Nanni, would depend on their ability to reorganize single-handedly the economy and provide for the proletariat, especially in the aftermath of the Matteotti crisis when it had become clear that further political struggle would not be tolerated.⁸⁸ Nanni clung to the “clear image of the unions laying siege to the [Fascist] Party, foreseeing the possibility that the very force of the working masses through the unions would permeate the fascist organization with proletarian

⁸⁴ Luciano Casali, “I sowersivi.” *Antifascisti e perseguitati in provincia di Forlì, 1926–1943* (Forlì: ANPI, 1989): 127.

⁸⁵ Nanni considered the splitting of the PSI and the founding of the PCI an “act of cowardice” [Torquato Nanni, “Chiaramenti e discussioni in seno al nostro Partito. Mosca e la situazione italiana,” *Avanti!* (14–15 January 1923)] .

⁸⁶ For the correspondence between Nanni and Serrati see: ASF, FS. For the correspondence between Nanni and Rigola see: Stefano Merli, “Corporativismo fascista e illusioni riformistiche nei primi anni del regime. L’attività dell’A.N.S.-Problemi del lavoro nelle carte di Rinaldo Rigola,” *RSS* 5 (1959): 121–136; and, Giuseppina Cavallucci, “Il carteggio con Serrati e Rigola,” in Torquato Nanni e *il movimento socialista nella Romagna toscana*, ed. Lorenzo Bedeschi, op. cit., 133–148.

⁸⁷ ASFO, FS, op. cit.

⁸⁸ Nanni opposed the Aventine Secession and condemned the tactics of the Socialist Party.

interests, automatically making them anti-bourgeois.”⁸⁹ However, Serrati forced Nanni to admit the impossibility not only of reconciling capital and labor through fascist rhetoric, but also of eliminating the class struggle through State repression.⁹⁰ In fact, when Nanni stated these doubts in a later book about the forced dissolution of the Italian Federation of Merchant Marines (FILM) to make room for the Fascist Marine Association, it was immediately sequestered by the censors.⁹¹

It should be remembered, however, that by 1927 police surveillance of Nanni constrained him to maintain his “provincial” location such that he may have lacked the means for forming a view on fascism as it was developing on a national scale.⁹² Whereas Arpinati continued to offer Nanni protection, he still “maintained a position poised between a declaration of support for fascism and fidelity to his own ideology.”⁹³ Although this implies that Nanni remained faithful to his socialist roots, his thinking had transformed his socialism into something quite different, influenced as it was by his close relationship with Arpinati and the efforts towards normalization and consensus-building then being carried out in Bologna.

Beginning in late 1927 Nanni began collaborating on Autarchia and offering his full support of corporativism. In November 1928, in response to a letter from Rinaldo Rigola applauding his work for the magazine, Nanni wrote, “not only must one fundamentally agree with the syndicalist legislation emanating from the Fascist Government, but also the way in which it represents the overcoming of *laissez faire*...There now remains only the question of relative liberty...or better yet, constitutional liberty.”⁹⁴ Yet, his 1927 biography *Leandro Arpinati e il fascismo bolognese* had already laid out his views on constitutional liberty, ending with specific support for Mussolini. In addition to its open justification of the violence of Arpinati and his *squadristi*, Nanni declared that “Fascism, in Him and with Him [capitals in the original], did not want to be, was not, and is not negation; but a surpassing of the socialist positions.”⁹⁵ Despite these affirmations of faith in Mussolini, however, the book was also sequestered by the censors, possibly by Arpinati himself, who no doubt wanted to avoid altogether Nanni’s attempts to justify his violent past.

By the end of the 1920s, Nanni still maintained “the utility of dictatorship in certain historical situations,” but the reality of fascism in power — particularly the continuing failure to restore democratic liberties — was forcing him to again reevaluate his position. In a letter to Rigola he wrote:

⁸⁹ Cavalluci, Cavalluci, and Bandini, “Torquato Nanni: un socialista nella crisi del primo dopoguerra,” op. cit., 264.

⁹⁰ Nanni, *Bolsevismo e fascismo*... op. cit., 285–86.

⁹¹ Torquato Nanni, *La gente di mare e Giuseppe Giulietti*, op. cit., 145.

⁹² ASF, AdG, b. 295, f. 22, “S. Sofia, Situazione politica.” Surveillance was apparently justified due to concern by the police that Nanni might flee into exile.

⁹³ Cavalluci, Cavalluci, and Bandini, “Torquato Nanni: un socialista nella crisi del primo dopoguerra,” op. cit., 271.

⁹⁴ Letter from Nanni to Rigola, June 1928, cited in *ibid.*, 278.

⁹⁵ Nanni, *Leandro Arpinati e il fascismo bolognese*, op. cit., 97.

Until now I believed that once the Government had consolidated power it would move gradually towards relative liberty; the job of fascism was to restore State authority and raise the prestige of the Nation; that is without discussion, but one is to give authority to the state, and the other to impede the exercise even of the most elementary constitutional liberties.⁹⁶

This disjunction in Nanni's among the needs of the Individual, State and Nation would be the central dilemma in his thinking in the coming years as he continued to play the double game of outwardly supporting the regime while retaining his position as a "socialist" in Romagna.

The same disjunction would characterize Arpinati's thinking as he began to rethink fascism due to his experiences at the highest levels of power. Arpinati would play a game with higher stakes which would end with his imprisonment and internal exile in 1934. In many ways, however, it began in January 1925 with the founding of the critical journal *Vita Nova*, "monthly magazine of the *Università fascista di Bologna*."

Vita Nova and the *Università fascista* were the consensusbuilding predecessors of the First Congress of Fascist Intellectuals organized by Arpinati in April 1925. Edited by Giuseppe Saitta, it included frequent contributions by fascist intellectuals such as Delio Cantimori, Ugo Spirito, Julius Evola, Armando Carlini, and Arnaldo Volpicelli.⁹⁷ *Vita Nova* can also be seen as a result of Arpinati's experience in the anarchist movement which had taught him the value of propaganda. The ideological content of the journal was strictly controlled by Arpinati, though he frequently allowed contributions by thinkers with differing opinions. Despite its sometimes pedestrian exaltations of Mussolini and Arpinati,⁹⁸ *Vita Nova* contained a number of salient articles which outlined what Arpinati felt should be the relationship between the conduct of the individual citizen and the conduct of the State. *Vita Nova* reached its apogee in the period 1927–1929 when most journals such as *Critica fascista* — dominated by second generation fascists — tried to "objectively distance themselves ideologically from Gentilian idealism that...was part of the prewar culture."⁹⁹ In many ways, *Vita Nova*'s sometimes "dissident" views were tolerated because it represented a conspicuous exception which confirmed the rule. *Vita Nova*'s most frequent collaborators were "Gentilians" who were either from the "second generation," or wrongly considered themselves to be due to their relatively late entry into the fascist movement. Yet, Arpinati's editorial

⁹⁶ Letter from Nanni to Rigola, 2 November 1928, cited in Cavalluci, Cavalluci, and Bandini, "Torquato Nanni: un socialista nella crisi del primo dopoguerra," op. cit.

⁹⁷ *Vita Nova* was published from January 1925 until November 1933, a few months after Arpinati's fall from power. For more see: Onofri, *I giornali bolognesi nel ventennio fascista*, op. cit., 166–168. On Carlini's contributions in particular see: Eugenio Garin, *Cronache di filosofia italiana* (Bari: Laterza, 1975): 448–460.

⁹⁸ Arpinati was described as the "pure, silent, and admirable creator of heroic Bolognese fascism, which manifests itself in stupendous works of Italian-ness" ["Per il terzo Anniversario della Marcia su Roma," *Vita Nova* 1, 10 (October 1925): 3],

⁹⁹ "Luisa Mangoni, *L'interventismo della cultura* (Bari: Laterza, 1974): 166.

and administrative control meant that a “fascist of the first hour” was at the helm, and Gentile himself contributed frequently. During his tenure as editor of *Vita Nova*, Saitta evolved as a “left wing Gentilian,” publishing or preparing to publish several works on humanism, humanist education, and the history of Italian philosophy.¹⁰⁰

Vita Nova’s writers approached only indirectly such issues as the relationship of the Individual to the State in fascism. Rather, they discussed these ideas in terms of the practical issues confronting the regime, particularly the ongoing debate about the “Roman Problem” and corporativism. As early as August 1925 Saitta outlined *Vita Nova*’s, and Arpinati’s, opposition to the Lateran Pacts in an anti-clerical article entitled “Controriforma” [“Counter-Reformation”]. Saitta attacked fascist critics who favored reconciliation between the regime and the Catholic Church and wanted to “return nostalgically to the period of the Counter-Reformation, which represents in their eyes the true Italian tradition, which is an essentially Catholic tradition, expressing the deepest sense of authority which fascism has proposed to restore.”¹⁰¹ In addition to attacking such a “Counter-Reformation,” Saitta also criticized the status *quo*, the “Reformation”: “In the first [the “Counter-Reformation”] there is the concept of authority as an iron necessity, from which it is illegal to escape; in the second [the “Reformation”] the concept of spontaneity, of liberty, is present, but spontaneity and liberty belong to the individual, and...represent the reign of the arbitrary.”¹⁰² Saitta was preoccupied by the role of the individual in both the “Reformation” — the individual versus “iron necessity” of the State — and the “Counter-Reformation” — a form of anarchy which he calls the “reign of the arbitrary.”¹⁰³ Given this choice, one which also faced Arpinati, there seemed to be two possible solutions. First, one could assert, as did Gentile, that fascism had overcoming all together the division between laicism and faith. The Individual could find self-fulfillment through integration into society and the State, the bureaucratic and juridical embodiment of the Nation. That is, the Individual would not want to “escape” from the authority of the State. For this reason, many felt fascism was truly “revolutionary”: Bolshevism was a social revolution, but fascism was a metaphysical revolution, a revolutionary transformation.

Others such as Arpinati saw a continuing disjunction between the State and the Nation, and ultimately resolved the problem by linking the Individual directly to the more universal concept of the Nation. This would be achieved through Arpinati’s assumption that individual citizens would bring to fascism a political morality similar to his own, one which substituted for religious faith a love of the Italian Nation. Like that of Delio Cantimori, Arpinati’s conception of the State necessarily reduced it to “a mere expression of economic and juridical factors, while affirming an organic relationship between the Nation and Civilization.”¹⁰⁴ Arpinati’s form of nationalism, deriving as it

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 107.

¹⁰¹ Giuseppe Saitta [pseud. Rusticus] , “Controriforma,” *Vita Nova* 1, 8 (August 1925).

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Michele Ciliberto, *Intellectual! e fascismo. Saggio su Delio Cantimori* (Bari: Laterza, 1977): 21.

did from Massimo Rocca's, was an acute, tripartite form: the Nation as a geographic, cultural, or ethnic collective; the State as the collection of governing institutions; and, the Individual, whose role as a citizen of that Nation could transcend the institutions of the State if those institutions failed. Arpinati might be thought of as an extreme, left-wing Gentilian only in that he felt that the State and the Nation could be one if the State were truly a new form of Gentilian "ethical state" in which "the state is the authority that represents the universality of all moral will and through which moral values become civil law."¹⁰⁵ Delio Cantimori similarly thought of "the rejection of 'individualism' and the liberal conception of life not as a rejection of the State, but as a search for and singling out of a new form of the State which knows how to resolve the problem between individual life and politics."¹⁰⁶

Of course, Arpinati's tripartite division of Individual-State-Nation created as many problems as it solved. First, there was the problem of determining whose moral values would become civil law. Second, there was Rousseau's old problem of interpreting the "universality of all moral will," of translating the "general will" into action. Third, there was the problem of evaluating the qualities and defects of particular individuals as this could lead to the typologizing of some citizens as unfit for political participation. Lastly, there was problem that in separating the State from the Nation, the State became "merely an 'accessory' institution in which there is no substantial difference between various forms of Government."¹⁰⁷

Arpinati had justified the fascist seizure of power by judging that the institutions of the Liberal Democracy had failed, despite the fact that the socialists gained political control in Bologna in 1913 through the legitimate means of representative democracy. Arpinati realized that the same thing could happen to the fascists should they hesitate to legitimize their seizure of power with concrete results.¹⁰⁸ Hence, his work as "silent builder." The institutions of consensus which Arpinati constructed in Bologna provided the individual citizen with tangible proof of the capacities of the Fascist State, including the beginnings of a sense that fascism would be there from cradle to grave. For Arpinati, however, participation in the State required high ethical standards which would benefit the Nation as an organic whole. The key to Arpinati's success was not in dissolving the Individual in the State but in collapsing the distinction between the State and the Nation to create a direct link between the Individual and the Nation. This hinged on the success or failure of morally-upright fascist leaders as individuals (as he considered himself to be) in constructing a positive experience of State administration such that the mass of disempowered individuals could identify with the State and find self-fulfillment in it. The State, in turn, had to continuously prove to these individuals its legitimacy as the institutional form best adapted to translating the desires

¹⁰⁵ Philip Cannistraro, "Gentile, Giovanni," in *Historical Dictionary of Fascist Italy*, ed. Philip Cannistraro, op. cit., 244.

¹⁰⁶ Ciliberto, *Intellettuali e fascismo*, op. cit., 22.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 21.

¹⁰⁸ Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, op. cit., 149–158.

of that Individual into actions which defended and strengthen the Nation. Provided these conditions were met, Arpinati felt that the interests of the State and the interests of the Nation so completely coincided that there was no difference between the two.

The difference between fusing Individual and State and fusing State and Nation is more than rhetorical. Arpinati opposed the Lateran Pacts because the Catholic Church placed another set of institutions between the Individual and the Nation. He opposed corporativism in Social Darwinian terms similar to those outlined by Rocca in *L'Anarchismo contro l'anarchiat* corporativism reduced competition between freely-acting individuals and posited the State as the arbiter of relations between individuals, weakening the Nation economically. Like the left-wing Gentilians, Arpinati saw the Nation as the embodiment of "Italian-ness" [Italian!t3], and fascism as "a new type of State neither medieval, nor absolutist, nor capitalist, but within which private initiative was expressly recognized."¹⁰⁹ Yet, corporativism interfered with the link Arpinati saw as necessary between the Individual and the Nation.

Arpinati rejected the idea that the rights of the Individual preceded the State rather than flowing from it. yet, Arpinati was neither a liberal nor democratic, because both of these labels imply that he was seeking some middle ground between the needs of the Individual and the needs of the State. Such a balance requires compromise and the limiting of the will of the Individual. Arpinati's individualism would not permit fully the intervention of the State in Individual affairs. But his authoritarianism and desire for social order also precluded the possibility of the fully free Individual, Arpinati's solution, therefore, was to link the Individual to the Nation *through* the State without losing the Individual in the State. Arpinati felt that, provided each individual shared a similar political morality (i.e. one similar to his own) there would be no difference between the goals and needs of the Individual and those of the Nation. Arpinati's politics can therefore be seen as deriving from Stirner's notion that the Union of Egoists would both exalt the Individual and collapse the traditional distinction between the individual and the community.

Through the late Twenties he and others associated with Vita Nova developed a politico-moral vision of fascism in which the ethical "collective character" of the Italian people might emerge. Camillo Pellizzi summarized this view in November 1925 article entitled "*Regime del popolo*" ["Regime of the People"]:

The people [popolo] does not mean the masses. It is more like a collective personality, a morality, a conscience, a collective character... It is not so that this people includes everyone, but can even consist of a minority, one which is, however, composed of citizens that are all equally citizens, active participants in the life of the State due to a birthright derived from their own force, faith, and individual and family traditions. Clearly this concept of the people is antidemocratic, because it derives from a fundamental

¹⁰⁹ Ciliberto, *Intelletuali e fascismo*, op. cit., 21.

distinction between individuals who are citizens of the State and those who, as regards the ends of this State, are indifferent...¹¹⁰

The model for the conduct of the individual citizen would be the fascist gerarca like Arpinati, who “rose from below, one that created a living movement and wants to keep it so.”¹¹¹ Arpinati demanded from others political conduct which derived from an immanentist political ideology consistent with their day-to-day moral conduct. Yet, the ultimate model and arbiter of what constituted “correct” moral character remained Arpinati himself, whose ideas of superior moral conduct he linked to his provincial roots in Romagna. Wrote Nanni in his biography of Arpinati:

Leandro Arpinati has taught fascism new habits of civil life. The unified and realistic vision he has of the social world does not even consist of conceiving of fascism as an armed occupation in a hostile society...Fascism, which has annulled factionalism in the Nation, can not re-propose the old schemes, without committing suicide.¹¹²

In the end, the fascists’ hope that the division between the Individual and the State had been resolved became nothing more than a “purely verbal expedient.”¹¹³ For a time, Arpinati felt he had avoided such a fate by retaining the rights of the Individual while helping to create an administrative State with which the Individual could so fully identify themselves and find self-fulfillment that the State as Nation would come to administer these rights. His success in creating this administrative experience in Bologna seemed so total, so much what the people wanted, that for a time he placed the cart before the horse. He wrongly judged that the distinction between the State and Nation had been eliminated, and allowed the rights of the State to precede those of the Individual.

Arpinati’s moral politics involved a paradox, a complex juxtaposition of two ultimately contradictory ideas: a libertarian defense of the individual’s rights which he was even predisposed to defend with violence; and, an authoritarianism derived from a sense that his personal moral conduct in particular was so superior to others that he might speak and act of their behalf. Fascism had many such contradictions, and it is possible that Arpinati did not recognize the contradiction if we consider what it is he hoped to find in fascism: faith. Arpinati found in fascism a substitute faith which he expected those around him to share. For Arpinati, “private life” was the “necessary and debatable premise of ‘public life,’” but he naively assumed that others shared this politicomoral view. Nanni wrote that Arpinati “has the faith of the elected...He has

¹¹⁰ Camillo Pellizzi, “Regime di popolo,” *Vita Nova* 11 (November 1925): 3–4.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Nanni, Leandro Arpinati e il *fascismo bolognese*, op. cit., 151.

¹¹³ Giuliano Amato, “Il fascismo e il conflitto stato e individuo,” in *Gli apparati statali dall’Uhitü al fascismo*, ed. Isabella Zanni Rosiello (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1976): 354.

resolved within himself this dilemma: either fascism is a springtime of life and I will win — or my defeat will not be only the defeat of a man.”¹¹⁴ Arpinati, “at times a judge and inexorable executioner,”¹¹⁵ was bound to be disappointed when fascism proved to be anything but the “springtime of life.”

In September 1929 Mussolini appointed Arpinati Undersecretary to the Ministry of the Interior, while retaining the official position of Minister for himself.¹¹⁶ Mussolini called Arpinati to Rome for at least two reasons. First, he hoped that Arpinati might carry out at the national level his success in building consensus at the provincial level in Emilia-Romagna. As such, Arpinati’s “passive mobilization of the masses” in Bologna in the Twenties can be seen as an anticipation of Mussolini’s call in the Thirties to “go to the people.”¹¹⁷ Second, Mussolini hoped to control Arpinati’s rise in popularity. Although Mussolini’s control of over the Fascist Party made this appointment “a concession from strength and not weakness,” provincial leaders such as Arpinati continued to hold considerable power.¹¹⁸ By bringing Arpinati to Rome Mussolini could weaken Arpinati’s link to events in Bologna, a tactic which had already proved successful with Grandi, Balbo, Turati, Farinacci, and other provincial ras. By 1933 Mussolini’s tactic would combine with Arpinati’s own disillusionment with the experience of fascism in power to force a showdown between the two.

It was a showdown Arpinati would lose.

¹¹⁴ Nanni, Leandro Arpinati e *il fascismo bolognese*, 154.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 146.

¹¹⁶ From 1929 to 1933 when Arpinati was at the Ministry of the Interior in Rome, *Vita Nova* increasingly came to be dominated by outright supporters of Mussolini and the regime. The rise to power of the Nazi’s became an important topic, as did Giulio Evola’s theorizing about Italian “spiritual” racism, as opposed to German biological racism. In the months between Arpinati’s fall from power in May 1933 and the final issue in November, *Vita Nova* took on an ever more obsequious tone, culminating in the final issue which included a series of self-critical repudiations of the entire program of the journal in the preceeding years.

¹¹⁷ D’Attore, “La politica,” in Bologna, ed. Renato Zangheri, *op. cit.*, 145.

¹¹⁸ Lyttleton, *The Seizure of Power*, *op. cit.*, 294.

Epilogue and Conclusions

Leandro Arpinati, Torquato Nanni, Massimo Rocca, and Maria Rygier all came to political consciousness before the First World War in a polarized political world which seemed to offer solutions only on the extreme Right and Left. They all shared what Robert Wohl describes as the “mentality of the generation of 1914,” characterized by “its activism, its pragmatism, its belief in the power of the will to reshape reality, its pessimism about the past, and its dedication to the creation of a new world and a new man [which] gave radicals of the Right and radicals of the Left the feeling that they were somehow secretly related and...made it possible for them to pass from one camp to another.”¹ What made the passage from Left to Right so much easier is that all four searched for a political solution to the metaphysical problem of their own lack of religious faith. Once they had withdrawn support for liberalism, socialism, and parliamentary democracy, however, all found themselves inhabiting an equally polarized political world of Fascism versus anti-Fascism, a world they had helped create.

Arpinati held the position of Undersecretary to the Ministry of the Interior from September 1929 to May 1933. As leader of the Bolognese fascists he had tried to impose his own moral order on his followers, leading by example. In Rome, however, instead of being the “silent builder” Mussolini had hoped, Arpinati immediately distinguished himself by mercilessly investigating all cases of graft, profiteering, *clientelismo*, and *arrivismo* within the government. The experience proved disillusioning. In his new position he was privy to nearly all information regarding the real successes and failures of the regime, although he immediately distanced himself from the operations of the Secret Police (the OVRA), leaving it largely in the hands of Arturo Bocchini.² Arpinati also insisted on maintaining personal contacts with former colleagues from opposing political persuasions including Torquato Nanni and Mario Missiroli. In general, however, his attempts to impose order failed, and he accumulated enemies quickly.³

¹ Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge: HUP, 1979) : 231

² For more see: Dimizia Carafoli and Augusto Padiglione, *Il Viceduce. Arturo Bocchini, capo della Polizia fascista* op. cit.; Guido Leto, OVRA. *Fascismo e antifascismo* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1952) : 37–561 and 43–63; Carmine Senise, *Quando ero capo della polizia segreta, 1940–1943* (Rome: Ruffolo, 1946): 18–23; and, Luigi Salvatorelli and Giovanni Mira, *Storia dell'Italia nel periodo fascista* (Turin: Einaudi, 1964): 582–83 and 901–04.

³ Regarding Arpinati's period in Rome, including his “witch hunts” within the fascist bureaucracy see: NARA, MP (T586), Box 1294, Neg. Frames 111202–111725, “Documents captured at Arpinati's House, 1934,”; NARA, MP (T586), Box 1021, Neg. Frames 056494–056621, “Documents Illustrating the Rise and Fall of Leandro Arpinati, One-Time Fascist Minister of the Interior”; NARA, MP (T586), Box

Initially, he was protected by Mussolini's personal influence.⁴ Mussolini had brought Arpinati to Rome to control his rise in power, but by 1932, Arpinati's power was considerable, and he came to be known as the "Second *Duce*" of fascism. Arpinati's case demonstrates that Mussolini had failed to replace the fascist "old guard" with "faithful servants of his own choosing," nor was he able to "eliminate its members and reduce them to total dependence on him."⁵ Increasingly, Arpinati disagreed with Mussolini about the future course of the regime. This disagreement centered on Arpinati's opposition to the 1929 Lateran Pacts and Alfredo Rocco's corporativist plans for state intervention in the economy. As we have seen, Arpinati's opposition to these programs derived from his tripartite distinction of Individual-State-Nation, that is, his view that State intervention in the economy severed an important direct link between the Individual and the Nation. These differences, combined with his uncompromising individualist views, eventually led to his being seen as unorthodox, dissident, and even "anti-fascist."

As long as Augusto Turati remained leader of the PNF, Arpinati could maintain these "contrarian" positions, carrying out his politico-moral program to make the State an effective means of transmission between the Individual and the Nation. Turati's replacement by Achille Starace in December 1931, however, signaled a dramatic transition for the Party and the beginning of the end for Arpinati.⁶ Prior to what became known as the "Starace era," it had been possible for citizens to remain indifferent to the state and even critically judge the fascists' attempts to legitimize their usurpation of power. Starace's plans to create a "new Italy" included opening the rolls of the party to millions of Italians who would be administered through a pyramidal bureaucratic structure. This marked a shift away from Arpinati's conception of fascism as an elite, "authoritarian" movement in which the citizen could participate in the state if they chose to do so, and towards a more "totalitarian" state in which the citizen would be required to participate. Starace came to be known for his absolute obedience to Mussolini and for imposing his strict authority over local party leaders. Rights and privileges increasingly came to be administered by the party, and party membership became almost essential for advancement in many careers. Notes Adrian Lyttelton, "after 1932 the party, even as an idea, failed to hold the loyalty of the ablest fascists."⁷

These plans did not sit well with Arpinati, who became Starace's principal opponent. Firstly, he opposed Mussolini's corporativist plan for massive state intervention in the

1203, Neg. Frames 08802–08811, "Minor Personalities-Agostino Iraci"; and, NARA, SDDF 865.002/137, "Arpinati, Leandro" (M527), Box 18/19, Neg. Frames 660–687.

⁴ Arpinati refused to address Mussolini as *Duce* and continued to use the *tu* form of address. In addition, he seems to have been much more outspoken and forthright with Mussolini than other *gerarchi*. For more see: Giovanni Giuriati, *La parabola di Mussolini ne ricordi di un gerarca* (Bari: Laterza, 1981): 68–69.

⁵ Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, op. cit., 305.

⁶ Cannistraro, "Starace, Achille," in *Historical Dictionary of Fascist Italy*, ed. Philip Cannistraro, op. cit., 517–19.

⁷ Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, op. cit., 306.

economy, particularly the creation of IMI and IRI. These “para-state” corporations were designed not only as part of Mussolini’s plans for economic and political autarchy in response to Italy’s balance-of-payments crisis during the Depression, but also as part of a larger cultural program to present fascism as a “third way” between Democracy and Communism. Arpinati felt that these institutions were based on the impractical notion of the existence of an independent class of managers distinct from both the state bureaucracy and big business. Such a class of managers would have been a popularized (but non-elite) modification of Rocca’s *gruppi di competenza*. Rocca, however, had envisioned the *gruppi* as elite groups of competent bureaucrats not necessarily beholden to the Party. Arpinati agreed, maintaining that fascism derived its legitimacy from administrative competence. In Bologna, he had in a sense carried out Rocca’s idea of the *gruppi di competenza* by gathering together technicians for his massive public works programs and intellectuals for the *Università Fascista*. He mistakenly thought he had been brought to Rome to carry out a similar program. As such, he saw Starace’s program as totalitarian, one in which the State impinged on the free-will of the individual citizen to participate in the life of the Nation. Arpinati’s “dissident” views were aimed at preventing the establishment of a totalitarian regime in favor of an authoritarian one characterized by an administratively competent elite. Thus, Arpinati rejected corporativism in part because it was no longer motivated by the notion of a competent core elite, but rather responded to Starace’s plans to involve huge numbers of new party members in the State. Arpinati opposed both the opening of the party’s rolls and the expansion of the regime by creating auxiliary organizations and semi-public institutions. As Adrian Lyttelton points out, “the party’s sphere of administration continued to expand as the regime attempted to bring fresh sectors of social and economic life under its control.”⁸ At the same time, “the huge increase in the party’s numbers brought a further decline in morale and political cohesion.”⁹

A second point of contention was Arpinati’s anti-Germanism. The rise of the Nazis to power in Germany and Austria increased the feeling that fascism was the political wave of the future, and Mussolini began making the first tentative alliances that would become the Rome-Berlin Axis. Arpinati was vehemently opposed, and his opposition to the Nazis would only increase over the next decade.¹⁰ In the short term, it would further mark him as a “dissident” fascist.

Through 1932, however, Starace’s very different program, now supported by Mussolini, prevailed. Against Arpinati, Starace gathered together a clique of enemies including Donna Rachele and others in the Mussolini family who were busily constructing what Arpinati described as a “fiefdom” in the province of Forlì through the improper channeling of public works contracts. As early as March 1933 it became clear that Mussolini was behind Starace’s series of challenges to Arpinati designed to remove

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il Duce I. Gli anni del consenso, 1929–1936* (Turin: Einaudi, 1974): 292–300.

him from power. The final challenge came on April 27 in a letter from Starace to Mussolini outlining twenty accusations against Arpinati.¹¹

The letter should not have come as a surprise to Arpinati, as tension had been mounting within the regime for some time. In as much as the letter was requested by Mussolini, it highlights how Arpinati and Mussolini were following divergent paths, one authoritarian, the latter (through Starace) totalitarian. Arpinati and Mussolini had conflicting ideas of what the fascist revolution could become based on what it had been up to that time. Arpinati felt that his programs had helped overcome the tension between the Individual and the State as the means for strengthening and defending the Nation, and that Mussolini's vision implied the possibility of exerting control over all facets of Italian life. Mussolini's new tack would brook no deviations and no heterogeneity of opinion leading to possible opposition. Faced with this new direction in the regime, Arpinati had come to be considered "antifascist" by the very fascists with whom he had worked to legitimize the fascist movement in power.

Among the more significant accusations was Starace's assertion that Arpinati had an "attitude wholly contrary to any corporativist expression of the regime...To each of Your [Mussolini's] affirmations about the character of corporativism, he has corresponded, without fail, his own affirmation to the contrary."¹² Arpinati was also criticized for "fomenting indiscipline" by not requiring workers at the Ministry of the Interior to enroll in the Party.¹³ Similarly, he was criticized for supporting Mario Missiroli's application for membership in the Party. Arpinati apparently told Starace that if the Fascist National Party had no room for Missiroli, the "Party should consider itself a bunch of buffoons."¹⁴ Many of the accusations in Starace's letter were fabrications or distortions of the truth, others involved dragging up past occasions on which Arpinati had been exonerated of any wrong doing. For example, Starace tried to reopen the possibility of Arpinati's complicity in the 1926 assassination attempt on Mussolini in Bologna. Starace cited as evidence Arpinati's continuing relationship with the pro-anarchist family of Ateo Zamboni. Some of the accusations were so slanderous that Arpinati challenged Starace to a duel, which the latter declined. Arpinati later sent Starace a terse and biting telegram which read, "If I had a need of a means for judging the baseness of men, you have given it to me. You are a vile liar."¹⁵

¹¹ For the full text of this letter see: Iraci, *Arpinati l'oppositore di Mussolini*, op. cit., 187-93.

¹² Ibid., 189. Starace even went so far as to suggest that Arpinati's language with regard to Mussolini's economic plans for heavy industry was such that, "had it been used by others, would have resulted in their being handcuffed and beaten."

¹³ While Arpinati remained in power, Party membership was not required for employment in the local administration of Civitella di Romagna. Two months after Arpinati's departure from Rome, Party membership was required. (ACC, "Delibero del Podestà, Verbale di seduta, 30 July 1933, Modifiche al Regolamento Organico per l'iscrizione al P.N.F."). By the mid-Thirties, town birth registers also began to note whether or not children were "of the Arian race."

¹⁴ Traci, *Arpinati l'oppositore di Mussolini*, op. cit., 192; and, ACS, SPCR, b. 79, f. "Arpinati Leandro," letter from Arpinati to Mario Ghinelli, 23 April 1933.

¹⁵ AGAC, telegram from Arpinati to Starace, 22 May 1933.

Whether Starace's letter is a collection of truths, lies, distortions, slander, or calumny misses the point. It was the pretext needed, and soon used, by Mussolini to ask for Arpinati's resignation. Arpinati had put himself in the service of Mussolini and was now being cast aside. Coming from a tradition of extreme anarcho-individualism, Arpinati as a Fascist typified the adage that "converts are the greatest zealots." As Nanni noted in his biography: "His violence — and a few exceptions prove the rule — was always at the service of a faith, never at the service of persons or special interests."¹⁶ The real tragedy for Arpinati is that while individualism remained the only consistent thread in his political thinking, he eventually did put himself at the service of a person: Mussolini. In doing so he contributed to establishing the Regime of the Duce which went beyond not only Gentile's collapsing of the distinction between the State and the individual, but also Arpinati's attempt to fuse the individual and Nation by collapsing the distinction between State and Nation. The Fascist ended by trying to eliminate the individual all together by substituting the Duce as a personified Individual-State-Nation, Arpinati tended towards the Individualist pole of the tripartite division of Individual-State-Nation, while Mussolini wanted to overcome this altogether by casting himself as the trinity itself. Mussolini's attempts to collapse this duality by making his persona inseparable from the State lasted nearly a decade. However, Mussolini could not provide a sufficient model of superior moral conduct no matter how extensive the propaganda campaigns of the fascist regime. As a close personal friend of Mussolini, Arpinati perhaps knew before anyone else that this could never work, that Mussolini's defects became the State's defects, with catastrophic results.

Arpinati's libertarian form of fascism could be tolerated in the early years before the establishment of the regime when local *rasi* were fairly autonomous and ideological homogeneity was not required. By 1933, however, things had changed. These were the years of the drafting of the *La dottrina del fascismo*, and Mussolini apparently even asked Arpinati to comment on Gentile's original draft. Arpinati's terse conclusion was: "These are abstractions which interest no one, least of all the fascists. You can't put your signature on such sketchy notes as these."¹⁷ In the end, Mussolini grafted his own polemical conclusions to Gentile's "abstractions."¹⁸ Arpinati had failed to see that despite their shared Romagnan background and his personal relationship with Mussolini, his ideas would no longer have a place within fascism. Mussolini would thereafter support Starace's program which proposed collapsing the distinction between the Individual, State, and Nation by substituting the *Duce* as the personification of all three.

Arpinati refused to offer his letter of resignation directly to Starace as Mussolini had requested. In the days following Starace's letter, Arpinati tried repeatedly to meet

¹⁶ Nanni, Leandro Arpinati e il fascismo Bolognese, op. cit., 149.

¹⁷ Iraci, *Arpinati l'oppositore di Mussolini*, op. cit., 179.

¹⁸ NARA, MP (T586), "The Doctrine of Fascism" (March-October 1932), Box 1119, Neg. Frames 072461-072904.

with Mussolini. His requests were denied. Finally on May 1 he offered the following letter of resignation to Mussolini personally:

In response to and in compliance with the request made to me by letter...!
resign from the position of Undersecretary of State for Internal Affairs.¹⁹

Mussolini was infuriated by the implication that he was behind this plot to liquidate his old friend, but Arpinati refused to modify the language of the letter. On May 4, news of Arpinati's dismissal was made public.²⁰

The significance of Arpinati's resignation was not immediately apparent, and for a while it seemed as if nothing had changed. On May 18 he was clamorously received by colleagues in the Chambers of Parliament where — as a police report later confirmed — it became “a race to approach him and shake his hand.”²¹ As noted above, Mussolini had seen the threat Arpinati represented by acting independently at the provincial level and sought to bring him into the fold. If Arpinati was not aware of this before going to Rome, he soon was. One evening, during a private meeting in his office at the Ministry of the Interior he confided to Mario Missiroli, “I could stay on in this position forever. All I would have to do is follow the herd of flatterers. But it's against my principles. I want to be imprisoned [confinato] . One has to pay for one's errors.”²² And so it was. Mussolini's vision of fascism as it passed into its second decade in power won out. Though Arpinati's departure didn't necessarily produce an overnight increase in ideological homogeneity within the regime, fascism's decline in quality can, in part, be marked from that date. There continued to be dissenting voices including Bottai and Longanesi and their “journals of opinion,” thinkers whose real capacity to dissent was also limited.²³ Yet, Arpinati's departure meant that Mussolini's last links with his provincial roots and with fascism of the movement were broken, and any balance between the Individual and the State upset.

Arpinati's forced resignation, the withdrawal of his Party membership, his arrest and imprisonment a year later, and the force used to quiet the former *gerarca* were very important symbolically. Arpinati's defenestration was a message to others that dissident voices could be easily quieted. If Mussolini could stamp out Arpinati, the “Second Duce,” a powerful and outspoken personal friend, then he could quiet anyone. Anyone. The ten-year anniversary of the fascist movement was therefore accompanied by several general shifts in emphasis: from the possibility of ideological heterogeneity to that of greater ideological homogeneity centered on Fascist Party membership, the persona of Mussolini and Gentilian “actualism”; from power being held by provincial

¹⁹ Iraci, Arpinati i'oppositore di *Mussolini*, op. cit., 185.

²⁰ NARA, SDDF 856.002/137 (M527), “Leandro Arpinati,” Box 18/19, Neg. Frames 660–687.

²¹ ACS, SPCR, b. 79, f. “Leandro Arpinati,” memorandum from Ministry of the Interior, 18 May 1933, reproduced in Arpinati Cantamessa, Arpinati *mio padre*, op. cit., 109.

²² Enzo Biagi, “Uno straordinario personaggio del regime. ‘Arpinati mio padre,’” *La Stampa* (28 March 1968).

²³ “Fore more see: Dino Grandi, “Anno 1932. Crisi del regime,” in *Il Mio Paese*, op. cit., 357–363.

administrations to bureaucratic centralization in Rome; from power being held by local *ras*, to power being held by Mussolini alone; and, from an economy characterized by the entrepreneurial decisions of the Liberal State to active state intervention and participation, particularly the creation of IMI and IRI.

Arpinati's departure from Rome was hardly noticed by the majority of Italians outside his former stronghold of Emilia-Romagna. Through the remainder of 1933 he "retreated" with his wife Rina and daughter Giancarla first to Rimini, then Bologna.²⁴ Starace prepared a difficult homecoming, keeping Arpinati's local supporters, the so-called *arpinatiani*, under close surveillance and replacing them in the Bolognese provincial administration with those in agreement with the regime's new direction. Mario Ghinelli, *federale* of Bologna and among the last members of the provincial bureaucracy sympathetic to Arpinati, was replaced.²⁵ However, with the financial help of Torquato Nanni and others, Arpinati arranged the purchase of a villa and large farm at Malacappa, a few miles north of Bologna in the heart of the *bassa bolognese*. Although he resumed contact with his former political allies, most of his time was dedicated to modernizing the farm and introducing experimental methods among the local peasants. Arpinati quickly became a respected leader in the area, and the agricultural products coming from Malacappa were particularly prized for their quality.²⁶

During his years in Emilia-Romagna, Arpinati succeeded in replacing the *iascio* of his home town of Civitella di Romagna with *arpinatiani*. While in Rome, however, his links to this important provincial power base had weakened. A harbinger of this loss of power was the infamous "smacking of Toscanini" in May 1931 when the maestro refused to play the fascist marching song *Giovinezza* upon the entry of Arpinati and other notable fascists into the Bologna Communal Theater.²⁷ Arpinati responded to Toscanini's refusal by boycotting the performance; Longanesi responded by accosting the conductor and smacking him across the face as he entered the theater. Several years later Toscanini would cite the event as one of his reasons for emigrating to the United States.²⁸ The event showed that Mussolini's tactic of weakening Arpinati's control over

²⁴ AGAC, During this period Arpinati received hundreds of letters of support and "condolence" from around the world.

²⁵ AGAC, Mario Ghinelli, "Pro-memoria sulla mia attività politica e sui principi cui sia stata ispirata," presented to the Alto Commissions per le Sanzioni Contro il Fascismo, November 1945.

²⁶ An entire chapter could be written about "Arpinati agriculture." The local historian Gianni Boselli maintains that "Arpinati singlehandedly brought the peasants of the *bassa bolognese* from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century" (interview by author, Argelato, April 1992). For more see: Gianni Boselli, "Leandro Arpinati: un fascista scomodo a Malacappa," *Foglio Aperto* 9 (March-April 1990): 6-7; Boselli, "I borghi senza tempo: Malacappa," *RdC* (27 February 1991); and, Boselli, "Profilo di un uomo di Malacappa: Leandro Arpinati," *Foglio Aperto* 6 (November-December 1991): 5-6.

²⁷ Luciano Bergonzini, *Lo schiaffo a Toscanini. Fascismo e cultura a Bologna all'inizio degli anni Trenta* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1991); Giampiero Landi, "Lo schiaffo. Intervista a Luciano Bergonzini," *A (Rivista ñnarchica)* 184 (August-September 1991): 35-39; Arrigo Petaccö, *Riservato per il Duce*, op. cit., 24-27; and, NARA, MP (T586), Box 1203, "Toscanini, Arturo," Neg Frames 08802-08811.

²⁸ Landi, "Lo schiaffo. Intervista a Luciano Bergonzini," op. cit., 38.

his provincial supporters had been at least partly successful. Thereafter, Longanesi's career, like that of the other arpinatiani, followed the same downward trajectory as Arpinati himself.

The arrest and internal exile of Nanni on Sardinia was the harbinger of more difficult times to come.²⁹ Arpinati found it difficult to stick to agricultural matters as his villa continued to be a meeting place for the *arpinatiani* from Bologna and Forlì. Aware that a fronde of not only former fascists but also Republicans and even Socialists might form around the former podestà, Starace began the second part of his program. He continued heavy surveillance on the farm at Malacappa and collected information and testimonies about Arpinati's visits to Civitella di Romagna. Arpinati's open declarations against Mussolini's foreign policy with Germany helped precipitate events.

In the early hours of July 27, 1934, Arpinati and scores of *arpinatiani* were rounded up in Bologna, Forlì, Civitella di Romagna, and Santa Sofia.³⁰ Outside these areas, his arrest was hardly noted as Hitler's June 30 "Night of the Long Knives" and other events in Germany and Austria occupied the country's attention. Strict control over the press, a practice familiar to Arpinati at the provincial level, now worked against him.³¹ Any discussion of Arpinati's departure was prohibited. Within a year his name was stricken from the *Enciclopedia Italiana*.³²

Without standing for a formal trial, Arpinati was given a five-year sentence "for behavior contrary to the directives of the National Fascist Party," to be served in *confino* on the island of Lipari.³³ For two years he lived a solitary life studying mathematics, engineering, and astrology before being allowed to return to Malacappa to attend to the failing health of his wife.³⁴ He remained under house arrest for an additional three years, whereupon he was sentenced to five more years, the only person to serve two five-year sentences under the Italian fascists.³⁵

In 1940, in a long letter addressed personally to Mussolini, however, Arpinati offered his services to the war effort. Individualist, intransigent, and even "dissident" in his antiGermanism, Arpinati's love for Italy remained. Arpinati's volunteering for the Sec-

²⁹ For more on Nanni's activities during this time see: ACS, CPC, b. 81106, f. "Nanni Torquato"; and, ASFO, AdG, b. 295, f. 21 and f. 22, 1927–1931, "PNF: Situazioni politiche della provincia, Santa Sofia."

³⁰ NARA, MP (T586), Box 1294, Neg. Frames 111202–111725; and, ACC, 1934, cat.15, class 7, f.1, "Pregiudicati, oziosi, vagabond!, ammoniti, sorvegliati, confinati, detenuti, reduci dalle case di pena, espulsi dall'estero." Many of the arpinatiani were labelled "politically dangerous."

³¹ Guido Nozzoli, "Il censore disarmato," *Il Giorno* (11 September 1963).

³² Arpinati appears in the first and second editions of the *Enciclopedia Italiana*, but not in the third and fourth addenda, published in the Thirties. His name, however, reappears in those addenda published after the Second World War.

³³ Iraci, Arpinati *l'oppositore di Mussolini*, op. cit., 216. For more on Arpinati in *confino* see: Ibid, 224–37; Arpinati Cantamessa, *Arpinati mio padre*, op. cit., 113–16; and, ACS, SPCR, b. 79, f. "Arpinati Leandro."

³⁴ ACS, SPCR, b. 79, f. "Arpinati Leandro," letter from Buffarini-Guidi to Mussolini, 18 July 1936.

³⁵ Bruno Gatta, "Il confinato di Malacappa," in *Gli uomini del Duce* (Milan: Rusconi, 1986): 74–84.

ond World War can be attributed his continuing desire to help the Nation. Arpinati's Nationalism was so tightly meshed with a moral sense of duty to Italy that it allowed him to distinguish what he saw as the needs and future of the Nation from those of the Fascist State and Mussolini. Mussolini responded with a full pardon.³⁶ Arpinati joined the 6th Corps of Railroad Engineers and was transferred to Turin, the only member of the "Class of 1892" to volunteer in the Second World War. His service was brief, involving mostly bureaucratic work and a brief trip to study railroad logistics in Italian-occupied Nice.³⁷

In February 1941, however, he was demobilized and returned to Malacappa, where he once again dedicated himself to running the farm. He went through a difficult period of self-reflection, including a re-evaluating of his life and the events which had led Italy to what he now realized was the brink of disaster. Italy was involved in a conflict alongside the Germans who had by now suffered their first defeats in Russia and North Africa. Initial bombardments of Southern Italy had begun, and the invasion of Sicily seemed immanent. Only at this point can it be said that Arpinati turned definitively away from Mussolini. But, Mussolini didn't forget completely about Arpinati, as evidenced by the disaster-relief funds Arpinati received in May 1942 when the Reno River flooded his farm, destroying his crops and flooding his home and barns.³⁸ Yet, Arpinati's fierce individualism remained. He resisted the fascists' plans for agricultural production by which field-by-field planting of certain crops was prescribed and enforced by the local bureaucracy. Although he acceded to these demands, Arpinati insisted on planting a large stick in the center of each fallow field. Asked why, he responded, "Although I respect the needs of the war effort, I do it while respecting my rights to private property by planting a stick in those fields."³⁹

During this period Arpinati also increased his contacts with his former colleagues in Romagna, particularly Torquato Nanni. Even at this late date Nanni's politics continued to be shaped by his long experience as a socialist and the way in which these views conflicted with the reality of fascism in power. In the years before the First World War socialists like Torquato Nanni accused the Socialists Party of having exchanged its mission of regenerating Italian society for parliamentary reformism which played into the hands of Giolitti. Their criticisms of the institutions of liberal democracy were consonant with a general criticism of majoritarian democracy coming even from such major thinkers as Croce. At the same time, Nanni's anti-clerical attacks on the Catholic Church contributed to the deligitimation of traditional religious faith in his home-region of Romagna. This two-pronged attack created both a political and religious

³⁶ NARA, MP (1886), Box 1021, Neg. Frames 056494-056621, "Documents Illustrating the Rise and Fall of Leandro Arpinati, One-Time Fascist Minister of the Interior."

³⁷ Iraci, *Arpinati l'oppositore di Mussolini*, op. cit., 24-45.

³⁸ Arpinati received a loan of 800,000 Lire from the government. ACS, SPCR, b. 79, f. "Arpinati Leandro," memorandum, 5 May 1942. That Mussolini was offering Arpinati protection is also demonstrated by the fact that, unlike Nanni, Arpinati never fell victim to the Black Brigades of the RSI.

³⁹ Agostino Bignardi, "Arpinati 'erético,'" *La Nuova Tribuna* (July-August 1968): 61-62.

void for which he was unable to find a substitute. In the end, Nanni could not decide between Socialism and Fascism, and tried to fuse the right wing of the former and the left wing of the latter into something completely new that would lead to the “evolution of capitalism towards socialism.”⁴⁰ Having rejected the reformism of the Left, he played into the hands of the Right, a fate he also tried to avoid. Wrote Nanni in 1924, “I would love to have never joined for a moment the now innumerable herd of all the converts head-over-heels about the triumph of Fascism.” However, not only was he aware that his hoped-for fusion of Right and Left might be so peculiar to himself as to be incomprehensible to others, but he also seems to have been aware of the contradiction involved in trying to straddle the “abyss” between Fascism and Socialism. “I offer no repentance,” Nanni wrote. “On the contrary, I am thankful that for the better part of twenty years, fortune has allowed me to control my ‘crises of conscience’ within the discipline of the official Socialist Party.”⁴¹

During his years *in confino* in Sardinia Nanni had begun writing his final work, *Profondità di vita*, an all-encompassing statement of his philosophical, cultural, and political ideas which he finally completed in 1941–42.⁴² The work could be described as partly “socialist neo-Kantian,” and partly a restatement of the fundamental premise of *Bolscevismo e fascismo* “Italian fascism and Russian Bolshevism are two different but not contradictory moments of the evolution of capitalism towards socialism.”⁴³ The Second World War, in Nanni’s view, was therefore a “cathartic expiation which involves all the individuals and peoples of the world...and will result in a new socialist brotherhood of people.”⁴⁴ *Profondità di vita* was suppressed by the fascists despite Nanni’s continuing relationship with Mussolini who, partly to resolve unemployment problems in Romagna, had earlier helped Nanni re-establish his printing press. After the establishment of the Italian Socialist Republic in July 1943, however, Nanni was informed by the Prefect of Forlì that he could no longer guarantee the safety of his family from the Black Brigades (*brigata nera*). Nanni sought Arpinati’s protection for the last time and moved his family to Malacappa. It is not clear the degree to which Nanni’s final political formulations in *Profondità di vita* shaped Arpinati’s thinking in the final two years they spent together. Trapped by his inability to decide between the Fascists and the Socialists, Nanni became the victim of both, and eventually paid with his life.

On October 6, 1943 Arpinati, responding to a personal invitation, met with Mussolini at the Rocca delle Camminate near Predappio. During this private meeting, Mussolini asked for Arpinati’s collaboration with the newly formed Republic, offering

⁴⁰ Nanni, *Bolscevismo e fascismo*...op. cit., 97.

⁴¹ Ibid, 18.

⁴² Torquato Nanni, *Profondità di vita*, op. cit.

⁴³ Ibid, 284.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 286–288.

him important positions within the government, including Minister of the Interior.⁴⁵ Arpinati refused to participate. Although Arpinati had volunteered for service in the Italian Army only a few years previously, the entire *raison d'être* of the Italian Socialist Republic was contrary to Arpinati's politico-moral thinking: his nationalism precluded collaboration with the Germans who had partitioned the country, and he remained opposed to any form of socialism.⁴⁶ Arpinati was also repulsed by the violent expeditions of the Black Brigades that had sacked Nanni's home.⁴⁷ Having refused to collaborate with Mussolini, and convinced of Germany's eventual defeat, Arpinati returned to Malacappa and began searching for an independent political solution, one which would, if possible, exclude communist elements. Arpinati tried for months to meet with the principal leaders of the Resistance from Emilia-Romagna including the Republican Tonino Spazzoli with whom, like Torquato Nanni, Arpinati had maintained contact throughout his years in the fascist movement. Spazzoli had fought with the Arditi in the First World War and joined the early fascist movement before resigning and joining the Republican Party.⁴⁸ His public break with the fascists and his continuing relationship with Arpinati earned him two years in *confino* at approximately the same time as Arpinati and Nanni.⁴⁹

Finally, in June 1944 a meeting with the partisans was held near Malacappa. At this meeting, Arpinati made clear to the partisans his own plans to pursue a "separate peace" with the Allies through the Monarchy via his remaining contacts with the House of Savoy.⁵⁰ Given the very different plans of the communist leaders assembled, however, no support for such a plan was forthcoming. Arpinati's second gambit was to offer financial and tactical support directly to the Resistance, with emphasis on

⁴⁵ Frederick William Deakin, *Storia della repubblica di Salò*, vol. 2 (Turin: Einaudi, 1963): 702-B4; Giorgio Pini, *Itinerario tragico* (Milan: Omnia, 1950): 35–36; Giorgio Pini and Duilio Susmel, *Mussolini l'uomo e l'opera*, vol. 4 (Florence: La Fenice, 1953–55): 344 and 577n; and, Attilio Tamaro, *Due anni di storia, 1943–45*, vol. 2 (Rome: Tosi, 1949): 203–04.

⁴⁶ On paper, the programs of the RSI were "socialist" in character, supposedly based on D'Annunzio's *Carta del Carnaro* from Fiume. The participation of Niccolò Bombacci, one of the founders of the P.C.I., is also indicative.

⁴⁷ The *squadrismo* in which Arpinati participated twenty years earlier was a response to a different set of circumstances. The squads of the Italian Socialist Republic (RSI) were of an entirely different origin and character, a distinction preserved in the Italian which refers to the former as *squadristi fascist!* and the latter either as *brigate nere* or *squadracce repubblicane*.

⁴⁸ For more see: Elio Santarelli, "Tonino Spazzoli," *Il Pensiero Romagnolo* (7 and 14 September 1974); Elio Santarelli, *I Repubblicani forlivesi negli anni fra le due guerre mondiali*, op. cit.; ISPRF, FF, b. "antifascist," f. "Tonino Spazzoli."

⁴⁹ ISPRF, FF, b. "antifascist," f. "Tonino Spazzoli."

⁵⁰ IRSRER, Sez. I, b. 5, "Dossier Arpinati-Nanni," letter from Ilio Barontini (partisan name "Dario") to Luciano Bergonzini, 10 January 1989; and, Arpinati Cantamessa, *Arpinati mio padre*, op. cit., 141–47.

Republican elements fighting in the Romagnan Apennines above Forli.⁵¹ This offer was also rejected.

Arpinati's various "non-communist" appeals to the Resistance leaders having failed, he made a final request for their help in arranging a meeting with a group of ex-syndicalists of the underground Bolognese *Unione Sindacale Italiana*, that is, with his former anarchist colleagues. He felt sure that he would find a "better understanding."⁵² The leaders indicated that they would do what they could, but in the end the meeting never took place. Arpinati at last offered help directly to the Resistance including, if necessary, its communist elements. The leader of the communists, a man with the partisan name "Romagna" indicated to Arpinati that "the help and solidarity of the farmers and the population in general were more than sufficient."⁵³ The sincerity of Arpinati's support was demonstrated by his offer of a ton of grain to the partisans in February. Again, the offer was rejected. No contact with former fascists was to be allowed.⁵⁴

A month later Arpinati traveled to Forli to meet directly with Spazzoli to discuss the possibility of providing support to Republican elements in the Resistance in Emilia-Romagna. Again the plan failed. A group of anti-fascists, having heard that Arpinati was staying as a guest in Spazzoli's home, threatened him should Arpinati not be turned out immediately. A hurried meeting of local Republican leaders became necessary given the contradiction between Spazzoli's high standing in the local Republican Party and the Resistance's directives which prohibited contact with former fascist leaders.⁵⁵ Spazzoli prevailed on the local Republicans, but any solution involving him was ended a few days later when he was captured by the Germans and brutally tortured. Arpinati appealed directly to Mussolini, even offering his own life in exchange, but the Duce claimed the Germans had too much evidence against Spazzoli. Spazzoli and two other partisans were hanged on a lamppost in the central square of Forli.

In November and early December 1943, Arpinati and Nanni played key roles in helping to evacuate eleven British generals and twenty five other officers of varying rank who had been caught behind enemy lines following the German occupation in September. The group of officers was first hidden in a monastery in the Apennines above Santa Sofia then secreted to Cervia along the Adriatic coast. On the night of

⁵¹ For more on the Resistance in Romagna see: Sergio Flamigni and Luciano Marzocchi, *La Resistenza in Romagna*, 1 ed. (Milan: La Pietra, 1969); and, Centro Studi "Giuseppe Donati," *Cattolici nella resistenza ravennate* (Ravenna: Edizioni del Centro Studi "Giuseppe Donati," 1975).

⁵² IRSRER, Sez. I, b. 5, "Dossier Arpinati-Nanni," letter from Sauro Ballardini to Luciano Bergonzini, 10 February 1989.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ IRSRER, Sez. I, b. 5, "Dossier Arpinati-Nanni," letter from Luigi Gaiani to Luciano Bergonzini, 27 January 1989,

⁵⁵ Giovanna Donatini, "La lotta politica in Romagna dall'avvento del fascismo alla Liberazione," laurea thesis, University degli Studi di Urbino (1967): 156-57.

December 10 and 11, they were ferried offshore to a waiting submarine.⁵⁶ Arpinati's participation in these events demonstrates his commitment to the defeat of the Germans and Mussolini's reconstituted Italian Socialist Republic.⁵⁷

Arpinati seems to have had very contradictory thoughts on how to resolve the problems facing the country: appealing to the monarchy to carry out a coup *d'état*, while also seeking to contact former anarchist colleagues. These attempts to contact the Monarchy are particularly ironic if we consider that during his anarchist days Arpinati was "picked by lots to kill the king."⁵⁸ There is no indication that the events taking place caused any alteration in Arpinati's ideology or lessened his strong individualism. He continued to do things his own way, seemingly oblivious to the risks involved in trying to maintain contacts with former fascists, the Monarchy, and the Resistance while under the close scrutiny of the Germans and the Black Brigades. Arpinati's contacts with Prince Umberto and the House of Savoy had a parallel in the position taken in these years by one of his former anarchoindividualist colleagues: Maria Rygier.

Maria Rygier's activities from 1926–1945 are not well known. In 1928 she published her accusation of Mussolini in which she showed that as a young man living among the Italian exile community in Switzerland the Luce had been a paid informant for the French secret police.⁵⁹ Later she published *La Franc-massonerie italienne devant la guerre et devant le fascisme*, a detailed account of the history of the European masonry, culminating in its opposition to fascism.⁶⁰ In 1945 she returned to Italy where she published *Rivelazioni sul fuoruscitismo italiano in Francia*, a pamphlet against the anti-fascists in exile.⁶¹ She concluded her political activities within the ranks of the reconstituted Liberal Party, carrying out a propaganda campaign in favor of the Monarchy. She died in Rome on 10 February 1953. This support of the Monarchy brings to mind Rygier's earliest articles which praised the Polish aristocracy,⁶² and she never seems to have given up hope that Italian king, Victor Emmanuel III would rise above Mussolini's dictatorship.⁶³ Although the support which Arpinati and Rygier

⁵⁶ For more see: Ennio Bonali and Dino Mengozzi, eds., *La Romagna e i generali inglesi (1943–1944)* (Milan: Angeli, 1982); Franco Angeli Editrice, "Rassegna critica del 'La Romagna e i generali inglesi'," (Milan: Angeli, 1982); Arpinati Cantamessa, *Arpinati mio padre*, op. cit., 165–169; Giuseppe Spada [pseud. Anonimo Romagnolo], *1943–45. Storie al margin! della storia* (Milan: Capriolo, 1984); "Arpinati, Leandro" and "Nanni Torquato," *Enciclopedia dell'antifascismo e della Resistenza* (Milan: La Pietra, 1968); Giovanni Vicari, *I generali inglesi clandestini a Cervia, 23 novembre-10/11 dicembre 1943* (Forlì: Pazzini, 1990); and, Giovanni Vicari, interview by author, Milano Marittima, April 1992.

⁵⁷ "Arpinati, Leandro" and "Nanni Torquato," *Enciclopedia dell'antifascismo e della Resistenza* (Milan: La Pietra, 1968).

⁵⁸ Giorgio Pini, *Ragazzo del >99*, op. cit., 135.

⁵⁹ Rygier, "Mussolini informatore della polizia francese o le ragioni occulte della sua 'conversione'," op. cit.

⁶⁰ Maria Rygier, *La Franc-massonerie italienne devant la guerre et devant le Fascisme*, op. cit.

⁶¹ Maria Rygier, *Rivelazioni sul fuoruscitismo italiano in Francia* (Rome, 1946).

⁶² Maria Rygier, "In giro per la Polonia," op. cit.; "Il giubileo di Sienkiewics," op. cit.; and, "Maria Konopnicka nel suo giubileo," op. cit.

⁶³ Di Porto, "Maria Rygier o della passionalità," op. cit.

separately gave to the Monarchy in these years may be only coincidental, it is consistent with Nanni's evaluation that Arpinati and other early supporter of the fascist movement thought of themselves as heads of a "meritorious monarchy." Wrote Nanni, "it is useless to look at Mussolini as a 'socialist' or 'fascist'...because he always sees himself as the peak of the *gerarchia*, 'monarchical'."⁶⁴ Arpinati shared this view of fascism as a "meritorious monarchy" in which one's competence can legitimize the near absolute usurpation of power. Neither Arpinati nor Rygier had ever had any positive experiences with majority rule, and both remained unconvinced of the merits of liberal democracy. One need only recall Rygier's eloquent pamphlet against voting and in favor of "direct action."⁶⁵ Both seem to have believed that anarchism, in the words of George Woodcock, "far from being democracy carried to its logical end, is much nearer to aristocracy universalized and purified."⁶⁶ However, this universalized aristocracy would have to come later. In the mean time, the Italian Monarchy could provide leadership, forestall the advent of majoritarian democracy in which they had no faith, and, most importantly, prevent the communists from taking power.

As for the fate of another of Arpinati's colleagues, Massimo Rocca, his "revisionism" had led to his expulsion from the Party in 1924, and two years of aggression by fascist squads forced him into exile in France in 1926. He continued to hope that Mussolini might turn towards his conception of fascism and outlined his economic ideas in a series of articles and books including *Idee sul fascismo* (1924), and *Fascismo e finanza* (1925).⁶⁷ Rocca substituted Stirnerian anarcho-individualism into the metaphysical void created by his rejection of religious faith. Although his behavior confirms that he found this to be a satisfactory solution for a while, he was ultimately faced with the inevitable problem of substituting himself for God, making himself into some sort of demi-gods. This eventually led him to embrace an unworkable faith in the efficacy of violence and direct action, a faith which later proved hazardous when the fascists demonstrated that violence and direct action could be employed by radicals on the Right as well as the Left. As an anarcho-individualist radical he was typologized by the authorities of the Liberal State who victimized him as a target for political exclusion. After the fascist seizure of power, he became (relatively speaking) a radical on the Right and was again typologized, this time by the fascists, as an extreme individualist and eventually forced into exile.

Rocca was shunned by the anti-fascist exiles in Paris about whom he later wrote the bitterly critical memoir, *Le fascisms et l'anti fascisms en Italie*.⁶⁸ He was arrested in Brussels at the end of the war, convicted of "collaborationism" and sentenced to

⁶⁴ ASF, FS, Letter from Torquato Nanni to Giacinto Serrati, undated response to Serrati's letter of 24 January 1925.

⁶⁵ Rygier, *Contro il voto e per l'azione diretta*, op. cit.

⁶⁶ George Woodcock, *Anarchism*, op. cit., 20.

⁶⁷ Massimo Rocca, *Fascismo e finanza*, op. cit.; and, *Idee sul fascismo* (Florence: La Voce, 1924).

⁶⁸ Massimo Rocca, *Le Fascisms et l'antifascisme en Italie* (Paris: Alcan, 1930). For more on his reception by the other exiles see: Aldo Garosci, *Storia dei fuorusciti* (Bari: Laterza, 1953): 16–18.

fifteen years in prison. In July 1945 his name appeared on the list of paid informers for the OVRA, hinting at how he managed to survive during his years in exile.⁶⁹ His sentence was reduced to nine years in 1947, but in 1948 he was released following the intervention of the apostolic nuncio in Belgium.⁷⁰ Back in Italy, he resumed his journalistic activities as editor of *L'Italia di Tutti*, a “weekly review of patriotism and culture against all forms of dictatorship and every monopoly, state, party, and class.” In addition, he continued to published several books including: *Come il fascismo divenne una dittatura* (1952); *Le incertezze della scienza moderna* (1960); *La sconfitta dell'Europa: la politica internazionale del ventennio vista dall'estero* (1960); and, *Il primo fascismo* (1964).⁷¹ Rocca died in Rome in 1974.

Arpinati, Nanni, Rocca, and Rygier tried to mark “individualist” paths during two very different periods in Italian politics, the Giolittian period of liberal democracy and the authoritarian Fascist Period. In neither period was their individualism tolerated. Their search for a solution for answers to metaphysical problems through political ideology ultimately failed. Wrote Arpinati in 1935,

A day comes when one realizes that everything they did and believed in was a crime. On that day disappointment and disgust invade the spirit. The only comfort: atonement.⁷²

For all four — and Arpinati and Nanni in particular — atonement would not be enough.

* * *

A full inquest into Arpinati and Nanni’s assassination was never undertaken. Italian law requires that every case reported to the carabinieri be treated with at least an initial investigation. Given the confusion of the passing front and the possibility that

⁶⁹ Ibid, 294. Although the list of informers was first published in the *Gazzetta Ufficiale* in July 1945, it first appeared in many national newspapers only on 3 July 1946.

⁷⁰ The intervention of the papal nuncio on Rocca’s behalf hints at the complex role of the Catholic Church in Italian postwar politics, particularly the relationship between Catholicism and defascistification. Yet, the return to faith which tempered the extreme fascism of such men as Agostino Iraci in the postwar period must be excluded as a possibility in the case of Arpinati and Nanni who remained strongly atheistic and anticlerical to the end. Although Iraci claims Arpinati was a “Christian without knowing it,” Arpinati proclaimed his atheism as late as 1942, and this may be a case where Iraci is presenting his own views as those of Arpinati. Iraci and Giancarla Arpinati Cantamessa carried out a long correspondence in the late Sixties concerning Iraci’s return to faith. Iraci even wrote a statement of his faith in God which did not, however, exclude a detailed vilification of the Church and the clergy (AGAC, letter from Agostino Iraci to Giancarla Arpinati Cantamessa, 6 December 1971).

⁷¹ Massimo Rocca, *Come il fascismo divenne una dittatura* (Edizioni Librarie Italiane, 1952); *Le incertezze della scienza moderna* (Milan: Padova, 1960); *La sconfitta dell'Europa: la politica internazionale del ventennio vista dall'estero* (Milan: E.L.I., 1960); and, *Il primo fascismo* (Rome: Giovanni Volpe, 1964).

⁷² Letter from Arpinati to Mario Ghinelli, 20 October 1935, AGAC.

they might be the victims of further aggression, neither the Arpinati nor the Nanni family fully pursued the matter through official channels to have the case heard.⁷³ The afternoon of the assassination, Torquato Nanni, Jr. went to Bologna in search of answers.⁷⁴ The closed-fisted salute of the gunmen hinted that the assassins were members of the 8th *Gruppo d'Azione Partigiana* (GAP), however, in Bologna, no answers were forthcoming from the *Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale di Alto Italia* (CLNAI). On returning from Bologna he went to an American mobile army hospital and command post temporarily stationed near Malacappa. There he again recounted the story of the assassination to an American field commander who ordered a partisan *gruppo* based in Romagna to go to Malacappa to investigate. Although they were not pleased to hear of the crime, there was little to be done. Already the next morning, the American command post had been dismantled and moved farther north towards the retreating German lines.⁷⁵

On the morning of 25 April 1945, three days after Arpinati's death, the CLNAI emitted its first public proclamation that it intended to "insure the continuation of the War of Liberation alongside the Allies in order to guarantee and defend liberty, justice, and public security."⁷⁶ The death sentence or, "in less severe cases, life imprisonment," was prescribed for former fascists. In Arpinati's case, however, the list of applicable crimes contained contradictory clauses. On the one hand, the CLNAI outlined criminal charges against "members of the fascist government and fascist *gerarchi* guilty of contributing to the suppression of constitutional guarantees, destroying popular liberty, creating the fascist regime, compromising or betraying the fortunes of the Country, and of having brought about the current catastrophe."⁷⁷ Arpinati's conduct until 1933 certainly fits this description. On the other hand, the CLNAI proclaimed that "the guilty party can be declared not punishable if he particularly distinguished himself with acts of valor or with proof of selfdenial or personal risk in the struggle for Liberation against Nazi-Fascism."⁷⁸ As has been shown, certain of Arpinati's actions after 1933 fit this description. One could argue that he at least deserved a fair hearing before the *Commissione Provinciale per l'Epurazione*, despite the fact that in most cases of this kind, their final ruling was that, given the timing and location of the events, they should be classified as "acts of war."⁷⁹ No partisan group or any other group took

⁷³ Giancarla Cantamessa Arpinati, interview by author, Malacappa, July 1992. No record of the assassination exists at the Archivio del Giudice Istruttore in Bologna.

⁷⁴ Torquato Nanni, Jr., interview by author, Santa Sofia, May 1992.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Cited in Franco Catalano, *Storia del Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale Alta Italia* (Milan: Bompiani, 1956): 403.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 405.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 406.

⁷⁹ Paolo Scalini, *Fare giustizia in Romagna* (Florence: Calderini, 1991); and, interviews by author, Casola Valsenio, August and September, 1992. The so-called "Togliatti Amnesty" was declared on 22 June 1946 (Decreto Legislativo del Luogotenente #719 of 17 November 1945). Under this law, any crime committed before 31 July 1945 and carrying a sentence of up to five years (except homicide) was

responsibility for the crime.⁸⁰ Debates concerning possible motives for the crime are inseparable from the postwar historiography in which Arpinati and Nanni, in a sense, lived on. For over twenty years, no serious study of either figure was published outside a few philo-fascist newspapers and journals of modest circulation. In 1967, however, the first volume of Luciano Bergonzini's *La Resistenza a Bologna* appeared with an initial clue as to a possible motive for their assassination. This clue was contained in the testimony of Verenin Grazia, Secretary of the CLN of Emilia-Romagna at the time of Arpinati and Nanni's assassination.⁸¹ In his testimony, Grazia referred to the growing popularity in Romagna of the *Partite Italiano del Lavoro* (PIL) led by Giusto Tolloy, who wanted to "limit [Italy] to a 'neutrality' which would have saved the Nation until the war had been won," given that Italy could "expect nothing from either the King of England or from Hitler."⁸² Grazia noted further:

Fortunately, such an opinion did not have a large following among the masses and, what's more, as far as the nostalgic *arpinatiani* were concerned, a group of *gappisti* [Gruppo d'Azione Partigiana] saw to the dispelling of this illusion on the morning of April 21 [sic, the date was April 22] when they appeared at Arpinati's holdings at Malacappa...and executed him before the arrival of the Allies. Torquato Nanni...an old socialist with whom Arpinati had maintained a close friendship also came to the same end.⁸³

Despite this open declaration of the partisans' complicity, no further inquiries were made, and the matter remained unresolved. Although Arpinati's daughter published an eye-witness account of the murders in 1968 in *Arpinati il mio padre*, the CLN responded by making it clear that the band responsible for carrying out the crime had acted independently. If the band responsible for the assassinations did not act independently, however, the issue remains as to who sent them. Given the unlikelihood that any pertinent documentation exists, answers must be inferred from Arpinati and Nanni's role in the general historical context.

In the Winter of 1944–45 the British withdrawal from offensive positions along the Gothic Line and subsequent redeployment in Greece filled the power vacuum created by the hurried withdrawal of the German Army, whose lines of retreat from the Balkans

pardoned for the purpose of "national re-pacification." As Scalini points out, however, the amnesty was rarely applied.

⁸⁰ The identity of the assassins and the name of the leader who sent them is well known. Proper documentation is unlikely to be found, however, as the assassins soon after fled to Yugoslavia and then Czechoslovakia. Printing their names does not resolve the more important issue of what their motives were.

⁸¹ Luciano Bergonzini and Luigi Arbizzani, eds., *La Resistenza a Bologna. Testimonianze e documenti*, 5 vols. (Bologna, 1967–1978).

⁸² *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 35–36.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

were in danger of being cut off by the swift Allied advance up the Italian Peninsula. The long-term effect was that of “saving” Greece from the Communists. However, this “changing of the guard” along the Gothic line created a stall in the Allied advance into Emilia-Romagna between November and April 1944–45. During the stall, the partisans made considerable sacrifices in fighting the entrenched German forces. At the same time, however, they were able to inflate the importance of their contributions, a tactic carried out with the help of the Americans interested in resolving the practical problem of finding a power structure for the vacuum they themselves were creating as they moved towards the bigger prize, Berlin.⁸⁴ Despite the help received from the Americans, by 1944 the communists were aware that changes were taking place which signaled the coming of the Cold War. They knew that if they failed to legitimize their leadership quickly, they risked being excluded from Italian politics altogether. Yet, the communists in Emilia-Romagna found themselves in the difficult position of having to quickly legitimize their seizure of power. They did this by eliminating potential opposition and, taking over the institutions of consensus that only a few months previously were considered fascist.⁸⁵ The communists were fully aware that the legitimacy of their leadership would be based on the success or failure of their efforts to resume as quickly as possible the proper functioning of these state institutions. This had to be carried out either by completely destroying the fascists’ institutions and starting from scratch, or by taking over the old ones and modifying their appearance. The communists chose the latter course. Existing institutions were reorganized under new headings, but the services provided were resumed. It would have been politically unfeasible to do otherwise.⁸⁶ The communists, like the fascists before them, eventually made peace with the institutions that they and some of their leaders had set out to destroy. In a sense, therefore, the communists completed the fascists’ program of creating a permanent position for the State between the Individual and the Nation. In the end, they succeeded in creating a popular mass movement in the aftermath of a very different kind of successful popular mass movement.

Given this historical context, Arpinati and Nanni had to be eliminated as potential leaders in the postwar period, two tiny players in the communists’ overall program to

⁸⁴ BCCV. For example, through the winter of 1943–44, the partisans were retroactively credited with having captured Monte Battaglia above Imola the previous November. In fact, the partisans were among the last of the divisions participating in the battle to arrive at the summit. Compare this to the fate of the Friuli Division, an Italian regular army division reconstituted after the Armistice with the Allies. This division suffered almost 100 per cent casualties the following April while taking the ridge-line north of Monte Battaglia. The Friuli Division does not appear in most histories of the Spring offensives. BCCV.

⁸⁵ For more on the issue of institutional continuity not only from the Fascist period to the Italian Republic but also from the Liberal State to the Fascist State see: Claudio Pavone, “La continuità dello stato. Istituzioni e uomini,” in *Italia 1945–48. Le origini della Repubblica* (Torino: Gippapichelli, 1974): 139–289.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

gain control of Emilia-Romagna.⁸⁷ After ten years as a leader in the *bassa bolognese*, Arpinati had succeeded in creating an economically viable comune at Malacappa, and his potential for upsetting the plans of the Communist Party was too great. Furthermore, as the detailed description of the assassination in the Prologue shows, Nanni was not killed simply because he was at the wrong place at the wrong time. Nanni was killed on purpose. Like Arpinati, Nanni was eliminated because he would have been able to identify, unmask, and compromise the *voltagabbane* (“turncoats”), in the *bassa bolognese*, those people who only months previously had considered themselves fascists but now found it convenient to join the most anti-fascist organization possible, the Communist Party.⁸⁸ The renegade band which did the “dirty work” of the Communist Party behind the advancing Allied front was sent by local leaders who were thereafter constrained to keep a low profile within the Party.

Arpinati, Nanni, Rocca, and Rygier’s life-stories have been used by historians for contemporary political ends in the postwar period. Many contemporary Italian historians and politicians refer to these anarcho-individualists as “inconvenient figures” because their participation in the fascist movement, followed by a failed attempt to defend anarcho-individualist ideas as the movement became a totalitarian regime, places them in that enormous terrain between the ambiguous labels “fascist” and “anti-fascist.” Arpinati’s apologists have portrayed him as the “last defender of the individual in the fascist regime.”⁸⁹ Arpinati was not a defender of the Individual tout court, but rather a defender of the Individual within the tripartite structure of Individual-State-Nation. Compared to the Cult of Mussolini and the fascism of the Thirties, however, his defense of the Individual is noteworthy, and it is this relative difference that some historians try to emphasize by calling him a “liberal.”⁹⁰ Against this tactic, historians on the Left have obscured both this relative difference, and Arpinati’s contributions in building the institutions of the fascist regime which the communists occupied and quickly legitimized following the Second World War. To legitimize their usurpation of power, however, the communists also needed to create a viable paradigm, namely the Myth of the Resistance. At the same time, it was necessary to dismiss the old governing paradigm by portraying fascism as the ideologically homogeneous Regime of the Duce. In order to dismiss the fascist governing paradigm and make way for their own, it was necessary for the communists to portray the entire twenty years of the fascist period as a monolithic, totalitarian (not authoritarian) regime. The communists did not want to

⁸⁷ For more on the communists’ control of the province of Emilia see: Vinicio Araldi, *Emilia Rossa* (Rome: Vito Bianco, 1964).

⁸⁸ Gianni Boselli wrote a series of three articles based on interviews with the author in which this theory was put forth, including a “challenge” to prove otherwise [“Un ‘giallo Arpinati’? Ricerca di tino studioso americano negli archivi di Washington,” *RdC* (22 April 1992)]. The immediate response came from Vittorio Savini, current head of the ex-partisans group in Emilia-Romagna, who stated simply, “We did it” [“Arpinati fu ucciso dai gappisti,” *RdC* (24 April 1992)].

⁸⁹ Iraci, *Arpinati l’oppositore di Mussolini*, op. cit., 185.

⁹⁰ See, for example: Guido Nozzoli, “Leandro Arpinati: Lo squadrista anarchico-liberale,” in *I ras del regime*, op. cit., 66–84.

re-evaluate potentially positive aspects of some of fascism's earlier phases. Historians of the Myth of the Resistance have therefore glossed over the extent of the continuity in institutions and personnel between the former fascist State and the postwar Italian Republic. Portraying Arpinati, Nanni, Rocca, and Rygier as a part of the Regime of the Duce has contributed to strengthening the Myth of the Resistance in Italian post-war politics, a paradigm which has been used to legitimize successive Italian governing coalitions.

And so it has been. The label "fascist" now conjures up images of the regime, Starace, the Duce, Abyssinia, El Alemain and Piazza Loreto. Arpinati was never this type of fascist, that is, he was never a fascist as defined by historians of the Left. Arpinati's anarcho-individualist origins are often presented as a curiosity, an ideology which he accepted in his early years but which he soon abandoned for fascism. I argue that Arpinati carried elements of anarcho-individualism into fascism; Arpinati remained a "fascist of the movement" to the end, while the nature of what it meant to be fascist changed. For Arpinati, fascism meant legitimizing the movement as an authoritarian regime characterized by an administratively competent elite which shared a political morality similar to his own. The Regime of the Duce marked by Starace's tenure as head of the fascist National Party was barely underway when Arpinati was removed from power. In fact, his removal from power contributed to its success. This assertion challenges the legitimacy of the Myth of the Resistance around which the Italian Republic formed in the late Forties in response to the exigencies of the Cold War which required the most rapid transformation possible of the totalitarian fascist state into a stable democracy. Before his death, Arpinati's strong Nationalism and political morality allowed him to see that fascism had been detrimental to the country. Although he never came to accept democracy and parliamentary representation, Arpinati had made the passage from fascism to a-fascism. At the time of his death, being a "fascist of the movement" had come to mean being, if not "antifascist," then at least "a-fascist."

Italian democracy has functioned in the postwar period by appending political parties to major personalities (both living and dead) according to the degree to which they were associated with the fascist regime. The debate over Arpinati's life and historiographical afterlife shows how competing historical interpretations have been used in the discussion of the problems of institutional and bureaucratic continuity. These problems still plague the Italian Republic today, where the electorate appears thoroughly jaded by the experience of government by the left, right, center and every possible permutation and combination thereof. Further research would use the debate over Arpinati's life to examine not only why the inherited structures of fascism have contributed to the failure of parliamentary institutions, but also why the Myth of the Resistance has been able to act as a unifying paradigm. Meanwhile, the Italian people are being offered a model of politics appended to major personalities, this time according to the degree with which they were associated with the political corruption of the postwar period.

Abbreviations

ACC	Archivio Comunale di Civitella di Romagna
ACS, CPC	Casellario Politico Centrale
ACS, MRF	Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista
ACS, SPCR	Segreteria Particolare del Duce, Carteggio Riservato
AGAC	Archivio di Giancarla Cantamessa Arpinati, Malacappa
ASB	Archivio di Stato di Bologna, Gabinetto della Prefettura
ASF, AdG	Archivio di Stato di Forlì, Archivio di Gabinetto di Prefettura
ASF, FS	Archivio di Stato di Forlì, Fondo Schiavi
ASS	Archivio Comunale di Santa Sofia
BCCV	Biblioteca Comunale di Casola Valsenio
BCF, CP	Biblioteca Comunale di Forlì, Collezione Piancastelli
CDG	Carte Dino Grandi, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.
IRSRER	Istituto Regionale per la Storia della Resistenza e della Guerra di Liberazione in Emilia-Romagna, Bologna
ISPRF, FF	Istituto Storico Provinciale della Resistenza di Forlì, Fondo August Flamigni
NARA, MP	National Archives Records Administration, Mussolini Papers (T586), Washington, D.C.
NARA, SDDF	National Archives Records Administration, State Department Decimal Files, Washington, D.C.
<i>AHR</i>	<i>American Historical Review</i>
<i>HR</i>	<i>Historical Reflections</i>
<i>IC</i>	<i>Italia Contemporánea</i>
<i>JCH</i>	<i>Journal of Contemporary History</i>
<i>JMH</i>	<i>Journal of Modern History</i>
<i>RdC</i>	<i>Il Resto del Carlino</i>
<i>RSI</i>	<i>Rivista Storica Italiana</i>
<i>RSS</i>	<i>Rivista Storica del Socialismo</i>
<i>SC</i>	<i>Storia Contemporánea</i>
CUP	Cambridge University Press
HUP	Harvard University Press
JHUP	Johns Hopkins University Press
OUP	Oxford University Press
PUP	Princeton University Press
SUP	Stanford University Press
UCAP	University of California Press
UCP	University of Chicago Press

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Istituto Storico Provinciale della Resistenza, Bologna
Istituto Storico Provinciale della Resistenza, Forlì
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This is the original 1994 Emory University thesis which may have been updated substantially for the 2002 book, however the book is out of print and not accessible. When a digital version of the book becomes available this web page can be updated with the latest version and this older version moved to another web page.

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