

Fascist Italy and the “Other”: Italianization, Antisemitism and Racial Persecution in the
Triveneto Borderlands, 1918-1948

by
Elysa Ivie McConnell

Dissertation submitted to the
Faculty of Arts
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Doctorate in Philosophy Degree in History

University of Ottawa

*For my mother
&
In memory of my nonno and nonna,
Benedetto and Angelina Ruscica.*

ABSTRACT**FASCIST ITALY AND THE “OTHER”: ITALIANIZATION, ANTISEMITISM AND RACIAL PERSECUTION IN THE TRIVENETO BORDERLANDS, 1918-1948**

Author: Elysa Ivie McConnell
Year of Submission: 2023

Supervisor: Dr. Jan Grabowski

Since the end of the Second World War, scholars have attempted to understand why Fascist Italy chose to adopt the racial laws in 1938. For sixteen years, Benito Mussolini rejected the existence of antisemitism in Italy, leading many to assert that the antisemitic program was a foreign import. The rise of Nazi Germany, expansion of Fascist Italy’s colonial empire, and the desire to create the new fascist man are generally believed to be the main factors that pushed Italian fascism towards a racial program. Yet these factors do not fully explain the radical shift in Fascist Italy’s approach to its Jewish minority.

This dissertation argues that the turn towards official racism should also take into consideration the development of fascism’s other long-standing minority program. Beginning in 1923, the Fascist government instituted policies to “Italianize” the Germanic and Slavic ethno-linguistic minority communities of South Tyrol (Venezia Tridentina) and the Adriatic (Venezia Giulia), known as the *allogeni*. To “make Italians” of the *allogeni* the Fascist government stripped them of their linguistic, cultural and political rights, and attempted to absorb them into the national community. However, by the end of the 1920s, Fascist officials began to question whether the assimilation of these ethno-linguistic Others was sufficient or even desirable. I argue that the failures of Italianization led to the delegitimization of assimilation—the foundation upon which Jewish inclusion had been built. The decline of assimilation was an important precursor to the rise of

fascism's racial program. This dissertation posits that the borderland Italianization program and racial laws were different phases of the Fascist "redemptive struggle," aimed at redeeming the Italian people and nation through their unification in both being and spirit. The borderland Italianization programs also established some of the methods and procedures that would be adopted for the implementation of the racial laws.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank my friends and family, who have supported and encouraged me throughout my academic studies. To my mother and stepfather who enthusiastically supported my pursuit of history and philosophy and have always been my greatest cheerleaders. To my father for instilling in me a love of history and storytelling from a very young age. To my incredible friends Emily, Victoria, Kim, Rita, Lauren, Esther, Luke, Sam, Andrew, Anthony and many others who have provided me with a shoulder to cry on, a sounding board to vent and have kept my spirits high throughout this experience.

A special thank you to my supervisor prof. Jan Grabowski for your unwavering support, words of encouragement and endless patience. To the members of my committee, prof. Eda Kranakis, prof. Corinne Gaudin, and prof. Damien-Claude Bélanger at the University of Ottawa, and prof. Gerald Steinacher at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, thank you for your feedback and insights. I am very grateful for the support that I have received from the professors and staff at the University of Ottawa. I would also like to thank prof. Doris Bergen at the University of Toronto for her guidance and encouragement over the years.

This project would not have been possible without the support of the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI), the *Fondazione Centro di Documentazione Contemporanea* (CDEC) in Milan, the Holocaust Educational Foundation of Northwestern University (HEF), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). Thank you to the archival staff at the CDEC, the state archives in

Rome, Bolzano and Trieste, and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington D.C.

Finally, to my husband Tom. You have been by my side since my first day of undergrad fourteen years ago and have stood by me through so many failures and triumphs. I am extremely grateful for your unwavering support, love and devotion. I could not have done this without you and our little family, Mitzy, Lola and Clementine. *Sei tutto per me. Ti amo.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	v
LIST OF MAPS.....	ix
INTRODUCTION.....	1
HISTORIOGRAPHY.....	16
THESIS	21
METHODOLOGY & SOURCES	28
CHAPTER 1 – DREAMING OF TRENTO AND TRIESTE: <i>ITALIA</i>	
<i>IRREDENTA</i> AND THE RISE OF FASCISM.....	36
AT THE CENTER OF TWO PERIPHERIES: BETWEEN VIENNA AND ROME.....	38
MUTILATED VICTORY: <i>ITALIA IRREDENTA</i> , WORLD WAR I AND THE POLITICAL EDUCATION OF BENITO MUSSOLINI.....	58
BORDER FASCISM: THE MARCH ON BOLZANO AND TRIESTE, 1919-1922.....	81
CHAPTER 2 –BUILDING THE NATION AT THE PERIPHERY, 1922- 1930.....	
FASCIST WORLD-BUILDING AT THE NATIONAL FRONTIER PHASE I: FASCISM, FOREIGN POLICY AND ITALIANIZATION, 1922-1925.....	102
THE SACRED FRONTIER IN THE ERA OF DIPLOMACY, 1922-1925.....	122
FASCIST WORLD-BUILDING AT THE NATIONAL FRONTIER PHASE II: AUTHORITARIANISM AND ASSIMILATIONISM, 1925- 1930.....	138
THE SACRED FRONTIER: THE ERA OF AGGRESSION, 1926-1930.....	179

CHAPTER 3 – FROM ASSIMILATION TO EXCLUSION: THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF FASCIST RACISM, 1930-1943.....	190
PERSECUTION AND PROSPERITY: JEWISH LIFE IN SOUTH TYROL AND TRIESTE BEFORE THE RACIAL LAWS.....	192
THE PRESTIGE OF THE RACE: ITALIANIZATION IN THE AGE OF NAZISM AND COLONIALISM.....	205
<i>FULMINI DA UN CIELA LIMPIDO</i> : THE ITALIAN RACIAL LAWS.....	230
CHAPTER 4 – THE NAZI OCCUPATION AND THE HOLOCAUST IN THE TRIVENETO BORDERLANDS, 1943-1948.....	270
A NEW CENTER OF GRAVITY: THE NAZI OCCUPATION OF THE TRIVENETO BORDERLANDS.....	272
<i>CACCIA AGLI EBREI</i> : THE ‘HUNT FOR THE JEWS’ IN SOUTH TYROL AND TRIESTE.....	292
ESCAPE AND EXILE: THE TRIVENETO BORDERLANDS AFTER WWII, 1945-1948.....	309
CONCLUSION – FASCIST REDEMPTION AND THE “PROBLEM” OF NATIONAL MINORITIES.....	318
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	326

LIST OF MAPS

Map 1: Northern Italy, 1855.....	36
Map 2: Map of the Italian Front during The First World War, 1917.....	71
Map 3: The Provinces of Venezia Giulia – Gorizia, Trieste, Fiume, and Pola, 1924-1943.....	82
Map 4: The Italian Provinces of Venezia Tridentina – Trentino and Südtirol/Alto Adige – bordering the Austrian Tirol, 1920-1943.....	90
Map 5: The Italian Border Regions and Neighbouring Countries, 1925.....	102
Map 6: The Italian Social Republic and the German Operation Zones, 1943.....	270
Map 7: Division of Venezia Giulia between Zone “A” and Zone “B” after the Second World War.....	313

INTRODUCTION

In 1934, Italian scholar Gaetano Salvemini published his pamphlet, “Racial Minorities under Fascism in Italy,” outlining the oppressive and authoritarian Italianization policies enacted by the Fascist regime to forcibly assimilate the ethnically-mixed communities of Italy’s northeastern borderland regions. Ten years prior, Salvemini had been forced to flee Italy due to his criticisms of the Fascist government’s treatment of the regime’s political opponents and the Germanic and Slavic linguistic minority communities of Venezia Tridentina and Venezia Giulia. In his pamphlet, he traced the systematic fashion in which the Fascists dismantled the rights and freedoms of these communities, known as the *allogeni*.¹ He describes this program as a violation of the foundational principles of justice, liberty and fraternity upon which the nation was built, and a breach of the agreements and promises Italy had made to both the international and borderland communities.² In order to legitimize their assimilationist policies, which the Fascists presented as neither violent nor oppressive, Italian officials portrayed Italianization as a benevolent movement “to create among the racial minorities a new attitude of respectful fidelity towards Italy and of grateful adherence to the nation.” Furthermore, the regime insisted that it did not ask for “trembling obedience, but the true and conscious consent of one who understands that he must be disciplined before he can share in the formation of the new Italian spirit. Those who were but groups of slaves until

¹ The term *allogeni* referred to those who resided within the Italian demarcations of the nation’s boundaries but were considered to be of a different ethno-linguistic group. The Fascist regime also used the term *alloglotti* which denoted a community that spoke a language that was not Italian or a dialect of Italian.

² Gaetano Salvemini, “Racial Minorities under Fascism in Italy,” Reel 25, RG-59.006M, Foreign Office General Correspondence, FO 371, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives (USHMM) Washington, DC, 1-5.

today are summoned by Italy to be her citizens, with equal rights and equal duties with all the other inhabitants of the peninsula.”³

Salvemini’s exposition of Fascist Italianization policies in the borderlands completely upends this false propaganda. In his scathing attack on the logic of Fascist Italianization policies he poses a fundamental question: “what do Mussolini and his friends hope to gain by the policy of ‘assimilation’? Do they really believe that they can ever transform the national minorities into Italians?”⁴ He finds the Fascist program to be lacking in both determination and reason, arguing that “the Fascists do not care whether the Germans and Slavs *become* Italian or not. It is enough for them that they *appear* to be Italian.”⁵ Yet, in seeking the eradication of all ethno-linguistic “Others” from Italian society through a program of superficial assimilation, the Fascist regime had placed itself at an impasse—by only “appearing” Italian, the *allogeni* would continue to exist as “foreigners-within,” while the forceful nature of Fascist policies would further perpetuate their alienation from the national community. As Salvemini writes,

[To] understand Italian does not mean that one has become Italian. As long as German, Slav or Greek mothers, as they nurse their children, call them affectionately by German, Slav or Greek names, and sing them to sleep with German, Slav or Greek lullabies, Italian will be a foreign tongue in the land which those mothers inhabit. Once upon a time, the Germans of South Tyrol, the Slavs of Venetia Giulia, and the Greek of the Dodecanese spoke their language without knowing that it was German, Slav or Greek....Today those Germans, Slavs and Greeks, realize that they are speaking a language of their own...No one would ever have been able to uproot their language from their hearts. Mussolini and the Fascists have rooted it there more deeply than ever before. Many people would have voluntarily learned Italian, if for no other reason than to carry on business with Italians more efficiently. Today, they learn Italian under compulsion,

³ Quoted in Salvemini, “Racial Minorities under Fascism in Italy,” 15-16. Original quote from Orlo Vergani, “Italia al confine Giulio: Accampamenti senza storia,” *Corriere della Sera*, 29 September 1928.

⁴ Salvemini, “Racial Minorities under Fascism in Italy,” 23.

⁵ *Ibid*, 11.

and as soon as it is forced upon them, hatred of Italy and of the Italian people accumulates in their hearts.⁶

The final section of Salvemini's pamphlet discusses the Fascist regime's approach to Italy's Jewish minority. He acknowledges that antisemitism had not been a central aspect of Italian or Fascist society, and that Italy's antisemitic current—promoted primarily by “Catholic and Nationalist papers” who attempted “to inoculate the people with the anti-Semitic virus”—had never reached the heights of what was witnessed in Germany. This stance was bolstered by the fact that many Italian Jews supported the Fascist regime, both financially and ideologically. However, a wave of antisemitic attacks in the Fascist press following the arrest of “anti-Fascist” Jewish agents forced Salvemini to question whether the regime had changed its stance on antisemitism.⁷ For Salvemini, these attacks were akin to a declaration of war against the entire Jewish community: “Either all the Jews show themselves to be 100 per cent solid for Fascism both in Italy and abroad, or the whole Jewish community in Italy will be persecuted as in Germany.” He ends the pamphlet with a woeful question, “what will Mussolini do against the Jews? Will the lightning follow the thunder?”⁸

While many of Salvemini's contemporaries continued to believe that Fascist Italy was incapable of enacting the kind of antisemitic program seen in Nazi Germany, Salvemini's knowledge of the Fascist regime's persecution of other minority groups and

⁶ Ibid, 23.

⁷ On 11 March 1934, Mario Levi and Sion Segre were caught transporting anti-Fascist leaflets at the Ponte Tresa border crossing between Italy and Switzerland. Levi escaped arrest and fled across the border, but Segre was apprehended. He was identified as a member of Turin's Jewish community and the Jewish nationalist group *Oneg Shabbath*. Following Segre's arrest, a number of his associates and family members, and other Turinese residents (Jewish and non-Jewish) belonging to the anti-Fascist group *Giustizia e Libertà*, were arrested. Ibid, 30. See also Michele Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy. From Equality to Persecution* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 69-71.

⁸ Salvemini, “Racial Minorities under Fascism in Italy,” 30-31.

the increasing popularization of “racial” solutions to questions of national belonging and security, made the exiled scholar acutely aware of the dangers that accompanied the rise of antisemitic feeling in Italy. Knowing Mussolini to be capable and willing to squash any group, whether real or imagined, which opposed the Fascist program, Salvemini saw the true threat that Italian Jews faced under Italian Fascism. Four years after the publication of Salvemini’s pamphlet, the Fascist government enacted the infamous *leggi razziali* (racial laws). With these laws, antisemitism, which Mussolini publicly rejected for almost two decades, became a central platform of Fascist ideology and policy.

This dissertation examines the connection between Fascist Italy’s persecution of the Germanic and Slavic borderland communities and Jewish minority through the theme of “redemption.” In his seminal volume on Nazi Germany and the anti-Jewish laws *The Years of Persecution*, Saul Friedländer introduces the concept of “redemptive anti-semitism” to explain Hitler’s obsession with the Jewish “enemy” and the development of the Nazi racial program. “Redemptive anti-semitism” refers to the central, driving belief of Nazism—that the Aryan race was in a life-or-death struggle with the Jews, who sought to corrupt and destroy the German people.⁹ This core belief laid the foundation for the radicalization of the Nazi persecution of European Jewry and all political, racial and social Others. I argue that a similar core belief drove the progression of Fascist Italy’s racial program, which predated the enactment of the racial laws. Upon the declaration of the Fascist revolution in 1922, Mussolini embarked on a program to “redeem” Italy from all political and racial others through policies of assimilation and erasure. The multi-ethnic

⁹ For more on “redemptive anti-semitism” see Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, Volume 1: The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998); and Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, Volume 2: The Years of Extermination, 1939-1945* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008).

communities of *Italia irredenta* were some of the earliest targets of the Fascist redemptive program. The core belief that drove the borderland Italianization programs—that Italian unity and greatness required the erasure of subversive Others from the national body—was the same belief that drove Mussolini to adopt the racial laws.

Italia irredenta or “unredeemed Italy” referred to those lands which were inhabited by Italian-speaking communities but had not been annexed to the Kingdom of Italy after the Wars of Unification (1848-1871). These regions included the provinces of Trentino-Alto Adige (Südtirol or South Tyrol) and the Adriatic Littoral, which were part of the Habsburg Empire and inhabited by large Germanic and Slavic linguistic communities. In the 19th century, Italian nationalists and irredentists fashioned these regions into the “historic” Italian *Triveneto* or *Tre Venezie* borderlands, which comprised of Venezia Tridentina (Trentino-Alto Adige), Venezia Euganea (Veneto-Friuli), and Venezia Giulia (Adriatic Littoral). During the First World War, the provinces of Venezia Tridentina and Venezia Giulia were promised to Italy in the secret Treaty of London, which brought Italy into the war on the side of the Entente. Hundreds of thousands of Italian soldiers were wounded and killed to bring about the “redemption” of these lands from the Austrian empire and to secure their unification with the Italian nation. However, the battle to redeem the borderlands during the war—which some perceived as the last war of Italian unification—brought forward a new era of Italy’s redemptive struggle. This struggle consumed the nation after 1918 and shaped the unstable political landscape that led to the rise of Mussolini’s Fascist regime. Through violence and terror, the Fascists placed themselves at the forefront of the Italian redemptive-revolution, which was

founded on the Fascists mission to “redeem” Italy from the internal and external enemies working to bring about the nation’s demise.

I argue that the borderland assimilationist campaigns of the 1920s and the racial laws of the 1930s were two phases of the Fascist redemptive program, which had its roots in the battle for *Italia irredenta*. In the Fascist era, the borderlands became both a symbol of Italian redemption and a space through which the redemptive program could be conceived and implemented. This program was not relegated to the borderlands—the concepts of redemption, revolution, renewal and regeneration shaped Italian socio-political life and Fascist policies throughout the peninsula. However, in the borderlands, the presence of linguistic, cultural and ethnic Others raised the stakes of the redemptive struggle. Within the Fascist worldview, the redemption of the borderlands through Italianization was necessary to ensure the security of Italy’s borders and prove the power and superiority of the Fascist regime. Furthermore, the redemption of the borderlands from internal and external Others was necessary for the redemption of the Italian nation as a whole. Yet, the methods to achieve redemption were revised in response to Fascist Italy’s changing domestic and foreign programs, policies and priorities. As this thesis will show, the borderland Italianization campaigns played a crucial role in charting Fascist Italy’s redemptive mission.

The Fascist redemptive struggle must be understood in relation to the development of nationalism and nationalist theories before and after the rise of fascism. In defining the nation, philosophers, revolutionaries and nationalist thinkers looked to the principles of language, culture, history, race and geography as the foundation of a national community.

Language had an especially important role in demarcating the boundaries of the national community. One of the foundational thinkers of nationalism, Johann Gottfried von Herder, argued that the “the best culture of a people cannot be expressed through a foreign language; it thrives on the soil of a nation most beautifully, [and] thrives only by means of the nation’s inherited and inheritable dialect. With language is created the heart of a people.”¹⁰ In his determination, the nation and its people were a phenomenon of “nature”—the linguistic, racial, economic and social development of a national group was directly tied to the natural surroundings in which the people and society lived. Yet, other theorists such as Ernest Renan rejected the idea that language and geography were sufficient in defining a nation. Instead, Renan defined the nation as “a spiritual principle resulting from the profound complexities of history,” and “a spiritual family, not a group determined by the lay of the land.”¹¹ In Renan’s assessment, the bonds of history, heritage and ancestry, which establish feelings of fraternity, kinship and a shared purpose amongst national brethren, are the determining elements of a nation. A nation is something that is both past (a common heritage) and present (a common destiny), established through consent and devotion, and the willingness to sacrifice oneself for the national cause.

Postwar and contemporary theorists, such as Hans Kohn, Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner and Eric Hobsbawm have shaped our modern understanding of the meaning of nations and nationalism. Kohn describes nationalism as “a state of mind, in which the supreme loyalty of the individual is felt to be due to the nation-state.” He argues that “a deep attachment to one’s native soil, to local traditions and to established territorial

¹⁰ Johann Gottfried von Herder, “Materials for the Philosophy of the History of Mankind, 1784,” Modern History Sourcebook, Fordham University.

¹¹ Ernest Renan, “What is a Nation?” Text of a conference delivered at the Sorbonne on March 11, 1882 in *Que’est-ce qu’une nation?*, translated by Ethan Rundell (Paris: Presses-Pocket, 1992), 9.

authority”—the basis of earlier characterization of a nation—existed throughout history, but that the modern idea of nationalism did not take shape until the end of the 18th century. In line with Renan’s essay, Kohn argues that while most nationalities have distinguishing features such as language, customs and common descent, these factors are not essential or sufficient in defining a national group.¹² Instead, the most “essential element is a living and active corporate will.”¹³ Anderson’s influential monograph *Imagined Communities* defines the nation as a “cultural artefact”¹⁴ and “imagined political community” that is both “inherently limited and sovereign.”¹⁵ In his assessment, the spread of a common language through modern newspaper print culture—which he describes as “mass ceremony”—allowed for the spread of nationalist thought and the establishment of an “imagined community.”¹⁶ The language used to describe a nation (i.e. “kinship” or “homeland”) helped to establish the ‘nation’ as an entity which is both “natural” and “unchosen.” As such, a national group bound by language is often also described as be bound by “skin-color, gender, parentage and birth era—all those things one cannot help.”¹⁷

Ernst Gellner’s approach to nationalism is characterized by his conception of modernity as a new and distinct social order and cultural system. Nationalism is a function of modernity, not its precursor.¹⁸ As a product of modernity and industrialization, Gellner does not consider nations or nationalism to be natural or permanent. Instead, he defines

¹² Hans Kohn, *Nationalism* (Toronto: D. Van Nostrand, 1955), 9.

¹³ Kohn, *Nationalism*, 10.

¹⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* revised ed., (London: Verso, 2016), 4.

¹⁵ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 35.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 147.

¹⁸ John Breuilly, “Introduction,” in Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Malden MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), xx-xxi.

nationalism “as primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent.” He further states that, “nationalism is a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political lines.”¹⁹ In defining a nation, Gellner offers a “cultural” and “voluntaristic” definition. The former rests on the ideals of a “shared culture” and “system of beliefs,” while the latter emphasizes “convictions, loyalties and solidarities,” and the collective recognition of national belonging and associated “mutual rights and duties.”²⁰ Building on Gellner’s definition of a nation, Habermas argues that the development of nations occurs as a “dual phenomenon,” constructed from above by the political and elite classes and also from below, through “the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people, which are not necessarily national and still less nationalist.”²¹ Furthermore, he divides the development of nationalism into three phases: first as a cultural, folkloric or literary ideal, second as a “pioneering phase” guided by the militant supporters of the nation, and the third as the phase of mass support either occurring before or after the establishment of the national state.²²

When tracing the development of the idea of the nation from Herder to Habermas, we see many different conceptions of the character and construction of nations. However, one thing remains constant—the idea that a nation is founded upon the shared recognition of a collective identity, spirit and mission. Without consent and commitment, either from the elite or the masses, the objective elements of a “nation” (i.e., language, customs and

¹⁹ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 1.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 6-7. Gellner defines the state as a societal system of agency that holds “the monopoly of power.” *Ibid*, 3.

²¹ E.J. Habermas, *Nations and nationalism since 1780: Programme, myth, reality*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 10.

²² Habermas, *Nations and nationalism*, 12.

ancestry) lose their unifying significance. In other words, the sovereignty of a nation finds its basis in the collective consent and devotion of those belonging to it. The national community's unity of purpose is most overtly expressed through one's willingness to sacrifice oneself for the protection and glory of the nation.

As with most nationalist movements in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries, the ideals of unity, devotion and duty, and of a collective identity and mission were crucial for the development of the Italian nationalist movement. In its earliest phase, nationalist thinkers considered all those who spoke Italian (more precisely one of the many Italian dialects) to be part of the imagined community of the Italian nation. Inherited from their ancestral forefathers and born to their descendants, this community was assumed to possess the unique characteristics and virtues of *italianità*, a concept which embodied the grandeur and supremacy of the Italian language, customs and culture. As descendants of the Roman Empire and the Renaissance, their common heritage endowed them with a common destiny—a sacred mission to redeem their past glory and assert their superiority amongst the races of men.

In the 19th century, duty and unity became the defining principles of Italian nationalism. In 1831, Giuseppe Mazzini, a founding father of the *Risorgimento* (Italian unification), set down the ideological foundations of the Italian nationalist movement when establishing his association *Giovane Italiane* (Young Italy). The oath of the members of Young Italy decreed it to be,

...a brotherhood of Italians who believe in a law of Progress and Duty, and are convinced that Italy is destined to become one nation—convinced also that she possesses sufficient strength within herself to become one, and that the ill success of her former effort is to be attributed not to the weakness, but to the misdirection of the revolutionary elements within her—that secret of force lies in the constancy of effort. They join this

association in the firm intent of consecrating both thought and action to the great aim of reconstituting Italy as one independent sovereign nation of free men and equals.²³

Mazzini's conception of the "religion of the nation" asserted that the establishment of a unified Italian nation had been ordained and legitimized by God and that it was the duty of all Italians to live up to the sacred mission that had been divinely bestowed upon them. Duty and unity, not rights, were given primacy of place in his nationalist program.²⁴

In his most famous work, *The Duties of Man* (1858) Mazzini urged Italians to devote their spirits, thoughts and actions to their country, which is "one and indivisible," and to commit themselves fully to their collective purpose—the unification of the Italian national community: "As members of a family cannot rejoice at the common table if one of their number is far away, snatched from the affection of his brothers, so you should have no joy or repose as long as a portion of the territory upon which your language is spoken is separated from the Nation."²⁵ Through education and the spread of the "religion of the nation," the inherited virtues of *italianità* (the Italian language, culture, spirit) would be revived within the hearts and minds of the Italian people, who had long been divided and suppressed under foreign rule. As bearers of a unified spirit, the Italian national community would reassert itself as one of the great "civilizations" of the world, creating an even better future for Italians and all humankind. Mazzini's preoccupation with "the redemption of Italian unity" above all other principles, garnered backlash from his

²³ Joseph (Giuseppe) Mazzini, "General Instructions for the Members of Young Italy," in *Joseph Mazzini: His Life, Writings and Political Principles* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1872), 62.

²⁴ Simon Levis Sullam, *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Origins of Fascism* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 11-24; Emilio Gentile, *La Grande Italia: The Myth of the Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 22.

²⁵ Joseph (Giuseppe) Mazzini, *The Duties of Man and Other Essays* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1961), 55.

contemporaries.²⁶ Following Mazzini's decision to back monarchical rule over the republicanism which he had long fought for, Francesco Crispi criticized Mazzini for his insistence that "form should be sacrificed before the great idol of the unity of a complete nation."²⁷ Yet, the unity to which Mazzini aspired was challenged by the divided loyalties and identities of the Italian people and by the different conceptions of what it meant to be Italian.

Linguistic, social, administrative and perceived racial differences impeded the creation of the unitary state following Unification. Scholars such as Aliza Wong, Edoardo Barsotti, Francesco Cassata, Vanda Wilcox, Silvana Patriarca and Valeria Deplano have shown that racism and eugenics had been a central part of the Italian nation-building program and lexicon since the days of the *Risorgimento*.²⁸ Italian political theorists and anthropologists used the terms *razza* (race), *stirpe* (stock) and *nazione* (nation) to denote the same ideas,²⁹ while authors of Italian romantic nationalism "celebrated a mythic link between blood, tradition and landscape."³⁰ During the *Risorgimento* (Italian Unification) and Liberal era, the term "race" did not evoke the concepts of "biological racism" that were popularized in the 20th century. It was instead used to denote a nation of people, an

²⁶ This phrase comes from a letter written by Francesco Crispi in which he criticizes Mazzini's abandonment of republicanism in the pursuit of unification. Quoted in Sullam, *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Origins of Fascism*, 29.

²⁷ Quoted in Sullam, *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Origins of Fascism*, 28.

²⁸ Important actors in the pre-Fascist Italian eugenics movement include Cesare Lombroso, Alfredo Niceforo, Giuseppe Sergi and Vilfredo Pareto. For more see Francesco Cassata, "Between Lombroso and Pareto: The Italian Way to Eugenics," in *Building the New Man: Eugenics, Racial Science and Genetics in Twentieth-Century Italy*, trans. Erin O'Loughlin (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011), 9-42. On Italian racism, imperialism and eugenics before fascism see Edoardo Marcello Barsotti, *At the Roots of Italian Identity: 'Race' and 'Nation' in the Italian Risorgimento, 1796-1870* (New York: Routledge, 2021); Aliza Wong, *Race and the Nation in Liberal Italy, 1861-1911: Meridionalism, Empire and Diaspora* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); and Vanda Wilcox, *The Italian Empire and the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

²⁹ Silvana Patriarca and Valeria Deplano, "Nation, 'race', and racism in twentieth-century Italy," *Modern Italy* 23, no.4 (2018): 350.

³⁰ Wilcox, *The Italian Empire and the Great War*, 152.

ethnic group, or a cultural or linguistic community, and was also conditioned by ideas of class, gender and geographical location.³¹ In the 19th century, this racial thinking was primarily directed towards the Africans in Italian colonies and Italians in the southern provinces, who were seen as culturally backwards and racially inferior due to centuries of “Africanization.” However, the idea that unity could be achieved through “racial purity” was not widely accepted due to the racial diversity of the Italian people. *Italianità* was considered to be a hereditary trait but, as Wilcox states, “Italian was [also] something one might become or be made into.” In accordance with this belief, the Italian government instituted programs of assimilation and internal colonization (i.e., education and centralization) to regenerate, strengthen and unify the nation.³²

Italian unity was also shaped by different perceptions and approaches to the boundaries of the nation. On one hand, all Italians, including those living outside of the borders of the “homeland,” were considered to be part of the nation.³³ On the other, the creation of a unitary and sovereign state required the establishment of “well-defined, easy-to-defend boundaries.”³⁴ The creation of secure and indisputable boundaries became one of the most difficult tasks in the post-Unification era, as many Italian-speaking communities, including those in the Trentino and Adriatic, were excluded from the nation.

Mussolini was undoubtedly influenced by Mazzini’s concepts of duty and unity, especially during his shift from socialism to interventionism and nationalism.³⁵ When developing the Fascist program, Mussolini appropriated the rituals and “symbolic thought

³¹ See Lucia Re, “Italians and the Invention of Race: The Poetics and Politics of Difference in the Struggle Over Libya, 1890-1913,” *California Italian Studies* 1, no.1 (2010): 1-65, doi:10.5070/C311008862.

³² Wilcox, *The Italian Empire and the Great War*, 152.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Gentile, *La Grande Italia*, 29.

³⁵ Sullam, *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Origins of Italian Fascism*, 71.

and language,” that was central to Mazzini’s “religion of the nation.”³⁶ Mazzini’s nationalist theology also helped to create the various “national myths” of the *Risorgimento* which shaped the cultural, social and political atmosphere in which Mussolini came to power. Most prominent among these myths was the myth of a “Greater Italy,” which promoted the supremacy of the Italian nation and its sacred “civilizing” mission.

In line with Gellner and Habermas, Emilio Gentile argues that “Italian nationalism arose from the needs of modernity,” and that the “modernity that Italian nationalism had to face after the Risorgimento” called for the “creation of a new civilization,” through “economic and social development,” as well as “cultural and spiritual development.”³⁷ The creation of a new civilization and Greater Italy were determined by the ways that “nationhood faced modernity.”³⁸ Inspired by the leaders of the *Risorgimento*, Mussolini saw revolution and regeneration as the forces that would establish political and moral unity, and enable Italy to fulfill its sacred mission. However, in the second decade of the Fascist dictatorship, Mussolini’s approach to revolution, regeneration, and redemption—the way that the Fascist state “faced modernity”—would undergo a drastic change. This change and its manifestation in Fascist approaches to its ethnic and religious minority communities is the subject of this dissertation.

In the 1920s, the Fascist government adopted programs of cultural assimilation premised on the pre-Fascist national myth that Italians could be moulded and made. The Fascist approach was undoubtedly more oppressive and authoritarian than the policies of its predecessors, but the underlying logic of these programs were based on the same

³⁶ Ibid, 73.

³⁷ Gentile, *La Grande Italia*, 20.

³⁸ Ibid.

foundation. The spread of a shared language, customs, rituals and faith were essential for unification, but the moral regeneration of the Italian people through their collective embodiment of the national spirit and commitment to the nation, was the primary path to achieving Italy's sacred mission. However, in the 1930s, Fascist efforts to instill a collective spirit and create *moral* unity amongst the national community was increasingly linked to the creation of *racial* unity. The new racialized Fascist redemptive struggle marked both a continuation and deviation from the myths and beliefs of the pre-Fascist era.

For this study, Fascist “redemption” (also known as the redemptive struggle or program) is defined as the mission to regenerate and unify the Italian nation and its people in *being* and in *spirit*. Unity of being refers to the outward expressions of *italianità*, such as the adoption of a national language, and later, of adherence to Fascist principles, rituals and programs. Unity of being also refers to the geographical and administrative unity of the nation, or in other words, the desire to secure the borders of the state and to overcome regionalism through the creation of a centralized national system (laws, administration, education, etc.). Unity of being was essential to bring about the latter and more crucial program of the redemptive struggle—unity of spirit. Unity of spirit refers to the adoption of a shared morality, sense of duty, a collective will and total commitment to the Fascist state and national community. The unification of the collective being and spirit of the nation would enable Italy to become the Greatest Italy of all the ages, thus fulfilling its sacred mission. Unification also entailed the cleansing of political and racial Others from the national body through policies of assimilation and exclusion. The goal of the Fascist redemptive struggle—unity of being and spirit—did not change drastically between 1920

and 1930. However, the approach and methods to achieve regeneration and redemption altered considerably. This was clearly demonstrated by the Fascist government's decision to adopt an overtly racist program in the mid-1930s.³⁹

HISTORIOGRAPHY

Historians have long sought to understand why Mussolini and his Fascist government chose to adopt a racial program sixteen years after their rise to power. Renzo De Felice and other post-war scholars placed the blame on Mussolini's growing friendship with Hitler, arguing that Fascist Italy was pushed into adopting the racial laws by their German allies or that the Fascist regime chose to adopt these policies to overcome the "ideological gap" between the two powers.⁴⁰ This argument helped to establish the myth of the *Italiani brava gente*, which continues to permeate Italian historiography and public memory today. This myth promotes the idea that antisemitism was absent in Italian society and that Italians were, per their nature, good humane people who did not condone or participate in the persecution of their Jewish neighbours. De Felice went so far as to argue that the Italian public held such widespread disapproval of antisemitism that the enactment of the racial laws "marked the beginning of the collapse" of their support for the regime.⁴¹ These myths were bolstered by commonly-shared narratives in Jewish postwar testimonies of the benevolence of the Italian "rescuer" and in light of the Italian army's

³⁹ For more on the development of overtly and covertly racist regimes see George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

⁴⁰ Patrick Bernhard, "Blueprints of Totalitarianism: How Racist Policies in Fascist Italy Inspired and Informed Nazi Germany," *Fascism (Liedon)* 6, no.2 (2017): 149, doi:10.1163/22116257-00602001.

⁴¹ Stefano Luconi, "Recent trends in the study of Italian antisemitism under the Fascist regime," *Patterns of Prejudice* 38, no.1 (2004): 3, doi:10.1080/0031322032000185550. See also Renzo De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo* (Turin: Einaudi, 1961); and Renzo De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy: A History* (New York: Enigma Books, 2001).

refusal to deport Italian Jews and foreign Jews from Italian-occupied territories in France, Africa, Yugoslavia and Greece before German occupation in 1943.⁴² Intent on burying the atrocities of the Fascist *ventennio* deep in Italian collective consciousness, the myth of the *Italiani brava gente* was positively received and promoted by the government and public.⁴³

De Felice's work has been both celebrated and heavily criticized, mainly due to his tendency to overstate Mussolini's intellectual prowess and his diminishment of the severity of the racial laws (i.e., that Mussolini intended to discriminate against the Jews, not persecute them). De Felice was also accused of "play[ing] down the anti-Jewishness of these measures," by arguing that the anti-Jewish laws were an unfortunate consequence of Italian efforts to police and restrict interactions between Italian nationals and the African inhabitants of Italy's colonial empire.⁴⁴ De Felice was not wrong to point out the connection between racial policies in the colonies and policies towards Italy's Jewish inhabitants, however, he used this connection to minimize the intention and conviction of the Italian antisemitic program.

Since the 1990s, scholars have revealed the widespread approval and participation of Italian officials, soldiers and civilians in the enactment of racist policies and state-sanctioned violence in both the Liberal and Fascist era, upending many of the De Felice's

⁴² This was not the case in Serbia, where Italian occupying forces "turned in Pristina's Jews to the German military...as early as March 1942." Other planned deportations were cancelled after Mussolini was removed from power in July 1944. Luciano, "Recent trends in the study of Italian antisemitism under the Fascist regime," 7. See also Davide Rodogno, "Italiani brava gente? Fascist Italy's policy Towards the Jews in the Balkans, April 1941-July 1943," *European History Quarterly* 35, n. 2 (2005): 213-240, doi:10.1177/0265691405051464; and David Bidussa, *Il mito del bravo italiano* (Milan: il Saggiatore, 1994), 57-81.

⁴³ The Fascist *ventennio* refers to the twenty years of the Fascist regime, from the March on Rome on 31 October 1922 to Mussolini's removal from power on 25 July 1943.

⁴⁴ Luconi, "Recent trends," 3.

foundational arguments. Angelo Del Boca's ground-breaking book, *Italiani brava gente?* shows how "ordinary" Italians participated in the persecution and murder of those deemed to be racially inferior and politically deviant (Ethiopians, Eritreans, Libyans, Slavs, Southern "brigands"), presenting a strong counter narrative to the myth of the "good" and "tolerant" Italian. The work of Michele Sarfatti Enzo Collotti, Aaron Gillette, Peter Staudenmaier, and Michael A. Livingston have revealed the long tradition of religious and political antisemitism in Italy, as well as the brutality of Fascist anti-Jewish persecution and the complicity of Italian citizens, further diminishing the myth of Italian benevolence.⁴⁵ These studies have also shown that the Fascist racial laws were not a German import. Since the *Risorgimento*, Italian anthropologists and racial theorists worked tirelessly to establish an Italian racial model or "Latin eugenics" to rival the biological "Nordic" model popularized in Germany. More recently, Patrick Bernhard has argued that Italian Fascist racial and regenerative policies inspired and legitimized the Nazi racial program, which emphasized biological racism in an effort to set itself apart from the Fascist model.⁴⁶ The Italian racial laws were therefore crafted according to uniquely Italian concepts of biological and "spiritual" racism and made to fit within the existing legal system.

Contemporary scholarship has greatly advanced our knowledge of the theories, trends and impacts of racism in 19th and 20th century Italy, yet scholars still struggle to explain why Fascist Italy chose to pursue an overtly racist program in the mid-1930s. It is

⁴⁵ See Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*; Enzo Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei. Le leggi razziali in Italia* (Rome: Editori Laterza, 2008); Aaron Gillette, *Racial Theories in Fascist Italy* (London: Routledge, 2001); Michael A. Livingston, *The Fascists and the Jews of Italy: Mussolini's Race Laws, 1938-1943* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

⁴⁶ Bernhard, "Blueprints of Totalitarianism," 134-162.

generally agreed that Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 and the declaration of the Fascist Empire in 1936 was the catalyst behind Fascism's new regenerative program. The concept of "regeneration" had been an essential part of the Italian nationalist and scientific dialogue since unification, however, before 1935, regeneration was primarily carried out through pronatalist social hygiene measures to advance the health and wellbeing of Italian mothers and infants, and through the moral and physical education of Italian children. In the 1930s, Mussolini began to express his concerns that a strictly pronatalist approach was insufficient to tackle the degeneration and decline of the Italian race. Fascist Italy's long-desired colonial enterprise was seen as the ideal opportunity to build a stronger, more virulent *uomo nuovo fascista* (new Fascist man).⁴⁷ Following the invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, Mussolini and his supporters determined that the regeneration of the Italian people required the establishment of a more overt and legally defined hierarchy of race, which would protect Italians from racial and moral degradation and instill the militaristic spirit necessary for a conquering people. However, the declaration of the Fascist empire and the regime's inability to establish a coherent racial policy only exacerbated Mussolini's fears of Italy's decline and degeneration in the face of the racial Other.

There is no doubt Fascist Italy's declaration of empire and Mussolini's mission to create the new Fascist man influenced the government's decision to adopt the racial laws.⁴⁸ However, I argue that these explanations are incomplete due to their tendency to

⁴⁷ Gillette, *Racial Theories in Fascist Italy*, 4. See also Roberta Pergher, *Mussolini's Nation-Empire: Sovereignty and Settlement in Italy's Borderlands, 1922-1943* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 75; and Alexander De Grand, "Mussolini's Follies: Fascism in Its Imperial and Racist Phase, 1935-1940." *Contemporary European History* 13, no. 2 (2004): 139-143, doi:10.1017/S0960777304001602. On the development of the idea of the new Fascist man see George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 155-180.

⁴⁸ Jorge Dagnino, "The Myth of the New Man in Italian Fascist Ideology," *Fascism* 5 (2016): 145-146, doi:10.1163/22116257-00502003; Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 97-99; Mosse, *The Image of Man*, 177.

ignore the topic of Italianization, which shaped Fascist demographic policy on the peninsula throughout the 1920s and helped lay the groundwork for the racialization of the Fascist program in the 1930s. The progression of Mussolini's anthropological revolution and the adoption of the racial laws cannot be fully understood as long as Italianization, and more specifically, the borderland assimilationist campaigns, are excluded from our analysis.

The borderland Italianization programs and the more general development of the Italian racial laws are rarely studied together. Numerous edited volumes and regional histories, such as the work of Maura Hametz, Marina Cattaruzza, and Leopold Steurer⁴⁹ discuss the development of Italianization and antisemitic policies within the borderlands, but they are often treated as wholly separate entities.⁵⁰ While these studies offer important contributions to our understanding of these programs, the connections between the

⁴⁹ Leopold Steurer's book *Südtirol zwischen Rom und Berlin 1919-1939* (1980) presented one of the first major challenges to popular regional histories promoting the "ideology of the ethnic community," based on narratives of South Tyrol's victimhood during the Fascist era and the relativization and minimization of South Tyrol's support for Nazism and involvement in the Holocaust. In addition, Steurer's has conducted decades of research on the *Opzione* (Option)—the 1939 campaign in which 250,000 South Tyroleans chose to leave South Tyrol and resettle in Nazi Germany—undermining the popular assertion that South Tyroleans were forcibly resettled by the Fascist government. His other contributions include studies on the experiences of the *Dableiber* (those who chose to stay), anti-Nazi resistance in the region, antisemitism in South Tyrol and the murder of disabled residents of South Tyrol during the Nazi euthanasia program. Gerald Steinacher and Günther Pallaver, "Leopold Steurer: Historiker zwischen Forschung und Einmischung," in *Demokratie und Erinnerung: Südtirol, Österreich, Italien: Festschrift für Leopold Steurer zum 60* (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2006), 56. Nationalizing myths in the regional historiography of Trieste were first dismantled by Angelo Ara and Claudio Magris in their book *Trieste: Un'identità di frontiera* (1987). Ara and Magris challenged the myths of Trieste's Italian heritage and culture, instead demonstrating that the city was created through the support of the Habsburg monarchy, and comprised of mixed ethnic groups who adopted the Italian language and culture and maintained their own unique frontier identity that could not be reduced to a national identity.

⁵⁰ Important studies on the borderland Italianization programs and antisemitic laws include Gerald Steinacher ed., *Südtirol im Dritten Reich: NS-Herrschaft im Norden Italiens, 1943-1945 = L'Alto Adige Nel Terzo Reich: L'occupazione Nazista nell'Italia Settentrionale* (Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2003); Georg Grote and Hannes Obermair eds., *A Land on the Threshold: South Tyrolean Transformations, 1915-2015* (Bern: Peter Lang AG, International Academic Publishers, 2017); Maura Hametz, *Making Trieste Italian, 1918-1954* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005); and Marina Cattaruzza, *Italy and Its Eastern Border, 1866-2016*, trans. Daniela Gobetti (New York: Routledge, 2017).

borderland assimilationist campaigns and the racial laws have yet to be thoroughly analyzed. One exception can be found in studies on the relationship between Fascist anti-Slavism and antisemitism. Marta Verginella, Stefano Bartolini and Enzo Collotti have shown that anti-Slavic racism, popularized in the ethnically-mixed region of Venezia Giulia, greatly influenced Fascist racial and colonial policy.⁵¹ René Moehrle has argued that the long tradition of anti-Slavism and racial tension in Trieste made it the ideal "racial laboratory" following the promulgation of the racial laws.⁵² Furthermore, he states that "the practices and actions of Fascist anti-Slavism in Trieste anticipated many components" of Fascist antisemitism, and as such, the latter should be viewed as both "an original phenomenon and as a racist continuity."⁵³ In this laboratory, racial policies would be developed and tested for their eventual distribution across all major centers on the peninsula. Building on these studies, this project analyzes the development of Fascist antisemitism and the racial laws in relation to the development of the earlier borderland assimilationist campaigns.

THESIS

This thesis charts the development of the borderland Italianization policies in the 1920s and places these developments in conversation with the progression of Fascist racial

⁵¹ Marta Verginella, "Antislavismo, razzismo di frontiera?" *Aut Aut 349: Il postcoloniale in Italia*, ed. Giovanni Leghissa (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 2011); Stefano Bartolini, *Fascismo antislavo: Il tentativo di "bonifica etnica" al confine nord orientale* (Pistoia: I.R.S.Pt Editore, 2008); Enzo Collotti, "Sul razzismo antislavo," in *Nel nome della razza. Il razzismo nella storia d'Italia, 1870-1945*, edited by A. Burgio (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1999), 33-61; Anna Vinci, "Esperienze triestine," in *Enzo Collotti e l'Europa del Novecento*, ed. Simonetta Soldani (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2011), 189-207.

⁵² René Moehrle, "Fascismo, antislavismo e antisemitismo: I rapporti dei consolati tedeschi a Trieste 1919-1945," in *Gli ebrei nella storia del Friuli Venezia Giulia: un vincenda di lunga durata*, eds. Miriam Davide and Pierto Ioly Zorattini (Firenze: Giuntina, 2016), 250.

⁵³ Moehrle, "Fascismo, antislavismo e antisemitismo," 246.

policies in the 1930s. It will demonstrate the central role that Italianization played in the development of Fascist authoritarianism and the regime's changing conceptions of inclusion and belonging. As previously mentioned, I argue that the borderland Italianization programs and racial laws were two phases of the Fascist redemptive struggle, embodied in the ideals of the *uomo fascista* and anthropological revolution. Both programs intended to establish national unity and a collective will, which Mussolini had sought since the period of intervention. Whereas the Italianization programs sought to redeem the borderlands through the "making of Italians" the racial laws sought redemption through the racialization of Italians and exclusion of non-Italian elements. It is important to note that policies of assimilation and exclusion appeared in both phases, yet one phase prioritized the assimilation of linguistic, cultural and ethnic Others, while the other prioritized the segregation and exclusion of racial Others. I argue that the shift from assimilation to exclusion occurred as a result of a fundamental change in how Mussolini and Fascist authorities perceived national identity and the means to achieve unity of being and spirit in the latter half of the 1920s.

As this thesis will show, following the Fascist consolidation of power in 1926, Mussolini began to rethink the criteria for belonging within the new authoritarian nation-state. A major turning point came in 1927, first with Mussolini's Ascension Day speech in which he declared a series of new demographic policies that would bring about the anthropological revolution of the Italian people, and second, with his public and private questioning of the validity of assimilationism, which had been the cornerstone of the *Risorgimento* and Italian nationalist movement. Assimilation was the means through which Jews had been integrated into the Italian nation and was also the foundation of the

Italianization programs. Mussolini's increasing fears over the weakness of the Italian people and the presence of political and racial Others at the borders and within the state led to the delegitimization of assimilationism within the Fascist program—a crucial step towards the racialization of Fascist society. Between 1927 and 1938 the Fascist government abandoned the principle of nationality as the basis for inclusion and began to adopt race as an essential prerequisite for belonging. Individuals of different ethno-national stock (*stirpe*) could no longer be “made into Italians” as their racial differences made it impossible for them to fully assimilate. In this new era, the unity of the Fascist nation-state was to be achieved through the segregation and exclusion of political, religious and racial Others from the national community.

The varying and often contradictory theories of race that have been the subject of so many studies will not be the focus of this thesis. Instead, it examines the long-term development of Italianization policies in Venezia Giulia and Venezia Tridentina and analyzes the similarities and differences between the Fascist persecution of the *allogeni* and the Jews. How did the Fascist government legitimize Italianization and racial policies? Through what means (education, religion, administration) did Fascist authorities attempt to carry out their policies of assimilation and exclusion? What were the narratives and policies of “othering” employed in each program? How did the *allogeni* and the Jews respond to their persecution, and how did neighbouring states and other European powers react to these oppressive programs? To what extent did the reception of Fascist assimilation and racism, both inside and outside the state, impact the progression of these policies? How did Fascist Italy's changing relationship with neighbouring states alter their approach to minority communities? What was the relationship between local authorities

and the Fascist center in Rome? How did Fascist authorities in the borderlands interpret and implement assimilationist and racial policies? Why did the shift from nationality/assimilationism to racism/exclusion occur when it did? What methods were used to establish a “hierarchy of Others” and how did these methods change according to shifting priorities?

Answering these and other questions will lead us to a clearer understanding of the multifaceted reasons behind Fascist Italy’s adoption of an overtly racist program in the 1930s. In the period of covert racism (1922-1935) Fascist ideologues believed that the superiority of the *italianità* and the forceful will of fascism would absorb racial others into the nation. By 1935, Mussolini’s anxiety over the corrupting forces of internal and external Others, his mission to create a new Fascist man, and the declaration of Empire made this “absorption” untenable if true redemption was to be achieved. As Jorge Dagnino states, “to ensure the radicalisation and ultimate completion of the anthropological revolution, Fascists thought it necessary to remove their opponents, as far as possible, from the national arena, whether it be for reasons of politics, race or gender. The driving force behind this palingenetic and ultimately utopian enterprise was the dream of fashioning a homogeneous and martial totalitarian community, purifying the nation of perceived deleterious elements.”⁵⁴ Another crucial factor instigating this shift was Mussolini’s fears over the security of Italy’s borders, both in the northeast and between the nation and empire.

Instead of focusing on trends of racism and antisemitism, I argue that Fascist xenophobia and narratives surrounding the “foreignness” of the *allogeni* and Italian Jews,

⁵⁴ Dagnino, “The Myth of the New Man,” 143.

as opposed to narratives of their “racial impurity,” were crucial for the legitimization of the racial laws, making them more palatable to the public and consistent with previous minority policies. The institution of official racism in Fascist Italy was a consequence of the Fascist elite’s increasing fears over “foreign” corruption and desire to redeem Italy from Others threatening Italian Fascist unity. Fascist concepts of “foreignness,” their determination to protect the state against foes at the frontier and to vanquish the “enemy-within,” were central to Fascist ideology since its inception but these ideas took on a new dimension in the era of racialization. The borderlands were the arena in which the Fascist government tested and developed policies, procedures and “boundary-drawing practices” to eliminate the “foreigners-within,” and these practices were easily manipulated and adapted for the racial laws.⁵⁵

As will be discussed, when implementing policies of forced assimilation and racial exclusion, Fascist officials established certain “degrees of foreignness” or “otherness” to distinguish those who might be absorbed and included in society from those “corrupting” the social fabric. In the case of the *allogeni*, morally and politically subversive individuals, including those who spoke non-Italians languages, were associated with pro-German or pro-Slavic individuals and institutions, or who did not show sufficient enthusiasm for *italianità* or fascism, were perceived to possess a higher degree of foreignness and to be a greater threat to Italian unity. Depending on the severity of their actions, subversive *allogeni* could be transferred, fired, arrested, interned, or expelled. For Jews in Italy, degrees of foreignness/otherness were determined by an individual’s involvement in the

⁵⁵ The term “boundary-drawing practices” is discussed in Anssi Paasi, “The Changing Discourses on Political Boundaries: Mapping the Backgrounds, Contexts and Contents,” in *B/ordering Space*, eds. Henk van Houtum, Oliver Kramsch and Wolfgang Ziefhofer, (Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2005).

Jewish community, their participation in the Zionist movement, their foreign associations, whether or not they held citizenship before 1919, and their Fascist “merits.” While foreign and full Jews were, for the most part, cast as racial and social Others, “mixed” Jews (*misti*) and those in mixed-marriages were attributed with a lesser degree of foreignness/otherness and were not initially subjected to the same degree of exclusion. Italian and foreign Jews who did not obtain *discriminazione* (discrimination) were stripped of their property, segregated, arrested and expelled, while mixed Jews were expected to renounce their Jewish heritage and fully assimilate into Italian society.⁵⁶

To better understand the Fascist redemptive struggle and their mission to establish unity of being and spirit, I propose a new model of the Fascist “hierarchy of Others.”⁵⁷ The idea of a racial hierarchy was by no means a new concept in Italian Fascism. The superiority of *italianità* and inferiority of non-Italian civilizations was the foundation of Fascist assimilation and the persecution of the *allogeni*. As such, the establishment of a new racial hierarchy in the 1930s was adapted to fit within the model that had been in place since the 1920s. While American and German racial thinkers proposed a “pyramid” or “triangular model” in which the racially pure “Aryans” were placed at the top above increasingly degenerate others, I argue that we must look at the Italian Fascist racial hierarchy as a model of “concentric circles.”

Reminiscent of the spheres of the heavens in Dante’s *Paradiso*, in building the Fascist utopia, Mussolini envisioned Fascism and *italianità* to be at the centre of all things—the ideal to which all Italians should work towards. Only the most devout Italian

⁵⁶ The status of *discriminazione* was given to people who were able to prove their Fascist “merits,” which included participation in the First World War or support for the early Fascist movement.

⁵⁷ Term taken from Roberta Pergher, *Mussolini’s Nation-Empire*, 24.

Fascists, those who exhibited fidelity to the cause and embodied the highest standards of moral and political behaviour (unity of being and spirit), would be welcomed into the centre of this utopia. Outside of this centre existed all ideological and ethnic Others, including political opponents, *allogeni*, and colonial subjects, placed in spheres in accordance with their degree of foreignness/otherness. Unlike the pyramid hierarchy in which racial classifications were fixed and unchanging, individuals and groups in Fascism's concentric circles could move (with limitations) between realms depending on their manifestations of *italianità* and expression of loyalty to the Fascist state. For example, Italy's German and Slovenian communities, whose foreignness/otherness alienated them from the Italian national community, were placed at the outer limits of the spheres. Through assimilation these communities were to be integrated into the Italian national community and brought closer to the Fascist centre. Those who rejected assimilation or were deemed to be unassimilable would be pushed further towards the outer realms. But as assimilation fell out of favour, the lines between spheres became less porous and the criteria for inclusion was refined. The adoption of official racism and antisemitism affirmed the impenetrability of the lines between spheres, creating walls where gateways once existed. Racial Others were excluded from the national community regardless of their expression of *italianità* or devotion to fascism. Cast as racially Other and threatening foreigners, by the end of the 1930s, Italian Jews were no longer welcome into the Fascist utopia and were thus expelled from the centre and fixed to an outer realm. Mixed race Jews who escaped expulsion were to remain in a sphere close to the centre, but any manifestation of their "otherness" led to their exclusion with the rest of their "race."

METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

The theories and concepts of border and borderland studies have greatly influenced my approach to this topic. Border theorists have attributed various meanings and definitions to borders and boundaries, but it is generally agreed that these entities are “not merely lines on a map,” fixed and unchanging.⁵⁸ Instead, they are continually being redefined, contested, and negotiated by the state and by those living in borderlands and frontier zones. In the words of sociologist Gerard Delanty, “the border is a networked and fluid process rather than a fixed line; it is constituted in new and changing relations between cores and peripheries, and is the site of political contestations where power and culture interact...Borders exist not at the edge of the territory of the state, but numerous points within and beyond it.”⁵⁹ Whether they be cultural, social, linguistic, gendered, religious or political, borders establish the parameters of our lives and shape our identities as individuals, as members of a group, and as members of a national community.⁶⁰

The need to define and delimit geopolitical borders became more acute in the age of nationalism. The conceptualization of the boundaries of the nation was an integral part of the nation-building project but competing mental maps and sociopolitical discourses transformed frontiers and points of contact into spaces of confrontation and conflict. Ethno-linguistic, geographical, cultural and historical frontiers were used to demarcate borders between nations, but the national identities prescribed to these borderland

⁵⁸ Paasi, “The Changing Discourses,” 18.

⁵⁹ Gerard Delanty, “Borders in a Changing Europe: Dynamics of Openness and Closure,” *Comparative European Politics* 4, no. 2/3 (2006): 183, doi:10.1057/palgrave.cep.6110073.

⁶⁰ On borders and frontiers see Malcolm Anderson, *Frontiers: Territory and State Formation in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996); Liam O’Dowd, “Contested States, Frontiers and Cities,” in *A Companion to Border Studies*, eds. Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012); Chiara Brambilla, Jussi Laine, James W. Scott and Gianluca Bocchi, eds. *Borderscaping: Imaginations and Practices of Border Making* (New York: Routledge, Publisher, 2016);

communities rarely coincided with regional and local realities.⁶¹ This dislocation between a nation's conceptions of its borders and the identities of individuals living in proximity to these borders is a central topic of this study.

Four concepts from the field of border and borderland studies are especially important for this analysis: core-periphery relations, mental maps, boundary-drawing practices, and "othering." This study will examine the changing core-periphery (also centre-periphery) relationship between the government and institutions at the national centre in Rome and the communities and institutions of the borderlands. It will also analyze the borderlands as the centre/core of multiple peripheries, as the communities of the borderlands held linguistic, historical, institutional and cultural ties to cross-border communities, former imperial and national "peripheries" such as Vienna, Ljubljana, Belgrade, Innsbruck and Munich, and immigrant communities across Europe and the United States. The centre-periphery concept is also relevant to the "concentric" model of the hierarchy of Others proposed in this study. The term mental maps refer to the ways that individuals and groups perceive the boundaries of their imagined communities, which can be national, transnational, religious, geographical, gendered, racial, political, linguistic, historical, institutional and cultural.⁶² Mental maps delineate the lines between in-groups ("us") and out-groups ("other") and shape the networks and systems connecting communities within and across borders. The development of Fascist mental maps of the

⁶¹ On the theories and concepts of borderlands see Michiel Baud and Willem Van Schendel, "Towards a Comparative History of Borderlands," *Journal of World History* 8, no. 2 (1997): 211-242, doi:10.1353/jwh.2005.006; and Oscar J. Martinez, "The Dynamics of Border Interaction: New approaches to border analysis," in *Global Boundaries*, ed. Clive H. Shofield (London: Routledge, 1994), 1-15.

⁶² On mental maps see P.H. Liotta, "Imagining Europe: Symbolic Geography and the Future," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 16, n.3 (2005): 67-85, doi:10.1215/10474552-16-3-67.

borderlands, the *allogeni*, and foreign and Italian Jews, and the often-contradictory mental maps held by these communities, will be discussed throughout this study.

Boundary-drawing practices and othering are interrelated concepts. Boundary-drawing practices can be “conceptual and cartographic, imaginary and actual, or social and aesthetic.”⁶³ As Anssi Passi writes,

these practices are always part of a broader social action and have typically been based on the processes of ‘Othering,’ i.e., the construction of symbolic/cultural boundaries between ‘us’ and the ‘Other’. Spatialization of identity, nation and danger, for instance, are examples of boundary-drawing practices which are always contested and reflect power relations. These practices, in which national (spatial) socialization and education play a crucial role, manifest themselves in such areas as foreign policy, media discourses and popular culture.⁶⁴

Boundary-drawing practices and the process of othering can be community driven socio-cultural constructs, as seen with different linguistic and religious groups living in proximity to one another, or can be state-driven legal and institutional practices, as in the case of Italian Jews. Boundary-drawing practices demarcate the criteria of inclusion and exclusion and are essential to the creation of national and racial hierarchies. This thesis will discuss the Fascist regime’s engagement with inclusionary and exclusionary boundary-drawing practices in the Italianization campaigns—which included the centralization of borderland institutions and administrative structures, the Italianization of place names and public spaces, and the nationalization of the press and educational system—and place these boundary-drawing practices in conversation with those instituted under the racial laws. It will also examine the relationship between boundary-drawing practices and foreign policy, which are both integral to national identity

⁶³ Anssi Paasi, “The Changing Discourses,” 18.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

construction. As Gearóid O Tuathail and Simon Dalby note, “foreign policy involves the making of the ‘foreign’ as an identity and space against which a domestic self is evoked and realized.”⁶⁵ Foreign policy is therefore an essential boundary-drawing practice that cannot be separated from domestic boundary-drawing practices. As this thesis will show, narratives of othering and boundary-drawing practices became increasingly repressive and exclusionary throughout the *ventennio* in response to the delegitimization of assimilationism and the radicalization/racialization of the Fascist program in the 1930s.

For the purposes of this study the term “borderlands” will primarily refer to the regions of northeastern Italy which were annexed after the First World War and continued to remain as part of Italy after the Second World War. As such, the eastern border regions of Istria, Fiume, Pola and Dalmatia, which were annexed by Italy after 1918 but not included in the Italian state after 1945, will not be included in this framework. Instead, the borderlands will encompass the major centres and smaller border towns of Venezia Tridentina and Venezia Giulia. These include Trento/Trent/Trient, Bolzano/Bozen/Bulsan, Merano/Meran to the north and Trieste/Triest/Trst, Postojna/Postumia/Adelsberger and Gorizia/Gorica/Görz to the east. This framework will also include the regions on the other side of the border in an effort to explore the relationship between the institutions and communities of the Italian border regions with those in neighbouring states. In the case of Venezia Tridentina, this includes the Austrian region of Tirol and its centre in Innsbruck, and in the case of Venezia Giulia, the Yugoslavian regions to the east of the Austrian Littoral (Slovene Littoral/Julian March) towards Lubiana/Ljubljana/Laibach. I will primarily use the terms Germanic-linguistic

⁶⁵ Gearóid O Tuathail and Simon Dalby, eds. “Introduction: Rethinking Geopolitics. Towards a critical geopolitics” in *Rethinking Geopolitics*, (London: Routledge, 1998), 4.

community and Slovenian/Slavic-linguistic community when referring to the *allogeni* communities in the 1920s, whereas the terms German and Slovenian/Slav will be used more frequently during the period of racialization in the 1930s. Both terms were used interchangeable in the 1920s and 1930s but the distinction in this study is reflective of the Fascist government's changing perspective of the linguistic and racial nature of these communities.

This study draws from the archival collections of the *Archivio Centrale dello Stato* (ACS; Central State Archives) in Rome, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington D.C., state archives in Trieste (ASTs), and the *Fondazione Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea* (CDEC) in Milan. The main archival sources used in this study come from the offices of the *prefettura* (prefecture) of Trieste and Bolzano and the Ministry of the Interior in Rome. These files include official reports and correspondence on the implementation of Italianization and the anti-Jewish laws between provincial prefects and the Interior Ministry, as well as communications between the prefect and local institutions, such as the *questore* (police commissioner), *podesta* (mayor), *carabinieri* (state police), and educational administrators, offering insight into how local officials interpreted Fascist Italianization and racial policies and the impact of these policies on the targeted communities. These sources discuss the policies of repression and surveillance carried out against the *allogeni* and Jewish citizens, the regimes' numerous investigations into anti-Italian sentiments and activities and the directives to counter these subversive acts, and the interception and censorship of anti-Italian "propaganda."

In addition to official documents, private letters and written testimony offer insight

into the experiences of Italians and minority communities in South Tyrol and Trieste during the Fascist *ventennio* and Nazi occupation. Speeches and articles written by Mussolini and other members of the Fascist elite shed light on the narratives of othering used to legitimize oppressive policies and the place of the borderlands within the Fascist worldview. In addition to Italian local and national newspaper reports, which have been thoroughly referenced in other studies, this thesis utilizes reports from the *New York Times*, which regularly covered stories that were censored or unreported in Italian newspapers. Furthermore, these reports offer a more international perspective on major events and developments in the *Triveneto* borderlands.

Changing core-periphery relations, boundary-drawing practices and policies of inclusion and othering will be analyzed through five stages of the borderland's development—the period of irredentism and annexation (1861-1918), the era of Fascist assimilationism (1918-1930) the era of exclusionary-othering (1930-1943), occupation and isolation (1943-1945), and finally, the period of post-war reconstruction (1945-1948). Chapter 1 discusses the Trento and Trieste irredentist movements from the time of the *Risorgimento* to the First World War, exploring the connections between irredentism, nationalism and fascism. It examines the changing relationship between the communities of Trentino-South Tyrol and the Adriatic Littoral and the governments in Vienna and Rome at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, the ethnonational and socio-political conflicts unleashed in the region in the wake of the First World War, and the important role that the borderlands played in the rise of fascism between 1918-1922.

Chapter 2 looks at competing claims and international debates surrounding Italy's

new borders, and the connection between Fascist Italy's domestic and foreign policy. The first section examines the early years of the Fascist Italianization campaigns (1922-1925) and the impact of these policies on the development of Fascist Italy's relationship with its new neighbours, Austria and Yugoslavia. The second section discusses the impact of the Fascist consolidation of power (1925-1930) on the borderland assimilationist programs and Fascist boundary-drawing practices. It analyzes the national laws, regional decrees and narratives of inclusion and othering that the Fascist government used to justify the erasure of Slovenian and German cultural, political and social life. Special attention will be given to the laws and procedures for the transfer and exclusion of *maestri stranieri* (foreign teachers). Furthermore, it discusses how domestic and international challenges to Italian sovereignty in the borderlands shaped Fascist approaches to foreign policy and Italianization.

Chapter 3 explores the transition from assimilation to racial exclusion in the 1930s, and examines the convergences and divergences between the ideological, legal, procedural and institutional frameworks of Italianization and anti-Jewish persecution (1930-1943). It examines the internal and external forces that pushed Fascist Italy towards the adoption of the racial laws, including the rise of Nazi Germany and Italy's invasion of Ethiopia, and the impact of the racial laws on Italianization. The final chapter discusses how Italianization and racial persecution influenced group dynamics during the Nazi occupation (1943-1945) of the borderlands, with specific focus on the experiences of Jews in Venezia Giulia and Trentino-South Tyrol, and the "settling of scores" that ensued between Slovenian, German and Italian residents. It explores the borderland's place as an important strategic frontier of the Third Reich and the Fascist government's response to

the Nazi occupation of Italian territory. Finally, it discusses the borderlands' transformation into a gateway for perpetrators and refugees during and after the war, and the Italian government's approach to the border provinces in the immediate post-war period (1945-1948).

CHAPTER ONE

DREAMING OF TRENTO AND TRIESTE: *ITALIA IRREDENTA* AND THE RISE OF FASCISM



Map 1: Northern Italy, 1855

Source: Geographicus Rare Antique Maps, “Northern Italy, Lombardy & Venice, Sardinia, Tuscany, Parma, Podena, Lucca and the State of the Church,” in G.W Colton, *Colton’s Atlas of the World Illustrating Physical and Political Geography*, Vol.2 (New York: 1855), no. 18.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1855_Colton%27s_Map_of_Northern_Italy_and_Corsica_-_Geographicus_-_ItalyNorth-colton-1855.jpg

In the wake of the First World War and the fall of the Russian, Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires, European politicians were tasked with the complete remaking of nation-state boundaries throughout the continent. This included the re-drawing of existing borders between states, as well as the construction of new nation-states from former

imperial lands. For the Kingdom of Italy, territorial expansion, national prestige and international prominence had been the primary motivators in joining the Triple Entente in 1915 against their former Austro-Hungarian and German allies. The push to reclaim regions of the so-called *Italia irredenta* (“unredeemed Italy”) and establish a position of power on the European stage led the Kingdom of Italy into a conflict that would result in the death of over 600,000 soldiers and the complete upheaval of Italian national life. Far from unifying the country, the First World War would lead to the further fragmentation of the Italian state and its people.¹

The following chapter examines how the myth of *Italia irredenta* became part of the geographical and mental maps of Italian nationalism and fascism, and discusses the process through which *Italia irredenta* became a foundational concept of the Fascist redemptive struggle. It explores (1) the development of the irredentist movement before the First World War; (2) the place of irredentism in the development of Mussolini’s ideology and rhetoric; (3) and the role of the borderlands in the rise of the Fascist movement from the First World War to the March on Rome. As this chapter will show, while the irredentist struggle initially existed as a fringe-cultural and political movement relegated to the national frontier, the rise of nationalism and the escalation of the European conflict transformed the irredentist struggle into a powerful symbol of national prestige, valour and redemption. The symbol of *Italia irredenta* became a central aspect of Fascist

¹ The number of Italian casualties over four years of war was astounding. It is estimated that a million men were wounded and over 600,000 – 10.3 percent of all soldiers mobilized – had been killed. Around 200,000 women lost their husbands, and 400,000 children became orphans. Antonio Gibelli, “Italy,” In *A Companion to World War I*, eds. John Horne and translated by Paul O’Brien (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell: 2010), 464-465.

rhetoric and ideology at its inception and the borderlands played a crucial role in the rise of fascism and the development of the movement's program and methods.

AT THE CENTER OF TWO PERIPHERIES: BETWEEN VIENNA AND ROME

Between the Wars of Unification and the First World War, Italy's northeastern borderlands transformed from a peripheral and, for most Italians, an inconsequential frontier to one of the most important battlegrounds in the fight for Italian identity, nationalism and sovereignty. Over five hundred years of Habsburg rule, these multilingual regions were integrated into the social, political and economic network of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and its centre in Vienna. Yet, the growth of nationalism in the 19th century shifted dynamics within the multiethnic empire, as ideas of patriotism and the concept of "the nation" and "homeland" began to redefine the importance of language, culture and customs in the conception of identity and belonging.² The fight to join all Italian-speaking peoples under one unified nation-state led to fierce debates over the geographic, linguistic and political boundaries of the envisioned Kingdom of Italy.³ Throughout the second half of the 19th century, these debates slowly unravelled the social fabric binding the multiethnic communities of Trentino-Alto Adige and the Adriatic Littoral, where Latin culture and Italian-speaking people met the diverse populations of the Austrian empire.

² On the fall of the Austro-Hungarian empire see John Mason, *The Dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, 1867-1918*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2013) and Alan Sked, *The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire, 1815-1918*, 2nd ed. (Abingdon Oxon: Routledge, 2013).

³ On the Italian Wars of Unification see Martin Clark, *The Italian Risorgimento*, 2nd edition, (London: Routledge, 2013); Spencer C. Tucker, "Italian Wars of Independence (Wars of Unification) (1848-1849, 1959, and 1866)," in *The Roots and Consequences of Independence Wars: Conflicts that Changed World History* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2013); and Spencer DiScala, *Italy from Revolution to Republic, 1700 to the present* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2009).

To fully understand the impact of the irredentist movement on the development of Fascist ideology it is important to provide a brief overview of the origins and development of Italian irredentism before fascism. The irredentist movement was born after the Third War of Unification in 1866, following the Italian government's decision to sign a treaty of peace with the Austrian empire which excluded the Italian-speaking communities in the provinces of Trento and Trieste from the Kingdom of Italy. In the latter half of the 19th century, Italian Austrians in the new borderlands found themselves between a hostile and unsettled imperial power and a nation-state that was unwilling to engage in yet another military conflict with its powerful neighbour.

For Italian irredentists and exiles, the signing of the Treaty of Vienna in October 1866 demonstrated that Italy had abandoned their national brethren in Trentino and Trieste. While the Italian public held little sympathy for the plight of Italian Austrians, Marina Cattaruzza has shown that the irredentist cause was supported by two important leaders of the *Risorgimento*. The Trento and Trieste movements were first “programmatically” unified by Giuseppe Mazzini in his public criticism of the Treaty of Vienna.⁴ In response to the armistice of 1866 Mazzini composed a furious protest:

Disgrace and ruin! It is dishonorable to abandon Italian lands when one has the means to claim them; it is dishonorable to hand these lands over to the enemy's revenge...it is a disgrace to send home an army of brave men...a dishonour to declare that the cliffs, still wet with the blood of our volunteers, is the property of Austria.⁵

Cattaruzza argues that with this article, Mazzini “built the argument that irredentism would use in the coming decades: a mixture of historical quotations, literary recollections,

⁴ Cattaruzza, *Italy and its Eastern Border, 1866-2016*, 9.

⁵ “Mazzini e i confine d'Italia. Lettera al circolo ‘Garibaldi’ di Trieste. Bologna, 2 marzo 1886,” in *Ricordi e Scritti di Aurelio Saffi*, vol. XIV (Florence: Tipografia Barbèra, 1905), 234.

strategic assessments and geographic considerations.”⁶ As one leader of the *Risorgimento* established the narrative foundation of irredentism, another would help create its institutional framework. In May 1877, Giuseppe Garibaldi and his allies founded the *Associazione in pro dell'Italia Irredenta* (Association for Unredeemed Italy) with the aim of building a national network to promote and support the irredentist cause.⁷ As a banded group, irredentists and exiled Italian Austrians hoped to exert more influence within the political, social and academic circles of Italy and Austria.

Some irredentists advocated for a separatist agenda and lobbied for the Italian government's support against, what they perceived to be, an increasingly hostile and oppressive Austrian government. However, their protests fell on deaf ears, as the Italian government prioritized its greater geopolitical and foreign policy aims over the promotion of the Kingdom's claims to *Italia irredenta*. The government's stance was solidified with its entrance into the Triple Alliance (*Triplice Alleanza/ Dreibund*) with Austria and Germany in May 1882. By entering this treaty each state agreed to a policy of mutual peace and friendship and promised to intervene in the event of an attack on any member state by another great power.⁸ In 1887, Austria and Italy further pledged that no territorial changes would be made in the Balkans without prior consultation and compensation by either state.⁹ With this Treaty, the Italian government made clear its priorities and Trento

⁶ Mazzini's article was published in *Unità Italia* on 25 August 1966. Cattaruzza, *Italy and its Eastern Border*, 10.

⁷ As the central “Italian” cities in each region, Trento and Trieste became the shorthand representing irredentist claims in both the Tyrol and Adriatic. Ibid, 16.

⁸ For an English version of the Triple Alliance treaty see “Triple Alliance with Austria and Italy (May 20, 1882),” in *Forging an Empire: Bismarkian Germany, 1886-1890*, edited by James Retallack, volume 4, *German History in Documents and Images*, German Historical Institute, Washington, DC (www.germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org).

⁹ Cattaruzza, *Italy and its Eastern Border*, 18. See also Alfred Franzis Pribram, “The Secret Treatise of the Triple Alliance,” *The Atlantic*, February 1920, 251-263.

and Trieste were once again set aside in favour of a stronger geo-political position for the Kingdom of Italy. Receiving little political or financial support from the Italian government, irredentist and exile groups devised multiple strategies to promote and maintain the fight for Italian rights in the borderlands and throughout the empire.

Between 1866-1880 Italian irredentism existed as a regional movement primarily supported and developed by Italian academics, intelligentsia and political elite living within the Hapsburg Empire and the northern Italian border regions. Irredentist organizations such as *Pro Patria* and the *Dante Alighieri Society* were established with two central aims: to spread the Italian language and culture in the borderland regions through the institution of schools, reading circles and publications, and to promote the superiority of Italian culture and the political and economic prominence of the Italian Austrian community within the Hapsburg Empire. The promotion of *italianità* became more pressing with the spread of ethno-nationalist rivalry in the multi-ethnic empire and the rise of competing irredentist and nationalist groups, such as the Pan-Germanist *Deutscher Verband* and the pro-Slavic *Edinost*, in the borderland regions.

Despite their impassioned declarations of the Italian character of these regions, irredentist narratives rarely aligned with the lived reality of individuals and communities in the borderlands, who did not ascribe to the highly politicized and nationalized identities promoted by the elite classes. In the Tyrolean Crown Lands, language existed as both a mental and social barrier between Italian and German speaking communities which prevented them from integrating or cooperating with one another. In his anthropological study of Tret and St. Felix of the Non Valley (Val di Non)—two 19th century villages “located on the linguistic, sociocultural and political boundary between the largely

German-speaking province of Bozen and the entirely Romance province of the Trentino”—Eric Wolf found that the villages’ close proximity and shared “common ecological patterning of their lives...bond[s] of common interest [and] interpersonal communications,” were not able to bridge the gap between their “different cultural worlds.”¹⁰ These cultural worlds were distinguished by differing social structures, interpersonal relations and diverging practices of communal living, land holdings, homestead, and inheritance. Different customs and limited social interactions resulted in only a few marriages between villages in the nineteenth century.¹¹ The Italian-speaking and German-speaking communities at the Tyrol-Trentino boundary were, therefore, geographically close but deeply divided by language, custom and social hierarchies.

The establishment of Italian language schools and irredentist associations coincided with the rise of what Gian Maria Varanini describes as “militant historiographical irredentism” in intellectual circles.¹² In the case of the Trentino, Varanini states that “the idea of Trentino was mythologized and hypostatized by irredentism,” that it did not garner political or historiographical support from the region’s ruling classes and was not reflective of the “public spirit of the city and territory.” The irredentist struggle in the Trentino was largely promoted and disseminated by irredentists from Trieste, Rovereto and Venice.¹³ Being a largely external movement, the nationalizing narratives of the early irredentist movement did not effectively penetrate the hearts and minds of the Trentini or

¹⁰ Eric R. Wolf, “Cultural Dissonance in the Italian Alps,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 5 no.1 (1962): 2, doi:10.1017/S0010417500001493. For more on this topic see John W. Cole and Eric R. Wolf, *The Hidden Frontier* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

¹¹ According to Wolf, “of six hundred sixty-seven marriages since 1800 recorded into the two villages only six involved partners from the two villages.” Wolf, “Cultural Dissonance,” 7-8.

¹² Gian Maria Varanini, “Irredentismi storiografici: il caso del Trentino tra Ottocento e Novecento,” *Reti Medievali Rivista* 16, no.1 (2015): 280, doi:10.6092/1593-2214/452.

¹³ Varanini, “Irredentismi storiografici,” 277-278.

have any immediate influence on the socio-political structures of the region. Within Trentino, historiographical narratives and their associated publications were influenced by the “identity traditions of individual valleys,” and not by the national-linguistic affiliations of its people.¹⁴

In addition to the communal histories and identities of the Alpine valleys, the Tyrolean Crown Lands possessed an especially prominent provincial identity (*Landesbewußtsein*) dating back to the events of the Tyrolean peasant uprising (1809). Following Napoleon’s victory at the Battle of Austerlitz (1805), Tyrol was ceded to Bavaria. Under Bavarian rule, taxes rose, the economy declined and the Tyrolean way of life was under threat. In 1809, the Bavarian army’s conscription of Tyrolean men provoked a popular uprising. Innkeeper and trader Andreas Hofer led the Tyrolean *Schützen* in a rebellion against the Franco-Bavarian occupation. The Tyroleans spectacularly defeated the Bavarians at the second Battle of Berg Isel near Innsbruck but were later overwhelmed by Italo-French troops. The Tyrolean rebellion had a profound impact on the development of Tyrolean history, memory and identity and transformed the region’s relationship with neighbouring powers. Empowered by their strong regional identity, the Tyrolean rebellion marked the Tyrolese as a people who would fight against any power that attempted to suppress their culture or defile their homeland. Hofer became a symbol of patriotism for 19th century German nationalists and a symbol of a unique Tyrolean national identity (*die Tiroler Nation*). To this day, Hofer is celebrated as a freedom fighter and regional folk hero.¹⁵

¹⁴ Ibid, 283-284.

¹⁵ Andreas Hofer was captured in January 1810 and taken to Mantua, where he was executed by firing squad on 20 February 1810. For more see Eyeck F. Gunther, *Loyal Rebels. Andreas Hofer and the Tyrolean Uprising of 1809* (Lanham, MD: U.P. of America, 1986).

While the Italian-speaking and German-speaking communities of the Trentino were divided by the geographic structures of the Alpine valleys and accompanying social hierarchies and memory cultures, the Italians of the Austrian Littoral lived in a region characterized by contact and cooperation amongst religious, linguistic and culturally diverse communities. Trieste's large Italian population was prominent in the port-city's economic, cultural and political milieu but Trieste was not a melting pot of diversity. In this cosmopolitan space, the concept of the borderlands and identity were continually redefined. In the first half of the 19th century, many of Trieste's inhabitants favoured a local "Triestine" identity over any linguistic-national affiliations. However, as Katia Pizzi has shown, this "Triestine" ('*triestinità*') identity was shaped by the contemporary Italian literary canon and as such "paradoxically...conformed with a perception of Trieste as [a] national and patriotic symbol of '*italianità*.'"¹⁶ Through her study of Italian thinkers like Pacifico Valussi, Dominique Kirchner Reill has demonstrated that Italian nationalist theorists in the mid-19th century presented the Trieste borderlands not as "blended realms but instead [as] 'rings' linking neighbouring nations," and argued that these "nations were not administrative states but distinctive communities defined by language and customs."¹⁷ These and other borderlands were important spaces of contact where the real "workshops of nation building" were taking place.¹⁸

In both Trento and Trieste, irredentists confronted a community of Italian-speaking people who often identified with local customs and social structures and did not adhere to

¹⁶ Katia Pizzi, "Trieste: A Border Identity," *Cultures of Memory, Memories of Culture Conference*, University of Cyprus, Cyprus, 20-22 February 2004.

¹⁷ Dominique Kirchner Reill, *Nationalists Who Feared the Nation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 110.

¹⁸ Reill, *Nationalists*, 111.

the roles, sentiments and ethno-national identities that were being imposed on them. As long-time members of a multi-ethnic empire, these communities had adapted to living in multi-ethnic spaces, whether that be through the maintenance of social and linguistic barriers as was practiced in the Tyrol-Trentino border or through the establishment of a more cosmopolitan system as seen in Trieste. In light of this reality, irredentists faced the difficult task of “remaking” Italian inhabitants in the “unredeemed lands.” Italian irredentists recast these regionally specific traditions and narratives as part of a greater Italian national tradition but argued that more needed to be done to promote the ethno-linguistic cohesion of the region’s Italian population. Through education and the complete re-writing of the regions’ histories, these people would be stitched into the fabric of the Italian national community, even while they continued to live outside of Italy’s national boundaries and primarily identified as loyal Austrian subjects.

Between the turn of the century and beginning of the First World War, a series of events propelled irredentism from its stronghold in the borderlands to the center of the Italian socio-political sphere. These tumultuous years saw transnational crises manifest as regional conflicts, while local disputes infiltrated international politics. Overtime, this vicious cycle would destabilize the national and transnational structures of power holding Europe together. First, the Badeni Ordinances (1897) led to a breakdown in relations between the Austrian Empire and its multi-ethnic citizens. Drafted by Austrian statesman Count Casimir Badeni, these ordinances proposed that civil servants in the Kingdom of Bohemia conduct their affairs in both Czech and German. Refusal to do so would lead to their dismissal. This proposal was vehemently rejected by the Austro-Germans who, as

speakers of the imperial *lingua franca*, were accustomed to their linguistic privileges and lacked the same bilingual training as their Czech counterparts.¹⁹ Badeni's assertion that regional languages should "enjoy equal public status" enflamed nationalist passions throughout the multilingual empire.²⁰ The ordinances were eventually repealed and Badeni was dismissed, but little could be done to contain the fallout.

In the borderlands, the upheaval caused by the Badeni Ordinances was most prominently displayed through the disputes surrounding the Italian university question. Decades of irredentist indoctrination and the intensifying conflict regarding the linguistic privileges of non-German-speaking subjects had transformed Habsburg universities into tinderboxes of ethnic rivalry, aggression and violence.²¹ In these multi-ethnic spaces, the empire's political and linguistic policies were challenged by the growing nationalistic fervour amongst the students and faculty. Italian Austrian subjects clashed with the Austrian government over the former's desire to build a free Italian university in Trieste. To placate their Italian subjects, the Austrian government eventually agreed to establish an Italian law faculty at the University of Innsbruck, yet, neither side was satisfied by this compromise and it did little to abate the conflict. On the evening of 3 November 1904, following the faculty's opening ceremony, violence erupted between a group of Italians

¹⁹ The New York Times report blamed the unrest on the Austro-Hungarian empire: "the Austrian Germans [who] have not played their Parliamentary game with any decent sense of fairness. Although always in a numerical minority in the country, they have for years been able to secure a majority in the Parliament, and in all that time, so far from doing anything to pacify racial animosities, they have ridden roughshod over all other nationalities, grinding them remorselessly in the mud. However, the moment these races secure a Parliamentary majority and try to use it to do something for themselves, the Germans break up the Parliament and refuse to recognize any of the constitutional obligations resting on the minority, and even declare they will join the German Empire before they will submit to the Slavonic majority." Harold Frederic, "Germans or Czechs," *New York Times*, 5 December 1897, 19.

²⁰ Cattaruzza, *Italy and its Eastern Border*, 38. On the Badeni crisis see Victor Jaeschke, "A National 'Struggle for Survival'? – the Badeni Crisis of 1897 in Cisleithania's German-Language Press," *Sprawy Narodowościowe. Seria Nowa*, no. 49 (2017): 1–13, doi:10.11649/sn.1436.

²¹ On universities in the multiethnic empire see Jan Surman, *Universities in Imperial Austria 1848-1918: A Social History of a Multilingual Space* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2019).

and much larger German mob. The German mob swarmed the building, destroying the objects within it, and attacked the Italian students. After some time, a company of the Austrian military was called in to subdue the riot and a young Tyrolean artist named August Pezzey, was killed in the fray after he was stabbed by a soldier's bayonet.²²

The 1904 Innsbruck riots were followed by months of protests in Italy and Austria, which often resulted in the destruction of property and violent confrontations between opposing nationalist groups, police and military forces.²³ The Trieste daily newspaper *Il Piccolo* condemned the Austrian government for its inability to protect Italians and their freedoms, and criticized its decision to keep the faculty in Innsbruck, where Italian students “expose[d] themselves to so many dangers...[and] humiliations.”²⁴ The public demonstrations and international debates surrounding the Italian university question helped boost irredentism's popularity in the borderlands and across Italy.²⁵ The suppression of Italian-Austrian subjects struck a cord with Italians in the peninsula who had once lived under the “yoke” of the Austrian government, and instigated a series of anti-Austrian protests in cities across the Kingdom. Nationalist conflict in the borderlands and the rise of anti-Austrian sentiments in Italy posed a major threat to the relationship between Vienna and Rome, and Italian officials were forced to address the suppression of their national brethren. However, official protests against the violent encounters between

²²“Le scene selvage di ieri,” *Corriere della Sera*, 5 November 1904, 1; “Innsbruck Riots May Wreck the Dreibund,” *New York Times*, 6 November 1904, 4. According to the *New York Times* report August Pezzey was killed by a “bayonet thrust” from an Austrian soldier, however, the military denied this claim, stating that he was instead murdered by “rioters.” *Ibid.*

²³ “Demand of Innsbruck Refused by Austria,” *New York Times*, 7 November 1904, 9.

²⁴ “I fatti d’Innsbruck,” *Il Piccolo*, 6 November 1904, 1.

²⁵ While one report argued that Innsbruck was a “purely German city, with an insignificant number of Italian residents” another ascribed the conflict to the “racial hatred between Italians and Austro-Germans in Italian provinces subject to Austria, the latter element having vainly tried for five centuries to Germanize the provinces.” “Italy Protests to Austria,” *New York Times*, 13 November 1904, 4.

Italian-speakers and German-speakers in Innsbruck were superficial, as both Italian and Austrian officials desired to suppress inter-ethnic conflict in order to maintain friendly relations.

The Italian university question, Innsbruck riots and their aftermath demonstrate how irredentist narratives began to infiltrate everyday life in the borderlands, while also fostering patriotic fervour in important socio-political centres across Italy and Austria. The controversy surrounding the Italian university question and associated national unrest brought attention to the empires' oppression of their Italian minority, which endowed the irredentist cause with greater legitimacy and urgency across all strata of Italian society. Italians throughout the peninsula became enraged with an "ally" that relegated their national brethren to second class subjects and impeded the unification of the Italian state. The 1904 riots also laid bare the escalating and increasingly unmanageable tensions between the Austrian empire and its multi-ethnic subjects. The diversification of language rights proved to be a Pandora's box for imperial authorities, as the granting of greater linguistic autonomy to any national group upended the balance of power within multi-national spaces. Vienna's efforts to stamp out Italian irredentism with the offer of linguistic or institutional concession only fanned the flames of German nationalism. In turn, the violent response of German-speakers towards Italian autonomy further strengthened the resolve of Italian irredentists and brought greater attention to their cause within the Italian public and political spheres.

In the wake of the 1904 riots, cracks began to form in the Triple Alliance as both the Austrian and Italian governments found it difficult to ignore the nationalist tensions in the borderlands. These cracks deepened in the wake of Austria's annexation of Bosnia-

Herzegovina in 1908. This campaign was carried out in direct violation of the terms of the Triple Alliance, which dictated that the Austrian government would not make any territorial changes in the Balkans without consulting and compensating the Kingdom of Italy. According to Andrea Ungari, this event “led not only to the effective dissolution of the alliance between Italy and the Central Powers...but crucially, also aroused an injured Italian national sentiment. Broad sections of Italian public opinion and of the country’s ruling class had expected Austria-Hungary to make territorial concessions of Italian unifications ‘unredeemed lands’ (*Italia irredenta*), namely Trento and Trieste.” The annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Austria’s unwillingness to abide by the terms of the alliance put pressure on the already fractured relationship between the neighbouring powers and further diminished Italian public opinion and the government’s faith in their Austrian allies. It also helped to accelerate Italian irredentism’s fusion with nationalist and conservative political groups working towards “the birth of new Italian nationalism,” which would soon consume Italian politics.²⁶

The agitations of the nationalist struggles in the borderland and the growth of nationalist ideology in the Kingdom of Italy transformed and radicalized the various strains of the irredentist movement. Dennison Rusinow argues that there were two generations of irredentists. The first proposed an ethnic concept of Italy and worked towards “the redemption of all Italians left outside the border of 1866.” At the turn of the 20th century the second generation of irredentists proposed a geographic concept of Italy and called for the redemption of all Italian territories, “which they, like Mazzini, defined in terms of the Alps—but with the added stipulation that ‘the Alps’ meant the watershed.”

²⁶Andrea Ungari, “New Italian Nationalism,” in *The New Nationalism and the First World War*, eds. L. Rosenthal et al. (Basingstoke, Hampshire UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 48.

The second generation was most vocally represented by the work of Rovereto geographer Ettore Tolomei, founder of the irredentist journal *Archivio per l'Alto Adige*, and the Roman journalist Virginio Gayda, who promoted Italy's claims to Trieste in his book *L'Italia d'oltre confine* (1914). Both would go on to become important members of the Fascist party. Rusinow describes the shift from the first to second generation of irredentists as a shift from "nationality to national frontiers" or from an "ethnic to a geographic concept of Italy." The latter ignored the ethno-linguistic composition of the regions and instead focus on the establishment of a mountain frontier that would be most advantageous for Italy's militaristic goals.²⁷

In the last two decades of the 19th century, Trieste became the major battleground for competing irredentist movements amongst Italian politicians and intellectuals battling over its meaning, purpose and intended outcomes. On one side were the Austrian multi-nationalists, consisting of Italian-speakers who promoted Italian linguistic and cultural rights in order to exert their influence within the Austrian empire and secure a more prominent position in the economic and social circles of Vienna and Trieste. The multi-nationalists asserted that Trieste's economic prosperity was rooted in its cosmopolitanism and connection to the Austrian hinterland and therefore did not support Italian expansionism or the separation of the Adriatic from the empire. They believed that a separatist agenda would only serve to threaten the prominence of Italians in Trieste rather than strengthen it. Instead of separation, multi-nationalist lobbied for a confederate

²⁷ Rusinow, *Italy's Austrian Heritage*, 17-18.

solution to counter Austrian dominance, while preserving the city's cosmopolitan identity.²⁸

In opposition to the moderate multi-nationalists was a more radical “political-territorial irredentism”—an aggressive nationalist and anti-Slavic movement which called for a stronger “national defense” to protect the *italianità* of Trieste from the Austrian oppressors and Slavic adversary.²⁹ This more radical strain of irredentism was embodied in the figure of Guglielmo Oberdan, who helped coordinate a failed assassination attempt against Emperor Franz Joseph I.³⁰ In protest of Austria's occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (1878) and the signing of the Triple Alliance (1882), Oberdan and a group of irredentists plotted to assassinate the emperor during his 1882 visit to Trieste, which was arranged in celebration of the city's 500th years under Austrian rule. Oberdan, who was arrested and executed by hanging after the plot was revealed, was celebrated as a hero and martyr of irredentism, and became an important symbol of Italy's growing nationalist movement.

Separatism was not widely supported in early irredentist circles. However a series of events in the latter half of the 19th century—the linguistic suppression and intensifying ostracism of Italians from Austria's social and political circles, the city's economic downturn and the rise of Pan-Slavism—caused many to abandon the moderate position of the multi-nationalists for a more aggressive separatist nationalism. One of the more influential forces driving irredentism towards a more radical platform was the rise of the

²⁸ See Fabio Capano, “From a cosmopolitan to a Fascist land: Adriatic irredentism in motion,” *Nationalities Papers* 46, no.6 (2018): 976-991, doi:10.1080/00905992.2017.1344626

²⁹ Angelo Ara and Claudio Magris, *Trieste Un'Identità Frontiera* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi, 2015), 52-53.

³⁰ Oberdan was born Wilhelm Oberdank to a Slovenian mother and Austrian father. He was only 24 years old when he was executed. Moerhle, *Judenverfolgung in Triest*, 38.

Trieste's Slavic community and the competing Pan-Slavic movement. Some multi-nationalists saw the rise of Pan-Slavism as an opportunity to build a European federation, while others perceived the movement as a major threat to Italian social and economic supremacy in the Adriatic. The denial of Slavic historical or political legitimacy in Italian irredentist rhetoric can be traced back to the Third War of Independence in 1866. Irredentists presented the Slavs as a foreign race, residing in the region "as the consequence of invasion or hospitality, neither of which can yield rights."³¹ Irredentist Carlo Combi wrote of Istrian Slavs as a people of no cultural importance or political impact:

[They are] foreigners even to the point of being unable to understand one another, and foreign to the Slavs beyond the Alps, they are leaves fallen off the trees of their own nation; certainly, none of them will have the power to return to life on the branch from which they were separated. They lived and live without history, without memory, without institutions, not at all pleased with their origin, but yearning to be considered equal to us.³²

The growth of Trieste's Slovenian community and their expanding influence in the city's political, social and economic circles agitated Italian anti-Slavic sentiment. As Trieste's banks and industries boomed, so did its population. Between 1810 and 1890, Trieste's population grew from 29,000 to 157,466, and reached 229,510 in 1910.³³ Attracted by the city's strong economy and job market, Slovenians from the surrounding region moved to the port-city in great numbers, contributing to the growth of Trieste's proletariat and middle classes. Slovenian banks, law firms, schools, cultural and political associations, and publishing houses grew at a rapid pace. According to Moehrle, by the

³¹ Quoted in Cattaruzza, *Italy and its Eastern Border*, 34.

³² *Ibid*, 35.

³³ Moehrle, *Judenverfolgung in Triest*, 32.

1870s, “Catholic Slovenes made up a third of the [city’s] population and were represented by over 120 association and societies”³⁴ Triestine society offered Slovenians access to positions within the Habsburg civil service and a chance to gain greater political influence within the Austrian government. In turn, Slovenian nationalists used the prominence of the city’s Slovenian community and their large numbers in the regions outside of Trieste, to legitimize calls for the annexation of the Adriatic to a unified Slovenian or Pan-Slavic State.

In response to the rise of Pan-Slavism, Italian nationalists and irredentist groups attempted to diminish the legitimacy of Slovenian cultural, political and linguistic rights and assert their superior status in the economic, intellectual and political circles of Triestine and Austrian society. Italian journalists like Virginio Gayda presented the Slavs as “semi-barbaric, peasant people” who were linguistically, culturally and ethnically inferior.³⁵ Anti-Slavism quickly infiltrated the political landscape of the Adriatic and became a central platform for Italian liberal parties, which attempted to strip their Slavic neighbours of their political and linguistic rights.³⁶ Italian suppression of the Adriatic’s Slavic population fostered deep resentments between the communities that would shape Italian-Slavic communal and diplomatic relations for decades to come.

By the turn of the century, many irredentists in Trieste had abandoned the multicultural spirit of Hapsburg imperialism for a more radical Italian nationalism. Cattaruzza divides these groups between the “cultural irredentists” and the “national irredentists.” The more liberal-minded “cultural irredentists” aimed to build stronger ties

³⁴ Ibid, 37.

³⁵ Rusinow, *Italy’s Austrian Heritage*, 28-29.

³⁶ Cattaruzza, *Italy and its Eastern Border*, 35.

between Italians in the Kingdom and across the border, and to disseminate the principles of *italianità* and the Kingdom's influence throughout the continent and engage in a fruitful cultural exchange with the German and Slavic worlds. Irredentists like Angelo Vivante, Gaetano Salvemini and Scipio Slataper debated the premises and goals of “cultural irredentism” in publications such as *La Voce* and *L'Unità*. Cultural irredentists in Trieste did not support separatist rhetoric or promote Italy's annexation of the Adriatic but instead saw the region as a gateway to another world, a bastion of Latin culture from which Italy's sphere of influence would extend into Europe.³⁷

In opposition to the “cultural irredentists” stood the “nationalist irredentists” and their separatist agenda. This position was exemplified in the writings of Trieste's Ruggero Timeus, who made numerous contributions to republican and nationalist magazines such as *L'Emancipazione* and *L'Idea Nazionale*. In Timeus' mind, there was no question of the legitimacy of Italy's claims to the Adriatic and other ancient Italian territories, which would act as a springboard to Italy's imperialist conquest in the Balkans and Mediterranean. According to Cattaruzza, Timeus' militancy was reflective of “the new mood in Italian nationalism, which, [discarded] liberal and democratic values...to embrace the idea of naked power politics and the authoritarian state.”³⁸ This new mood became increasingly popular in the borderlands, where irredentist and nationalist ideals were routinely challenged and defended. The growth of Italy's new nationalism, widespread economic and social unrest in Europe and Austria's refusal to grant Italian Austrians greater autonomy or equal status in the empire, pushed many multi-nationalist

³⁷ Cattaruzza, *Italy and its Eastern Border*, 39.

³⁸ Ruggero Timeus died 14 September 1915 at the age of 23, fighting as a volunteer of the 8th Alpini Regiment during the First World War. *Ibid*, 41.

supporters away from their relatively moderate stance towards this more militaristic, national-imperialist approach.

The convergence of irredentism, nationalism and imperialism in the first decades of the 20th century deeply influenced Italy's decision to go to war in 1911 and 1915—two events that would inextricably alter Italy's historical trajectory. “Thus, an era of the gravest menace to Europe has been opened,” wrote the *New York Times*, following the Italian invasion of Libya on 30 September 1911. “Nobody can foretell what developments the conflict may take—whether it will lead to the break-up of the Ottoman dominion in Europe or precipitate a European Armageddon.”³⁹ Less than three years later, on 28 June 1914 Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie, Duchess of Hohenberg, were assassinated in Sarajevo and the “European Armageddon” was unleashed.

Italy chose to remain neutral as Europe went to war in the summer of 1914. To justify its decision to withhold assistance from their Austrian and German allies, the Italian government argued that Austria-Hungary, having declared war on Serbia in August 1914, was the main aggressor of the conflict and had already broken the terms of the Triple Alliance with the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908. In this period of heightened nationalist conflict, the idea of going to war alongside Austria and Germany was an unpopular prospect for many Italians who, by this point, harboured strong anti-Austrian feelings.⁴⁰ For over thirty years, Italy and Austria had overcome their territorial and

³⁹ “Italy Begins War on Turkey: Wins First Naval Battle,” *New York Times*, 30 September 1911, 1.

⁴⁰ Public and political support for the Triple Alliance in Italy reached a new low in September 1913 when the Austrian Lieutenant Governor of Trieste, Prince Hohenlehe “decided to issue a decree expelling from the province all foreigners engaged on the public works. As the foreigners in this case meant Italians, an extremely painful impression [had] been made throughout the peninsula, and the long dormant subject of “irredentism” had suddenly become lively.” “‘Irredentism’ Revived,” *New York Times*, 14 September 1913, 61.

political disputes under the cooperative framework of the Triple Alliance, but the First World War presented Italy with an opportunity she could not pass up—a chance to redraw her borders and assert her will on the European stage.

Italian society was split between those who believed that Italy should join the war, the interventionists, and those who supported neutrality, the neutralists. Both sides attracted supporters from varying ideological groups and economic classes.⁴¹ Those who supported intervention—including nationalists, the bourgeoisie, students, democrats, and some socialists, including a young Benito Mussolini—saw the war as a chance to reclaim *Italia irredenta* and to prove the nation's worth in the eyes of European powers. Others hoped that the mobilization of the Italian people under one collective cause would accelerate nationalization.

Irredentists and Italian exiles in the border regions played a major role in pushing the nationalist camp towards interventionism. Ungari notes that after the initial outbreak of the war in 1914 Italian nationalists expressed “a certain reluctance...to fight alongside the Western Powers, as the movement was ideologically averse to their liberal political regimes.” Nationalists and many amongst the “liberal political class and army... admired instead the German authoritarian political model. But the irredentist strain in the ANI [Italian Nationalist Association] proved decisive and led to the nationalist's participation in the interventionist movement.”⁴² Irredentists had a more difficult time convincing a majority of parliament and the public to support intervention. Most Italians did not care to fight and die for the “redemption” of far-away lands to which they had no connection.

⁴¹ Roberta Pergher, “An Italian War? War and Nation in the Italian Historiography of the First World War,” *The Journal of Modern History* 90 (December 2018): 874, doi:10.1086/700561.

⁴² Ungari, “New Italian Nationalism,” 55.

Those in parliament feared that the fall of the Ottoman and Hapsburg Empires would result in a complete upending of the balance of power, which would destabilize Europe and Italy's position within it. The security of Italy's borders would be threatened as the loss of the Austrian buffer would leave the nation open to both the "Slavic masses" and the encroachment of the Russian empire.

Despite widespread support of neutralism, Italian Prime Minister Antonio Salandra and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sidney Sonnino entered negotiations with both the Central Powers and Triple Entente, to see which side would offer more favourable terms for Italy's support. Italy's territorial demands included, "the entire Province of Trent, bringing her frontier to Venoste, Passirio and Beonio, including the Districts of Rovereto, Trento, Bressanone, Meran, Bressanone, and Brunico. To the east she [desired] to extend her frontier to the Julian Alps, including the provinces of Gorizia and Istria, with the Districts of Tolmezzo, Gorizia, Trieste, Pola and Fiume."⁴³ These demands seemed absurd and impractical to many in the international community. One article published in the *New York Times* on 28 March 1915 asserted that both the history of the region and its population did not support Italian demands. The article also offered a warning:

In all human probability, if Irredentist dreams come true, Italy will find herself with a problem on her hands almost as serious as that which Germany has had in Alsace Lorraine. The German inhabitants of South Tyrol have always been the most loyal subjects of the house of Hapsburg. It is inconceivable to think of the German peasants of the Trentino becoming loyal Italians as it is to think of the Italians becoming loyal Prussians. The Slavs in the irredentist lands have absolutely nothing in common with Italy, those who are disloyal to Vienna or Budapest look to Petrograd for inspiration and certainly not to Rome. In gratifying Irredentist hopes Italy would assume not only a language question, but also a race question and a national question.⁴⁴

⁴³ "Italy demands much territory from Austria," *New York Times*, 17 March 1915, 1.

⁴⁴ George B. McClellan, "Italy's Price for Neutrality," *New York Times*, 28 March 1915, 58.

As the report predicted, Italy's demands laid the groundwork for decades of future conflict within the borderlands and between Italy and the new neighbouring states. On 26 April 1915, the Triple Entente and the Kingdom of Italy signed the Treaty of London, in which Italy agreed to declare war on the Germany and Austria-Hungary in exchange for *Italia irredenta*. The irredentist dream of redemption and nationalist fantasy of social unification were finally within reach but remained elusive. Although the conflict resulted in the unification of a large part of *Italia irredenta* with Italy, in many ways it led to the further fragmentation of Italian society after the war.

MUTILATED VICTORY: *ITALIA IRREDENTA*, THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND THE POLITICAL EDUCATION OF BENITO MUSSOLINI

Far from achieving the peace and unity promised by the irredentists and interventionists, the end of the war saw Italian social, economic and political life fall into a state of chaos. Hundreds of thousands of Italian men died fighting on the Austrian and Russian fronts, and those who returned were demoralized and disgruntled by their diminished prospects. Refugees and prisoners of war were scattered across Italy and Europe, and the populations of former lands of the Austro-Hungarian Empire found themselves in purgatory, waiting their ascension to the "sacred realm" of nationhood. This process was a far cry from the euphoric experience that many had hoped for and the carving up of Europe left both winners and loser unsatisfied. Moreover, the political, social and economic conflicts dividing political camps and the general public had not been smoothed over by the war, while the idea of a *vittoria mutilata* ("mutilated victory") began to creep into the hearts and minds of the Italian people. The populace's lack of faith in the

government was amplified by Rome's inability to tackle the many socio-political crises plaguing Italy, such as high unemployment, inflation and food shortages. Out of this chaos rose Benito Mussolini and his *Fasci Italiani di Combattimento* (Italian Fighting League).

The connection between Mussolini's Fascist movement and borderland irredentism is complex. Mussolini was not an avid supporter of irredentism or nationalism in the early years of his political career. Yet, over time he recognized the power of these movements and their ability to mobilize and inspire the Italian populace. While a member of the Socialist Party, Mussolini was appointed to the role of secretary of the Trentino Chamber of Labour in 1909 and was entrusted with the editorship of the party's local paper *L'Avvenire del Lavoratore*.⁴⁵ Through his encounters with Italian irredentism and Pan-Germanism during his time in Trento in 1909, Mussolini began to develop ideas about Italian nationalism and patriotism that would play a major role in his post-war rise to power. Mussolini was not fond of Trento and only stayed in this post for seven months, but his time there would prove invaluable to the development of his writing and rhetorical skills. During this time, Mussolini encountered the irredentist and nationalist movements in a tangible way, although he approached these movements with scepticism. In Trento, he was first exposed to the issue of the linguistic and geopolitical border, while the internationalism of his socialist ideology was challenged by the nationalism of his "Germanic comrades" who treated the Italians as their lesser counterparts.⁴⁶

As noted by De Felice, while Mussolini was not immediately impressed by Trento he "was soon taken by the vortex of journalistic and agitational activity" in the region and

⁴⁵ Peter Neville, *Mussolini*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2015), 27-28.

⁴⁶ R.J.B Bosworth, *Mussolini*, 2nd ed. (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), 61-62.

was inspired by the nationalist and irredentist thinkers that he encountered.⁴⁷ He regularly corresponded with Giuseppe Prezzolini, the editor of *La Voce*, and tried to promote this publication amongst the Trentini socialists and members of the Italian organization *Pro Cultura*. While he did not fully agree with Prezzolini's nationalist views, he was taken by Prezzolini's mission to spread the gospel of the Italian nation throughout the peninsula in the hopes of creating "an Italian soul."⁴⁸ After six months in his post as Trentino's Party Secretary, Mussolini spent a month working under Cesare Battisti, a well-known Italian geographer, irredentist and editor of the popular local newspaper *Il Popolo*.⁴⁹ Born in Trento and a former student of the University of Florence, Battisti was one of the most prominent Italian public figures in Trentino. He established the Trentino chapter of the Social-Democratic Party of Austria and was one of the most vocal supporters of political autonomy and the establishment of an Italian university.⁵⁰ Mussolini was not enthralled by Battisti's irredentism but Battisti's journalistic methods, passionate rhetoric and skillful use of the press to rally support for his cause left a deep impression on the young socialist.⁵¹ As Peter Neville argues, under Battisti's tutelage Mussolini learned of the power of propaganda and gained "the technical knowledge of journalism," which he

⁴⁷ Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini Il Rivoluzionario, 1883-1920* (Turin: Einaudi, 1965), 63.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Bosworth, *Mussolini*, 63.

⁴⁹ Neville, *Mussolini*, 29.

⁵⁰ Stefano Biguzzi, "A Revolutionary in Trentino," in *Mussolini 1883-1915: Triumph and Transformation of a Revolutionary Socialist*, eds. Spencer M. Di Scala and Emilio Gentile (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 99.

⁵¹ For more on Cesare Battisti see Cesare Battisti, *Il Trentino: Saggio di Geografia Fisica e di Antropogeografia* (Trento: Giovanni Zippel Editore, 1898); Cesare Battisti, *Il Trentino Italiano* (Milano: Ravà & Co., 1915); Giovanni Lorenzoni, *Cesare Battisti and the Trentino* (New York: Italian Bureau of Public Information, 1919); Elena Dai Prà and Nicola Gabellieri, "Bridging geographical research and political action: the Trentino Italian region in the scientific and socialist writings of Cesare Battisti, 1895-1914," *Journal of Historical Geography* 71, (January 2021): 83-93, doi:10.1016/j.jhg.2021.01.005.; and Or Rosenboin, "Geopolitics and Nationalism: Interpreting Friedrich Ratzel in Italian, 1898-1916," in *Radicals and Reactionaries*. Ed. Ian Hall (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015): 17-42.

would carry throughout his political career.⁵² Stefano Biguzzi also points to the “common ground that existed between the reformism of Battisti and the extremism of Mussolini” in their “battle for the defense of national identity.”⁵³ Yet, according to De Felice, while working with Battisti on *Il Popolo* and the weekly *Vita Trentina*, Mussolini injected “an aggressive tone hitherto unknown to the local political struggle.”⁵⁴ This did not go unnoticed by local authorities. Officials in Austria and members of the Socialist party perceived Mussolini’s views and writing as extremist and dangerous. His vitriolic and violent rhetoric landed him in Austrian custody on multiple occasions and led to his eventual expulsion from the region.⁵⁵

Mussolini’s short time in Trentino had a fundamental impact on the development of his political ideology. In 1911 Mussolini published a book on the situation in the Trentino entitled *Il Trentino Veduto da un Socialista* (The Trentino. From the View of a Socialist), which provided an overview of the Pan-Germanist ideological movement and regional institutions (*Il Deutscher Shulverein*, *Süd Mark*, *Il Volksbund*), the Italian counter-movements (*Lega Nazionale* and *Pro Cultura*), and his own assessment of the state of Trentino’s political landscape and irredentist movement. In his assessment of Pan-Germanist ideology he mocked the movement for its non-Germanic foundations (instead being inspired by non-Germans Gobineau, Lapouge and Chamberlain), for its tendency to claim all important Italian and European cultural figures and movements as German,⁵⁶ and

⁵² Neville, *Mussolini*, 29.

⁵³ Biguzzi, “A Revolutionary,” 121.

⁵⁴ De Felice, *Mussolini Il Rivoluzionario*, 69.

⁵⁵ Mussolini was expelled from the Empire on 26 September 1909, after police searched his apartment and found an unmailed letter in which he criticized a recent pronouncement by the Austrian public prosecutor stating that “Italia ends at Ala.” Luigi Villari, *Italian Foreign Policy Under Mussolini* (New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1956), 7.

⁵⁶ In criticizing Chamberlain’s approach, Mussolini writes, “with this purely personal criterion, Chamberlain finds that David, Goliath, perhaps Solomon were Germans, that Dante was German, that the

provided an overview of the racial ideology of the “imperialist Aryanism,” which posited that “Germanism must purify Europe by enslaving and gradually eliminating the inferior race,” including the “chaotic” Latin and Semitic races of southern Europe.⁵⁷

In his assessment of the Pan-German institutions, Mussolini described the “Teutonic tenacity” with which they gained both support and funding for their program of encroachment into the Italian Trentino and the Adriatic.⁵⁸ He discussed the methods of “internal colonization,” which included the transplantation of Germans into Italian regions and the diffusion of Pan-Germanist ideology through their network of schools, publications and cultural institutions, but argued that their efforts “to hinder by all means the undeniable advance of the Italian element in the Ladin valleys” would not alter the true nature of the region.⁵⁹ As opposed to the “imperialist Aryanism” of the Pan-German institutions stands *la difesa italiana* (the Italian defense)—the *Lega Nazionale* (LN). In describing the mission of the LN, Mussolini reiterated the words of Trieste scholar and LN’s first president Riccardo Pitteri (elected 27 May 1900):

moderate and just, [the LN] does not usurp, it preserves; it does no attack, it rejects; does not fight for an interest, but for a right; it casts no shadow over the light of its serene sincerity, has in its enthusiasm only the cry of cheers while so many others shout: death!...In its paternal flowerbeds it cherishes, educates, spreads beautiful flowers of the sweet language born in Italian gardens...⁶⁰

entire Renaissance was the work of Germanism” Mussolini, *Il Trentino veduto da un socialista, Note e Notizie* (Firenze: Casa Editrice Italiana, 1911), 12.

⁵⁷ “Sud-Mark also aims to extend the boundaries of Pan-Germanism,” writes Mussolini, “It’s battle cry is: Get up, O Germans, and move towards the South. It calls the port of Trieste commercial emporium German, and advises: German people, do not lost sight of your goal, the Adriatic!” Mussolini, *Il Trentino*, 7.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 20.

⁵⁹ Mussolini’s assertion of the Italian character of the Trentino contradicted a previous statement in a 1909 letter to Prezzolini in which he claimed that “Italian irredentists know that Trentino is Austrian.” It is likely that his position on Trentino changed after his time with Battisti. Quoted in De Felice, *Mussolini Il Rivoluzionario*, 68.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Mussolini, *Il Trentino*, 27. This quoted speech was given in Pirano on 27 May 1906. For more see Riccardo Pitteri, *Discorsi per la Lega Nazionale* (Rome: Editori Alfieri & Lacroix, 1919).

Although Mussolini outwardly rejected nationalism he was clearly drawn to the narratives of Italian superiority and national prestige promoted by nationalist and irredentist institutions.

As opposed to the menacing character with which he presented the Pan-German associations, Mussolini spoke of the work of the Italian organization with praise and encouragement. He wrote with pride of the Lega Nazionale and Pro-Cultura's work to defend against the "Germanization of the Trentino," which included the establishment of kindergartens, circulating libraries, reading circles and men's and women's committees.⁶¹ Mussolini did seem to acknowledge the difficult position under which the Lega Nazionale had to operate, arguing that the organization "defends linguistic Italianness, but does absolutely no political work [and] does not constitute a danger to the 'nexus of empire.'"⁶² In staying out of political work and asserting their operations under the flag of the Austrian empire and not the Kingdom of Italy, Mussolini asserted that the LN operated "almost exclusively in the scholastic field," in order to "protect itself from Austrian laws [and]...to avoid suspicion and persecution by the authorities."⁶³ He was more critical of the indifference of the Italian middle class and of the local nobility and the Nationalist Party who he perceived as shirking their responsibility to their Italian brethren in order to secure their personal wealth and positions of power under the Austrian system.⁶⁴

While Mussolini did praise the work of the socialist and Italian organizations in the Trentino, he expressed deep frustration with the region's so-called irredentist movement:

There are many Italians who, arriving in Trentino, believe they will find there the same attitude as among the Italian populace (or at least among its élite) in

⁶¹ Mussolini, *Il Trentino*, 28-34.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 30.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

Lombardy before 1859 or in Venetia before 1866. Because in Trentino, an Italian people are subject to Austria, and Austria is the enemy of Italy, the naïve ‘regnicoli’ [Italian subjects] mentioned above believe in the existence of an irredentism, i.e. an anti-Austrian movement tending to violently separate Trentino from the so-called nexus of the empire to reunite it with Italy, I don’t know, if you are irredentists in the traditional sense of the word, as there are in Trieste, where Oberdan’s sacrifice is too recent to be forgotten, but it is certain that in Trento there are no irredentists, or if there are they do not openly demonstrate themselves as such...Irredentism and irredentists do not exist in Trentino unless you want to pass off irredentism as the throwing of stones against the griffin of the Forst brewery...or some timid display of tricolor cockades...or the hanging of a puppet depicting Hofer at the foot of Dante’s statue or the spray of rotten eggs on the Austrian coat of arms carried out in the middle of the night...All are resigned to the Austrian yoke.⁶⁵

While this may be interpreted as exhibiting Mussolini’s outright disdain for irredentism, his assessment of the threat of Pan-Germanism, criticisms over the weakness of Trentino irredentism, and his praise for the work of Italian irredentist organization is evidence, not of Mussolini’s disdain for irredentism, but of his disappointment in the irredentist movement for not living up to its separatist and nationalist ambitions.⁶⁶ As Biguzzi states, “the more vehemently [Mussolini’s anti-irredentist] intention was expressed the more significant are those passages and patriotic ‘slips’ in which the agitator from Romagna let it be known, more or less unconsciously, that he had a firm concept of nationhood within his political ideal.”⁶⁷ And while Mussolini criticized the weaknesses of irredentism, he also acknowledged the unifying and mobilizing power of the nationalist struggle which was ineffectively harnessed by local Italian leaders.⁶⁸ The fears, disappointments and

⁶⁵ Mussolini, *Il Trentino*, 38-39.

⁶⁶ Biguzzi describes Mussolini’s patriotic sentiments as “flow[ing] more or less unmistakably through the life of a young Mussolini, like an underground river [which] was able to return to the surface,” during his time in Trento. Biguzzi, “A Revolutionary,” 119.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 116.

⁶⁸ In his discussion of the establishment of Pro Patria, Mussolini describes how the program to Germanize Trentino instigated the rise of the initial Italian irredentist movement in Trentino: “The threat woke up the perhaps too peaceful Trentino people. A burst of enthusiasm warmed spirits from Salorno to Ala.” Mussolini, *Il Trentino*, 28.

ambitions expressed by Mussolini during and after his time in Trentino helped lay the ideological kindling that would ignite his nationalistic and patriotic passions after the outbreak of the war.

Mussolini described the daily squabbles between the pro-German and pro-Italian organizations as a war “which does not kill human lives, but is continuous, exasperating, and passionate like wars between armies.”⁶⁹ However, he did not defer to the same nihilistic terms conveyed by some irredentist thinkers, whom he described as “pessimists.” These pessimists portrayed the conflict as “a great bristling battle between the Germanism that wants to cross the Alps and the Romanism that defends the ancestral borders.” Only one nation would survive this life-or-death conflict. Instead, Mussolini asserted that if the Austrian government remained neutral the spread of *italianità* would continue unabated through “the Italian peasants who push north and suppress any German remnants.”⁷⁰ He described the “pessimists”—those who perceived the struggle of the Trentini as a life-or-death struggle, as harbingers of an illegitimate fear. More specifically, he blamed those who felt increasingly powerless against the “undeniable and incessant successes of the Slavic penetration,” and who feared that a similar “German penetration” was occurring in the Trentino.⁷¹ In response to this pessimism, Mussolini presented an economic, political and geographic argument as to why the situation in Trento could never become as dire as that of Trieste. Yet, in his optimistic assessment, Mussolini did not fully reject the dangers of Pan-Germanism or possibility of future Austrian interference.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 34.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 36.

⁷¹ Ibid, 35.

After his time in Trentino, Mussolini went on to spearhead the socialist newspaper *Avanti!* (1912-1914), the vessel through which he developed his own brand of political thinking while gaining popularity amongst the more radical wing of the socialist party. The rift between Mussolini's revolutionary socialism and the Party's more moderate line widened into an insurmountable fissure with the start of the First World War. Mussolini became increasingly critical of the Party's neutralist stance and began to attack the socialists in his own newspaper *Il Popolo d'Italia*, first published on 15 November 1914. Mussolini believed that the nation's prestige and honour on the international stage depended on its participation in the Great War. To stay out of the fight would be to concede the nation's weakness and its secondary position amongst Europe's great powers. He also believed in the war's nationalizing potential and ability to bind all the regions of Italy behind a single cause, bringing about a revolution that would remake Italy.⁷²

Nationalist-irredentist rhetoric, the redemption of *Italia irredenta* and the expansion of Italy's geographical and spiritual borders were all central to Mussolini's interventionism. Although Mussolini was not an irredentist, his experience of the irredentist struggle in Trentino, while generally disappointing, revealed to him the powerful energy that could be generated by nationalist rivalries, even amongst a generally peaceful and resigned population. The rivalry between Austria and Italy, which had maintained a friendly tone throughout the Triple Alliance, took on a new character upon Italy's declaration of neutrality. While many hardline irredentists and nationalists cried

⁷² In *Talks with Mussolini*, Mussolini discusses the reasons for his support of intervention: "The nationalists wanted expansion; the democrats wanted Trent; the syndicalists wanted war in the hope that it would lead to a revolution. This was my own position at this juncture. For the first time, the great majority of the nation was actively opposed to the parliamentarians and the politicians...I became convinced of the need for a great stirring of the whole people to consolidate the moral unity of our nation—with or without socialism." Emil Ludwig, *Talks with Mussolini* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1933) 81; 83.

out for Italy to redeem *Italia irredenta* and free their Italian brethren from the “Austrian yoke,” Mussolini saw irredentism as a means to an end, and used irredentist rhetoric to seize on the mobilizing, unifying and revolutionary energy that such a conflict could generate at the national level.⁷³ As Neville states, “Mussolini’s journalistic acuteness made him realize the potency of the Italians desire for an Alpine frontier,” and as such Mussolini’s previous assertion over Trentino’s lack of irredentism will were muted under his growing war cry.⁷⁴ Regarding the eastern frontier, Mussolini first asserted “that Italy should not claim Trieste and Fiume from a new, independent Yugoslavia because the Yugoslav working class were brothers.”⁷⁵ Yet soon after, Mussolini’s turn from socialism swept away any feelings of brotherhood with working class and non-Italian “brethren.”⁷⁶

On 14 September 1941 *Avanti!* published a letter from Cesare Battisti to Mussolini in which Battisti spoke out against those who mocked Trentino’s desire to break free from Austria. He noted that “an irredentism of action” could not have existed while Italy and Austria were linked by the Triple Alliance, but “today from the bloodied fields of Galicia and Bosnia as well as from the cities and valleys and from every place where Trentino is, one looks quivering at Italy...Now is the moment in which irredentism takes concrete form and has reason to exist.” He referred to the Italian patriots held in Austrian prisons and the numerous refugees in Italian societies “who have come here braving infinite dangerous [and] live in anxious expectation of fervent fraternity...who have come here in the hope of returning up there soon with weapons in hand,” as evidence of the seriousness of Trentini

⁷³ The interventionist campaigns conducted by intellectuals such as Prezzolini, Salvemini and Battisti helped to bring Mussolini over to the interventionist cause. Bosworth, *Mussolini*, 87.

⁷⁴ Neville, *Mussolini*, 35.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ For more on Mussolini’s early political life see Didier Musiedlak, “Religion and political culture in the thought of Mussolini,” *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 6, no. 3 (December 2005): 395-406.

separatism.⁷⁷ Just two months later, Mussolini's membership card to the Socialist Party was revoked for his interventionist agitations and, what the socialists described as his support for imperialism.⁷⁸ Both Mussolini and Battisti enthusiastically join the Italian war effort following Italy's declaration of war in May 1915.⁷⁹

However, many Trentini, in addition to the citizens of Trieste, did not share the same passion for separatism promoted by Battisti. As with so many other places in Europe, the Great War brought destruction and ruin to Trento and Trieste. In Trentino, Italian soldiers encountered a community which did not see them as heroes, but as warmongers who transformed their homeland into a battleground. A *New York Times* report on the Italian occupation of the Trentino from October 1915 paints a bleak picture of their reception:

Italian difficulties are here immeasurably increased by the behaviour of the people. With the exception of a few ardent and impassioned patriots, the vast majority of the inhabitants of the Trentino, who are Italian in language, customs and traditions, look with amazement on the way Italy is carrying into their homelands...For when an Italian detachment captures a position which gives them undisturbed access to a 'redeemed' village, or even a cluster of houses, instead of being welcomed as heroes, with flags and rejoicing, time after time, the Italian troops find the inhabitants who speak their language and are of the same blood, dumb and silent, even in some cases, recalcitrant. The majority serve their new masters, as they did their old, without enthusiasm or show of feeling. And the Italian soldier volubly expresses his surprise and disgust at the cool reception he is receiving at the hand of his 'brothers' of the Trentino.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ "Trentino e Trentini," *Avanti!*, 14 September 1914 n.254, 2.

⁷⁸ Mussolini was especially sensitive to the accusations that he was an imperialist. In 1911 he participated in a protest against Italy's imperialist war in Libya. He did not equate the national war as an imperialist endeavour, as it was based on the principle of nationality. Bosworth, *Mussolini*, 93.

⁷⁹ Mussolini was called to service in August and his unit fought in the Second and Third Battle of the Isonzo. His friend and ally Cesare Battisti joined the Alpini Corps and was captured by Austro-Hungarian forces on 10 July 1916. He was returned to Trento where he was charged with high treason and executed by hanging at the Castello del Buonconsiglio, just two days after his capture.

⁸⁰ "Trentino not Eager to be 'Redeemed,'" *New York Times*, 17 October 1915, 4.

There are several possible reasons why the inhabitants of the Trentino showed little enthusiasm for their “deliverance” from Austria. Some resented Italy’s rejection of the Triple Alliance and Austria’s promise for the peaceful transfer of the Trentino, believing that Italy had sacrificed their homeland to war and ruin in pursuit of more ambitious territorial gains.⁸¹ It was thought that the Austrians had used this betrayal to poison the minds of the Trentini against Italy, who were dismayed by the assault and destruction of their homes and villages. Other reasons for the cool reception ranged from distress over the negative economic repercussions of the region’s separation from the Tyrol or fear of Austrian retribution for any support or assistance offered to the Italian occupiers. The sentiment of many Trentini was encapsulated in an interview from November 1915 between a woman from Trentino and *New York Times* correspondent Willy G.R. Benedictus who was stationed in Riva del Garda:

‘Of course we are Italian,’ she said, ‘Austria did not treat us downright badly, but we knew it wanted to kill our race and make Germans of us. We were happy in April thinking that we should be peacefully given up to Italy. Then came hunger, and then the war. Nowadays the Italians give us plenty to eat, but in seeing the fine soldiers marching through our streets, we women think they may be going to kill those we love, our men who have been taken away, and we cannot be very cheerful.’⁸²

The realities of war and the divided loyalties that manifested between local communities and Italian soldiers sobered the irredentist fervour legitimizing Italy’s occupation of the region. The Trentini’s cool reception did not align with the narratives of

⁸¹ After months of outright refusal, in March 1915 the Austrian government agreed that the Trentino would be ceded to Italy after the war in exchange for their neutrality. The Treaty of London made many more territorial concessions to Italy which led the Italian government to side with the Entente. On the Italian negotiations see Leo Valiani, “Italian-Austro-Hungarian Negotiations 1914-1915,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 1, no.13, 1914 (1966): 113-136; and Timothy W. Crawford, “The Entente Realigns Italy, 1915,” in *The Power to Divide: Wedge Strategies in Great Power Competition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2021): 72-85.

⁸² Willy G.R. Benedictus, “Two Tyrol Fronts in Unique Warfare,” *New York Times*, 14 November 1915, 88.

redemption lauded by irredentists and interventionists. Soldiers were disturbed by the Trentini's lack of gratitude for their bravery and sacrifice, and poor relations between the Italian soldiers and local inhabitants bred an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust. This led to questions within Italian military circles regarding the Trentini's loyalty to the Italian cause. Rumors began to circulate about the presence of an Austrian "spy system" set up to undermine Italian military action in the region. It was believed that this "system could only exist with the aiding and abetting of some of the natives." In this environment, even the most enthusiastic Trentini, "the jolly old goat hero, wearing an Italian tricolored insignia larger than a teacup and enthusiastic in his Garibaldism" or the "rustic maiden to whose buxom charms many an Italian soldier had already fallen a victim!"—could not be trusted. It was even believed that the Austrians had transported and interned, "irredentist peasants" who were "replaced by Italian speaking Austrian spies." The lack of enthusiasm amongst "redeemed" inhabitants undermined Italian authorities' confidence in the borderland communities and encouraged Italian soldiers to treat these communities as "enemy aliens." Thus, the Italian occupation of the Trentino laid bare the fundamental conflict between how irredentist and nationalist presented the people of the "unredeemed lands," and the identity narratives, political concerns and regional loyalties that had shaped these communities for centuries, thereby threatening the righteousness of Italy's 'moral endeavour.'⁸³

⁸³ Ibid.



Map 2: Map of the Italian Front during the First World War, 1917

Source: "Hand-drawn map of Italian Front in World War I," in H.M, *Archive of Hand-Drawn Maps and Views of the World War I Battlefields* (France: 1917).

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hand-drawn_map_of_the_Italian_Front_in_World_War_I.jpg

The movement of millions of soldiers to the frontier between 1914-1918 was accompanied by the repatriation, displacement and deportation of hundreds of thousands of civilians. Refugees and exiles had resided in Italy since the start of the conflict in 1914, but the Italian government did not set up an official welfare system until the events of the *Strafexpedition*. In May 1916, Austro-Hungarian troops broke through the Italian line west of the Asiago plateau, almost reaching Veneto. This offensive was known as the *Strafexpedition* or "punitive expedition" (also known as the Battle of Asiago or the

Trentino Offensive) as it was meant to “visit due retribution on Italy for its betrayal of the Triple Alliance.”⁸⁴ The Italians were able to halt the advance of the Austro-Hungarian Army, but the conflict resulted in around 150,000 casualties on the Italian side—almost double the casualties on the Austrian side.⁸⁵ It also led to the mass evacuation of over 75,000 Italian citizens from the front and the establishment of an official welfare system for displaced persons in Italy.⁸⁶

This system placed people into four categories based on the circumstances of their displacement. The first group were the *rimpatriati* (repatriated), encompassing Italians who lived or worked abroad, including families and seasonal workers from French, German and Austrian territories, who returned to Italy after its declaration of war from French, German and Austrian regions. An estimated 500,000 Italians returned to Italy in the spring of 1915.⁸⁷ In the town of Udine, northwest of Trieste, almost 10 percent of the population, 70,000 emigres, returned in the spring and summer of 1915.⁸⁸ The sudden influx of such a substantial number of people strained communal and national resources and worsened unemployment rates across the country. The second group comprised of Italian-Austrians from Trento and Trieste who supported Italian irredentism and as such, were distinguished as the *fuoriusciti* (expatriats or political refugees).⁸⁹ The *fuoriusciti* were separated from the third group, the *profughi* (refugees) because the former

⁸⁴ Giorgio Rochat, “The Italian Front, 1915-18,” in *A Companion to World War I*, ed. John Horne (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010): 86.

⁸⁵ Rochat, “The Italian Front,” 86.

⁸⁶ Marco Mondini and Francesco Frizzera, “Beyond the borders: displaced persons in the Italian linguistic space during the First Worlds War,” in *Europe on the Move: Refugees in the Era of the Great War*, eds. Peter Gatrell and Liubov Shvanko (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 182.

⁸⁷ Matteo Ermacora, “Assistance and Surveillance: War Refugees in Italy, 1914-1918,” *Contemporary European History* 16, no.4 (2007): 446, doi:10.1017/S0960777307004110.

⁸⁸ Mondini and Frizzera, “Beyond the borders,” 180.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

consciously chose Italy, while the *profughi* had been forcibly removed from strategic military zones on both sides of the Austrian-Italian front.⁹⁰ Over 60,000 Italian-speaking Trentini were forcibly evacuated by the Austrian army. These evacuees were placed in emergency housing or relocated to labour camps and small village communities in Bohemia, Moravia and Lower and Upper Austria, and were met with disdain and distrust by authorities and local inhabitants.⁹¹ Evacuees on the Italian side were dispersed to cities and town in central and southern Italy. It is estimated that in 1915 the Italian military evacuated 52,000 people residing near the front line, “including 10,000 from the mountain area of Friuli, 12,000 civilians of Slavic origin from the Isonzo valleys and another 30,000 from the border areas of Veneto, Trentino and Lombardy.”⁹² The final group were the *internati* (internees), between 3,000-5,000 Italian-Austrian civilians including neutralists, socialists, anarchists, pacifists, teachers, priests and other civilians who dared to criticize the Italian war effort or show sympathy for the Austrian enemy’s cause.⁹³

The refugee crisis in Italy resulted in two major shifts in Italian socio-political life. The first was the rise of the prefects and the centralization of the refugee welfare system. The prefecture acted as the representative of the Ministry of the Interior at the provincial level and was charged with overseeing local government and maintaining law and order in the provinces and municipalities.⁹⁴ Before the implementation of the national welfare system in 1916, local authorities were expected to deal with the tidal wave of displaced persons and the unemployment crisis with little direction or oversight from the central

⁹⁰ The *profughi* included both Austrian and Italian citizens living near the front line.

⁹¹ According to Frizzera the distribution of refugees was as follows: Moravia (19.135), Bohemia (15.798) and Upper and Lower Austria (12,726 and 12,974). Francesco Frizzera, *Cittadini dimenzati: I profughi trentini in Austria-Ungheria e in Italia (1914-1919)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2018), 88.

⁹² Ermacora, “Assistance and Surveillance,” 447.

⁹³ Mondini and Frizzera, “Beyond the borders,” 181.

⁹⁴ Ermacora, “Assistance and Surveillance,” 449.

government. Assistance was lacking and relief funds were sporadically and unevenly distributed. Charities and aid societies run by irredentists and exile groups, socialist organizations and members of the local middle class provided support for repatriated and exiled Italians. However, charitable efforts at the local level were not enough to tackle the social and economic crisis plaguing north-eastern Italy, which resulted in food shortages and riots.⁹⁵ According to, Marco Mondini and Francesco Frizzera, in response to the civil unrest in the north-east, the central government “recommended that the prefects of the Kingdom should adopt a series of prudent health and police measures, that made no distinction (for better, in terms of welfare; for worse, if one thinks of surveillance and repression) between Italian citizens and *irredenti*.”⁹⁶ The prefects shared this responsibility with military authorities and the General Secretariat for Civil Affairs.⁹⁷ Ermacora argues that the health and police measures were on the one hand, meant to provide relief and support to refugee and local communities and, on the other, used “as a means of social control” over refugee-evacuees.⁹⁸

The second shift—which occurred at both the communal and institutional level—related to changing perspectives on identity and belonging that followed the refugee crisis. Regardless of refugee-evacuees official categorization, local authorities and residents treated both Italian Austrians and Italian citizen from the borderlands, not as welcome neighbours but as strange and dangerous foreigners. In an effort to control displaced

⁹⁵ As with most of the Austro-Hungarian empire, starvation plagued Trieste for much of the war. In September 1915, letters on Austrian prisoners of war spoke of the “shocking state of affairs in Austria, particularly Trieste, where it is said to be impossible to purchase oils, rice potatoes, sugar or coffee. Money, says one letter, is of scarcely any use in Trieste, because of the enormous shortage of food and clothing. There is little meat on hand. The people of Trieste are dying from lack of nutrition.” “Starvation in Trieste,” *New York Times*, 5 September 1917, 2.

⁹⁶ Mondini and Frizzera, “Beyond the borders,” 179.

⁹⁷ Ermacora, “Assistance and Surveillance,” 449.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 450.

communities, the government forcibly separated towns and communal groups and distributed them to different locations throughout the peninsula.⁹⁹ Thought to be Austrian spies, the refugee-evacuees lived under constant scrutiny from their resentful host communities, who believed that the government was doing more to assist unwanted “enemy aliens” than they were for “real” Italians.

The tension between locals and refugee-evacuees escalated after the disaster of the Battle of Caporetto in October 1917 and the subsequent arrival of another 500,000 refugees into the Kingdom of Italy. The Italian army’s defeat at Caporetto was a transformative moment for the Italian war effort at both the frontline and the home front. Amongst soldiers and civilians, the defeat fostered the idea that Austria, not Italy, was the aggressor pushing Italy into a defensive war. Bosworth describes Caporetto as causing “something of a character shift” in the Italian war effort, which divided the conflict between the period of intervention or the “Liberal and dynastic” period between May 1915 and October 1917, and the “popular and national” period, from the defeat at Caporetto to the end of the conflict.¹⁰⁰ As stated by Giuseppe Finaldi, while the first period was propelled by territorial expansion dictated by the elites, “the second was one of national defence, which pitted the entire resources (physical and psychological) of the nation in the outcome of the struggle.”¹⁰¹ According to De Felice, that the defeat at Caporetto and the Bolshevik Revolution, which occurred around the same time, marked the end of Mussolini’s ties to socialism as he became convinced that Italian victory was dependent

⁹⁹ Mondini and Frizzera estimate that “half a million fugitive-evacuees-refugees had been distributed, sometimes by force, to virtually all 70 provinces of the Kingdom.” Mondini and Frizzera, “Beyond the borders,” 183.

¹⁰⁰ Giuseppe Finaldi, *Mussolini and Italian Fascism*, 2nd ed (London: Routledge, 2013), 30. The two terms appeared in Richard Bosworth, *Mussolini’s Italy* (London: Penguin, 2005), chapters 2 and 3.

¹⁰¹ Finaldi, *Mussolini and Italian Fascism*, 31.

on national unity and the suppression of the classist struggle.¹⁰² According to this analysis, after Caporetto, Mussolini transformed psychologically and politically from an agitator and propagandist to a politician intent on establishing “new political formulas” and building political and economic alliances that would strengthen the Italian national body against its foreign enemies.¹⁰³ Recent studies have challenged De Felice’s position, arguing that Mussolini’s break with socialism was evident in his writings before October 1917.¹⁰⁴ However, Mussolini’s pre-Caporetto pieces condemning socialist defeatism and praising the moral virtue and strong morale of Italian soldiers became all the more poignant following Caporetto and contributed to the national resurgence that resulted in Italy’s victory over the Austrian aggressor.¹⁰⁵

The defeat at Caporetto further agitated tensions between refugees from the front and Italian officials and communities who unwillingly welcomed them. The hostility and isolation experienced by both Italians and Italian Austrian refugee-evacuees radically transformed their conceptions of identity, allegiance and belonging. Frizzera’s study of the treatment and experience of Trentini evacuees in Austria and Italy drives this point home. In his assessment of diaries and letters written by Trentini evacuated to Austria, Frizzera finds that inadequate housing, little financial assistance and harsh labour

¹⁰² Ibid, 32.

¹⁰³ De Felice, *Mussolini Il Rivoluzionario* 393-394.

¹⁰⁴ On Mussolini and Caporetto see Stéphanie Lanfranchi and Elise Varcin, “Il trauma di Caporetto nei testi di Mussolini: propaganda e performatività,” in *Il trauma di Caporetto: Storia, letterature e arti*, eds. Maria Pia de Paulis, Francesca Belviso and Alessandro Giacone (Accademie University Press, 2018).

¹⁰⁵ Italy’s defeat and eventual victory would come to be known as the Piave myth—named after the frontline at the Piave river from which the Italian people would defend the fatherland from the invading “foreigners.” This myth and the idea of the “mystical connection” between the Italian people and “their sacred territory” was preserved in the famous song *La leggenda del Piave* (The Legend of Piave). Finaldi, 137. See also E.A Mario, “The Legend of the Piave, 1918,” in Giovannie di Capua, *Faccetta Nera, canti dell’ebbrezza Fascista* (Scipioni: Valentano, 2000), 26.

conditions in some refugee camps eroded the Trentini's sense of loyalty or belonging to the Austrian empire.

Italian Austrians and Italian citizens from the borderlands who had been evacuated to the Italian interior were also treated as dangerous foreigners and accused of carrying a hidden agenda to corrupt Italy's war victory. Refugees from Friuli and Veneto dispersed in southern provinces criticized the government for their poor living conditions and grew frustrated at the hostility of host communities. The gap between the different cultural worlds of the Italian refugee-evacuees and Italians of the interior could not be bridged by their shared citizenship or national belonging. In their study of the refugee crisis in Italy, Mondini and Frizzera refer to letters from refugees describing how different customs, cultures and social practices, including religion, family relations and,

even sexual customs bred friction, as did eating habits and ways of spending leisure time. Tensions would often flare into open hostility: the Venetians and Friulians were accused of immorality and dissolute behavior, unsurprisingly in the overwrought climate of nationalism they were suspected of being pro-Austrian. An obsession arose over refugee spies leaking reserved information or sending signals to Austrian aeroplanes and ships. Reports of 'the enemy in our midst' piled up daily on the desks of prefect and government ministers. Discontent and marginalization were staple fare for what would be recalled as a clash between different components of the nation.¹⁰⁶

Regardless of their ethnicity or national affiliations, borderland communities were villainized and blamed for the Italian military's inability to move the frontline. Rumors of an Austrian-spy network and other malicious forces undermining the Italian war effort were reinforced by the abysmal geographic gains and the huge loss of life on the front. The concept of the "enemy-within" became a central feature of the Italian social landscape

¹⁰⁶ Mondini and Frizzera, "Beyond the borders," 185.

and helped shape the myth of the Italian stab-in-the-back theory, popular amongst disillusioned soldiers like Benito Mussolini.

As the Great War drew to a close, the promises of unity and prestige promoted by irredentists, nationalists and interventionists in 1914-1915 were not fulfilled for the peoples of Italy. Dissatisfied and demoralized, the sudden and anti-climactic victory of November 1918 led both soldiers and civilians to believe that nefarious forces were attempting to undermine Italy's glory, valour and sacrifice. Rumours of Italy's mutilated victory were amplified during the post-war treaty negotiations, as Italy found itself having to legitimize its territorial claims against the Wilsonian principle of self-determination. The disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and establishment of Austria and the Kingdom of Serbs Croats and Slovenes presented a major challenge to Italian claims as the secret Treaty of London had promised to Italy territories inhabited by large populations which were neither ethnically nor linguistically Italian, including South Tyrol, Gorizia, Trieste and Istria.¹⁰⁷

At the Paris Peace Conference the Italian contingent found itself in a contentious battle for these territories. In December 1918, Yugoslav representatives challenged Italian claims in the Adriatic and presented their territorial claims as being "based upon the principle of justice and national self-determination."¹⁰⁸ The Allies appeared to regret their promises to Italy, while the Americans, who did not sign the Treaty of London, were sympathetic to the Yugoslav national claims over, what they perceived as, Italy's

¹⁰⁷ Rusinow, *Italy's Austrian Heritage*, 43-45.

¹⁰⁸ "Yugoslav Claims Set Forth in Detail," *New York Times*, 26 December 1918, 2. In Istria, it was estimated that there were 224,000 Slavs and 145,516 Italians. In Gorizia and Dalmatia, the Slavic population numbers 767,708, while the Italian population counted 108,147. *Ibid.*

imperialist demands. President Woodrow Wilson was a vocal opponent of Italy's annexation of Adriatic territories, arguing that it infringed on the Slavs' right to national self-determination. However, this consideration was not extended to the Germanic communities of South Tyrol. Strategic objectives and the desire to weaken Germany and Austria outweighed the national and political rights of the Tyrolese, so Italy's extension to the Brenner Pass garnered less attention from the victorious powers.

Mussolini was quick to capitalize on the public's dissatisfaction and complete lack of confidence in the Liberal government's ability to fight for the Italian territories that the nation's sons had fought and died for. In this atmosphere of disillusionment and defeat, Trentino and Trieste became important symbols of Italy's sacrifice and victory and were regularly alluded to in Mussolini's speeches. The protection of Italy's sacrifice and victory therefore went hand-in-hand with the protection of Italy's claim to the Trentino and Trieste. To deny these regions to Italy would be to deny the sanctity of the nation's sacrifice. On 29 December 1918, Mussolini gave a speech at the inauguration of a plaque memorializing Trieste's irredentist martyr Guglielmo Oberdan in which he affirmed the legitimacy of kingdom's territorial demands and expressed his anxiety over the security of Italy's borders and the encroaching threat of the "Slavic masses:"

It is painful to think that there are some who oppose the *italianità* of Trieste by placing before us a primitive people who have almost no history. If we are challenged at the peace conference, then not only will the living rise up in Italy, but so will the dead...We must not allow any adulteration or contamination of our victory, which has been achieved by so much blood and with so much torment...[W]hen we ask for Trento, Trieste, Alto Adige and Zara, we are not asking for anything except that which belongs to us by right. Those who deny us this right should look at the destruction done by the enemy in Veneto, Invasions never again! And for this reason, we must draw the border at our natural gate, to prevent anyone from marching on Italy's fertile plains. These tribes jealously covet our sky and our sea, and precisely for this reason we have the duty to block the doors of our house,

and afterwards, if necessary, we will sign pacts of friendship with them... We must guarantee ourselves against the dangers of the future and of these Slavic peoples whose chains we have broken. Even if it were possible to come to an agreement, we still do not know what they will want. Perhaps they would also want Venice, because there is a Riva degli Schiavoni, or Milan because there was a Slavic king. In Trieste we have allowed a Slovenian newspaper to continue publishing. This is the proof of our liberal thought; now it is time to look at freedom as it presents itself. Out of 50,000 Italian inhabitants, of Fiume, 45,000 have already expressed their opinion; it is a typical case of a people who, according to Wilson's criteria, can determine their own destiny.¹⁰⁹

The war may have ended, but for Mussolini and his followers the fight for *Italia irredenta* and Italy's redemption had yet to be won.

Italian nationalists were enraged by the American and Allied opposition to their territorial claims and feared that the Italian Liberal government was too weak to defend Italy's position. The fight for Italy's territorial demands led to the first battle of the Fascist revolution—the storming of La Scala in Milan in January 1919. Looking back on this moment in April 1921, Mussolini exclaimed:

We had won; we had sacrificed the flower of our youth, and they came to us with bills of usury and extortion! They disputed with us the sacred boundaries of the county, and there were Democrats in Italy, whose democracy consisted of imperialism for others and no imperialism for us, who threw this ridiculous accusation at us, because we intended that Italy should be bounded on the north by the Brenner, and she shall be while there is Italian blood in Italy. We intended that the eastern boundaries should be at the Nevošo, because that is the just and nature confine of our country.¹¹⁰

Debates over the Fiume question further amplified tensions in Paris. Fiume was not part of Italy's original territorial claims but was included in its post-war demands due to the city's large Italian-speaking population. The nationalists took up this campaign and

¹⁰⁹ Benito Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, eds. E. and D. Susmel, 44 vols. Florence, 1951-1960, Rome 1978-1980 [hereafter BMOO], vol. XII, p 91-92.

¹¹⁰ Mussolini, "How Fascismo Was Created: It's Evolution and Essence," in *Mussolini as Revealed in his Political Speeches*, ed. Barone Bernardo Quaranta di San Servino (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1923), 136.

transformed the Fiume question into a national crisis. On 12 September 1919, Italian poet, aviator and nationalist Gabriele D'Annunzio occupied Fiume, an action which he took in direct opposition to the Paris Peace Conference and Italian government. The D'Annunzio coup only last fifteen months but had an immense impact on the collective psyche of the Italian people. One charismatic leader was able to achieve what no liberal government dared, setting the stage for a new political age.

Mussolini relished in the Liberal government's failures in Paris and their embarrassment over Fiume. The events of the peace negotiations were seen to justify his criticisms of Rome and affirmed the existence of an internal and international plot against Italy. Mussolini's rhetoric—his anger over the “mutilated victory,” cries of patriotism and renewal, and warnings against internal and external enemies—enflamed hearts across the peninsula. They were especially impactful in the newest provinces, where strangers and enemies abounded. Ensuring the security of Italy's borders and annexed territories from those who wished to steal these hard-won lands was a convenient rallying cry for Mussolini's followers, who presented themselves as the only force strong enough to defeat these enemies. These concerns shaped Mussolini's brand of “extreme nationalism” at its infancy and, in time, the borderlands came to play an important role in the success of the Fascist movement.

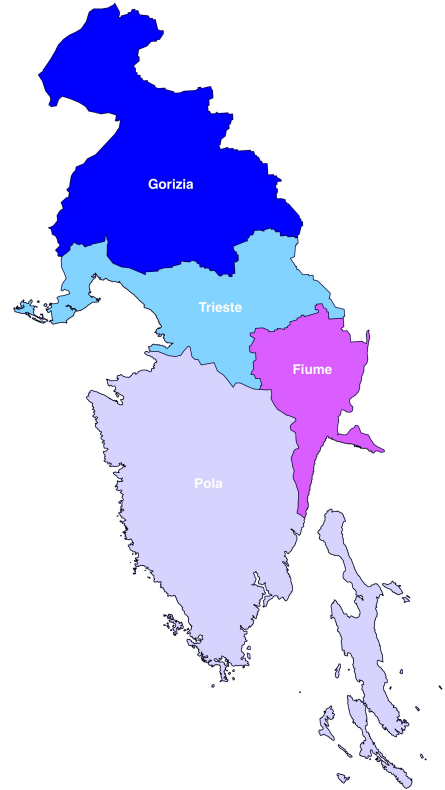
BORDER FASCISM: THE MARCH ON BOLZANO AND TRIESTE, 1919-1922

In the new provinces the rise of fascism and its infiltration of borderland politics progressed in markedly different ways, yet the two peripheral movements had a profound impact on the development of fascism at its ideological and geographical centre. The

immediate postwar years in Trieste were characterized by violence and unrest. Italian occupying forces entered a city devastated by war and in civil and economic limbo. From November 1918 to July 1919, the province was placed under the military governorship of General Carlo Pettiti di Roreto, who had the dual task of bringing the former Austrian province into the Italian state while attempting to contain the wave of social unrest that swept over Italy after the war.

The decline of the war economy and disruption in trade relations between Italy and the former empires had a ripple effect across Italy's economy. Trieste was especially hurt by this transition. Throughout the war, Trieste's bustling commerce and trade screeched to a halt. In July 1919, American journalist Mary Heaton Vorse described the citizens of Trieste as "a dejected lot...aching under the exasperation of suspense, the nerves of her people on edge."¹¹¹ This tension soon boiled over.

Trieste's status as both an industrial and international city made it an important site in the socialist and communist revolts of the *biennio rosso*—the series of strikes and violent protests that occurred throughout Italian industrial centres between 1919 and 1920. The crisis of the *biennio rosso* provided fertile ground for the growth of Fascist extremism,



Map 3: The Provinces of Venezia Giulia – Gorizia, Trieste, Fiume, and Pola, 1924-1943

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Venezia_Giulia_province.png

¹¹¹ Mary Heaton Vorse, "Debatable Lands in Central Europe," *New York Times*, 6 July 1919, 64.

with Trieste proving to be especially fruitful.¹¹² The Trieste Fascisti was established on 3 April 1919 by Lieutenant Pietro Jacchia, just weeks after the first *fasci di combattimento* (fighting league) was founded in Milan.¹¹³ The extreme nationalism of the Fascisti appealed to a significant portion of Trieste's Italian population, who wished for an end to the economic and social unrest of the attempted leftist revolution and the territorial disputes preventing Venezia Giulia's official annexation to Italy. Trieste quickly became a centre of Fascist power in Italy and was the fastest growing *fasci* group in Italy between 1919-1920.¹¹⁴

In their violent confrontation with socialists, the Fascists received support from multiple factions of Triestine society, including former soldiers, police, industrialists, bourgeoisie, agrarians, students, local administrators and big industry. In light of the central government's weakness to subdue the worker's revolts, the Fascists were increasingly seen as the only force capable of combating socialist and Bolshevik revolutionary forces and of protecting the interests of Italians in the Adriatic. On the road to dictatorship, one of the most advantageous allies for the Fascists were Trieste's nationalist group *Associazione Patria*. The nationalists were inspired by the Fascist fighting leagues and in 1919 Fulvio Suvich appointed Bruno Coceancig as commander of the 500-man nationalist battalion *Sursum Corda*.¹¹⁵ Moehrle argues that by joining forces

¹¹² On the *biennio rosso* and the rise of Fascism see Giuseppe Maione, *Il Biennio Rosso: Autonomia e Spontaneità Operaia al 1919-1920* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1975); Dahlia Sabine Elazar, "Class, State, and Counter-Revolution: The Fascist Seizure of Power in Italy, 1919-1922," *European Sociological Review* 16, no.3 (2000): 301-321; Charles Bertrand, "The Biennio Rosso: Anarchists and Revolutionary Syndicalists in Italy, 1919-1920," *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques* 9, no.3 (1982): 383-402; William Brustein, "The 'Red Menace' and the Rise of Italian Fascism," *American Sociological Review* 56, no.5 (1991): 652-664, doi:10.2307/2096086.

¹¹³ The *fasci di combattimento* was founded in Milan on 23 March 1919 and reconstituted as the *Partito Nazionale Fascista* (PNF; the National Fascist Party) on 9 November 1921.

¹¹⁴ Moehrle, *Judenverfolgung in Triest*, 12.

¹¹⁵ Coceancig's name was Italianized to Coceani in 1928. Ibid, 72.

with the nationalists, the politically inexperienced Fascists were able to infiltrate the inner circles of Trieste's political and economic life.¹¹⁶

In turn, the Fascists brought a new energy to the nationalist agenda, which saw fascism as a vehicle through which it could attack and suppress its enemies, and protect the “interests of the old political, economic and financial elites.”¹¹⁷ One major issue which the Triestine Fascists and nationalists held in common was their enragement over the continued presence of Slavic businesses, hotels, cultural centers and educational institutions after so many had fought and died to reclaim the region for Italy. The international character of the city, once seen as its strength, was now perceived as a threat to the peace of the new province and of all of Europe. Nationalist fervour in Trieste was amplified by D'Annunzio's occupation of Fiume, which received strong support in Trieste. D'Annunzio also inspired the rhetorical style, aesthetics, and rituals that were adopted by Mussolini's Fascist movement, such as his self-proclaimed title of “*Duce*,” his enthusiastic parades and balcony speeches, and use of the Roman salute. While D'Annunzio's style of mass politics and the Fiumian expedition were important precursors to the rise of fascism, historians such as Michael Leeden have demonstrated the many ideological and political differences separated the two men, including their motivations for political action and responses to conflict and compromise.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 73.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 72-74.

¹¹⁸ On D'Annunzio and the Fiume crisis see Dominique Kirchner Reill, *The Fiume Crisis: Life in the Wake of the Hapsburg Empire* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 2020); Michael Arthur Leeden, *The First Duce: D'Annunzio at Fiume*, 2nd edition (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2002); Federico Carlo Simonelli, *D'Annunzio e il mito di Fiume: riti, simboli, narrazioni* (Ospedaletto, Pisa: Pacini editore, 2021); and Enrico Serventi Longhi, *Il faro del mondo nuovo: D'Annunzio e i legionari a Fiume fra Guerra e rivoluzione* (Udine: Gaspari, 2019).

International disputes over the Adriatic were fought in the streets of Trieste, dividing the city between “foreign agents”—Slavs and socialists, many of whom were Italian—and “true Italians,” the Fascists and nationalists. Fascist bands targeted Slavic spaces throughout the city with relentless bombings, street fights, and the looting and destruction of residential buildings and businesses. One of the most devastating and well-known attacks occurred on 13 July 1920, when a large group of Fascist Blackshirts attacked and set fire to the Narodni Dom (National House or Hotel Balkan) one of the most important centres of Slavic cultural life in the region, in addition to other Slavic institutions. The attack was coordinated by Francesco Giunta, one of the rising stars of D’Annunzio’s coup in Fiume sent to Trieste to head its Fascist movement in April 1920.

Mussolini was encouraged by the active and violent energy of the border Fascist movement in Trieste. The border Fascists’ ability to mobilize and unify the Italian element against political and racial “enemies” was a manifestation of the highest ideals of the Fascist revolution. Mussolini shared his praise and encouragement of Triestine Fascists on 20 September 1920 at the Politeama Rossetti theatre in Trieste. This speech was crucial for the development of fascist ideology, as it laid out the movement’s central tasks and most prominent threats. In setting out the Fascist program Mussolini spoke of the strong standing of the “vitality of [the Italian] race”—including 10 million emigrants and the 40 million Italians in the peninsula who exist as “one compact whole.” The “180,000 German subjects in the Upper Adige and 360,000 Slavs” of Venezia Giulia were all that stood in the way of total racial homogeneity of the Italian nation.¹¹⁹ He declared the “foundation-stone of Fascismo to be patriotism”¹²⁰ and the heights of Italian civilization to be the

¹¹⁹ “The Task of Fascism,” *Mussolini as Revealed in His Political Speeches*,” 109.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 112.

“Dolomites of Italian Thought.”¹²¹ German expansionism and Bolshevism were highlighted as the two most prominent external threats undermining Italy’s patriotic sacrifice and sacred mission. Victory over the former had been sanctified by Italy’s annexation of its mountain frontier:

The tricolour on the Brenner means that the Germans will no longer descend with impunity upon our lands. Glaciers have now been placed between us and them, and on these glaciers are the magnificent Alpine soldiers who went to the assault of Monte Nero, who were sacrificed at Ortigara, and who have on their flag the motto ‘No passage this way.’¹²²

In the wake of Italy’s defeat over the Austrian aggressor, the Bolshevik menace had become the most prominent threat to the nation. This was especially true in Trieste, where deceitful politicians used Bolshevism to gain support from the “Slavic masses.” To protect Italy from these external threats, Mussolini called for vigilance in the protection of the sacred boundaries marked by the tricolour flags on San Giusto, Nevoso and the Dinaric Alps.¹²³ In this and many other speeches, the symbolism of Trento and Trieste came to represent two sides of the same coin—on one side the borderlands were symbols of sacrifice and victory and on the other, symbols of peril and defeat. Fascism’s fight to protect *italianità* and Italian sovereignty in the borderlands from Bolshevism, Pan-Slavism and German expansion was presented as a sacred mission that was necessary to ensure the strength and sanctity of Italy’s victory.

Emboldened by Mussolini’s support, Triestine Fascists continued their crusade to establish “law and order” against the Bolshevik agitators. In October 1920, the Fascists staged a violent riot to break-up a labour strike organized by the Socialists. In February

¹²¹ Ibid, 114.

¹²² Ibid, 110

¹²³ Ibid, 120.

1921, a Fascist mob attacked the offices of the Trieste Socialist daily *Il Lavoratore*. Italian newspapers such as Turin's *La Stampa*, reported that the attack was a reprisal for the murder of a carabinieri officer who was ambushed while walking through "a socialist district of the city." In the early hours of the morning, the man left a party with his girlfriend and was loudly singing Arditi songs in the neighbourhood.¹²⁴ He was approached by the group of men who told him to stop. A brawl ensued and he was killed. Later that day, the Fascist mob set the office of *Il Lavoratore* on fire and "tried to prevent the fire brigade from smothering and containing the fire which destroyed the building and threatened to spread to the surrounding houses."¹²⁵ Far from praising the nationalist vigilantism of the Trieste Fascists, *La Stampa* criticized the group for their total disregard for the power and authority of the police and for their cruel attack, which it described as a "pure and simple act of violence and delinquency." Especially worrying for the newspaper was the fact that these "village brawls" were idealized in some circles of public opinion, which threatened the "moral sanctity of the whole nation."

The Fascists' sustained attack against Slavic and Socialist institutions was characterized as a "wildfire spreading the merciless crusade of devastation."¹²⁶ Fascists and their nationalist supporters increasingly perceived Slovenian and Croatian communities as harbingers of anti-Italian sentiments and a Bolshevik agenda. In the unstable border region, fears over the "Red contagion" were amplified, and attacks on "foreign" (i.e. Slavic) individuals and institutions were therefore portrayed as justifiable acts for the protection of the state. Maura Hametz has shown that the central government

¹²⁴ The *Arditi* was a division of highly trained, elite soldiers in the Italian Army established during the First World War.

¹²⁵ "Crisi di violenza," *La Stampa*, 12 February 1921, 1.

¹²⁶ "Nationalists War on Reds in Italy," *New York Times*, 28 January 1921, 3.

and local authorities responded to Fascist violence with complicity, and in some cases, encouragement. Military forces and the carabinieri who witnessed the “wildfire” of Fascist attacks did little to intervene or protect the city’s Slovenian and Croatian inhabitants. When they did intervene, it was often “to round up socialist groups and charge them with aggression against the state.”¹²⁷ The support of the nationalists and complicity of government authorities encouraged the growth of a strong and excessively violent Fascist movement, and the region became a great stage upon which the Fascisti could demonstrate their fortitude and superiority against the Slavic-Socialist enemy.

The fever of the *biennio rosso* and the Fascist revolution did not affect Trentino and South Tyrol as severely as it had in the eastern borderlands. In the last days of the war the Italian army occupied Trento, Bolzano and Merano, and marched across the Brenner Pass as far as Innsbruck, Landeck and Leinz. These regions were placed under the civil and military government headed by Guglielmo Pecori Giraldi. While the Tyrolese certainly resented their Italian occupiers, this resentment did not immediately result in violent conflict between the Italian troops and German residents. The presence of large numbers of Italian men in Tyrol did, however, present a problem for some Austrians, who found their sisters and daughters fraternizing with the enemy.

In May 1918, the Swiss newspaper, *Thurgauer Zeitung*, published a report from the Austrian Tyrol stating that,

In Innsbruck...the Tyrolese girls have very quickly accustomed themselves to the foreign garrison and the southern warmth shining from the eyes of the Italian officers has had a special effect upon the Innsbruck women. Quite different from the young Italian women, who

¹²⁷ Maura Hametz, “The Carabinieri stood by: The Italian State and the “Slavic threat” in Trieste, 1919-1922,” *Nationalities Papers* 20, no.4 (2001): 565, doi:10.1080/00905990120102093.

in Udine and elsewhere showed themselves very distant and restrained toward the Austrians, the Tyrolese girls, not infrequently to the general disgust, like to stroll around arm in arms with the Italian officers, to go sleigh riding with them, to dance with them, etc.¹²⁸

The author of the report criticized the women for their loose morals, stating “that our Tyrolese girls are so eager to catch men and have not the least shadow of real German maidens’ honor or of maidens’ pride. This is no credit to the Tyrol and these girls do not deserve the name of Tyrolese maidens; they ought to be called geese!” In one instance, a woman was physically assaulted by her brother for walking home with an Italian man. It was alleged that “a group of thirty men had agreed to publicly chastise any German women or girls found in the company of Italian officers.” This caused the Italian commander to “inform the Innsbruck Mayor that any such procedure would be regarded as a hostile act against the Italian troops of occupation.” He went so far as to instruct the officers to use their weapons against anyone who would assault them or the Tyrolese women they accompanied.¹²⁹

Anxieties over the presence of Italian soldiers in the Austrian Tyrol and South Tyrol were not limited to the local population. As early as December 1918, Italian commanders voiced concerns over the spread of subversive propaganda and the infiltration of the “Bolshevik contagion” amongst Italian troops stationed in Innsbruck, whose

¹²⁸ “Tyrolese Girls Won by Italian Soldiers,” *New York Times*, 4 May 1918, 26.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

radicalization could have disastrous consequences upon their return home. To counter this threat, Italian authorities collected intelligence on active centres of Bolshevik propaganda and banned soldiers from visiting these establishments.¹³⁰ According to Andrea Di Michele, in countering the threat of communism, “the often divergent interests of the Italian and Austrian authorities found a point of contact.”¹³¹ The Italian military kept their eye on the Bolshevik movement in Austria and Germany, and in April 1919, the Italian



*Map 4:
The Italian Provinces of Venezia
Tridentina – Trentino and Südtirol/Alto
Adige – bordering the Austrian Tirol,
1920-1943*

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_South_Tyrol#/media/File:Tirol-Suedtirol-Trentino.png

commander “ordered the closing of the Bavarian frontier...owing to fears of a spread of Bolshevism to Italy.”¹³²

South Tyrol and Trentino were officially annexed to Italy on 10 October 1920, in accordance with the Treaty of St. Germain.¹³³ To prepare for this transition, in July 1919, Luigi Credaro was appointed *Commissario Generale Civile della Venezia Tridentina* (General Commissioner of Venezia Tridentina) which replaced the military government

¹³⁰ Andrea Di Michele, “Trento, Bolzano e Innsbruck: L’occupazione Militare Italiana del Tirolo (1918-1920),” in *Trento e Trieste: Percorsi degli italiani d’Austria dal ’48 all’annessione*, ed. Fabrizio Rasera (Rovereto: Accademia roveretana degli agiati, 2014): 439-440.

¹³¹ Di Michele, “Trento, Bolzano e Innsbruck,” 440.

¹³² “Italy Orders Barrier on Bavarian Reds,” *New York Times*, 12 April 1919, 2.

¹³³ The peace conditions of the Treaty of Saint Germain were dictated on 2 September 1919 and confirmed by the National Assembly in Vienna four days later. In this vote, “Tyrolean representative abstained as a sign of protest.” Rolf Steininger, *South Tyrol: A Minority Conflict of the Twentieth Century* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2003): 5.

of Pecori Girardo. In Innsbruck and the cities and towns of South Tyrol, the province's passage from Habsburg to Italian territory was observed as a "day of mourning (*Trauertag*)."¹³⁴ The loss of South Tyrol and the defeat of the Austrian army had a profound impact on the development of memory culture in the region, which became entrenched in the narratives of "sacrifice and reunification."¹³⁵ These narratives were expressed on the front page of Bolzano's *Der Tiroler* on the day of annexation:

South Tyroleans! As of today, the incorporation of South Tyrol into the Kingdom of Italy is a fact. With that, the old state of Tyrol was torn in two. South Tyrol became the victim of the peace treaty, which, despite the solemnly proclaimed right to self-determination, tears us away from our fellow countrymen. We South Tyroleans have the unshakeable hope that the day will come when justice and far-sighted politics will bring us national liberation.¹³⁶

The Fascist movement in South Tyrol did not receive the same widespread, popular support as it had in Trieste. However, Fascist extremism in the region had a profound impact on the development of the Fascist movement and the new border province. The extreme nationalism of the Fascist movement had little to offer the German-speaking majority in the larger centers of Bolzano and Merano, nor did it find support in the small Alpine villages. Instead, Tyrolean fascism was imported from Trento and more prominent Fascist groups in Milan and Verona. The *fasci di combattimento* of Bolzano was founded on 16 February 1921 by Achille Starace, leader of the Trento Fascisti. The group was comprised of 120 members, most of whom were businessmen and military officials from other regions in Italy.¹³⁷ Representing a microcosm of the collapse of the Liberal Italy,

¹³⁴ Laurence Cole, "Divided Land, Diverging Narratives: Memory Cultures of the Great War in the Successor Regions of Tyrol," in *Sacrifice and Rebirth: The Legacy of the Last Habsburg War*, eds. Mark Cornwall and John Paul Newman (New York: Berghahn Books, 2018), 261.

¹³⁵ Cole, "Divided Land," 261.

¹³⁶ *Der Tiroler*, 10 October 1920, 1.

¹³⁷ Steininger, *South Tyrol*, 6.

Rusinow argues that the weakness and indecision of the government in Trento created a policy vacuum in the region, and left competing political forces to fight for supremacy in the region.¹³⁸ Fascisti of Trento and Bolzano protested Luigi Credaro's moderate and conciliatory attitude towards the Germans of Venezia Tridentina and called for more aggressive campaign to Italianize the region. The precarious peace of the Treaty of St. Germain did little to reassure Fascists of the security of the new region within Italian borders. International criticism of the Italian annexation of South Tyrol and calls for the union of Austrian and German provinces made the Italianization of the new province even more pressing.

Within a few months of their establishment, the Bolzano Fascisti began their campaign of violence and intimidation. In April 1921, the Austrian provinces of Tyrol and Salzburg held a plebiscite for the province's union with Germany in which the majority of the Tyrolean population voted in favour of the proposal.¹³⁹ This plebiscite was not provided for or recognized by the European peace treaties, and as such, it had little impact. Even so, the vote drew the ire of Fascists in northern Italy. On 24 April 1921, the day of the vote, two-hundred and eighty Fascists from Trento and northern Italy met in Bolzano. The mob attacked a group of Germans in traditional Tyrolean costumes participating in a ceremonial procession, known as *Trachtenumzug*, which opened the annual Bozen Fair. The plebiscite ballot boxes, "set out to enable attendees to take part in the North Tyrol vote," were stolen by the Fascists and brought to Trento, "where they were publicly burned."¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Rusinow, *Italy's Austrian Heritage*, 54.

¹³⁹ The newspaper *Il Piccolo* reported the results of the plebiscite: "80,000 voted in favor of joining Germany and 1,200 [voted] against." "Il plebiscito del Tirolo," *Il Piccolo*, 26 April 1921, 1.

¹⁴⁰ Steininger, *South Tyrol*, 8.

A few days prior, Credaro warned the central government of the impending attack and called for assistance but received no response. With no directive from Rome, military units based in the region did nothing to protect the Tyrolese from the attack, but they did escort the Fascists back to the train station to ensure they were unharmed. As a result of the attack, which would thereafter be referred to as “Bloody Sunday” one man, a teacher named Franz Innerhofer, was killed and around fifty were wounded. Of all the Fascists who participated in the events of “Bloody Sunday,” only two members of the Bolzano Fascio were arrested, but none of the other participants would face consequences for the violent assault of the Tyrolean community.¹⁴¹

In June 1921, in response to the Tyrolean plebiscite and Fascist attack in Bolzano, Mussolini addressed the Chamber of Deputies to scrutinize the weak and conciliatory position of the Liberal government:

What is the present Government doing to defend the Alpine barrier of the Brenner and the Nevoso? Its policy, as regard to Upper Adige is lamentable. Though the Hon. Luigi Credaro would doubtless be extremely capable of running a kindergarten (*laughter*), I absolutely deny that he has the necessary qualifications for governing a region where several languages are spoken and the rivalry between the races is ancient and bitter.¹⁴²

As he did in 1911, Mussolini pointed to the menacing activities of the agents and institutions of “*pangermanismo*” (Pan-Germanism), particularly the Munich-based *Deutscher Verband*, and accused the ministers of Tyrol of promoting German propaganda in favour of revisions to the Austrian-Italian border. He described Bolzano as a “nest of Pan-Germanism” and applauded the actions of the Bolzano Fascists, who with their

¹⁴¹ “I fatti di Bolzano,” *Il Piccolo della Sera*, 26 April 1921, 4.

¹⁴² BMOO XVI, 432.

violent action “marked the limit to which fascism intended that the German movement should go.”¹⁴³ He set out the Fascist governments demands in Alto Adige which included, “the abolition of everything which reminds us of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, even in outward form,” the dismissal of two pro-German governors, and the institution of bilingualism “in every act of public administration.”¹⁴⁴ It was reported that, “the address was received with marked attention [with] even the Socialists listening with interest.”¹⁴⁵ The nationalist struggle in Trentino-South Tyrol provided the Fascists with an opportunity to prove themselves as protectors of Italian interests, both in the borderlands and within the international community.

In the spring and fall of 1921, the Fascists of Venezia Tridentina embarked on an aggressive campaign which would serve as a dress rehearsal for the March on Rome. In April 1922, local Fascists met in Trento to draft a list of demands, which included the stripping of South Tyrolean political and administrative autonomy, the dissolution of political and athletic associations with irredentist leanings, and called for the use of the Italian-language in public offices and schools.¹⁴⁶ On April 27, the Fascists sent their demands to the Town Council of Merano. One of the most contentious issues was their assertion that the Italian tricolore flag was to be raised at City Hall, which the council initially refused. In response, the Fascists threatened that eight hundred men would storm Merano’s City Hall if their demands were not met. In the face of these violent threats, the council eventually conceded to all the Fascist demands.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 433.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 435.

¹⁴⁵ “Italian Minister Refuses to Return,” *New York Times*, 23 June 1921, 2.

¹⁴⁶ Steininger, *South Tyrol*, 11.

In October 1922, the Fascists proposed a similar action in Bolzano. The groups drafted and sent a ten-point memorandum to the local government, which called for the resignation of Bolzano's pro-German mayor Julius Perathoner, the instatement of bilingualism and mandatory Italian lessons for those in public offices, and the establishment of an Italian school and church. The Italianization of the "Empress Elizabeth" school was a particular point of contention for the Bolzano fascio and the Town Council's outright refusal to Italianize the school propelled the Fascists to more aggressive action. Mussolini enlisted his trusted ally Francesco Giunta "to organize 'some kind of action' in Bolzano."¹⁴⁷ On 1 October 1922, Giunta and his action squad stormed the school and seven hundred Fascists occupied Bolzano's City Hall without incident. The *New York Times* reported that the mob "insisted on the resignation of the Municipal Council, seized German schools, dissolved the local police and clamored for the resignation of Senator Salata, Director General of the liberated provinces, and Senator Credaro, High Commissioner of the Trentino, for their so-called policy of 'masterly inactivity.'"¹⁴⁸ Credaro agreed to their demands and resigned soon after, fleeing Trento for Rome.

For Mussolini, the superiority of fascism was solidified by the Fascist seizure of power in Trento and Bolzano. Fascism had succeeded where the irredentists, socialists and nationalists had failed and in doing so, demonstrated the failure of the Liberal government to contain the revolutionary energies of the Fascisti. In a speech delivered in in Naples, "at the final stage of the pilgrimage of the ever-swelling ranks of Italian youth," preparing themselves for the assault on Rome, Mussolini reaffirmed the centrality of the

¹⁴⁷ Cattaruzza, *Italy and its Eastern Border*, 124.

¹⁴⁸ "Italian Socialists Expel Moderates," *New York Times*, 5 October 1922, 12.

borderlands in the Fascist ideological and political struggle, and as powerful symbols of Italian sacrifice and victory. He welcomed his followers from across Italy, who have “all come together to affirm quietly and positively the indestructability of our united faith, which means to oppose strongly every more or less masked attempt at autonomy or separatism.”¹⁴⁹

Mussolini pointed to the March on Bolzano and Trento as evidence of the “complete paralysis of the Italian states...and the no less complete efficiency of the Fascist state,” which affirmed that the time had come for the Fascists to take power.¹⁵⁰ In describing his ideal state Mussolini proclaimed that “for us the nation has a soul and doesn’t consist only in so much territory...The greatness of a nation lies in the aggregation of all these virtues and conditions. A nation is great when its spiritual force is transferred into a reality.”¹⁵¹ To bring about this ideal state Mussolini envisioned Fascism “concentrating all these energies, purifying certain circles, and removing certain members of society, gathering others under its standard.”¹⁵² On 28 October 1922, as Mussolini’s Fascist mob marched on Rome three thousand black shirts and their leader Francesco Giunta, fresh from his victory in Bolzano, stormed the prefecture of Trieste and forced its prefect to step down. The prefectures of Gorizia, Udine and Pola were also occupied, with no opposition from the carabinieri or military. As reported by the consulate of Germany in Trieste, the Fascist takeover ignited a firestorm of anti-Slav violence across the region.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Speech by Mussolini in Naples, 26 October 1922, *Mussolini as Revealed in his Political Speeches*, 171.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 173.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, 177.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, 179.

¹⁵³ Moehrle, *Judenverfolgung in Triest*, 102.

From the first days of the *fasci di combattimento* to the March on Rome, events in the new provinces proved to be transformative for the Fascist movement. Scholars like Cattaruzza have rightly described the borderlands as “training grounds” for the Fascist seizure of power and the March on Trento and Bolzano as a sort of dress rehearsal for the March on Rome. Local Fascists in each provinces tested and refined their extremist rhetoric and methodical use of force. Mussolini was inspired by the violent methods of Trieste Fascists and saw great potential in their anti-Slav and anti-Bolshevik program. He praised the actions of the Fascists of Venezia Tridentina who, through their collective will and strength, successfully marched on Bolzano to “safeguard” *Italianità* in South Tyrol. Mussolini applied these borderland methods to expand his popularity and seize control of Italy. Yet, the success of the Fascist takeover did not assure the long-term success of the movement. They now faced a new challenge—to maintain control and bring about the Fascist revolution. The Italianization of the new provinces would become crucial to their success.

An examination of the journey from irredentism to fascism reveals some important ideas, themes and contradictions that would carry on throughout the Fascist period. The first is the importance of the interplay between regional, national and international developments in the progressive radicalization of the irredentist struggle. The spectrum of irredentist thought in the Adriatic and Trentino was founded upon different national myths—what Emilio Gentile describes as the “constellation of beliefs, ideas, ideals and values” about the nation, its character and mission—but the popularity and prominence of these different movements was heavily influenced by the changing relationship

between the multi-ethnic communities within the borderlands, and the perceived or desired relationship between the borderlands communities and the national and imperial centres in Rome and Vienna.¹⁵⁴ The rise of the Pan-German and Pan-Slavic movements, the greater visibility of competing nationalist organizations and communities, and the Austrian government's infringement on Italian Austrian rights all contributed to the suppression of the moderate, liberally-minded irredentist movements promoting either the rights and status of Italian Austrians within the empire or the creation of a federation of nations based on the principles of nationality and cooperation, and led to greater support for the more extreme strains of irredentism, which were imperialist, racist and separatist. Embodied in the spectrum of irredentism were different redemptive myths. While the former promoted either cooperation with the Austrian government or with solidarity with other national groups fighting against imperialism, the latter promoted Italian dominance in the Trentino and Adriatic, the suppression of the linguistic and racial other, and the annexation of the Austrian territories that infringed on Italy's sacred, natural and strategic borders.

Equally important was the development of the Italian government's a relationship with the borderland communities and neighbouring powers. Following the Third War of Unification, the Liberal government prioritized its friendship with Austrian Empire over the unification of *Italia irredenta*. However, the rise of nationalism in Italy and the Habsburg Empire, the competition of nationalist movements in the borderlands, the disintegration of the powers of the Austro-Hungarian empire, and tensions that arose over the Vienna's policies towards Italian Austrian citizens and the Balkans led to crack in the

¹⁵⁴ Gentile, *La Grande Italia*, xiv.

foundation of the Italian-Austrian friendship and the rise of anti-Austrian feeling amongst the Italian populace. The oppression Italian Austrians in the Hapsburg empire and the growth of Italy's geo-political ambitions lead to a renaissance of irredentist ideas at the turn of the century. Adapted and manipulated for varying political purposes, the concepts and practices of irredentism began to infiltrate the psyche of Italian society, setting Italy on an ambitious and treacherous path that would end in both victory and defeat.

Austria's declaration of war in the summer of 1914 and Italian neutrality brought the issue of *Italia irredenta* to the forefront of Italian political life. For irredentists, nationalists and interventionists, the redemption of the nation would be fully realized following the unification of the *Italia irredenta* with the Italian nation. However, the irredentist dream of unification that had encouraged Italy to war in 1915 ultimately resulted in the further fragmentation of the nation-state, both during and after the war's end. Throughout the war, it became apparent that the geographic redemption of *Italia irredenta* was not sufficient to overcome the contradictory mental maps and myriad of social and cultural differences alienating the Italian communities of the borderlands from the communities of the Old Kingdom. At the war's end, the only things that unified the Italian populace was their collective mourning over the senseless death and injury of so many soldiers and their anger over the government's handling of the war and treaty negotiations.

The importance of the interplay between regional, national and international developments is apparent in the radicalization of Mussolini's political thought from his time in Trentino to after the First World War and would continue to shape fascist ideology and policy throughout the *ventennio*. For Mussolini, the symbolic and nationalizing power

of *Italia irredenta* was not fully realized until the start of the European conflict. His turn from socialism to nationalism and interventionism was influenced by the shifting international situation, by his meditations on the Trentino—which asserted that the Italian people would unite and rise up against Austrian and German aggression—and by the perceived weakness of the Italian government and socialists, who refused to seize on the revolutionary moment. The interplay of these multi-level developments was crucial for Mussolini's ideological transition towards fascism.

In his turn from socialism to nationalism we also see a pattern which would repeat itself during his time in power. The sincerity of Mussolini's beliefs in the irredentist or nationalist struggle is less important than his ability to seize on the ideological and political movements which were most effective in bringing about his ultimate aim—the redemption of the Italian people and the creation of a Greater Italy. In establishing his Fascist ideology, Mussolini weaved together various aspects of these different movements and myths, already well established in Italian society, to create something that was both familiar and revolutionary. The symbol of *Italia irredenta* became an essential feature of the Fascist mythical tapestry and collective mental map of the nation. In the postwar period the borderlands took on a Janus-faced symbolism in Italian national life, representing both Italy's sacrifice and victory and the threat of treachery and defeat. These threats were both internal, embodied in the Liberal government's perceived impotence to secure Italian claims at the postwar treaty conferences, and external, most prominently displayed in the protestations of Woodrow Wilson and the Austrian and Yugoslavian governments. For Mussolini and his followers, the geographic redemption of *Italia irredenta* through the crucible of war did not lead Italy to greater unity or prominence. In

the postwar era, the political and cultural redemption of *Italia irredenta* from Italy's internal and external enemies became the nation's sacred mission and the Fascist government would act as protector and executor of this mission. This new redemptive struggle focused on the regeneration of the Italian people, and especially the borderland communities who had been included within the nation's geographic borders but continued to live outside of its ideological and cultural boundaries.

CHAPTER TWO

BUILDING THE NATION AT THE PERIPHERY, 1922-1930

FASCIST WORLD-BUILDING AT THE NATIONAL FRONTIER

PHASE I: FASCISM, FOREIGN POLICY AND ITALIANIZATION, 1922-1925



Map 5: The Italian Border Regions and Neighbouring Countries, 1925

Source: David Rumsey Map Collection, David Rumsey Map Center, Stanford Libraries, "Italy," *Atlas of the Province of Prince Edward Island Canada and the World* (Toronto, Ontario: Cummins Map Co., 1925), 12.

http://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~259239~5522417:Italy-?sort=Pub_List_No_InitialSort%2CPub_Date%2CPub_List_No%2CSeries_No&qvq=/when%2F1925;q:italy;ort:Pub_List_No_InitialSort%2CPub_Date%2CPub_List_No%2CSeries_No;lc:RUMSEY~8~1&mi=0&trs=11

The Fascist March on Bolzano and Trieste signalled the start of a new relationship between the Italian state and the borderland provinces. Just a few months after Mussolini's rise to power, the new Fascist government embarked on a campaign of forced assimilation that would alter the borderland's geographical, institutional and social landscape. Mussolini aimed to bring about the completion of the redemption of *Italia irredenta*

through the Italianization of the region and its people. At its inception, the Italianization project adopted many of the methods and approaches developed by the irredentist and nationalist movements, such as the spread of *italianità* through education and the press, the institution of bilingualism and promotion of Italian supremacy in the region's political, legal and economic spheres.

Between 1922-1925, the Italianization programs were hindered by the Fascist government's own limitations, which stemmed from the lack of a centralized administrative system and program, and the prioritization of foreign policy initiatives which were, at times, undermined by the borderland assimilationist policies. The interplay between internal and international developments, and the tension between foreign policy goals and the need to exert Italian sovereignty in the new Italian regions, went far in shaping the Fascist government's approach to the redemption of the borderlands. The first section of this chapter discusses the policies and procedures that Fascist authorities adopted to address the minority issue in the *Triveneto* borderlands during its initial years in power and examines how conflict in the borderlands impacted the relationship between Fascist Italy and its neighbours. It also looks at the response of German-speaking and Slovene-speaking communities and officials in the borderlands to Fascist assimilationist policies. The second section of this chapter explores the shift in Fascist Italianization policies following the institution of the *leggi fascistissime* in 1925-1926 and the extension and fortification of Fascist authoritarian power in the latter half of the 1920s.

On 19 March 1923, the Fascist government in Rome assigned Ettore Tolomei and Giovanni Preziosi the task of drafting a blueprint for the Italianization of South Tyrol.

Since the 1890s Ettore Tolomei had been one of the most prominent and radical irredentists of South Tyrol. In August 1909, Tolomei—a historian and geographer by training—began publishing the quarterly journal *Archivio dell'Alto Adige*, in which he constructed the historical, cultural, geographical and ethnographic basis of South Tyrol's Italian heritage.¹ Tolomei applauded “the renewal that the Fascist revolution brought to the Atesino question,” which he perceived as a central program of the “destinies of the nation.”² Tolomei's co-author, Giovanni Preziosi was a former priest who, in 1913, founded the journal *La Vita Italiana all'Estero*, which promoted the preservation of Italian culture in the face of foreign intervention. Early in his political career, Preziosi warned of the threat of the “Jewish international” and strove to instill antisemitism in the hearts and minds of Italian citizens.³

The partnership of Tolomei and Preziosi resulted in Tolomei's triumphant announcement on 15 July 1923 of the 32-point *Provvedimenti per l'Alto Adige*.⁴ The 32-points can be roughly divided into three categories: (1) control of the movement and settlement of “foreign elements;” (2) the abolishment of German institutions and adoption of measures to affirm the predominance of Italian in public places and proceedings; and (3) the centralization of economic, political and social life in the peripheral provinces. These measures, which were specifically drawn up for the Italianization of South Tyrol,

¹ On Ettore Tolomei see Maurizio Ferrandi, *Il nazionalista. Ettore Tolomei. L'uomo che inventò l'Alto Adige* (Merano: Alpha & Beta Verlag, 2020).

² Ettore Tolomei an Benito Mussolini, 15 June 1923, in Walter Freiberg and Josef Fontana, *Südtirol und der Italienische Nationalismus: Entstehung und Entwicklung einer europäischen Minderheitenfrage. Teil 2: Dokumente* (Innsbruck: Wagner, 1990), 79-80.

³ Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, 49.

⁴ An English translation of the 32-points can be found in Steininger, 19-20. A full copy of the *Provvedimenti per l'Alto Adige* can be found in Freiberg, *Südtirol und der Italienische Nationalismus*, 67-79.

would also influence the program of denationalization enacted against the Slavic populations of Venezia Giulia.

German-speaking officials in South Tyrol were quick to condemn Tolomei's program. Just one week after the announcement of the *Provvedimenti per l'Alto Adige*, German Deputies from the region published "a memorial address to Premier Mussolini [in protest of] the regulations for the administration of their district." They spoke out against the government's handling of:

1. The language question: laws and regulations seldom provided with a German translation
2. Change of placenames: alterations injure international business interests
3. Right of meeting: non-political educative lecture forbidden
4. Census: confusion of nationalities
5. Schools: proposed suppression of the German schools in seven German Communities
6. The Lowlands: transference of the judicial district of Neumarkt (Egna) to the purely Italian sub-prefecture of Cavalese
7. Historic traditions: general suppression, including the name 'Tyrol,' except as a designation of a village and castle near Meran.

While the Deputies admitted that their protest would likely not impact the status of the regulations, they closed with the assertion that, "nothing can change the character of German 'Kultur' in the Upper Adige." As the authors of the memorial predicted, the Fascist government ignored their protest and proceeded to enact a series of laws according to Tolomei's 32-points.⁵

The postwar treatise of Versailles, Rapallo and St. Germain brought the provinces into Italy's orbit, but their centre of gravity had yet to be fixed in Rome. The assimilationist campaigns of 1922-1925 primarily focused on three programs—the spatial restructuring of the borderlands' political, municipal and provincial boundaries, the Italianization of place names and regional institutions, such as the press and schools, and

⁵ "Mussolini Gets Protest from German Deputies," *New York Times*, 22 July 1923, 128.

the securitization of the border and restriction of the movement of individuals and ideas promoting anti-fascism, communism and German or Slavic irredentism.

As part of the Habsburg Empire, the Princely County of Tyrol and the Adriatic Littoral enjoyed a high level of provincial autonomy which provincial leaders hoped to maintain within the Italian state. However, the integration of the annexed provinces under the unitary and nationalist model of the Fascist regime required the abolishment of the Austrian system of laws and administrative structures that were, for the most part, kept alive in the immediate post-war years. The pre-Fascist Central Office for the New Provinces had preserved the Habsburg legal and administrative systems which ensured the provinces administrative autonomy but this autonomy was quickly dismantled under the centralizing program of the Fascist regime.⁶ The administration of South Tyrol was cut off from the Tyrolean-German cultural centre at Innsbruck—the capital of the province of Tyrol since 1420—and placed under the jurisdiction of the Trentino, with its centre at Trento. In late November 1922, Mussolini declared that the new region of Friuli Venezia Giulia would be established through the union of the province of Trieste and the region of Friuli.⁷ With these incorporations, the central government aimed to suppress the influence

⁶ Cattaruzza, *Italy and Its Eastern Border*, 127.

⁷ Moehrle, *Judenverfolgung in Triest* 103; Lavo Čermelj, *Life-and-Death Struggle of a National Minority: The Yugoslavs in Italy*, 2nd edition (Ljubljana: Tiskarna Ljudske Pravice v Ljubljana, 1945), 20-21. Liberal Italy began this spatial restructuring with the gerrymandering of the region before the first post-war parliamentary election. According to an article by the *New York Times*, the Liberal government attempted to “neutralize as far as possible, the foreign vote,” the constituencies in the new province were divided to minimize the number of deputies that could be elected in the majority German or Slavic regions.” In Venezia Tridentina, Trento and Roverto, which had a majority Italian population – 400,000 Italians to 30,000 Germans – and Bolzano with its German majority – 150,000 Germans and 20,000 Italians, were divided. The former was allowed to elect seven deputies, while the latter were restricted to four. All four deputies elected in Bolzano were part of the German League (*Deutscher Verband*). Venezia Giulia was divided between Gorizia-Gradisca, Trieste and Istria-Parenzo. Gorizia-Gradisca voted in five deputies, four of which were part of the Slavic Unity party, in addition to one Communist. In Trieste, three members of the Italian Constitutional Bloc – including Francesco Giunta – were elected, in addition to one communist, Nicola Bombacci. The constituency of Istria-Parenzo voted in two Fascist deputies, three member of the Italian Constitutional Bloc and one communist. The election of eight Italian deputies in

of the German and Slavic majorities and anchor the provinces within Italian administrative structure.

The central government placed the responsibility for the implementation of Italianization policies in the hands of the *prefetto* (prefect). During the war, the central government extended the powers and authority of the prefect, especially in matters of public health and security. As the representative of the Ministry of the Interior at both the provincial and municipal level, the prefecture became the central institution connecting local organizations to the Fascist centre in Rome.⁸ This administrative network included the *questore* (police commissioner) and the *carabinieri* (military police), as well as state security agencies, such as the *Direzione Generale della Sicurezza Pubblica* (Director General of Public Security) and the *Militia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale* (Voluntary Militia for National Security; MVSN), otherwise known as the ‘*camici neri*’ or Blackshirts. Guided by the prefect, these agencies worked together to bring Fascist “law and order” to the borderlands.

In addition to the spatial restructuring of the provinces, the government passed numerous laws and decrees for the Italianization of place names and institutions. The toponymic campaign of 1922-1923, one of the earliest and most influential programs of Italianization, “aimed to eradicate evidence of all non-Italian influence” in Venezia Tridentina and Venezia Giulia.⁹ In December 1922 the Prefect of Venezia Giulia declared that all restaurants and bars had to provide bilingual menus, signs and bills and giving the

Trieste and Istria-Parenzo outweighed the four Slavic deputies of Gorizia-Gradisca.” “Italy’s Fringe of Alien Subjects,” *New York Times*, 29 May 1921, 14.

⁸ Andrea Di Michele, “Fascismo e prefetti a Bolzano,” in *La regione Trentino Alto Adige/Südtirol nel XX secolo* (2007): 204.

⁹ Hametz, *Making Trieste Italian*, 90.

Italian primacy of place, and that all street signs and place names in municipal spaces must be in Italian. Those who failed to replace non-Italian public inscriptions could be punished with the payment of taxes at a rate four times higher than the normal (Regio Decreto No.352 of 11 February 1923).¹⁰ Streets, piazzas, villages, schools and municipalities were rid of their “foreign names” and replaced with their “correct” Italian names. The Italianization of place names in South Tyrol began with Royal Decree (RD) No. 800 of 29 March 1923,¹¹ after King Victor Emmanuelle III gave his approval, based on recommendations made by Tolomei his article, “*Prontuario dei nomi locali dell’Alto Adige*,” published in Volume 11 of the *Archivio* in 1916.¹² Many of these names had been completely fabricated by Tolomei. In August 1923, the name Tyrol was banned and the following month all South Tyrolean Alpine Associations and their local affiliates were dissolved. In 1924, the *List of municipalities and parts of municipalities in Venezia Giulia* was published as a comprehensive guide of all the Italian modifications.¹³

The “name change” campaigns were part of a larger movement to make Italian the only permissible language in the public sphere, with the intention that it would eventually verge into the private lives of all citizens. Giuseppe Lombard Radice, who acted as General Director of National Schools between 1922-24, justified these policies in the third edition of his book *L’ideale educazione e la scuola nazionale (The Ideal of Education and the National School, 1922)*:

¹⁰ Gorazd Bajc, “Crimes Committed by the Fascist Regime in the Slovene Territory,” in *Crimes Committed by Totalitarian Regimes*, ed. Peter Jambrek (Ljubljana: Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 2008), 129.

¹¹ *Regio Decreto 29 March 1923, n.800*, also known as “*Decreto sulla Nomenclatura Locale de’ Alto Adige*” was published in *Archivio per l’Alto Adige*, VXIII-11 (1923): 730-731. Tolomei also provides a list of Italian place names approved by King Vittorio Emanuele and Mussolini.

¹² For more see Steininger, *South Tyrol*, 17-23.

¹³ Hametz, *Making Trieste Italian*, 90.

In our time the work of denationalization by a conquering people has become more terrible as it is more radical and wide-reaching. In the democratic world of today all strata of society and all citizens with votes are to be reckoned with in the life of civilization; therefore a ruling people feels itself endangered so long as the language, customs, societies, and organizations of the conquered people exist. The victors intend to suppress every point of difference by slaying the national consciousness of its coerced subjects, and the prohibition of their language will doubtless tear up the roots of such consciousness.¹⁴

This quote is reflective of the pervading belief regarding the unbreakable connection between national affiliation and language which was championed throughout the Liberal era, yet also acknowledged the existential fear of the Other which gained greater prominence in the age of the *vittoria mutilata*. It also exemplified the core belief of assimilationism which guided the Fascist program in this early phase—that by depriving minority communities of their cultural, linguistic and social lives they would have no choice but to adopt the Italian language and participate in its institutions, thereby assimilating into the national body. Those who refused would be punished and cast out. German and Slavic languages were not immediately banned, but a series of increasingly restrictive laws were passed to bring about bilingualism in these regions. The Fascist state also targeted institutions and organizations that promoted the use of foreign languages or those that maintained affiliations between the minority populations and their linguistic and cultural brethren, such as newspapers or sport clubs.

The early toponymic campaigns were some of the first stones to fall in the avalanche of Fascist Italianization that swept over Venezia Tridentina and Venezia Giulia in the 1920s. As the decade progressed, the forced assimilationist program infiltrated all

¹⁴ Quoted from Eduard Reut-Nicolussi, *Tyrol: Under the Axe of Italian Fascism*, translated by K.L. Montgomery (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1930), 149. For more on Radice and Fascist educational theory see Eden McLean, *Mussolini's Children* (Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 2018).

aspects of life in the borderlands as the Fascist attempted to bury the “foreign past” under the weight of the Fascists’ national will. In addition to the toponymic programs, Fascist assimilationist policies focused on three central campaigns—the Italianization of administrative offices, the press and educational institutions. As Radice noted, the integration of the annexed provinces was impossible without the removal of “foreign” officials and institutions from the socio-political landscape of the borderlands. The initial purges focused on individuals who did not speak Italian, served under the Austrian regime, were part of Pan-German or Pan-Slavic organizations, and those who had professed any criticism of the Italian annexation or the Fascist regime.

The announcement of RD No.400 of 18 February 1923 resulted in the dismissal of German, Slovene and Croatian civil servants, judges and prosecutors who worked under the Austrian system and who were unable to provide, “a sufficient guarantee that they would loyally perform their work.”¹⁵ As Di Michele states, in the eyes of the Fascist authorities, these individuals “constituted an obstacle to the planned Italianization of the region,” either due to their lack of proficiency in the Italian language or relationships with foreign institutions.¹⁶ These individuals were often dismissed, forced into early retirement or, if in possession of the requisite language skills, were transferred to another region. On 23 October 1923, it was decreed that Italian was the primary and mandatory language to be used at the federal, provincial and local level.¹⁷ However, in regions with majority German and Slavic-speaking populations, such as South Tyrol and Gorizia, it was difficult

¹⁵ Bajc, “Crimes Committed,” 129.

¹⁶ Andrea Di Michele, *L’Italianizzazione imperfetta: L’amministrazione pubblica dell’Alto Adige tra Italia liberale e fascismo* (Alessandria IT: Edizioni dell’Orso, 2003), 166.

¹⁷ Präfekturdektret Nr. 1796 Gab. v. 23. 10. 1923, in Freiberg, *Südtirol und der Italienische Nationalismus*, 126-127; Steininger, *South Tyrol*, 23.

to find local Italian replacements with the experience and knowledge to take up these postings. For this reason, high-ranking officials were often replaced with Italian *regnicoli* who had transferred from provinces of the old kingdom, while the lower-ranking positions were kept by non-Italian locals.¹⁸

The second campaign, which focused on the censorship and eventual abolishment of “foreign” journals and newspapers accused of promoting Slavic or German irredentism and stoking unrest amongst the *allogeni*, was paramount to establish ideological and social control of the borderlands. George Talbot has argued that Mussolini “came to power without a clear censorship plan of action [as there] was no culture of mass communications in the country.”¹⁹ However, this was not the case in the borderlands which had a well-established system of mass communication and a higher literacy rate than the rest of Italy. Even before the official start of the Fascist censorship campaign with Royal Decree 15 July 1923, the Fascist government attempted to control the dissemination of information through the surveillance and suppression of German and Slavic newspapers, journals and publishing houses. Anyone involved in the creation and distribution of “anti-Italian” propaganda was marked with suspicion and faced arrest or the disbandment of their publication.

¹⁸ Di Michele, *Italianizzazione imperfetta*, 180.

¹⁹ George Talbot, *Censorship in Fascist Italy, 1922-43* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 23. Article 2 of RD 15 July 1923, n.3288 endowed prefects with the authority over the editors of newspapers and periodicals who “printed false or tendentious information which hinders the diplomatic action of the government in relations with foreign countries or damages national credibility at home or abroad or gives rise to unjustified alarm in the population or gives reasons for disturbances.” Furthermore, any publications that “instigate the commission of crimes or incites class hatred or disobedience to the laws or the order of the authorities or compromises the discipline of the employees to public services or favors the interests of foreign states...or vilifies the Country, the Royal Family, the Supreme Pontiff, the Religion of the State, the institutions of powers of the state or friendly powers,” would be subject to an official warning and review by a commission. Numerous offenses would lead to the dismissal of the head of the publication. Königliches Gesetzdekret Nr. 3288 v. 15. 7. 1923, in Freiberg, *Südtirol und der Italienische Nationalismus*, 138-139.

In South Tyrol and Trieste, German and Slavic language newspapers and the socialist press had been popular targets for nationalist and Fascist violence prior to the March on Rome. These institutions were suspected of promoting foreign interests and of feeding resentments amongst the German, Slovenian and Croatian populations of borderlands. In 1921-22, Fascist squads occupied the offices of the *Südtiroler Landeszeitung* in Merano and the *Tiroler* in Bolzano to harass and threaten the staff for promoting “a German point of view.”²⁰ In January 1923, just a few months after the Fascist rise to power, Trieste’s Slovenian newspaper *Edinost* was accused of printing and distributing an anti-Italian leaflet in the border town of Postumia (Postojna) with the following message:

Brothers! With the greatest compassion we admire the unequal struggle you fight against our accursed enemy. Glory to you, martyrs. Persevere and have faith! We, the liberated, prepare ourselves. The day of redemption (*redenzione*), the day of resurrection and joy, will also come for you. Yet, for the traitors who have yet to encounter our vengeance, it will be a day of judgement and terror.²¹

This kind of anti-Italian rhetoric, which was often distributed at railroad stations or on trains travelling through the borderlands, was seen as proof of the existence of a Slavic plot.²² The Fascists condemned any newspaper publishing these messages as traitorous organs of a foreign power which had no place in Italian society.

²⁰ Reut Nicoluss, *Under the Axe*, 113. For more on the destruction of the German press in South Tyrol see *Ibid*, 181-188.

²¹ Archivio di Stato di Trieste (ASTs), Prefettura di Trieste, Gabinetto (1922-1954) (PTG), busta 43, fascicolo 068, Italian Translation of Slovenian leaflet from the Questore di Trieste to the Prefetto di Trieste, 13 January 1923. Another translation uses the word “liberazione” instead of “redenzione.” ASTs, PTG, b.43, f.068, Italian translation of Slovenian leaflet from Il Capitano Capo Sezzone (Massone) to the Prefetto di Trieste Trieste, 12 January 1923.

²² ASTs, PTG, b.43, f.068.

In addition to the threat posed by the cross-border communities who encouraged and enflamed anti-Italian sentiment, Fascists also perceived the Slavic officials and institutions as carriers of the “Bolshevik contagion.” As Rusinow notes, before 1926 police repression in Venezia Giulia was usually directed “against Slavs as suspected Communists, rather than against Slavs as Slavs.”²³ In February 1923, the government began arresting communists across Italy and announced that they had uncovered and intercepted a communist plot backed by Moscow. Trieste was identified as an important centre of this plot, where “intense propaganda had been carried on among the Slav population of the redeemed provinces.” According to a *New York Times* report, Italian officials seized “proclamations printed in Slavic and many hundreds of thousands of lire...in the offices of the Communist paper there. These proclamations incited the Slavs to arms and free their country from the Italian yoke.”²⁴

Four months later, in June 1923, the Fascists temporally shut down the Communist newspaper *Il Lavoratore* and arrested two of the newspaper’s editors, which caused an uproar in the Chamber of Deputies.²⁵ The Communist Deputy for Trieste, Nicola Bombacci and the Fascist Deputy for Trieste, Francesco Giunta went head-to-head. Giunta condemned *Il Lavoratore* for their alleged support of communist violence against

²³ Rusinow, *Italy’s Austrian Heritage*. 193.

²⁴ “Arrests Nip Plot for Italian Revolt,” *New York Times*, 8 February 1923, 3. See also “Italian Communists Arrested,” *The Times*, 6 February 1923, 9.

²⁵ “L’arresto di giornalisti comunisti a Trieste,” *Il Piccolo*, no. 7 June 1923, n.1095 1.

Fascists and threatened that Bombacci should “not complain [that] his newspaper was suspended. The next time we will suppress it altogether.” Giunta continued,

we cannot allow Communist papers to carry on criminal propaganda against the interest of the nation. You, Deputy Bombacci, asked whether you still enjoyed the rights of Italian citizenship. We reply that you do not because all your actions prove you to be unworthy of that honor... We are in favour of liberty but up to a certain point, because with us the safety of the country comes first.

Through this altercation, Giunta and the Fascists of Trieste made clear that any anti-fascist press or “criminal propaganda” was perceived as an act against the security of the state, thereby justifying any actions taken against individuals or institutions suspected of these activities.²⁶

The Fascist government adopted numerous measures to survey, censor and eventually dismantle the German and Slavic press. Act No. 3228 of 15 July 1923 gave prefects the power to approve and dismiss editors-in-chief. In October 1923, the prefect of Udine, under his own initiative, passed Order No. 1062 ordering that all foreign language newspapers were to be published with Italian translations.²⁷ As will be discussed, Mussolini initially revoked this decree after the protestations of the Yugoslavian government. By the end of 1924, no foreign language publications could be distributed without an Italian translation.²⁸ Fascist authorities also tried to prevent the publication and distribution of Slavic books by institutions such as the *Goriška Matica*.²⁹ The German press of South Tyrol faced similar measures as their Slavic counterparts. Many German bookstores went

²⁶ “Radicals in Fury in Italian Chamber,” *New York Times*, 8 June 1923, 2.

²⁷ Bajc, “Crimes Committed,” 128.

²⁸ Glenda Sluga, *The Problem of Trieste and the Italo-Yugoslav Border: Difference, Identity and Sovereignty in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 47.

²⁹ Čermelj, *Life-and-Death Struggle*, 77.

out of business after the passage of a decree stating that all stores, kiosks and libraries had to have an inventory of Italian books equal to their German inventory, which was a costly endeavour.³⁰ On 8 January 1925, Bolzano's assistant prefect declared that South Tyrolean German language newspapers would be "subject to prepublication censorship," and justified this measure by accusing the newspapers of "tendentious anti-Italian reportage."³¹ In the following months, a number of German dailies and weekly newspapers, including the *Bozner Nachrichten* and the *Neue Freie Presse* were shut down or banned. By 1927, only a small number of state-sanctioned German language newspapers were allowed to operate in South Tyrol. However, German newspapers and journals continued to make their way into the borderlands through clandestine channels.³²

In addition to newspapers, the Fascists attempted to monitor and suppress the dissemination of "anti-Italian" historical narratives, especially those which undermined the *italianità* of the borderlands. On 4 June 1923, the Prefect of Udine sent a report to the Prefects of Trieste, Trento, Zara and Pola, about the discovery of two Yugoslavian history books in the possession of Don Giuseppe Abram, a parish priest of the church of S. Lucia in the town of Tolmino, northeast of Udine. According to the report, the two histories of the great war—*1914-1918* by Vitomir Feodor Ielenc and *Na krvavih poljanah* (*On the Bloody Fields*) by Ivan Maticič—"are hostile to Italy," an attempt "to ridicule the army and rekindle hatred against everything Italian." The prefect points out that most of the *allogeni* "generally do not read books other than those coming from nearby Yugoslavia" and warns of the harm to the "prestige of the state and for our national interest," when

³⁰ Reut-Nicolussi, *Under the Axe*, 159.

³¹ Steininger, *South Tyrol*, 25.

³² Reut-Nicolussi, *Under the Axe*, 182.

these and “similar books can go, with impunity, into the hands of people with no objective critical spirit, who are generally ill-disposed towards our cause, especially when it comes to students, teachers and priests.” He credits public libraries and “numerous reading circles throughout the Slavic part of the Giulia region” for smuggling, distributing and supporting the “anti-Italian propaganda system,” and advises the other prefects of his decision to seize these and similar books.³³

In response to the report from Udine, the prefect of Trieste, Crispo Moncada, ordered the questore to carry out searches for these books in local libraries, bookstores and in the personal collections of prominent members of the Slovenian community. In a letter to the Ministry of the Interior, dated 12 July 1923, Moncada reported the discovery and confiscation of several copies of the books, “kept hidden in a closed drawer,” at the Stoka bookstore in Trieste.³⁴ Later that month, a box containing copies of Matčič’s book, bound for the National Library of Gorizia, was seized at the Piedicolle railway yard, an important border station near Tolmino.³⁵

Individuals responsible for the writing and transmission of anti-Italian propaganda were subject to fines, dismissal, closure of their businesses, public shaming and even arrest. In July 1925, the well-known irredentist, historian and professor at the University of Florence, Gaetano Salvemini, and his colleague, Ernesto Rossi, were put on trial over

³³ ASTs, PTG, b.43, f.068, Report from the Regia Prefettura di Udine to the Prefetti di Trieste, Trento, Zara and Pola: Circolare 06/3054, 4 June 1923. Both published in 1922, the full titles are as follows: *1914 do 1918: Spomini jugoslovanskega dobrovoljca (Memories of Yugoslav Volunteerism)* by Vitomir Feodor Jelenc (1885-1922) and *Na krvavih poljanah: trpljenje in strahote z bojnih pohodov bivšega slovenskega planinskega polka (On the Blood Fields: Suffering and Horrors from the Battle Campaigns of the Former Slovenian Mountain Regiment)* by Ivan Matičič (1887-1979).

³⁴ Ibid. Report from the Prefetto di Trieste to Ministero dell’Interno, Divisione Generale della Pubblica Sicurezza, 12 July 1923.

³⁵ Ibid., Report from the Legionale Territoriale dei Carabinieri Reali di Trieste (Divisione Gorizia) to the Prefetto della Provincia del Friuli (Udine), Comando della Legione dei Carabinieri Reali di Trieste e Sottoprefettura di Gorizia, 27 July 1923.

accusations that they had broken “the law regulating newspapers” and had illegally published defamatory criticisms of the King and Government.³⁶ Salvemini was an outspoken critic of the Fascist government and was especially critical of the Italian annexation to South Tyrol and Dalmatia and the Fascist Italianization campaigns. This trial made international news, leading to criticisms of the Fascist government’s attempts to punish those who spoke out against their laws and rhetoric. As noted in the *New York Times*,

...it is generally believed that Professor Salvemini is being tried for his general attitude and past record of opposition to the Fascist regime. It is recalled that he was one of the leaders in the movement, immediately after the war, to prevent Italy from annexing territory except that containing a population made up for the most part of Italians. This would have prevented the annexation of Trentino and parts of Dalmatia.

Salvemini was eventually released by the court. He embarked on a daring escape to France in August 1925, but his lawyer was murdered in his home during a violent purge of Florentine “anti-Fascists” by Fascist death squads in October 1925.³⁷

From the lecture halls of top-tier universities to the small rooms of village kindergartens, the Fascists endeavored to regulate and censor anything taught or circulated in public and private institutions. The Italianization of the education system was one of the most far-reaching and aggressive assimilationist programs. It sought to make Italian the official language of instruction, re-write the curriculum to promote Fascist and nationalist ideas of Italian history and culture, and employ “loyal,” upstanding teachers and school administrators to mould the next generation of Italian Fascists. On 1 October 1923, the Minister of Public Education, Giovanni Gentile, announced that Italian would

³⁶ “Trial of Professors is Exciting Italy,” *New York Times*, 12 July 1925, 52.

³⁷ For more on Salvemini and his persecution under fascism see Charles Killinger, *Gaetano Salvemini: A Biography* (Westport CT: Praeger Publishers, 2002).

be the only officially recognized language of instruction.³⁸ This law (RD No.2185) applied to the entirety of the Italian state but was especially detrimental for the German and Slavic language schools in the borderlands. According to Steininger, the *Lex Gentile* was seen as “‘the most momentous and gravest de-nationalization decree of this time,’ [and a] ‘death sentence’ for German public education in South Tyrol.”³⁹ Beginning with the primary school classes of 1923-1924, Italian became the the only language of instruction for first year students and this policy would be extended to the next grade with each successive year. According to this plan, by the 1928-1929 schools year all foreign languages would be eradicated from the classrooms of Italian primary schools.

The institution of Italian-only classrooms required the participation of teachers and administrators proficient in Italian and amenable to the Fascist program. In the eyes of the Fascists, the continued presence of German and Slovene teachers threatened the progress of the denatonalization of the younger generation. Thus, the Italianization of the education system also entailed the systematic dismissal of *maestri stranieri* (foreign teachers) who were employed under the Austrian system, were not proficient in Italian, or were thought to have some connection to anti-Italian activity. Those who could speak Italian were expected to pass an exam to demonstrate their Italian-language skills.⁴⁰ Di Michele notes that, “in addition to evaluating the teachers’ linguistic abilities, these exams could easily become an opportunity to take stock of their political conduct, and as such, some failures may have been inspired by reasons that had nothing to do with the teacher’s knowledge

³⁸ A copy of Regio Decreto 1 October 1923, n.2185 can be found in Freiberg, *Südtirol und der Italienische Nationalismus*, 149-154.

³⁹ Quoted from Steininger, 26.

⁴⁰ Čermlej, *Life-and-Death Struggle*, 27.

of Italian.”⁴¹ Those who passed these exams were either transferred to provinces in the old kingdom or placed under the supervision of local educational administrators and the prefecture. In 1924, the German Teachers College was closed, and the passage of Legislative Order No. 2300 of 24 December 1924, allowed the Fascists to dismiss teachers “who had not behaved in accordance with the government’s political instructions.”⁴²

Within the first year of Fascist rule, the prefects and questore began identifying and tracking the activities of teachers and students associated with Slavic irredentism or Pan-Germanism, and attempted to limit their movement. In August 1923 Slavic teachers and priests from across Europe, including Venezia Giulia, were invited to attend a series of conferences in Ljubljana. In response to this invitation, the prefect of Trieste sent a telegram to the *sottoprefetti* (subprefects) of Postumia, Sesana and Monfalcone, and the questore and Comando Legione (carabinieri) of Trieste advising them of the “distinctly irredentist and anti-Italian significance” of the conferences.⁴³ He requested that they “arrange an appropriate security service aimed at identifying people, especially teachers and priests, who eventually intend to go to Ljubljana, hindering border transit where possible” and to inform him of the results. The Prefect of Udine went so far as to deny “passports to several teachers from Gorizia who intended to go to Ljubljana.” These measures resulted in the “numerical scarcity” of the representatives of Venezia Giulia, a fact which was condemned by the conference leaders.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Di Michele, *L’Italianizzazione Imperfetta*, 174.

⁴² Bajc, “Crimes Committed,” 126.

⁴³ ASTs, PTG, b.43, f.068, Telegram from the Regia Prefettura della Provincia di Trieste to the Sottoprefetti of Postumia, Sesana and Monfalcone, Questore of Trieste and Comando Legione of Trieste: Circolare 068-4014, 1 August 1923.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, Report from the Questura di Trieste to the Prefetto di Trieste, 12 August 1923.

Securing the frontier from the influx of nefarious “anti-Italian” forces and restricting the free movement of individuals and ideas crossing the border was a vital concern for the Fascist government. To their best ability, Fascist authorities tracked the movement of *allogeni* and foreign citizens to and from the borderlands. Fascist officials were especially concerned with individuals with connections to Slavic or German irredentist groups such as the *Deutscher Verband*, *Orjuna* and *Jugoslaveska Matica*. These groups were accused of distributing anti-Fascist propaganda and stirring up trouble in the border regions. For example, a July 1924 report from the commander of the MVSN Division of Zone VI on the activities of *Orjuna* (*Organizacija Jugoslavenskih Nacionalista*; The Organization of Yugoslav Nationalists) describes the nationalist organization’s expansion to the border area and accuses them of establishing a secret organization, with the help of “communist elements,” to infiltrate the borderlands and cause political unrest. They were also accused of coordinating and encouraging attacks on Fascist officials and police, “scattered over a vast territory in the midst of populations largely hostile towards them.” The report warns that the Fascists faced “a truly well-developed and organized plan for Slavic-Nationalist penetration, which as a result of the push from across the border, tends more and more towards the West,” which must be stopped, or else risk the “existence of a vast network of intrigues and pseudo-espionage,” that would work to undermined Fascist authority.⁴⁵

Officials paid special attention to students attending Slavic institutions as they were seen as potential carriers of irredentist and communist propaganda. Members of student organization like the *Associazione Zora*, a subsidiary of *Orjuna*, were surveyed

⁴⁵ ASTs, PTG, b.61, f.068, Report by the Commander of the Milizia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale Zona VI, 14 July 1924.

and investigated whilst visiting their relatives living in Venezia Giulia. Many of these students were born in the now-Italian region and had numerous connections to Trieste and surrounding border communities. Officials also investigated their relations to determine their political feeling and the extent of their participation in anti-Italian activities.⁴⁶ Measures were taken to remove *allogeni* subjects from sensitive positions in borderland offices supervising the movement of goods and information, such as customs officers and postal office workers.⁴⁷

The Fascists Italianization campaigns of 1922-1925 brought the realization of many of the points laid out in Tolomei's 32-point program. These early campaigns were often driven by laws enacted at the state centre in Rome, but prefects and other local administrators adopted their own initiatives based on concerns that were unique to the borderlands. Their proximity to hostile neighbours forced borderland officials to allocate more time, effort and resources to the surveillance and control of the minority communities. These campaigns were founded on the idea that the redemption through assimilation could only succeed if the individuals and institutions impeding Italianization were removed. However, officials also had to consider the political sensitivity of these measures which drew fervent criticism from German and Slavic nationalists and neighbouring governments. The following section will explore how the assimilationist campaigns undermined Fascist foreign policy initiatives, and the development of the Fascist governments response to "foreign interference" into Italy's minority question.

⁴⁶ Ibid, Report from the Sottoprefettura di Postumia to the Prefettura di Trieste, 18 August 1924.

⁴⁷ ASTs, PTG, b.43, f.068, Report from the Sottoprefetto di Postumia to the Commissario di P.S. di Confine-Postumia, 27 December 1922; ASTs, PTG, b.61, f.068, Report from the Commissariato Postale Telegrafico di Trieste to the Prefetto di Trieste, 31 December 1923.

THE SACRED FRONTIER IN THE ERA OF DIPLOMACY, 1922-1925

Between 1922-1925, Mussolini placed a great deal of effort into the normalization of relations with other European powers and the conclusion of the conflict over the Adriatic and Brenner borders. By 1925, Mussolini achieved a certain level of success in establishing cooperative relationships with neighbouring states. On 2 July 1925, Mussolini and his cabinet presented “a survey of Italy’s internal and international situation and judged both to be excellent.” Mussolini was especially boastful about his successes in negotiating favourable economic agreements with both Yugoslavia and Germany, stating that “Italy and Yugoslavia would soon sign about thirty partial agreements dealing with local questions affecting Fiume and Dalmatia and intended to improve traffic and economic relations” between the neighbouring states, while a commercial treaty between Italy and Germany would soon be concluded. However, by the end of the year the relative peace of economic co-operation that Mussolini celebrated in the summer of 1925 would start to wither as Fascist Italy began its pursuit of more ambitious domestic and foreign policy programs.⁴⁸

In the arena of European politics Mussolini sought to elevate Italy’s status within Europe and prove himself as a shrewd and effective diplomat. Each foreign policy success helped to legitimize his government—and Fascist ideology as a whole—both nationally and abroad. Yet throughout the 1920s, debates over the validity of Italy’s “sacred borders” and criticisms of the Fascists’ treatment of ethnic minorities continually placed Mussolini at odds with neighbouring powers and threatened friendly relations between Italy, Austria, Germany and Yugoslavia. It is generally agreed that before 1925-26, Mussolini’s foreign

⁴⁸ “Finds Italy Prospering,” *New York Times*, 3 July 1925, 3.

policy initiatives coincided with the policies and approaches of the Liberal Era.⁴⁹ The “pragmatic” and relatively moderate stance that characterized Mussolini’s early foreign policy initiatives (1922-1925) would give way to more aggressive tactics in the latter half of the decade. These tactics were, to some extent, adopted in response to the criticisms and condemnations sounded by foreign governments, which stoked anti-Italian sentiment and undermined the legitimacy of Italian sovereignty in the borderlands.⁵⁰

For the security of Italy’s eastern boundary, the annexation of Fiume and mutual agreement over the Adriatic border was critical. The Treaty of Rapallo, signed by Italy and Yugoslavia on 12 November 1920, was the first treaty to lay out the territorial division of the Adriatic.⁵¹ Neither side was content with the terms of the agreement—Italy did not receive the entirety of Dalmatia, as promised by the Treaty of London, or win their claim to Fiume, and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes were cut off from the sizeable Slavic communities residing along the Adriatic ports and rural villages of the interior. Over the next few years, the two governments attempted to establish a more cooperative economic relationship and address the issues surrounding the security of the border. As a keystone issue for the Fascist foreign policy programs of the early 1920s, Italian-Yugoslavian treaty negotiations provided Mussolini with the opportunity to prove himself and his government’s capability in asserting Italy’s national will in the European sphere, although some Fascists criticized him for his restraint in his dealings with the Yugoslavs

⁴⁹ Elisabetta Brighi, *Foreign Policy, Domestic Politics and International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2013), 67; Christian Goeschel, *Mussolini and Hitler: The Forging of the Fascist Alliance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), 22; Neville, 96.

⁵⁰ Neville refers to the years of 1922-32 as Mussolini’s “pragmatic phase” in foreign policy. Neville, *Mussolini*, 96.

⁵¹ For an English translation of the treaty of Rapallo see: League of Nations, *Treaty Series* 18 (1923): 397-403, <http://www.forost.ungarisches-institut.de/pdf/19201112-1.pdf>.

and his decision to uphold the Treaty of Rapallo.⁵² For the Yugoslavian government, the normalization of relations with Italy was seen as economically beneficial and a major step towards the new state's inauguration as a European power. However, open hostility and a lack of trust between the two states endangered their ability to cooperate.

The tenuous relationship between Italy and Yugoslavia was strained by public and private accusations, made by both sides, of the persecution of Italian and Yugoslavian communities residing in the borderlands. Barely a month after the Fascist takeover, deputies from the border provinces accused the Fascist government of stripping the minority communities of their rights. On 17 November 1922, after an 8-hour ordeal, the Chamber of Deputies voted the Fascist government into power by a count of 306-116, thereby placing "the seal of legality" upon the Fascist coup d'état. During these proceedings, a well-known Slovenian lawyer, politician, and elected Deputy of Trieste, Joseph Wilfan (also Josip Vilfan), complained to Mussolini and the Chamber that, "his countrymen did not enjoy liberty," to which Mussolini responded, "You Germans, Austrians and Slavs as minorities enjoy liberties of the press, speech and meetings, all of which you were denied by the Italian majority under Austrian rule." In addition to Wilfan's protest the leader of the South Tyrolean Deputies, Eduard Reut-Nicolussi, declared their intent to vote in opposition of the new government to protest the Fascist takeover. Just a few months after this encounter the Fascist government began to dismantle all of the liberties that Mussolini had denied subverting.⁵³

To ensure the success of Fascist foreign policy in Yugoslavia the Italian government was forced to walk a fine line between suppression and cooperation. In the early years of

⁵² Alan Cassels, *Mussolini's Early Diplomacy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970), 81-82.

⁵³ "Chamber, 306-116, Backs Mussolini," *New York Times*, 18 November 1922, 30.

Italianization, Mussolini presented the Italianization campaigns as routine nationalizing measures that were applied in all provinces, while denying accusations of programmatic violence or oppressive measures targeting minority communities. In the early years of Fascist rule, the establishment of friendly relations with Yugoslavia was crucial for Italy's economic stability. Mussolini also viewed Yugoslavia as an important ally to counter Italy's German and French adversaries. In this climate of cooperation, Rusinow argues that the Fascists "tended to present a less brutal face" to the Slavic minority."⁵⁴ There were some instances when Mussolini had to roll back anti-Slav legislation enacted by Fascist officials in Venezia Giulia as they posed a threat to his foreign policy initiatives. In October 1923, Mussolini received news of the public outcry in Yugoslavia over the Italianization policies in Udine and Trieste, and instructed the prefects to pull back on their efforts to prevent the breakdown of Italian-Yugoslavian treaty negotiations.⁵⁵ The Italian government also had to answer to accusations regarding their mistreatment of individual Yugoslavian citizens, as was the case in November 1923 when the Minister of Foreign Affairs received a letter from the Yugoslavian ambassador regarding an incident in which Italian border officials allegedly harassed Yugoslavian citizens attempting to cross the border.⁵⁶ The prefect of Trieste and podestà of Postumia were enlisted to carry out an investigation into the incident in order to reassure the Yugoslavs of their commitment to fair treatment of their neighbouring subjects.⁵⁷

Soon after the establishment of the Fascist government, Italian and Yugoslavian

⁵⁴ Rusinow, *Italy's Austrian Heritage*, 185.

⁵⁵ Cassels, *Mussolini's Early Diplomacy*, 135-136; Rusinow, *Italy's Austrian Heritage*, 193.

⁵⁶ ASTs, PTG, b.61, f.068, *Note verbale* from the Legation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes to the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, 20 October 1923.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, Letter from the Ministero del Interno – Direzione Generale della Pubblica Sicurezza to the Prefetto di Trieste, 11 November 1923.

foreign ministers entered diplomatic negotiations to address concerns regarding free movement in the borderlands, trade and economic relations, and the status of Fiume and the declining port of Trieste. In 1924 and 1925, Italy and Yugoslavia signed two treaties of friendship and cooperation. Regarded as one of the regime's greatest foreign policy successes, the Treaty of Rome (1924) resulted in the partition of the Free State of Fiume between the two powers. Fiume would go to Italy and Yugoslavia would receive the Delta, including the northern seaport Sušak (Porto Baros). The January 1924 treaty of friendship was intended to nullify conflict in the borderlands and bring about cooperative relations between the neighbouring states.⁵⁸ However, the terms of the treaty and the loss of Fiume were not well received by the Yugoslavian public and the treaty did not fully resolve key issues between the states.⁵⁹

On 20 July 1925 the two powers signed the Nettuno Conventions, a set of agreements which confirmed the mutually-agreed border, freedom of movement and immigration for Italian citizens, the autonomy of the Eastern Orthodox church in Italian territories, and the cross-border transportation of resources.⁶⁰ It also affirmed the states' willingness to work towards the amicable resolution of issues that had yet to be addressed. The conventions gained general approval in Italy but were not successfully ratified by the Yugoslavian parliament in Belgrade. As stated in the *New York Times*, public disapproval of the Nettuno Conventions was widespread amongst Yugoslavian citizens, "partly because the people expected better protection from the Slovenian minority in Italy and partly for

⁵⁸ Cattaruzza, *Italy and Its Eastern Border*, 141.

⁵⁹ The Italians referred to Fiume as the *città olocausta* [sacrificial town]. Ibid, 141.

⁶⁰ For an English translation of the Treaty of Nettuno see League of Nations, *Treaty Series* 83 (1928): 141-157; 83-85, <http://ungarisches-institut.de/dokumente/pdf/19250720-4.pdf>. On Yugoslavian and Italian treaty negotiations see Lavo Čermelj, *Life-and-Death Struggle*, 9-13.

commercial reasons, but chiefly because of a tendency to regard Italy as a natural enemy.”⁶¹ The desire for Italian-Yugoslavian friendship was not shared by the Yugoslavian press and many of its citizens, which helped entrench the position of Slovene and Croat nationalists in Ljubljana and Zagreb who perceived Fascist Italy as an oppressive and imperialist force.⁶² The public outcry against Italianization policies and Belgrade’s rejection of the Treaty of Nettuno demonstrated how the assimilationist campaigns in Venezia Giulia directly affected, and even jeopardized, Fascist foreign policy initiatives.

Friendly relations between the countries were continually challenged by nationalist protests and violent confrontations between Italians and Yugoslavians throughout the Adriatic. In November 1925, following an attempt on Mussolini’s life, a series of anti-Italian and anti-Yugoslavian riots took place in both countries.⁶³ These demonstrations began in Trieste when a group of Fascists attacked the Yugoslav Consulate and the office of the newspaper *Edinost*. The attack was premised on accusations that the Slovenian newspaper had published an article claiming that the “story of the plot against Mussolini’s life was a pure invention.”⁶⁴ As with the attack on the Narodni Dom five years prior, it was reported that police did nothing to stop the attack on the *Edinost* building.⁶⁵ In

⁶¹ Before Nettuno, the Yugoslavian parliament had approved the Belgrade Conventions, despite misgivings about, “the clauses allowing the Italians to buy land within a 30-mile zone of the frontier which had been forbidden to all foreigners, and permitting the Italian firms with factories in Yugoslavia to hire Italians. Many, especially Dalmatians, Croatians and Slovenes, feared this would result in a dangerous Italian penetration of Dalmatia.” The passage of the Belgrade Conventions seemed to foretell that the Nettuno Conventions would also be successfully ratified. “Italian Treaty Likely to Pass in Belgrade,” *New York Times*, 28 June 1926, 4.

⁶² Rusinow, *Italy’s Austrian Heritage*, 194-195.

⁶³ See “The Trieste Riot,” *The Times*, 16 November 1925, 13; and Rusinow, *Italy’s Austrian Heritage*, 196.

⁶⁴ “Yugoslavs Attack Italian Consulate,” *New York Times*, 10 November 1925, 4.

⁶⁵ “The Trieste Riot,” *The Times*, 16 November 1925, 13.

response to the Fascist action in Trieste, anti-Italian riots broke out in the universities and consulates of Spalato and Belgrade. Yet, the outrage expressed by Triestine Fascists and the Yugoslavian nationalists was not matched by the governments in Rome and Belgrade. The Italians were quick to apologize to the Yugoslavian government for the Trieste attack. Italian newspapers were forbidden from publishing on the events in Trieste or commenting on the involvement of “agents of a neighbouring power” in the assassination attempt.⁶⁶ The Yugoslavian Foreign Minister, Momčilo Ninčić (Momchilo Ninchich), “characterized the [Yugoslavian] demonstrators as traitors [and] congratulated Premier Mussolini on his escape from assassination.”⁶⁷ At this point, violent demonstrations and public criticisms were not enough to dissuade the Fascist and Yugoslavian governments from their efforts to establish friendly relations, and the parliament in Belgrade continued their struggle to align the kingdoms’ foreign policy initiatives with public sentiments.

This push for Latin-Slav unity in the face of so much animosity was in part influenced by Mussolini’s anxiety over the rise of stronger Germany and the security of Italy’s northern border. Although Germany and Italy did not share a common border, Mussolini feared that Germany re-entry onto the European stage would destabilize the primacy of Fascist Italy’s position amongst other European powers. He was also wary of the German nationalists and South Tyroleans who believed that their liberation would be secured by a strong Germany. On 1 December 1925, Great Britain, France, Belgium, Germany and Italy signed the Treaty of Locarno—a set of agreements that provided a mutual guarantee of peace in Western Europe.⁶⁸ Participants agreed to the inviolability of the borders set

⁶⁶ “Tensions in Italy,” *The Times*, 12 November 1925, 14.

⁶⁷ “Yugoslavs Attack Italian Consulate,” *New York Times*, 10 November 1925, 4.

⁶⁸ An English version of the Treaty of Locarno can be found here:

<https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%2054/volume-I-1292-English.pdf>

out in the Treaty of Versailles. For Mussolini, Locarno was a great personal success, as it provided him with the opportunity to present himself as “*arbiter mundi*” and champion of anti-revisionism, and also marked the beginning of a period of Anglo-Italian reconciliation (1925-1929).⁶⁹ However, Mussolini was frustrated by the results of the Locarno Treaty, as the confirmation of Germany’s western borders following the Ruhr crisis (1923-1925) led to an undesirable shift in the balance of power.⁷⁰ The Italian premier could no longer exploit Franco-German antagonisms and the securitization of the western borders would allow Germany to move their attention to their eastern and southern borders. Friction between Fascist Italy and Weimar Germany was compounded by the latter’s unwillingness to acknowledge and confirm the Brenner/Brennero frontier and Italy’s possession of Alto Adige without an exchange of Italy’s support for Anschluss.⁷¹

The spread of Pan-Germanism and establishment of a Greater Germany (*Großdeutsch*) at Italy’s border had been a primary concern for Mussolini since his posting in Trentino in 1909. Rather than being abolished by the Great War, the “Teutonic threat” continued to undermine peace in Europe. The idea of the unification of Germany and Austria, known as *Anschluss*, had its roots in the historical debates surrounding the “German question” in the post-Napoleonic era. In the mid-19th century, German politicians entered fierce debates over the geographic, linguistic and ethnic boundaries of the German nation-state. Nationalists were divided over whether Germany should exist as a *kleindeutsch* (little Germany) or a *großdeutsch* (encompassing all the German provinces

⁶⁹ Brighi, *Foreign Policy*, 69; Neville, *Mussolini*, 99 and 103.

⁷⁰ Bosworth, *Mussolini*, 175.

⁷¹ Sally Marks, “Mussolini and Locarno: Fascist Foreign Policy in Microcosm,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 14, n.3 (1979): 424-426, doi:10.1177/002200947901400304. For more on Locarno see Jon Jacobson, *Locarno Diplomacy: Germany and the West, 1925-1929* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972; and Rusinow, *Italy’s Italian Heritage*, 180-184.

of the Austro-Hungarian Empire).⁷² These debates were reopened after the fall of the Habsburg and German Empire.

Calls for the unification of Austria and Germany began soon after the end of the Great War. In April 1921, members of all political parties in Austria held demonstrations in Vienna, Innsbruck and Salzburg in support of the country's union with Germany and to protest the Entente's attempts "to prohibit the popular movement towards union," and delegitimize their right of self-determination.⁷³ These demonstrations were followed by the Austrian plebiscite—in which 98% voted for union with Germany—and the Fascist attack on the Bozen Fair. However, the international community was not enthusiastic about *Anschluss* and refused any proposals that might strengthen the territorial prominence of the aggressor states. Yet, there was little consensus on the Entente's decision to give South Tyrol to Italy, which garnered both condemnation and praise. Some, like Viscount James Bryce, a British academic and Liberal politician, criticized the Treaty of Versailles for its failure "to draw just boundaries wherever possible and for failing to ascertain the wishes of the populations concerned."⁷⁴ He spoke publicly of the "injustice of transferring the Southern Tyrol from Austria to Italy," describing it as being "among the 'grave errors committed' by the Peace Conference." In his assessment,

Italy had, of course, no historical title whatever to the purely Germanic region she sought to acquire. However, the principle of nationality was in this case thrown overboard by the allied powers and a quarter of a million of German Tyrolese, countrymen of the heroic Andreas Hofer, who had led their forefathers in a gallant resistance when Napoleon turned them over to Bavaria in 1805, were delivered up to Italy as if they had been so many cattle. The British and French Governments defended their action by pleading a secret treaty they had made with Italy

⁷² Erin R. Hochman, *Imagining a Greater Germany: Republican Nationalism and the Idea of Anschluss* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016), 4-5.

⁷³ "Austrians Demand Union with Germany," *New York Times*, 10 August 1921, 2.

⁷⁴ "Bryce Sees Neglect in Versailles Pact," *New York Times*, 10 August 1921, 3.

in 1915, when they were endeavoring to induce her to enter the war on their side. It was a promise that ought never to have been made.⁷⁵

He warned that this injustice would only cause problems for Italy, and that the mismanagement of postwar territorial divisions laid out in the Treaty of Versailles had “sown the seeds of war.”⁷⁶ It seems that Bryce’s fears were also felt by President Wilson who later expressed his regret over his approach to the Brenner frontier, which he admitted was conducted without proper understanding of the Tyrolean nationality issue.⁷⁷ In trying to determine the reasoning behind Wilson’s approach to the division of the Tyrol, Rusinow argues that Wilson believed that in handing over South Tyrol, he would be more successful in countering Italian claims in the Adriatic.⁷⁸

Others believed that South Tyrol was and had always been Italian soil. In response to the criticisms of Italy’s annexation of South Tyrol, in a letter to the *New York Times* entitled “Dante On Italy’s Boundaries,” an impassioned reader of the paper defended Italy’s claim and the nation-state’s right to assimilate “foreign” minorities. He described the poetic and historical basis of Italy’s claims to the Trentino and South Tyrol, and argued that new “political boundaries, running as they do on the watershed line in Tyrol and crossing the Brenner Pass, coincide with the natural ones.” The Brenner Pass was, “the great gate of Italy,” and the German population of South Tyrol were merely Teutonic tribes who had long ago made their way through this gate. As such, their presence in any land south of the Brenner Pass did not undermine its Italian heritage. He also pointed to

⁷⁵ “Bryce Says Treaty Sows Seeds of War,” *New York Times*, 3 August 1921, 5. While Bryce argues that it was the German Tyrolese who fought for Andreas Hofer, in reality, Tyrolese of all three languages of the historic Tyrol (German, Italian and Ladin) fought under Andreas Hofer against Bavarian and French troops.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Rusinow, *Italy’s Austrian Heritage*, 50.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 48.

the presence of minority communities in every nation, including the United States, arguing that “the passing years have brought about the complete assimilation of foreign elements in America: so, too, will the problem adjust itself in Italy...by the combined influences of economic relations and of a higher civilization.” The spectrum of opinion on South Tyrol’s place in Europe was vast and, with little consensus, the contentious status of the Brenner Pass continued to plague Italian, German and Austrian relations throughout the decade.⁷⁹

Political unrest in Bavaria boiled over in November 1922, and reports began to circulate about a growing fascist movement in the southern German province and their violent assault on Socialists in Munich: “a group of reactionaries calling themselves National Socialists have evidently been fired by the success of the fascist movement in Italy, and are desirous of emulating the latter’s achievements.” The *New York Times* reported that the Munich action was supported by “seven companies of well-armed Fascisti wearing steel helmets” from Tyrol. The Munich correspondent of the Berlin daily newspaper, *Das Zwölf-Uhr Blatt* (The Twelve O’Clock Sheet), wrote that, “the National Socialists are beginning to don uniforms consisting of a tam o’shanter, gray blouse, and black, white and red arm band bearing an anti-Semitic swastika. The leader of the movement this correspondent adds, is one Herr Hitler, who is said to be desirous of becoming a Bavarian Mussolini.”⁸⁰

For the real Mussolini, the rise of the Bavarian right presented both an opportunity and a threat. On the one hand, by supporting and cultivating German nationalists, Mussolini believed he could better exert his influence to achieve his own ends. On the other, Mussolini was cautious of “the strength and danger of German nationalism” which

⁷⁹ “Dante On Italy’s Boundaries,” *New York Times*, 23 August 1921, 89.

⁸⁰ “Elect Von Knilling Premier of Bavaria,” *New York Times*, 9 November 1922, 20.

posed the greatest challenge to Fascist Italy's position in Europe and Italian sovereignty in South Tyrol.⁸¹ The Nazis appealed to Mussolini as the most sensible of the Bavarian right due to their willingness to abandon South Tyrol in exchange for the support of Fascist Italy.⁸² In an October 1923 interview with the Bavarian correspondent of the Fascist newspaper *Corriere Italiano*, Hitler provided assurances that "South Tyrol need not to be an element of discord between Italy and Germany." Instead, he was setting his sights on more ambitious targets: "only 180,000 Germans are living under Italian rule, he said, but a total of 17,000,000 are outside the German frontiers, and of this total 10,000,000 are in Russia."⁸³ The next month, Hitler's failed Beer Hall Putsch and "March on Munich" resulted in his arrest and he was temporarily removed from the spotlight, but the threat of German nationalism continued to thrive.

Germany and Italian relations entered a dangerous tailspin following Locarno. In December 1925, rumors began to circulate within the German press that officials in Bolzano planned to remove the city's famous Walter monument and ban the Tyrolese from displaying Christmas trees.⁸⁴ The Fascist government denied these claims, but Bavarian authorities decided to institute a boycott on Italian tourism and trade in protest of the reported suppression of the German Tyrolese. Enraged by the Italianization campaign, on 5 February 1926, the prime minister of Bavaria, Heinrich Held, declared his

⁸¹ Alan Cassels, "Mussolini and German Nationalism, 1922-1925," *The Journal of Modern History* 35, no.2 (1963): 138.

⁸² Ibid, 147. In November 1922, Mussolini received a report on Bavarian separatism from Adolfo Tedaldi, the Italian representative of the Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission, in which Hitler was identified as being the most conciliatory of the German right on the issue of South Tyrol. Hitler received backlash from the German right for his stance on the issue of South Tyrol. Goeschel, *Mussolini and Hitler*, 20-22.

⁸³ "Hitler Talks of His Bund," *New York Times*, 17 October 1923, 3; For the entire article see *Corriere Italiano*, 16 October 1923, printed in Eberhard Jäckel and Alex Kuhn, eds., *Hitler: Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen, 1905-1924* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1980), 1035-7.

⁸⁴ Rusinow, *Italy's Austrian Heritage*, 182-183.

intention to “lodge the strongest protest against the brutal rape of the German people” of South Tyrol.⁸⁵ The German Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann also challenged the Fascist assimilationist campaigns and declared himself as spokesman for the “more than ten million Germans outside the Reich’s borders.”⁸⁶ In response to criticisms of Italian policies in South Tyrol, Mussolini embarked on a very public attack against Germany and any foreign powers who attempted to undermine Italian sovereignty in the borderlands. Mussolini’s attack also stemmed from his anxieties regarding Germany’s economic recovery, its admittance to the League of Nations and his failure to obtain a Brenner guarantee at Locarno. On 6 February 1926, Mussolini delivered a speech to the Chamber of Deputies which accused Germany of unleashing a “nefarious and ridiculous [anti-Italian] campaign” and spreading lies about oppressive and violent measures against German-speakers in South Tyrol.⁸⁷ In response to these criticisms, he claimed that:

It is quite unheard of to speak of violence, and especially of brutal violence, committed by the Fascist government in Alto Adige! In Alto Adige we are merely carrying out a policy of *italianità*. We consider them Italian citizens and apply to them our laws. If we do not then we would have the spectacle of a State within a State! What is more: The Fascist Government, in many matters, has gone to lengths to meet the needs of those populations.⁸⁸

He declared that “the Italian policy in Alto Adige will not change by one iota,” and that the Fascists, would “rigorously, methodically, [and] obstinately” apply all laws that would “make the region” Italian. He further insisted that “the Germans in Alto Adige are not a national minority, but an ethnic relic,” and finished his speech with a warning; “Fascist

⁸⁵ Antwort Mussolinis auf die Rede des Mnisterpräsidenten Dr. Heinrich Held vom 6. Februar 1926, in Freiberg, *Südtirol und der Italienische Nationalismus*, 345; Grote, *The South Tyrol Question*, 45.

⁸⁶ Rudolf Lill, *Südtirol in der Zeit des Nationalismus* (Konstanz: UKV Verlagsgesellschaft, 2002), 75.

⁸⁷ BMOO XXII, 69.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 71.

Italy may, if necessary, carry its flag beyond the Brenner, but lower it, never!”⁸⁹ In response to Mussolini’s outburst, Stresemann accused Mussolini of declaring “a threat of war against Austria or against Austria and Germany.”⁹⁰ Yet Mussolini refused to back down. He continued to reject claims of Italy’s mistreatment of the Tyrolese:

It is false that in the Upper Adige violence and terror reign, as has been said by Held and repeated by Stresemann feebly. That the German newspapers have life is demonstrated by the statements of teachers, hotel men and war veterans living in the Upper Adige, who have, without any pressure, manifested their sympathy toward the Italian government. For us, the Upper Adige is and will remain always, politically, historically, geographically, economically and morally, an Italian domain.⁹¹

According to the *New York Times*, the international community was unsettled by the “unwarranted and intolerable character of Mussolini’s outburst,” which many perceived as “political psychopathy.”⁹² The “battle of words” between Stresemann and Mussolini was one of the first major challenges to the precarious post-war peace that had been so delicately crafted in numerous treaties and agreements between neighbouring states: “not since the armistice have two great powers addressed each other in terms so hostile and so direct.”⁹³ The Governor of the Austrian State of Tyrol, Dr. Franz Stumpf, was especially concerned by Mussolini’s threatening language and implored the Austrian government to submit a formal protest to the League of Nations.⁹⁴ Mussolini refused to allow the issue to be heard or discussed in an international committee and asserted that his

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 72-73.

⁹⁰ Eloise Ellery, “Mussolini’s Warlike Threats to Germany,” *Current History (1916-1940)* 23, n.6 (March 1926): 907. A copy of Stresemann’s speech and the debate on South Tyrol that took place in the German Reichstag on 9 February 1926 can be found in Freiberg, *Südtirol und der Italienische Nationalismus*, 350-387.

⁹¹ “Schiacciante risposta del Duce al discorso di Stresemann,” *Il Piccolo*, 10 February 1926, 1.

⁹² “Germany to Answer Mussolini Today,” *New York Times*, 7 February 1926, 6.

⁹³ P.W. Wilson, “Mussolini’s Fling at Germany Jars Europe,” *New York Times*, 14 February 1926, 63.

⁹⁴ Landeshauptmann Dr. Franz Stumpf zur Bedrohung der Brennergrenze durch Mussolini, in Freiberg, *Südtirol und der Italienische Nationalismus*, 350; “Tyrol Governor Protests,” *New York Times*, 10 February 1926, 4.

attack on Germany was necessary to expose the “menace of Pan-Germanism” and its threat to European peace.⁹⁵

In the end, Stresemann and Mussolini chose to avoid further confrontation and, as *The Times* reported, it was generally agreed that the Bavarian Premier’s outburst,

on the South Tirol question was out of place, and that the comments in some sections of the German Press which went beyond the limits of propriety were based upon some statements that haven’t turned out not to be true...[However] the speech of the Italian Prime Minister went far beyond anything these remarks might have called for in the way of a rejoinder....But there is no desire to carry on the controversy in the same strain. The Press contents itself with repeating that Germany has no designs upon the Brenner frontier, and that the concern of the German people for the Tirolese is quite altruistic.

However, an article in the *Täglich Rundschau* did assert that, “no Italian threats will prevent Germans from championing the cause of areas of German civilization, whether these are on their own borders or in foreign countries.”⁹⁶

Despite their mutual agreement to walk away from their “battle of words,” the Mussolini-Stresemann dispute caused serious damage to the relationship between Fascist Italy and Weimar Germany, further entrenching them in their opposing sides. Mussolini was even more committed to the protection of the border and the forced assimilation of the South Tyrolean population, which would be “‘Italianized in language, loyalty and culture.”⁹⁷ For the Germans and Austrians, Mussolini’s threats and the ramping up of Italianization policies made *Anschluss* all the more appealing. As one contemporary report noted: “there is no question that [Mussolini’s] Italianizing of the South Tyrol and his Brenner threats have greatly strengthened the Austro-German movement. The Pan-

⁹⁵ “Mussolini Urges Latin-Slav Unity Against Germanism,” *New York Times*, 27 February 1926, 1,6.

⁹⁶ “Germany and Mussolini,” *The Times*, 9 February 1926, 14.

⁹⁷ P.W. Wilson, “Mussolini’s Fling at Germany Jars Europe,” *New York Times*, 14 February 1926, 63-64.

Germans think his attitude makes the union possible in five instead of ten years.”⁹⁸

Mussolini’s declarations against the threat of German nationalism marked the beginning of a more aggressive and less conciliatory approach to Italian foreign policy. Criticisms of Fascist Italy’s borderland Italianization policies did not deter Mussolini from the program. Instead, Fascist assimilationist policies became more ruthless and oppressive in response to these protests. In this atmosphere of criticism and conflict, the redemption of the borderlands through forced assimilationist campaigns—which had been a central platform of the Fascist ideological program—became even more essential to the stability of the Fascist state and security of its borders. The assimilation of the majority of *allogeni* citizens through education, the dismantling of their linguistic and cultural rights, and the suppression of those who refused to comply, continued to be the programmatic blueprint of Italianization. Yet, it became increasingly obvious that the Fascist government had to take a firmer hand in suppressing the *allogeni* if they wanted to achieve their greater national and foreign policy initiatives. The full Italianization of the region would put an end to “foreign intervention” and better protect Italy from internal dissent, as well as the external threats of the “Bolshevik contagion,” or a potential *Anschluss*. As will be discussed in the following section, the Fascist consolidation of power and institution of authoritarian emergency decrees to “protect the state” between 1925-1926 would endow the government with the legal and political power to overcome the various limitations preventing the institution of policies to bring about the total erasure of Germanic and Slavic society from the borderlands.

⁹⁸ “Pan-German Union Arouses Austria,” *New York Times*, 4 March 1926, 3.

FASCIST WORLD-BUILDING AT THE NATIONAL FRONTIER
PHASE II: AUTHORITARIANISM AND ASSIMILATIONISM, 1925-1930⁹⁹

The menacing character of Mussolini's attack on Germany in 1926 was mirrored in the development of the Fascist ideological and national program in the mid-1920s. Between 1925-1926, the Fascist government enacted a series of laws and decrees to consolidate power over the Italian political, legal and economic system. With these laws, known as the *leggi fascistissime*, the ideologies and institutions of the Liberal era were systematically dismantled to make way for the establishment of the Fascist dictatorship. Mussolini envisioned that the establishment of authoritarian rule and the "fascistization" of Italian society would lay the groundwork for the regeneration and unification of the Italian people and nation-state. The following section will examine how the institution of the Fascist authoritarian system changed the government's approach to the borderland Italianization campaigns. As with phase I of the redemptive program, it will explore how the assimilationist policies impacted Fascist Italy's relationship with neighbouring states and, in turn, how changes in international politics shaped the assimilationist programs.

Between 1924-1926 Mussolini capitalized on a series of political crisis to legitimize the institution of Fascist authoritarianism. The first of these crises was the murder of the socialist and anti-Fascist politician Giacomo Matteotti in June 1924. Matteotti's murder was one of the first major challenge to Fascist rule and was incredibly damaging to Mussolini and his government.¹⁰⁰ Mussolini initially denied any involvement in the

⁹⁹ A portion of this section was presented as a paper at the Lessons and Legacies Conference at Washington University in St. Louis in November 2018 and will be part of the upcoming Lessons and Legacies volume. See Elysa McConnell, "Building the Nation at the Periphery: Fascism, Italianization and Racial Persecution in Italy's Eastern Borderlands," in *Lessons and Legacies XV: Global Perspectives and National Narratives*, eds. Erin McGlothlin and Avinoam Patt (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, Forthcoming).

¹⁰⁰ For more see Bosworth, *Mussolini*, 160-166.

murder and instead blamed the “Jews, freemasons and bankers.”¹⁰¹ Urged by his most radical supporters (the *ras*), Mussolini used the political unrest of the Matteotti crisis to remove his political opponents from positions of power, citing the threat that socialist, communist and liberal dissidence posed to the Italian state.¹⁰² On 3 January 1925, Mussolini gave a speech to the Chamber of Deputies declaring the start of a new Fascist era in which a single-party government, guided by the wisdom of *Il Duce*, would rule Italy without opposition.¹⁰³

Over the next few years, the numerous laws and decrees of the *leggi fascistissime* were passed, establishing the political and legal basis of the Fascist dictatorship and extending the government’s control over the powers of the state. Two laws were especially crucial for the Fascist takeover: RD 24 December 1925 and RD 31 January 1926. These laws legitimized Mussolini’s position as supreme ruler and gave the Fascist government complete control over the passage of laws and the administrative bodies of the state.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, article 1 of RD 31 January 1925 endowed the government with far-reaching powers over the “organization of public bodies and institutions” and the management of personnel within these institutions.¹⁰⁵

After an attempt on Mussolini’s life in October 1926, the government announced the passage of emergency decrees to “defend the state.” These decrees paved the way for a revision of the police code, the extension of the government’s powers over the police,

¹⁰¹ Neville, *Mussolini*, 69.

¹⁰² The *ras* were local leaders of the Fascist squadristi, who pushed Mussolini to use the Matteotti crisis to purge the government of their political enemies. Bosworth, *Mussolini*, 165.

¹⁰³ The Italian version of this speech can be found in David Bidussa ed., *Scritti e discorsi 1904-1945* (Milano: Giacomino Feltrinelli Editore, 2022), 442-452.

¹⁰⁴ For more see Gert Sørensen, “The Dual State of Fascism,” in *International Fascism, 1919-1945*, eds. Gert Sørensen and Robert Mallett (London: Frank Cass, 2002), 31-33.

¹⁰⁵ Legge 31 Gennaio 1926, n.100 art.1, *Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d’Italia*, 2 February 1926. 426: <https://www.eticapa.it/eticapa/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Legge-100-del-1926.pdf>

and the institution of police confinement (*confino*) as a penalty for political and criminal offenses.¹⁰⁶ RD 25 November 1925, n.2008, also known as the *Provvedimenti per la Difesa dello Stato* (Provisions for the Defense of the State) provided for the establishment of the *Tribunale speciale per la difesa dello Stato* (Special Tribunal for the Defense of the State). This Special Court was originally instituted as a temporary measure to try “subversive” groups and individuals who were either accused or caught engaging in criminal and treasonous acts against the Fascist state. Punishments included imprisonment, exile, confinement or in the most serious cases, execution. Slavic subjects made up just 1.5 percent of Italy’s population but they accounted for more than 5 percent of Special Court trials by 1935.¹⁰⁷ The Special Tribunal, which resulted in the prosecution of 13,547 cases and imposition of almost 28,000 years of jail time,¹⁰⁸ proved to be such an effective political and legal tool that it was eventually entrenched in the Fascist legal system with the passage of the 1931 Police Code, also known as the Rocco criminal code.¹⁰⁹

The expansion of Fascist powers through the *leggi fascistissime* enabled the government to insert itself into every aspect of Italian public and private life. It also allowed for the government to adopt extreme measures to “protect” the state from perceived internal and external enemies and to pursue one of the central ideals of the Fascist revolution—the regeneration and redemption of the Italian people. On 26 May 1927 Mussolini delivered a prophetic speech in the Chamber of Deputies charting a new

¹⁰⁶ Michael Ebner, *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini’s Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 44.

¹⁰⁷ Čermelj, *Life-and-Death Struggle*, 191

¹⁰⁸ Bosworth, *Mussolini*, 181.

¹⁰⁹ Sørensen, “The Dual State,” 33. For more on the Special Tribunal see also Antonio Barocci, “Political arrest of women under fascism: gender and the special tribunal in Italy 1926-1928,” *GeoJournal* 87 (2002): 749-764.

course for Fascist Italy. He began by asking whether the “Italian race, the Italian people, in their [current] physical expression [are] in a period of splendor or are there symptoms of decay?” and determined the “picture [to be] quite gray.”¹¹⁰ To combat the threat of decay Mussolini alluded to numerous measures that had been adopted to ensure the health and wellbeing of Italian citizens and the Fascist state. These measures were implemented both internally within the state and externally at its national frontiers. The former included efforts to eradicate diseases like tuberculosis and measles, to combat social ills such as crime and alcoholism, and the institution of programs to improve maternal and infant health: “We must cure our race, beginning with maternity and infancy.”¹¹¹ For Mussolini, the survival of the Italian race and the success of Fascist revolution was dependent on the exponential growth of a morally, physically, politically, and spiritually superior Italian population.

Yet, the success of these internal programs was inextricably linked to the success of measures taken against “foreign” sources of decay. The prevention of the spread of disease required “sanitary disinfection at the sea and land frontiers of the nation” which justified stricter border controls. Mussolini boasted that “9,000 ships [had] been disinfected and ridden of rats which carry contagious diseases from the East—that East which brings us so many pleasant things, like yellow fever and Bolshevism.”¹¹² In his assessment, the detrimental effect of foreign influence in Italy was demonstrated by the low population rate of the provinces of Venezia Tridentina and Venezia Giulia,¹¹³ while

¹¹⁰ Benito Mussolini, “Discorso dell’Ascensione: Il regime fascista per la grandezza d’Italia, 26 May 1927,” in *Scritti e discorsi 1904-1945*, ed. David Bidussa (Milano: Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore, 2022), 538.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 541.

¹¹² *Ibid*, 539.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, 544.

“false” historical narratives created confusion and disloyalty amongst the *allogeni* population.¹¹⁴ The health of the state required its immunity from foreign influences, Bolshevism, anti-Fascist revolutionaries, and other nefarious sources inside and outside its national and ideological boundaries.

Mussolini referred to the night of his attempted assassination as the moment in which “the revolution had to dig it’s heel against the anti-revolution,” and cites the various and necessary measures taken to protect the state, including:

the withdrawal and revision of all foreign passports; an order to fire upon anyone attempting to cross the frontier clandestinely; the suppression of all anti-Fascist daily and periodical publications; the dissolution of all anti-Fascist associations, organizations and groups which were anti-Fascist or suspected of anti-fascism; the deportation of all those suspected of anti-fascism, who carry out any kind of counter-revolutionary activity, or who illicitly wear the Black Shirt; the creation of special police in all regions and the creation of a police and investigative offices and a special court.¹¹⁵

He asserted that the punishment, confinement and deportation of anyone committing political offences was not terrorism, but “a measure of social hygiene, a national prophylactic...as a doctor would quarantine one affected with one disease.”¹¹⁶

Likely inspired by German-Italian animosities that had brewed between the nations during the “battle of words” a year prior, Mussolini devoted an entire section of the Ascension Day speech to Alto Adige,

Of all the provinces...there is one which is particularly interesting to me: Bolzano. It is time to acknowledge that for many centuries Bolzano was called Bolgiano; it is time to acknowledge that Bolgiano was always a very Italian city...that the Germanization of Bolgiano dates back to the second half of the last century, precisely when Austria, after losing Venetia, sought to forcibly Germanize Alto Adige and Trentino, so as to have a secure wedge planted between two Italian regions.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 549.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 557.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 561.

All this has nothing to do with the Brenner border. Even if, for the sake of argument, there were hundreds of thousands of 100% Germans in Alto Adige, the Brenner border would still be sacred and inviolable. And we will defend it, even with war if necessary, even tomorrow. Those who inhabit the region in reality are Italians who speak a German dialect as a language of use. Moreover, the problem of ethnic minorities is unsolvable. It is turned on its head, but it is not resolved.

He ended his speech by emphasizing the importance of installing “moral order” over “public order.” While the first required force, which the Fascist carried out with ease, the former sought political, social and national unification and the fusion of the masses with the Fascist regime: “Everything inside the State, nothing against the State, nothing outside of the State.”¹¹⁷ With the 1927 Ascension Day Speech, Mussolini announced “the creation of a new, powerful, unitarian Italian state from the Alps to Sicily,” and foresaw that, “in ten years’ time Italy...will be unrecognizable to itself and to foreigners, because [it] will have radically transformed not only its face but which is far more important, above all its soul.”¹¹⁸ How right he would be.

The establishment of the Fascist dictatorship and the beginning of a new redemptive-regenerative program fundamentally changed Rome’s relationship with the borderland provinces and neighbouring states. The passage of the *leggi fascistissime* provided a solid foundation for the passage of increasingly oppressive laws to control the public and private lives of *allogeni* citizens, bringing new life and purpose to the Italianization campaigns. On 1 November 1925, Mussolini shared a circular with his ministers charting out his approach to the border provinces. Circular no.3730 began with a description of the liberal government’s borderland program and its desire to preserve the

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 576.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 577.

regional and municipal autonomy of the new provinces. According to Mussolini, this approach had resulted in the creation of “obedient subjects” who continued to live “outside the ‘nation.’”¹¹⁹ To counteract this unfavourable outcome, Mussolini called for the total integration of the borderland’s laws and institutions within the national system, the establishment of a centralized and co-ordination assimilationist program, the “reintegration of [the] *italianità*” of the new provinces, and complete assimilation of minority groups through education and language restrictions.¹²⁰ These platforms were reaffirmed in June 1927 in a memorandum draw up by during a conference of the six Fascist *federali* of Venezia Giulia.¹²¹ The programmatic blueprint of the earlier phase of Italianization had not drastically changed, but the measures taken to bring about assimilation were more extreme and restrictive. Bolstered by their new powers, Fascist authorities intended to “kill the foreigner in the *allogeno*,” through policies of suppression and terror.¹²² Through the erasure of racial minority groups and their absorption into the Fascist state, the redemption of the borderlands would finally be complete.

To assert totalitarian rule in the borderlands and further denationalization efforts, the Fascist government in Rome implemented two territorial and administrative policies in 1926. The first was the nation-wide institution of the office of the *podestà* and the abolishment of municipal autonomy (“RD 4 February 1926; statute of 26 June 1926; RD 3 September 1926”).¹²³ In Venezia Giulia and Venezia Tridentina, Slovenian, Croatian

¹¹⁹ Rusinow, *Italy’s Austrian Heritage*, 164.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Cattaruzza, *Italy and Its Eastern Border*, 128-129.

¹²² This idea was inspired by the phrase, “to kill the Indian in the child,” which described the program of forced assimilation enacted by the Canadian government and Catholic Church against Inuit, First Nations and Métis children between the 17th and 20th centuries. Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families and placed in residential schools.

¹²³ Cattaruzza, *Italy and Its Eastern Border*, 128.

and German mayors were replaced, and local councils were disbanded. Under the previous system these positions were locally elected, but under the new Fascist system the government-appointed *podestà* answered only to the prefect. Unreliable local government actors were to be replaced with loyal and effective *podestà* “of proven faith,” but there were few local Italians—particularly in South Tyrol or the interior of Venezia Giulia—with the necessary experience or qualifications to fill these positions.¹²⁴ According to Di Michele, instead of promoting the seriousness and respectability of the Fascist regime, the *podestà* of South Tyrol often “provoked complains from the population and attacks from the press beyond the Brenner.”¹²⁵ The government had similar issues finding suitable Italian candidates to occupy postings in Gorizia. *Podestà* were often replaced due to their, “lack of ‘moral rigidity,’” honesty and inefficiency.¹²⁶

Second, RD 2 January 1927 n.1 established seventeen new provinces in Fascist Italy, including the provinces of Bolzano and Gorizia. The separation of Bolzano from the province of Trentino was deemed necessary due to the perceived ideological and programmatic disconnect between Trentini officials and the government in Rome. As the work of Di Michele has shown, following the difficulties of the post-war years and the loss of their regional autonomy many Trentini became disillusioned with the Fascist government, while the central government perceived the Trentini as too locally minded—unable to break out of the “villager in the village” mentality and act in the “interest of the national community.”¹²⁷ Some Trentini harboured resentment towards Italians from the old provinces who resettled in the region, which strengthened claims of their “excessive

¹²⁴ Andrea Di Michele, “I *podestà* italiani della provincial Bolzano,” GR/SR 8 (1999), 73.

¹²⁵ Di Michele, “I *podestà* italiani,” 88.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹²⁷ Di Michele, *Italianizzazione Imperfetta*, 194.

localism” and anti-patriotism.¹²⁸ The Fascist government increasingly viewed the Trentini as unreliable foreigners, especially those who had served under the Austrian empire, regardless of their support for Italian irredentism.¹²⁹ As Di Michele writes, under these circumstances, the government decided “it was necessary to free the Germans of Alto Adige from the control of the Trentino people, too inclined to the spirit of revenge and still insufficiently integrated into the life of the nation.”¹³⁰ Problematic Trentini officials were to be removed or transferred from both the Trentino and South Tyrol, while administrative authority over Bolzano, Bressanone and Merano was moved away from Trento and concentrated in the new office of the Bolzano prefecture. By implementing direct control over Bolzano without the interference of the Trentini, the government in Rome believed they could more effectively and methodically carry out the denationalization of the German-linguistic communities of South Tyrol.¹³¹

The institution of the podestà and program of territorial restructuring was carried out across the peninsula to enable the Fascist government’s assertion of complete control over the municipalities and provinces. These changes were also intended to mitigate the threat posed by Fascist hardliners and local PNF members who challenged Rome’s authority and sought to establish their own little dictatorships within their regions.¹³² Strengthening the administrative ties between the central government and peripheral institutions was crucial to the success of the assimilationist program, but more aggressive tactics were needed to overcome the disconnect between fascist rhetoric about the

¹²⁸ Di Michele, “Fascismo e prefetti,” 210.

¹²⁹ See also Pergher, *Mussolini’s Nation-Empire*, 105-107.

¹³⁰ Di Michele, “Fascismo e prefetti a Bolzano,” 210.

¹³¹ Ettore Tolomei discusses the necessity of the division of the provinces of Trentino and Bolzano in “Le Due Provincie. Trento e Bolzano,” *Archivio per l’Alto Adige XXII*, 1927: 193-218.

¹³² Di Michele, “Fascismo e prefetti a Bolzano,” 205.

italianità of the borderlands and the “otherness” of the *allogeni*.

In the borderlands, the Fascist government pursued a policy of erasure and absorption. Their authoritarian measures included the Italianization of surnames, the institution of Fascist monuments and state institutions, the Italianization of the church services and officials, the abolishment of Slavic and German associations, and the complete Italianization of local administrative offices, the press and schools. The new laws bestowed greater powers and resources to the local administrators (prefettura, podesta) and police (questore, carabinieri, MVSN divisions) to implement the forced assimilation campaigns and to organize surveillance operations and gather intelligence on individuals and institutions obstructing Italianization. The following section will examine the policies of erasure and absorption adopted by the Ministry of the Interior, how local officials interpreted and implemented these policies, and how the borderland communities and neighbouring powers responded to the assimilationist program.

Bilingualism in public spaces and institutions was increasingly restricted after 1925. The government’s name change campaign became more personal with the enactment of RD 10 January 1926, no. 17, which stipulated that, by decree of the prefect, “Italian or Latin surnames translated into other languages or reformed with a foreign spelling” will have their “original” surnames reinstated.”¹³³ This law was first applied to

¹³³ Regio-Decreto-Legge 10 gennaio 1926, n.17, Freiberg, *Südtirol und der Italienische Nationalismus*, 284. The procedures for the execution of RD 10 January 1926, n.17 were laid out in Ministerial decree 5 August 1926. Ibid, 285. In the case of South Tyrol, surnames were dividing into four categories: (1) “Surnames translated into German...derived from Latin or Ladin form” were to be “retranslated into Italian; (2) Surnames which had been formed in their spelling where to be reinstated into their “pure form”; (3) “Surnames derived from Atesino toponyms” which had been addressed in the *Prontuario*); (4) “Surnames derived from German personal names,” which were to be “translated into the Italian baptismal names.” Paolo Drigo an Ettore Tolomei, 5 February 1931, in Freiberg, *Südtirol und der Italienische Nationalismus*, 287.

the provinces of Venezia Tridentina and were eventually extended to Venezia Giulia with RD 7 April 1929, n. 494.¹³⁴ RD 8 March 1928, n.383 made it illegal to give newborns “funny or immoral names, or names that would offend the public opinion,” which essentially prohibited parents from giving their children Slovene or German names. It is estimated that “115,000 Slovene family names were Italianized.”¹³⁵

The denationalization of surnames coincided with the further Italianization of public symbols, businesses and monuments. One of the most prominent examples of the Italianization of public spaces and symbols was the erection of the Fascist Victory Monument (*Siegesdenkmal*) in Bolzano. The construction of the monument was approved by the Italian Chamber on 10 February 1926 and was met with widespread support amongst the Italian public. The monument was placed in a visible location between the historic Tyrolean town centre and what was then the growing Italian side of the city, in a site that was originally earmarked for a monument to the fallen Austrian soldiers (*Kaiserjäger*) of the Great War.¹³⁶ Fascist architect Marcello Piacentini pledged to build a “truly Fascist monument,” that evoked the glorious Roman past and victorious Fascist future, and in celebration of the success of the Fascist civilizing mission and the superiority of Latin civilization and culture.¹³⁷ The Latin inscription on the monument

¹³⁴ Examples of surname changes in Venezia Giulia: “Vodopivec/Bevelacqua, Pacoiig/Pacorini, Andriancich/Andriani, Kante/Cante, and Klun/Coloni.” Italy. Senato Della Repubblica, X Legislatura, *Disegna di Leggo N.1007*, 6 May 1988, 1-2. Examples of surname changes in Venezia Tridentina: Pitscheider/Pezzei; Gall/Cassani, Verant/Ferrandi, Wieser/Viser. Grote, *The South Tyrol Question*, 37.

¹³⁵ Bajc, “Crimes Committed,” 130.

¹³⁶ On the failed *Kaiserjäger* monument and battle between local and national memory cultures in South Tyrol and Trentino see Cole, “Divided Land, Diverging Narratives,” 267-278. On the construction of Fascist monuments in South Tyrol see Gerald Steinacher, “Fascist Legacies: The Controversy Over Mussolini’s Monuments in South Tyrol,” *European Yearbook of Minority Issues* 10 (2011): 647-666; and Andrea Di Michele, “Fascist Monuments on the Border. The Case of Bolzano/Bozen, South Tyrol,” in *Rethinking Fascism: The Italian and German Dictatorships*, eds. Andrea Di Michele and Filippo Focardi (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022).

¹³⁷ Steininger, *South Tyrol*, 36.

reads: “HIC PATRIAE FINES SISTE SIGNA HINC CETEROS EXCOLUIMUS LINGUA LEGIBUS ARTIBUS”—Here are the borders of the fatherland. Put down our weapons [i.e. stop our advance] From here, we brought to the other language, laws and arts.)”¹³⁸

The official dedication of the Victory Monument occurred on 12 July 1928. In addition to the installation of this monument, several German monuments and important sites of German public memory were either planned for removal, moved or destroyed. Sites which gained special notice amongst the South Tyrolean population were the monument to Walther von der Vogelweide Monument in the central square or Bolzano, the tower of the Bozen Museum and the Laurin Fountain. German businesses were also targeted by Italianization. A telegram sent from Innsbruck’s Austro-Tyrolean Welfare Committee to the Associated Press reported that on 1 March 1928, innkeepers in Trentino and Bolzano were “forced to stage a public demonstration of their satisfaction with the Italian regime,”¹³⁹ and later that summer, it was decreed that a picture of *Il Duce* and the royal family had to be shown in all hotels, bars and restaurants.¹⁴⁰ Those who refused were accused of a “lack of patriotism,” and faced the forced closure of their businesses.¹⁴¹ The campaign to erase the German character of the region and re-write South Tyrol’s history and memory culture enraged German Tyroleans, as well as Germans and Austrians abroad.

In the latter half of the 1920s, the Fascist government attempted to implement the Italianization of religious institutions and officials, which proved to be one of their most

¹³⁸ Ibid, 37.

¹³⁹ “Laud Seipel Speech on Tyrol Question,” *New York Times*, 2 March 1928, 6.

¹⁴⁰ Steininger, *South Tyrol*, 32.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

contentious and difficult campaigns. The Fascist government first addressed the religious issue with RD 13 November 1923, which mandated that religious instruction had to be given in Italian in all Italian-language schools. In Venezia Tridentina, this attempt was thwarted by the Bishop of Bressanone/Brixen, Johannes Raffl, who was able to protect religious instruction for first graders with the support of the Holy See.¹⁴² In 1925, the Fascist government and Pope Pius XI came to the agreement that religious instruction in German would only be permitted in the first three years of primary school.

In the fall of 1926, more than a thousand Tyrolean priests went on strike to protest “their inability to comply with the government’s orders on the ground that their pupils only [understood] German.”¹⁴³ Following numerous appeals to the Pope and government in Rome, the Tyrolean clergy began a more aggressive and public campaign against Fascist intrusion. In February 1928 Catholic associations in North and South Tyrol published an appeal to Catholics worldwide, which condemned “Italian tyranny” against the Germans of South Tyrol. In their plea, the Tyrolean priests spoke of the Fascists’ lack of respect for their customs and rights:

They have forced parents to send their children to teachers who do not understand the mother tongue of the children. This is not all. The last step to complete the suppression is made: it is prohibited to instruct our young in the truth of our holy religion in our mother tongue. Negroes of Africa have the full right to learn their religion in their maternal tongue. Children of our Catholic people must learn these eternal rules in the language of their oppressors. A single cry of rage sounded through the country, but it could not be loud, because jails and chains are prepared for those who claim the most holy of all human rights. Catholics of Austria and Southern

¹⁴² Giuseppe Motta, *The Italian Military Governorship in South Tyrol and the Rise of Fascism* (Rome: Edizioni Nuova Cultura, 2012), 90; Elisa Gori, “Trends in linguistic, scholastic and educational policies in Trentino and Alto Adige (1919-1938),” *Acta Scientiarum: Education* 38, no.1 (2016), 8.

¹⁴³ “Priests Go One Strike in Italian Province,” *New York Times*, 15 October 1926, 19. The previous month, the clergy of South Tyrol sent a letter to Pope Pious XI to protest the harmful “denationalization measures” and to ask for his “gracious protection of the right to religious instruction in the mother tongue,” *Die Südtiroler Geistlichkeit an Papst Pius XI*, in Freiberg, *Südtirol und der Italienische Nationalismus*, 183.

Germany are in the deepest grief at this unprecedented injustice, and in this bitter hour the Catholics of the Tyrol appeal to them for assistance. Will you not protest against this injustice which is being done against not only our brothers but also the Holy Church? What occurs today in the Southern Tyrol may happen tomorrow to the Catholics of other states.¹⁴⁴

The plea of Tyrolean clergy caused an uproar in Austria and Germany, reigniting national resentments between the neighbouring powers. The Chancellor of Austria, Ignaz Seipel, who was also a monsignor of the Catholic church, criticized Italy's treatment of the Germans of South Tyrol in the Austrian Chamber. Enraged by Seipel's speech, Mussolini recalled the Italian Minister of Vienna to Rome. The *Giornale d'Italia* reported on the "deep resentment and profound indignation" felt by Italy in response to Seipel's attack and rejected any claims of the persecution or molestation of Italy's German population.¹⁴⁵ It went on to state that, no "special laws or regulations" had been applied to Tyrolese: "the official attitude here is that these Germans are subjects and therefore, must learn the Italian language and attend Italian State schools, just as the inhabitants of any other region of Italy do." The Italian press organ *Tribuna* asserted that the "Upper Adige does not exist as an international question" and will soon not exist "even as an Italian question," as the "negligible" racial minority would be overrun by the strength of Italian unity.¹⁴⁶

Mussolini did not pursue any punitive action for Austria's "anti-Italian" aggressions, but the Italian Chamber did question whether Seipel's attack should be considered an "intolerable intervention" by a foreign power into Italy's domestic affairs. Mussolini made clear that he would not tolerate these types of interventions and warned

¹⁴⁴ "Tyrolese Attack Italian 'Tyranny'," *New York Times*, 11 February 1928, 4.

¹⁴⁵ "Break With Austria By Italy Reported," *New York Times*, 25 February 1928, 1.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 5.

that the “the frequently repeated clamor about the Upper Adige is beginning to become a nuisance. It does not alarm us, but it appears to show that Austria is following Yugoslavia’s footsteps and is about to become an irritating neighbor.”¹⁴⁷ Mussolini later assured both the German subjects of Venezia Tridentina and their German and Austrian neighbours that the “South Tyroleans will obtain everything they desire if they show they are loyal to the Italian government,” which implied their acceptance of the division of Tyrol by an international border and the complete abandonment of their culture, history and identity.¹⁴⁸

Seipel’s speech against Fascist oppression in South Tyrol received support from the Central European and Balkan press, but his words had little impact.¹⁴⁹ Aside from his public critique of Italian policies in South Tyrol, Seipel refused to pursue any action that might cause further harm to Austrian-Italian relations. Ultimately it was the Vatican, not the Austrian government, which stepped in to assist the Tyrolean clergy. In the spring of 1928, the Vatican approved German-language instruction in parish schools, which were “kept under strict surveillance” by the Italian government.¹⁵⁰ A few months later, in September 1928, Vicar General Joseph Mutschlechner published a manifesto in the church paper of the Brixen diocese stating that the priests of South Tyrol were free to provide religious teachings in churches in German.¹⁵¹

The clergy of Venezia Giulia were also very outspoken in their opposition to the Italianization of religious instruction and institutions. In January 1928, the Bishops of

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ “Il Duce Says Germany Needs Nationalism,” *New York Times*, 29 April 1928, 19.

¹⁴⁹ “Laud Seipel Speech on Tyrol Question,” *New York Times*, 2 March 1928, 6.

¹⁵⁰ Steininger, *South Tyrol*, 28.

¹⁵¹ “Italy Outwitted in Tyrol,” *New York Times*, 21 September 1928, 12.

Gorizia, Parenzo-Pola, and Trieste-Capodistria sent a memorandum to Mussolini requesting that the Fascist government respect the sovereignty of the church and their “full freedom” to provide religious instruction in the language that is “intelligible to the faithful.” This, they argued was a moral imperative: “To all, Italians and Slavs, the bread of the divine word is to be dispensed, which enlightens and consoles hearts—strengthens the will to good, mitigates and brings together souls and makes the duty of obedience and subjection of authority sacred and enviable.”¹⁵² Following this protest, in March 1928, the *Provveditori agli Studi* began to allow cities and villages in Venezia Giulia to apply for a delay in the transition to all-Italian classes in years four and five, due to “difficulties of various natures” which made the transition untenable.¹⁵³

The defiance of the clergy was troubling for Fascist authorities. As spiritual leaders of their communities, local priests and bishops played an important role in the moral education of citizens and communities. The Fascist government worried that religious instruction in a foreign language would fundamentally alienate the borderland populations from the rest of Italy, thereby impeding their full Italianization. Rome’s inability to assert control over ecclesiastical institutions was also frustrating for Italian parishioners in multi-lingual communities like Trieste. In February 1928, the satirical newspaper *Marmeo* published a story about the priests of Trieste’s San Giovanni di Guardiella—Monsignor Francesco Sila and his colleague Don Giuseppe Milanovich—and their insistence on conducting their service in the Slavic language, even though the priests and the majority of parishioners understood Italian. The questore pointed to the “irreducible Slavophilia”

¹⁵² ASTs, PTG, b. 151, f. 068, Memorandum from the Bishops of Venezia Giulia to Benito Mussolini, 16 January 1928.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, Letter from the Regio Provveditore agli Studi (Board of Education) of Venezia Giulia and Zara to the Prefect of Trieste, 6 March 1928.

of the two priests, and in particular Don Milanovich as the cause of this laughable protest.¹⁵⁴ The Fascist officials decided that the more “prudent” Monsignor Sila—who “[was] eager to be well seen and respected by the political authorities and by those of the PNF”— would fall in line if the more negative pro-Slavic influence of Don Milanovich was removed and his position was filled with a priest of Italian nationality. Another report in the Trieste daily *Il Piccolo* told of an incident in which a young parishioner berated a priest for conducting his sermon in Slovenian. He was claimed to have shouted, “Ten years after Trieste has been liberated with the blood of the Italian Army, it is not admissible to preach in Slavonic. You must end this survival of Austrianism.”¹⁵⁵ These public complaints against the continued preaching in “foreign” tongues may have removed certain problematic actors from ecclesiastical institutions, but the Fascist government faced continuous pushback against its attempts to Italianize religious services and instruction in the borderlands.

Although there was support for the Italianization of churches amongst many Italian speakers, the strong opposition of local Slavic and German-speaking clergy, their connection to cross-border institutions and support from the Vatican made ecclesiastic institutions a difficult target for forced assimilation. The signing of the Lateran Pact of 1929, in which the Catholic Church recognized the legitimacy of the Italian Fascist state in return for the maintenance of its sovereignty, affirmed the Holy See’s supremacy over Catholic institutions in Italy. Article 22 of the Concordat “placed the care of all believers (German, [Slavic] and Italian) in the hands of the church,”¹⁵⁶ while Article 39 confirmed

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, Report from Questura di Trieste to Prefetto di Trieste, 3 April 1928.

¹⁵⁵ “Stops Slavonic Service,” *New York Times*, 29 February 1928, 2.

¹⁵⁶ Grote, *The South Tyrol Question*, 62.

the Pope's authority over seminaries, which would operate "without any interference on the part of the scholastic authority of the Kingdom."¹⁵⁷ The Fascist state also confirmed its adherence to the principles and teachings of Catholicism. The reconciliation between the Church and fascism helped to legitimize the Fascist regime in Italy and abroad, however, it hindered the full Italianization of religious institutions. The Fascists continued to monitor and remove pro-German and Slavophilic agents from churches and seminaries, and proceeded with the closure of Catholic youth clubs, but the regime was unable to assert complete control over the religious sphere.¹⁵⁸

The rebukes and delays that the Fascist government faced in response to its program to denationalize borderland churches was a major setback for the Italianization of the regions. Yet the weight of the world's opinion did little to dissuade the Fascists from their program of forced assimilation. Their lack of control over the clergy and ecclesiastical institutions made the elimination of German and Slavic associations and the Italianization of schools even more critical. The *leggi fascistissime* provided Fascist institutions with the legal framework to dismantle the network of institutions that supported the cultural, social and political life of German and Slavic communities. With these laws came the expansion of the powers of the police and Fascist security services, whose ultimate goal was to protect the state from internal threats and eliminate anti-Fascist actors and organizations within Italian society. Fascist officials in the borderlands

¹⁵⁷ Article 29, The Concordat, 1929. An English translation can be found at: <https://www.uniset.ca/nold/latern.htm#3>.

¹⁵⁸ On the closure of Catholic clubs see the two telegrams from the prefect of Bolzano Giovanni Battista Marziali to the Ministry of the Interior (May 1931) in Freiberg, *Südtirol und der Italienische Nationalismus*, 119.

perceived *allogeni* communities as breeding grounds of anti-Italian sentiments, which posed a clear and present danger to the security of the border and the success of Italianization. Emboldened by the *leggi fascistissime*, police and state institutions invested a great deal of time, resources and effort into the investigation and monitoring of German and Slovenian community members and institutions in the hopes that they could more effectively target anti-Italian agents and stem the spread of the irredentist spirit.

The detailed and frequent reports by Fascist authorities noted the personal and private details of the leading member in *allogeni* communities and associations—their names, family history, addresses, education, professions and political activity—and monitored their movement and interactions. They kept translated records of any publications made by these associations and restricted the kinds of literature they were allowed to teach or disseminate. Local officials were especially concerned by *allogeni* associations who received moral or material support from foreign institutions. The Fascist attack on the associations of Venezia Giulia and Venezia Tridentina were thus driven by two concerns—the association’s attempts to keep alive the irredentist spirit amongst *allogeni* communities and the involvement of foreign entities in borderland affairs.

The Trento prefectural decree of 3 September 1923, n.13165 provided for the dissolution of the clubhouses of the German Alpine Associations in South Tyrol (*Alpenverein Südtirol*) and, in accordance with decree 24 January 1924, b.1242, their assets were to be transferred by their Italian counterpart, the *Club Alpino Italiano*.¹⁵⁹ As part of the *leggi fascistissime*, the laws of 26 November 1925, no.2029 and 24 December 1925, no.2300 were passed to purge state organization of employees with ties to illicit

¹⁵⁹ Präfekturdekret Nr. 13165 v.3.9.1923, in Freiberg, *Südtirol und der Italienische Nationalismus*, 109-110; Präfekturdekret Nr. B. 1242 v. 24. 1. 1924, in *Ibid*, 110-111; Steininger, *South Tyrol*, 23.

anti-Italian and anti-Fascist organizations. These laws stipulated that “all public employees were required to communicate their past or present belonging to secret associations,” and allowed the government to dismiss civil servants based on their current or previous membership in anti-Fascist associations.¹⁶⁰ They also allowed for the dissolution of organizations that did not prescribe to the procedures and formalities set out by the Fascist government, which included language restrictions and citizenship requirements. In South Tyrol, these laws provided the justification for investigations into the covert activities of “anti-Italian” Pan-German associations such as the *Andreas Hofer Bund*, *Volksbund* and *Deutscher Verband*, and the rooting out of their supporters amongst “foreign employees.”¹⁶¹

While Fascist authorities did succeed in suppressing many of the pro-German associations, their success was often superficial, as many of these institutions continued to operate underground or on the other side of the border. In a report from the prefect of Bolzano, Umberto Ricci, to the Ministry of the Interior in February 1927, the prefect confirmed that all communist and Pan-German associations had been dissolved. The *Deutscher Verband*, “which formerly formed the center towards which the surviving hopes of claims in the field of regional autonomy and German education gravitated,” had ceased to exist while its members had “almost all abandoned any anti-national activity.” However, he cautioned that those who continued to carry out anti-Italian activities did so without raising suspicions and often acted through their “relations abroad,” who worked alongside associations such as the *Andreas Hofer Bund*, to “influence the press” against

¹⁶⁰ Di Michele, *L'Italianizzazione Imperfetta*, 168.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, 169.

Italian policies.¹⁶² A few months later he reported on the “resurgence of the Pan-German campaign” which had been primarily driven by the foreign press and the clergy, which “always manages to keep irredentist sentiment alive.” In this report, Reut-Nicolussi was identified as one of the most prominent anti-Italian agents, and as such had been placed under “continuous and rigorous” surveillance. This surveillance was enforced to monitor his activities and also to collect evidence of his anti-Italian activities with the intention that he be placed under police confinement.¹⁶³ Furthermore, having been identified as a “dangerous and suspicious individual,” Reut-Nicolussi was forced to carry an “identity card” in accordance with Article 3 of the 1926 Police Code.¹⁶⁴ According to Reut-Nicolussi, “about a hundred other equally respected persons, among them ex-burgomasters, presidents of companies of associations, etc., were also provided with these insulting inscriptions, bound over to carry them on their persons and produce them on any official demand.”¹⁶⁵

In 1925 and 1926, Fascist officials in Venezia Giulia began a more concerted effort to investigate, monitor and suppress Slovenian institutions. In association with the Ministry of the Interior and the prefects, the podestà, the carabinieri, MVSN and questore kept records on all known *allogeni* associations, their organizing and participating

¹⁶² Bericht des Präfekten Umberto Ricci an das Innenministerium, 12 February 1927, in Freiberg, *Südtirol und der Italienische Nationalismus*, 116.

¹⁶³ Bericht des Präfekten Umberto Ricci an das Innenministerium, 22 July 1927. Freiberg, *Südtirol und der Italienische Nationalismus*, 117

¹⁶⁴ Reut-Nicolussi, *Under the Axe*, 268. The *Testo unico delle leggi di pubblica sicurezza* (T.U) of 1926, which laid out the conditions for the identity cards, was incorporated into RD 19 giugno 1931, n.773. Article 3 of T.U. 1926 became article 4 of the 1931 criminal code, which stated that “the public security authority [had] the power to order that dangerous people or suspects, and those who [were] unable or refuse[d] to prove their identity,” were subject to surveillance and reporting. Furthermore, the authorities were entitled to “order dangerous or suspicious people to equip themselves, within a given term, and identity card,” that they were required “to show upon every request of public security officers or agents.” Article 4, RD 19 giugno 1931, n.773.

¹⁶⁵ Reut-Nicolussi, *Under the Axe*, 268.

members, their purpose and activities, and their presence and involvement in communities throughout Venezia Giulia. These institutions, many of which had been founded in Trieste and other Adriatic centres before the rise of fascism, ranged from youth and student organizations, commercial and scholastic associations, charities, and any other group that promoted “cultural propaganda” and “racial education” in the borderlands.¹⁶⁶ These included the *Societa Balkan*, *Slava Prosveta*, *L'Aeronautica Jugoslava*, *Jugoslavenska Matica* and the *Associazione Femmine di Beneficenza Trieste*.¹⁶⁷

As Fascist authorities monitored and scrutinized the private lives of *allogeni* citizens, they placed harsher restrictions on the public activities of associations. The law of 6 August 1926, no.1486 restricted the organization of public sport and cultural events, which could only take place with lengthy approval from the state. The Public Security Act 1848 of 6 November 1926 further restricted the public activities of Slovene associations, which made it almost impossible for them to function. Dozens of Slovenian and Croatian associations were disbanded for operating without adherence to national legislation and their property was confiscated. In a final blow against *allogeni* associations of the Adriatic, on 19 July 1927 the prefects of Venezia Giulia received the confidential circular no.3832 from the Ministry of the Interior declaring that all Slavic associations and organizations were to be disbanded by October 1928. The prefects received this declaration with enthusiasm and by the end of 1927 most Slovene associations had been shut down. The most prominent Slavic press and cultural organization *Edinost*, a staple in

¹⁶⁶ ASTs, PGT, b.103, f.068, In a report on the Slovenian youth association *Societa Prosveta*, the prefect of Trieste writes that group was first organized in Trieste “in 1920 by a group of Slovenian nationalists who intended to promote a cultural propaganda and action in Venezia Giulia, intended to maintain and give Slovenian non-locals an education according to the traditions of race.” Letter from Prefect of Trieste to the Prefect of Istria, 28 June 1926.

¹⁶⁷ Files on these associations can be found in ASTs, PGT, b.103, f.068 (1926) and b.142, f.068 (1927).

the region since 1876, was closed in 1928.¹⁶⁸

The redemption of the *allogeni* required both the removal of "harmful," anti-Fascist forces and the promotion of Fascist ideology and morality throughout the nation. As the Fascist government effaced German, Slovene and Croatian associations from the borderlands, a network of Fascist educational and cultural organizations was established to spread *italianità* and the ideals of the Fascist national spirit. The long-term survival of the Fascist revolution was dependent on the revitalization of the Italian people as a loyal and unified entity, and Italy's youth were the best hope to ensure its longevity. Fascist youth organizations, such as the *Gruppo Balilla* and *Avanguardie Giovane*, were in operation as early as 1923 but their membership was low. The movement for the political and cultural indoctrination of the new generation of Fascists gained greater momentum under the "new political climate" of the Fascist dictatorship. Between 1924 and 1925, membership to these institutions increasing significantly—the *Avanguardisti* went from 50,729 to 145,000 members, while *Balila's* membership increased from 3,078 to 43,000.¹⁶⁹

On 3 April 1926 the Chamber of Deputies approved the establishment of the national Fascist youth organization, *Opera Nazionale Balilla* (ONB)—the primary institution responsible for the organization and coordination of Fascist youth groups. The ONB and its sister organization *Piccole Italiane* were responsible for the physical, spiritual, cultural, political and moral health of Italian youth. As a central aspect of the Fascist ideological crusade, these mass youth organization worked to instill a sense of

¹⁶⁸ Bajc, "Crimes Committed," 127.

¹⁶⁹ Alessio Ponzio, *Shaping the New Man: Youth Training Regimes in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015), 35.

pride and loyalty to the *patria* (fatherland), while reviving the spirit of a militaristic *italianità* within a new generation of Italians.¹⁷⁰

The spread of Fascist youth organizations was a crucial step in the dismantling of the network of Germanic and Slavic associations in the borderlands between 1925-1930. This was evident in the Fascist investigation into the charitable organization *Zensko dobrodelno udruzenje* or the *Associazione Femminile di Beneficenza* (AFB). According to a report from the carabinieri to the prefect of Trieste, the AFB—founded in Trieste in 1922—had between 300-500 members in 1925. The AFB’s charitable activities included “the distribution of subsidies in money, clothing and more,” the delivery of sewing machines throughout the region for people in need, and the institution of a library for members and the local community. In addition to their charitable activities, the AFB ran children’s education centres and were also responsible for the publication of the Slavic women’s newspaper, *Zenschi Svet* (*Mondo Femminile*; Female World), which had a circulation of around 7,500-10,000 copies per month. In 1925, the AFB officially declared that it was fully funded by the fees and contributions of its members and voluntary donations, as well as the profits of the association’s companies, and claimed to act autonomously from other Slovenian-Croatian organizations in the region and across the border.¹⁷¹

In the eyes of Fascist officials, the charitable and seemingly honourable activities of the AFB, their schools and newspaper, were a cover for more malevolent dealings. Police reports on the AFB’s activities provide no real evidence for their suspicions. They

¹⁷⁰ McLean, *Mussolini’s Children*, 70.

¹⁷¹ ASTs, PGT, b.103, f.068, Report from the Legione Territoriale di Trieste to the Prefetto delle Provincia di Trieste and the Comando della Legione Carabinieri RR di Trieste, 19 July 1925.

instead point to the fact that all the members hold “Slavic sentiments,” while some members of the AFB’s board were married to “fervent” Slovenian propagandists. The report to concluded that, “despite being philanthropic... [the AFB] aims to unite the brotherhood of the *alien elements* and therefore keep Croatian-Slovenian irredentism alive.”¹⁷² The AFB’s newspaper and education centres became more problematic following the establishment of the Fascist mass youth organizations ONB and *Piccole Italiane* in the spring of 1926. In May of that year, the carabinieri reported on the continued activities of the AFB and in particular, the organization of sewing classes for teenage girls from Trieste and its northern suburbs Roiano and Barcola.¹⁷³ The report argued that the true purpose of these groups was to “unite the Slavic female elements by removing them from participation in the municipal recreation centres organized by the *Piccole Italiane*,” which held their own embroidery and sewing classes. The AFB were accused of carrying out this “method of harmful propaganda in various districts of the city,” and engaging in the “amoral” act of depriving the girls of their patriotic education. A year earlier, in the summer of 1925, the Fascists uncovered a similar scheme in Bolzano where it was determined that women’s sewing courses in the city were, in fact, “top secret training programs” for German-language teachers, which likely contributed to Fascists suspicions towards the AFB and other organizations.¹⁷⁴ In the wake of this report, the Fascist provided a verbal warning to the AFB organizers and instructed the owner of the building of the AFB headquarters to shut down their operation.¹⁷⁵ The death blow to

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ ASTs, PGT, b.103, f.068, Report from the Legione Territoriale di Trieste to the Prefetto delle Provincia di Trieste and the Comando della Legione Carabinieri RR di Trieste, 18 May 1926.

¹⁷⁴ Steininger, *South Tyrol*, 31.

¹⁷⁵ ASTs, PGT, b.103, f.068, Report from the Legione Territoriale di Trieste to the Prefetto delle Provincia di Trieste and the Comando della Legione Carabinieri RR di Trieste, 18 May 1926.

allogeni associations came with articles 5 and 6 of the law of 9 January 1927, which “banned all organizations and youth associations except those run by the Fascists.”¹⁷⁶ By 1928, the AFB, along with hundreds of other associations in Venezia Giulia, was shut down and relocated to Ljubljana.¹⁷⁷

The destruction of *allogeni* associations between 1925-1930 aimed for the complete breakdown of communal life amongst Germanic and Slavic citizens. The dismantling of these social and cultural organizations and their replacement with Fascist associations changed the dynamics of Fascist Italianization. The Fascist regime demanded the willful and enthusiastic participation of all citizens in Fascist organizations and any involvement with *allogeni* associations was perceived as inherently criminal. Without the support of local Germanic and Slavic associations, *allogeni* citizens became more, and in some cases entirely, dependent on institutions of the state for their livelihood. As members of Fascist associations and institutions (state offices, schools, etc.) all citizens, but especially Germans and Slavic citizens, were expected to adhere to Fascist ideas of identity, culture and history. Any deviation from this line was considered to be amoral and an exhibition of an individual’s anti-Fascist sentiments.

As with the Fascist youth organizations, the establishment of a centralized school system with a curriculum based on the ideals and virtues of *italianità* were crucial to the Fascist redemptive struggle. Eden McLean has shown that Fascist educational programs were deeply rooted in pre-Fascist concepts of *italianità* which were both ethnocultural and

¹⁷⁶ Bajc, “Crimes Committed,” 127.

¹⁷⁷ On the stripping of Slavic women’s political agency during the 1920s see Marta Verginella, “Political Activism of Slovene Women in Venezia Giulia after World War I and the Rise of Fascism. From Autonomy to Subordination,” *ACTA HISTRIAE* 26, no.4 (2018): 1041-1062, doi:10.19233/AH.2018.43.

racial. Italian concepts of identity and nation had always blurred the lines between ethnicity and race. Italian nationalist thinkers discussed ethnic characteristics, such as a common language and collective Roman heritage, as inherited qualities that were part of a shared racial and national identity.¹⁷⁸ Yet, since the days of the *Risorgimento*, the diversity of regional dialects and customs, in addition to anthropological rhetoric concerning the racial divisions between the superior north and “Africanized” South, challenged the professed commonalities binding the Italian people under a unitary nation. To counter these divisions, Fascist educational institutions, and their irredentist-nationalist predecessors, strove to “revive” the *italianità* inherited by all Italians, and elevate them to their collective superiority. Instead of trying to diminish or overcome regional differences, the Fascist program first chose to incorporate and celebrate regional diversity as varying manifestations of the spirit of *italianità*. Bonds between the regions and the nation would be strengthened through the teaching of a collective history, language, ritual and the Fascist ideals of discipline and obedience.

As with all other regions, the *italianità* of the borderland provinces was to be re-integrated with the nation. The revival and redemption of the *allogeni* was based on the assertion that they were, at their core, Italians whose “otherness” had been instilled in them by foreign powers. Education was the primary means to overcome this otherness and redeem their *italianità*. Unlike other regions of Italy, the *allogeni* communities had no linguistic or cultural ties to the Italian nation and held separate notions of identity and belonging. As such, the group that would be most responsive to the “revival” project were those with the weakest ties these notions—*allogeni* children. Through the education of

¹⁷⁸ McLean, *Mussolini's Children*, 53.

children in both Fascist youth groups and schools, the Fascists aimed to “embed the process of Italianization in the heart of the family.”¹⁷⁹

Educational policies in the borderlands strove for the denationalization of *allogenic* children and re-awakening of their *italianità*. To tackle the most obvious obstacle to Italianization—the language barrier—the Fascist government placed increasing restrictions on non-Italian language instruction. RD 22 November 1925 n.2191 set the course for the abolishment of non-Italian languages in primary schools, while classes that were not fully Italianized were expected to include five hours of Italian instruction in accordance with RD 24 January 1926.¹⁸⁰ However, beyond the passage of laws or the implementation of a nationalist curriculum, the success of the educational program was intimately tied to the scholastic, familial and communal environment in which the German and Slovene students were raised. Eden McLean’s study of Fascist educational policy points to Gentile’s concept of “organic learning” as one of the “pedagogical pillars essential to the framework of Fascist education.” “Organic learning” posited that students would learn better when their curriculum reflected their lived experiences, such as their “local environment, family traditions, community customs, and languages.”¹⁸¹ To conquer the alienation of German and Slovene children from the Italian ethnic community the line between public and private life had to be abolished. Teachers were expected to embody and uphold the ideals of *italianità* while parents were charged with ensuring the proper moral and spiritual education of their children.

In both Venezia Giulia and South Tyrol, the insertion of Fascist associations and

¹⁷⁹ Grote, *The South Tyrol Question*, 38.

¹⁸⁰ Gori, “Trends in linguistic,” 6.

¹⁸¹ McLean, *Mussolini’s Children*, 37.

Italian-only schools into the communal life of *allogeni* citizens was met with disdain and widespread resistance. Many German and Slovene associations moved underground and continued to operate illegally, often kept alive with the support of organizations in Germany, Austria and Yugoslavia. In the face of countless laws and measures intended to strip them of their networks and identities, borderland communities continued efforts to preserve their linguistic and cultural heritage and communal social ties, especially amongst the children who had been born and raised under fascism.

To counter the “cultural corruption” of German students in South Tyrol, parents, priests and unemployed teachers established a network of underground schools known as *Katakombenschule* (“catacomb’ schools”).¹⁸² Seeing that German language newspapers, journals and textbooks had been banned, teaching materials had to be smuggled into South Tyrol. These materials—which included German fairy tales and textbooks—were stored in Tyrolean churches and distributed to hidden spaces in barns or cellars where these clandestine classes were held.¹⁸³ German nationalists, and particularly students from Tyrol and Innsbruck associated with the German nationalist association *Nibelungen*, helped facilitate this network. These nationalist groups helped shape the “Catholic-conservative and the ‘nationalist-völkisch orientation’” of the materials and lessons in the catacomb schools, which were meant to instill a sense of pride and loyalty amongst the German students of South Tyrol.¹⁸⁴

In November 1925, the Italian prefect of Venezia Tridentina, Giuseppe

¹⁸² The catacomb schools were inspired by the practices of early Christians in ancient Rome, who worshipped in secret catacombs to avoid persecution. For more on the catacomb schools see Reut-Nicolussi, *Under the Axe*, 213-220.

¹⁸³ Steininger, *South Tyrol*, 32.

¹⁸⁴ Grote, *The South Tyrol Question*, 38-39.

Guadagnini sent decree n.11471 to the *sottoprefetto* of Bolzano, Merano, Bressanone, Brunico and Cavalese regarding the presence of the German “resistance organization,” which he insisted could only exist with support from the local community.¹⁸⁵ Guadagnini demanded that the repression of these clandestine institutions be carried out with the “utmost vigilance, alacrity and energy,”¹⁸⁶ and proposed various methods to repress the clandestine schools, including the identification of their main benefactors, the collection of information from local judicial and educational authorities on the activities of these organizations, the investigation of German-speaking teachers and known anti-Italian agents, the closure of clandestine institutions and seizure of their teaching materials, and the repatriation of teachers with foreign citizenship.¹⁸⁷ A year later, endowed with the full power of their authoritarian police state, the Fascists launched their counteroffensive against the catacomb schools. This years-long program included, covert surveillance of potential anti-nationalist educators, searches of the homes of teachers and parents, interrogations and physical assault, confiscations of illicit teaching materials, deportation and imprisonment.¹⁸⁸ The *Lingua e Cultura* section of *Archivio per l’Alto Adige* often commented on the prevalence of these illicit schools and in some editions published the names and transgressions of those involved, such as Antonia Dischristin of Caldora who was “denounced for running an underground school,” and Maria Buol who, according to the publication, had continued to give “lessons in German to three five year-old children,”

¹⁸⁵ Erlaß der Präfektur der Venezia Tridentina Nr.11471 Gab. v. 27.11.1925, in Freiberg, *Südtirol und der Italienische Nationalismus*, 158.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid; Steininger, *South Tyrol*, 31.

¹⁸⁷ Erlaß der Präfektur der Venezia Tridentina Nr.11471 Gab. v. 21.11.1925, in Freiberg, *Südtirol und der Italienische Nationalismus*, 158-159.

¹⁸⁸ For an example of one of these interrogations see *Verhör des Frl. Angela Nikoletti durch den Podestà von Kurtatsch am 11. Mai 1927* in Ibid, 163-164. Following this interrogation, Angela Nikoletti received her third expulsion notice and was threatened with arrest and imprisonment for a period of 1-6 months if she did not comply. *Orstverweis für Angela Nikoletti*, in Ibid, 165.

in spite of “numerous previous warnings.”¹⁸⁹ According to Steininger, the brutal campaign against these schools “provoked fear and terror throughout the land,” and made the catacomb schools incredibly difficult to maintain.¹⁹⁰ Despite the great care and effort made to support and run these underground schools, their sporadic and primitive nature made them difficult to sustain and generally ineffective.¹⁹¹

The dismissal, exile and imprisonment of German teachers in South Tyrol, and their replacement with Italian teachers from southern and central Italy, had a profoundly negative impact on the students of that province. Teachers from the old provinces transferred to the borderlands were faced with the difficult task of teaching children with almost no comprehension of the Italian language, and who were themselves unable to communicate in German. As a result, these teachers did not stay in their positions for very long and the quick turnover directly impacted the quality of education that Tyrolean children received. The inadequate education offered in both the Italian schools and the catacomb schools left many students behind, causing a substantial increase in the rate of illiteracy amongst elementary school children. Stuck between an Italian identity at school and a Tyrolean identity at home, these children’s sense of self and community was constantly being challenged and undermined.¹⁹²

The poor performance of *allogeni* students did not dissuade Fascists from proceeding with their linguistic monopoly. In February 1928, the government in Rome moved forward with the full Italianization of primary schools in accordance with the

¹⁸⁹ “Lingua e Cultura,” *Archivio per l’Alto Adige XXIV*, 1929, 518.

¹⁹⁰ Steininger, *South Tyrol*, 31.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, 32.

¹⁹² *Ibid*.

program set out in the Lex Gentile of October 1923.¹⁹³ Italy's monolingual identity was affirmed with the Primary School Act of 5 February 1928, no.577, which opened the door for the Italianization of secondary schools and private institution in South Tyrol and Trieste.¹⁹⁴ Individual and group lessons conducted in German, Slovenian or Croatian outside of schools were banned, with the exceptions of some ecclesiastical institutions. As stated by the Fascist Minister of Education to an audience of, "600 Italian school teachers in Bolzano" in June 1928, "every remaining vestige of German culture in the annexed Austrian province of South Tyrol [was] to be eliminated by the Italian Government"—a sentiment which also extended to Slavic communities in the Adriatic.¹⁹⁵ As a result of the Lex Gentile, Primary School Act and associated laws, an estimated "444 Slovene schools attended by 50,000 pupils" were closed in Venezia Giulia, while "324 schools with 539 classes and 30,000 pupils" were shut down in South Tyrol."¹⁹⁶

The abolishment of the German and Slovenian school systems in 1928 was devastating for *allogeni* teachers who remained in the borderlands and led to a renewed campaign for the dismissal and transfer "anti-Italian" agents from educational institutions. *Allogeni* teachers (*maestri*) in the borderlands who had maintained their positions after the initial purges that began in 1923 were routinely investigated by Fascist authorities. Their behaviours and attitudes were rigorously scrutinized by the regional educational inspector, police and local government officials. Article 143 of the Royal Decree of 5 February 1928, n.577, in accordance with article 1 of RD 31 January 1926, granted state and local officials

¹⁹³ For more on the philosophy and application of the Gentile reforms see McLean, *Mussolini's Children* (2018).

¹⁹⁴ Bajc, "Crimes Committed," 126.

¹⁹⁵ "'Purges' Tyrol Schools," *New York Times*, 7 June 1928.

¹⁹⁶ Bajc, "Crimes Committed," 126; Steininger, *South Tyrol*, 26.

the right to transfer (*trasferimento*) teachers and educational staff to schools in other regions if they were found to be in violation of Fascist principles. The purge of Italian schools was backed by the government in Rome but was dependent on the initiative and follow-through of local officials. In one illuminating example, on 11 June 1929, the podestà of Crenovizza (Hrenovice) in the municipality of Postumia (Postojna) sent a report to the *Provveditore agli Studi* of Venezia Giulia requesting the transfer of three teachers at the *Scuola Prifari*.¹⁹⁷ In this report, the teachers Ludmilla Hocevar, Amalia Carnelli and Stalislava Zaman, are described as being of Slavic nationality and of “*dubbia fede*” (“dubious faith”).¹⁹⁸ This report set off a series of investigations into the women and their activities in the community.

Many teachers who were investigated by the Fascists, including Hocevar, Zaman and Carnelli, did not have any real charges or hard evidence for their supposed treachery. Instead, they were seen as suspicious and potentially dangerous due to circumstantial evidence which pointed to their anti-Italian sentiments and hostility towards fascism. Zaman—a teacher at the *Scuola Prifari* for twelve years—was reported to be of “Slavic origin” and “Slovenian sentiment.” While there was no evidence of her acting against the regime, she was accused of “never contributing to the Italianization of the school,” and having a “clearly passive and disinterested demeanor towards every patriotic and regime initiative.”¹⁹⁹ Hocevar was accused on not showing support for Fascist political programs or imparting strong national sentiment amongst her students. Hocevar was transferred to

¹⁹⁷ In each province, the department of the *Provveditore agli Studi* was instituted to act as the regional authority of education and studies. They dealt with matters regarding teaching and administrative staff, student performance and curriculum.

¹⁹⁸ ASTs, PGT, b.192, f.068, Report from the Podestà di Crenovizza to the Provveditore agli Studi di Trieste, 11 June 1929.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid*, Report from the Prefetto di Trieste to the Ministero dell’Educazione Nazionale in Rome, 12 September 1930.

Umbria in March 1930 while Zaman was moved to Ancona in July 1930.²⁰⁰

Carnelli presented a unique case for local officials. Having taught in the town of Prifari for three decades, she was identified as an influential force in the community. In a report from the Carabinieri of Trieste to the Prefect, Carnelli—daughter of Pietro and Francesca Schusterrschetz, born in 1873 in Canale d’Isonzo (Gorizia)—was accused of holding Slavic sentiments and associating with “hostile elements,” including a suspected anti-Italian priest.²⁰¹ Until 1928, Carnelli was reported to have “held an open attitude of indifference and [of being] passively obstructive towards Italian and Fascist propaganda in the schools.” Instead of approving the podestà’s request for Carnelli’s transfer, the provveditore issued Carnelli a warning to “refrain from associating with Slavic elements and to make every effort to carry out her duties as a Fascist teacher both within the school and outside of it.” She was instructed to behave in a way that would clearly demonstrate her support, “fidelity and enthusiasm,” for the Fascist regime.²⁰² After issuing this warning, the provveditore received no complaints about her conduct. Carnelli was even awarded a certificate of merit by the Ministry of Public Education, “for the praiseworthy manner of teaching and educating young people.”²⁰³

Yet, the carabinieri were unconvinced of Carnelli’s “sudden change of heart,” which they presented as a sham to “mask her real Slavic sentiments” and avoid “the provisions of the authorities.”²⁰⁴ Her new attitude and active support of the Fascist youth

²⁰⁰ Ibid, Report on the transfer of Ludmilla Hocevar from the Provveditore agli Studi to the Prefetto di Trieste, 13 July 1930; Ibid, Report on the transfer of Stanislava Zaman from the Provveditore agli Studi to the Prefetto di Trieste, 18 July 1930.

²⁰¹ Ibid., Report from the Prefetto di Trieste to the Provveditore agli Studi di Trieste, 26 September 1930. There is no indication that Carnelli was married or that her surname had been Italianized at any point.

²⁰² Ibid, Report from the Provedditori agli Studi to the Prefetto di Trieste, July 1930 (date illegible).

²⁰³ Ibid, Report from the Carabinieri di Trieste to the Prefetto di Trieste, 4 August 1930.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, Report from the Prefetto di Trieste to the Provveditore agli Studi di Trieste, 26 September 1930; Report from the Provveditore agli Studi di Trieste to the Prefetto di Trieste, 23 October 1930.

organizations were attributed to her “fear of transfer,” and desire to avoid further suspicion under the watchful eyes of local officials and informants.²⁰⁵ In June 1929, she was reported to have participated in a Slavic propaganda meeting in Landolo (Crenovizza) hosted by the “well-known Slovenian irredentist, professor [Lavo] Čermelj,” who later fled to Yugoslavia to avoid arrest by the Fascist authorities.²⁰⁶ Carnelli was also accused of supporting efforts to distribute prohibited Slavic journals and newspapers, which was especially damning considering her prominent role in the school and community. The report concluded that Carnelli, “although externally painted in the Italian style” was “anti-Italian at her core,” and a pernicious force corrupting the education of the students of Prifari. In October 1930, Carnelli’s transfer was approved by the education minister.

In addition to teachers’ engagement with hostile elements in the Slavic community, Fascist officials regulated “inappropriate” relations between Italians and Slovenians. Marriages between individuals of Italian and Slovene heritage was not uncommon in Venezia Giulia, but relationships founded on immorality were not accepted. In one case, the carabinieri reported that a twenty-one-year-old teacher, Giovanna M., whose last name had not been Italianized and was likely of Austrian descent, had been the long-time “mistress of the squad leader of the [border militia], *Milizia Confinaria Serra della Centuria of S. Pietro del Carso*.”²⁰⁷ The report stated that, “almost every day he would go to S. Michele where he spends the night in Giovanna’s bedroom, located in the same house as the school.” The town did not appear to be in favour of this relationship and rumors began to spread that Giovanna had fallen pregnant. Just nine days after

²⁰⁵ Ibid, Report from the Carabinieri di Trieste to the Prefetto di Trieste, 4 August 1930.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, Report from the Prefetto di Trieste to the Provveditore agli Studi di Trieste, 26 September 1930; Report from the Provveditore agli Studi di Trieste to the Prefetto di Trieste, 23 October 1930.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, Report from the Prefetto di Trieste to the Provveditore agli Studi di Trieste, 13 June 1930.

receiving this report, the prefect and provveditore approved her immediate removal from the school. The Fascist government did not have any laws or regulations against married men having mistresses, and *Il Duce* himself was known to have many extramarital affairs. However, for Fascist authorities, the squad leaders' fraternization with a teacher of non-Italian origin was not becoming of a border official endowed with the securitization of the "sacred" boundary of the Fascist state. Furthermore, the teacher's indiscretion in carrying out the affair in her school made her unsuitable to educate future upstanding Fascists.

A study of Fascist approaches to the dismissal and transfer of *allogeni* teachers illuminates the individual and collective logic that drove the assimilationist program, as well as the evolution of this logic following the expansion and fortification of Fascist authoritarianism in 1925-1926. The institution of Fascist associations and the all-encompassing nature of Fascist social, economic, cultural and political life after 1925-1926 altered the scope and objective of assimilationism. Before 1925, Fascist assimilationism targeted state officials and teachers who were obvious impediments to Italianization, either because they did not speak Italian or openly supported German or Slovene irredentist organizations. Particular attention was paid to *allogeni* and foreign citizens who held prominent positions within economic, political and social organizations in the borderlands and abroad, and as such, were in an ideal position to carry out espionage and other illicit activities. In rural communities, Fascist officials targeted individuals who publicly promoted their Germanic or Slavic sentiments, thereby corrupting the passive *allogeni* residents through the distribution of irredentist propaganda and the running of "anti-Italian" resistance organizations such as the catacomb schools, student associations and charities.

After 1925-1926, the Fascist government passed increasingly stricter laws for the disenfranchisement and denationalization of the German and Slavic minorities. The *leggi fascistissime* provided the Fascist government with the legal foundation and institutional framework to suppress German and Slovene political and communal life and to survey, dismiss, expel and arrest those who exhibited anti-Italian sentiments on a scale not previously possible. After 1925, the shortfalls of the early Italianization campaigns were to be corrected with greater surveillance and harsher punishments for anti-Italian activity. However, the definition of “anti-Italian” activity changed and adapted in accordance with the authoritarian state’s political needs. Whereas Fascist officials initially concerned themselves with active forms of subversion—public protests against Italianization or the Fascist regime, the printing and distribution of anti-Italian propaganda, and promotion of foreign interests—after 1925, they began to pay greater attention to more passive forms of subversion, which included a lack of enthusiasm for fascism and association with anti-Italian actors. Teachers in the borderlands were especially susceptible to accusations of passive subversion, as many of them were of Slovene or German descent, had grown up and lived within *allogeni* communities, and held direct positions of influence within its most vulnerable demographic. As noted by Marta Verginella, when organizing the Italian teacher college in Tolmin, Fascist officials “believed that after the discontinuation of Slovene-language education [attendees of the Tolmin college] would turn into patriotic Italian teachers that would be capable of working in nationally challenging and non-homogenous area.”²⁰⁸ Instead, the discontinuation of minority schools and intensification

²⁰⁸ Marta Verginella, “Women Teachers in the Whirlwind of Post-War Changes in the Julian March,” *ACTA Histriae* 29 no.4 (2021), 863, doi:10.19233/AH.2021.34.

of Fascist assimilationism resulted in more widespread resentment and rebellion amongst *allogeni* teachers and borderland communities.

To weed out the corrupting influence of those of “dubious faith,” teachers and other officials who had survived the pre-1925 purges were expected to continually prove their commitment to Italianization and exhibit their pro-Fascist sentiments through the promotion of Fascist ideology in the classroom, enthusiastic involvement in Fascist associations, and the rejection of friends or family with any connection to the anti-Italian or anti-Fascist activities. However, it is crucial to note that even when an individual exhibited this pro-Fascist attitude, as was seen with Carnelli, it was still at the discretion of Fascist officials to determine whether this attitude was legitimate. In other words, although Fascist officials continued to promote and praise assimilationism, when *allogeni* citizens attempted to assimilate into Fascist society they were increasingly perceived as disingenuous and treated with suspicion and rejection.

Local party members, Fascist authorities and school officials grew increasingly concerned with the negative and counterproductive role that German and Slovene teachers were seen to play in impeding the spread of *italianità*. In an essay published in the 1929 edition of *Archivio per l'Alto Adige*, an Italian teacher from South Tyrol discussed the role of “*maestri alloglotti*” (foreign teachers) in hindering the Italianization of the school system in the region, the isolation of Italian teachers from the *allogeni*, and the negative affect of this educational void on local students. He argued that foreign teachers who were proficient in the Italian language should be dismissed, as “they speak Italian as Germans,” are of a different “political faith” and are therefore “not the most suitable teachers to whom

to entrust the delicate matter of the schools of South Tyrol.”²⁰⁹ According to his assessment, the removal of this influence and the installation of experienced Italian teachers, with greater economic support and a position of status within the community, was the only solution to the poor state of South Tyrolean schools. Breaching the divide between the Italian teachers and German community was especially difficult, as the teachers, without knowledge of the local language or customs, had no way to ingratiate themselves with the community, while the German subjects viewed them as a source of contempt and “a foreign figure in [their] sympathies and interests.”²¹⁰ The disconnection of Italian schools with the “real life” of the community made “organic leaning”—the foundation of Fascist education—an impossible task.

Despite authorities’ best efforts, the radicalization of assimilationist policies could not overcome the contradictions between fascist rhetoric and the reality of life in the borderlands. Assimilation was premised on the idea that a large portion of the *allogeni* were merely “unredeemed Italians” or passive peasants who could be remade into loyal subjects. However, the Fascist dictatorship’s endeavour to create a unitary state through the erasure of “otherness” transformed the German and Slovene populations into a fundamental problem. In the latter half of the 1920s, we see Fascist officials become increasingly disillusioned with the policies of assimilation and more attuned to the idea that German and Slovene *allogeni* were inherently and unalterably different. Even those who had shown their commitment to *italianità*, such as the Trentini or some of the *maestri*

²⁰⁹ Giralmo Gaspari, “I problemi e I fatti dell’assimilazione e dell’educazione nell’Alto Adige,” *Archivio per l’Alto Adige* XXIV, 1929: 80.

²¹⁰ Gaspari, “I problemi,” 82.

stranieri, were seen to be of “compromised Italian spirit.”²¹¹ As Roberta Pergher has shown, this disillusionment with the assimilationist campaign was increasingly vocalized by its most prominent supporters, including Tolomei and Mussolini.²¹² In January 1927, Mussolini expressed his doubts over the assimilationist project in South Tyrol in a letter to the prefect of Bolzano, Umberto Ricci. In this letter, *Il Duce* alluded to his abandonment of the program to transform adult members of the German minority into Italians and insisted that the Italianization of the region could only be achieved through the settlement of large numbers of loyal Italians from the old kingdom. Programs to transform German-speaking children into “true Italian Fascists” were to continue, but he asserted that the “otherness” of their parents, teachers, and community members would be much harder, if not impossible, to overcome.²¹³

The apparent shortcomings of assimilationism did not lead to an immediate change in the Fascist approach to Italianization. Instead, the *italianità* of the borderland provinces and the nation’s connection and commitment to them were reaffirmed in a series of essays published in the August and September 1927 issues of the Fascist journal *Gerarchia*. In one essay, Triestine Fascist Giuseppe Cobol (Italianized to Cobolli Gigli) celebrated the supremacy of Italian civilization and its “powerful force of assimilation,” and asserted that the minority groups of Venezia Giulia, “are today Italian citizens who must not differ from others in any area of duties or rights,” as fascism could not allow for any “deviations and deformations.”²¹⁴ He argued that the artificial “alien problem” was manifested by

²¹¹ McLean, “The Un-‘Common Sense’ of National Identity: Luigi Molina, *Trentini* and the Fascist Italianisation Campaign in Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol,” *Contemporary European History* (2023): 19, doi:10.1017/S0960777323000139.

²¹² Roberta Pergher, *Mussolini’s Nation-Empire*, 13.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 64-65.

²¹⁴ Giuseppe Cobol, “I fascismo e gli allogeni,” *Gerarchia*, September 1927, 805; 803.

subversives and “infidels,” such as Slavic intellectuals and Austrian agents, who worked to undermine the Fascist “moral order,” but he claimed that these anti-Italian forces would be conquered through the forceful implementation of Fascist authority.²¹⁵

In the case of South Tyrol, Giuseppe Cristofolini countered the idea of a homogenous German population in South Tyrol, which he proposed was instead composed of some German immigrants—“remnants of medieval barbarian invasions”—and “other Italians who became German over the centuries.”²¹⁶ Before Italy’s rightful annexation of the region, the “usurpers of the Atesino lands” undertook the “methodical and aggressive denationalization” of the Tyrol, suffocating Italian national consciousness. With the Fascist assimilationist program Italy had finally made “itself heard at the Brenner Pass,” and revived the *italianità* of the region. In direct contradiction to Fascist authorities’ distrust of the Trentini and frustrations with assimilationism he argued that “the increasingly frequent contacts with the interior, especially with Trentino, bring our new compatriots closer to us. The Ladin lands and the villages under Bolzano have returned to their Italian purity, despite the fact that German doctors, officials and above all priests are still established here and there.”²¹⁷ He concluded his essay with a criticism of foreign intervention through slanderous propaganda and support of the German Tyrolean resistance movement, which impeded the absolute redemption of the region—“But Italy, erasing a past of weaknesses must resume its vigilant post on the now forever forbidden threshold, carrying out that work of assimilation that the *Duce* has proclaimed and which is required by the interest and the laws of the nation.”²¹⁸

²¹⁵ Cobol, “I fascismo,” 803-805; See also Verginella, “Antislavismo, razzismo di frontiera?” 43-44.

²¹⁶ Giuseppe Cristofolini, “Gli allogeni,” *Gerarchia*, August 1927, 644.

²¹⁷ Cristofolini, “Gli allogeni,” 646-647.

²¹⁸ *Ibid*, 647.

The radical progression of the assimilationist campaigns after 1925 placed German and Slovene-speaking citizens in an untenable position—they could not enjoy any of the freedoms of citizenship without abandoning their identity and their cultural and linguistic heritage but were unable to fully assimilate into Fascist society without a cloud of suspicion looming over their heads. Many individuals and families in the borderlands chose to leave Italy to escape scrutiny and persecution, thereby sharing their experiences of Fascist oppression to their national brethren abroad. While the legal and clandestine emigration of *allogeni* citizens appear to be a success for Italianization, it presented a huge problem for neighbouring powers and threatened to derail Fascist Italy's foreign policy program.

THE SACRED FRONTIER: THE ERA OF AGGRESSION, 1926-1930

As the Fascist Italianization campaigns intensified after 1926, the Yugoslavian parliament found it more difficult to ignore the persecution of Slovene and Croatian citizens in Italy. In November 1926, parliamentarians in Belgrade protested the persecution of the Slovene minority in Venezia Giulia following the arrest of Joseph Wilfan in Rome, in addition to a rumored Fascist plot to kill Engelbert Besednjak, the Slovene Deputy of Gorizia, and reports of “numerous searches in Slovene houses in Istria and Trieste.”²¹⁹ One Yugoslavian minister called for the arrest of the Italian ambassador in Yugoslavia in retaliation for Wilfan's arrest.²²⁰ Soon after, Wilfan, Besednjak, Čemejl and other prominent Slovenian nationalists fled to Yugoslavia.

In addition to the uproar caused by Fascist persecution of *allogeni* citizen in

²¹⁹ “Italy Angers Yugoslavs,” *New York Times*, 13 November 1926, 5.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

Venezia Giulia, movement on Europe's political chessboard led to further strain in Italian-Yugoslavian relations. Fascist Italy's pursuit of strategic alliances with Albania and Hungary were perceived as an infringement of Yugoslavia's territorial sovereignty. The signing of the First Treaty of Tirana (1926) between Italy and Albania caused a great scandal in Yugoslavia, turning both the Yugoslavian government and public against Italy.²²¹ The Yugoslavians accused the Italians of attempting to build an Italian protectorate in Albania, thereby extending their influence into the Balkan sphere and violating numerous treaties between the countries. Meanwhile, Yugoslavia entered friendly relations with France—one of Italy's oldest and most reviled enemies. Given the events of November 1926, Yugoslavia's abandonment of Italy and movement towards France is unsurprising. The arrest and persecution of prominent Slavic citizens of the Adriatic, in addition to Italy's infringement in the Balkans, showed Italy to be a devious ally. The hostility between the two countries intensified between December 1926-March 1927 as news spread of the movement of both Italian and Yugoslavian troops to the borders between Italy, Yugoslavia and Albania. The Fascist propaganda machine looked to France as the source of Yugoslavia's unrest and accused France of "morally and materially aiding Jugoslavia [Yugoslavia] in its warlike preparation and of urging it to continue in its present anti-Italian policy."²²²

Mussolini did not take kindly to the alliance of two powers at Italy's eastern and western borders. However, he continued to assert the peaceable nature of the Italian-Albanian friendship and condemned Yugoslavia's aggressive response and France's

²²¹ On the impact of the Italo-Albanian friendship on Italo-Yugoslav relations see Cassels, *Mussolini's Early Diplomacy*, 315-337.

²²² "Balkan 'Revelations' Rouse Ire of Italians," *New York Times*, 20 March, 1927, 6.

support of their hysteria. The conflict between the neighbours unleashed a wave of protests in both Italy and Yugoslavia, especially amongst university students. Reminiscent of the student protests of 1905, a new generation of men and women in the borderlands and centres of power joined together to condemn the persecution of their national brethren. In May 1928, university students in Ljubljana organized a demonstration to protest Fascist Italy's treatment of Yugoslavs in Italy and the planned ratification of the Nettuno Treaty. According to a *New York Times* report, that same week students in Vienna "tore down and trampled the flag flying over the Italian consulate," which had been raised "in commemoration of the thirteenth anniversary of Italy's entry into the war."²²³ The students then, "marched through the city crying against Italy and Mussolini and singing Tyrolean songs forbidden in Italianized South Tyrol. Thousands of others joined the students before the consulate but were dispersed by police." Italian students responded with their own protests in the borderlands.²²⁴ The struggle against Fascist persecution bonded students in South Tyrol and the Adriatic with students in Germany, Austria and Yugoslavia, and public opinion in neighbouring countries was decidedly against Mussolini and the Fascist persecution of borderland communities.²²⁵

Fascist Italy was eventually freed from its obligations to Yugoslavia when, in January 1929, the Yugoslavian king initiated a coup of the government in Belgrade. This presented the Fascist government with an opportunity to abandon previous terms of friendship in pursuit of more ambitious territorial goals in the Balkans. Fascist Italy used the university protests and the political unrest in Yugoslavia as justification to carry out

²²³ "Italian Flag Stirs Austria to Riot," *New York Times*, 25 May 1928, 8.

²²⁴ "Students Try to Burn Tricolor," *New York Times*, 26 May 1928, 6.

²²⁵ "Yugoslavs To Make Reparation to Rome," *New York Times*, 3 June 1928, 53.

further arrests in Venezia Giulia and implement harsher punishments for apparent anti-Italian activity. The Fascist government's anxiety over the persistent "Slavic threat" was made official with the distribution of a memorandum on 2 September 1929 from the Ministry of the Interior's Public Security Office to the prefects of Venezia Giulia. This directive stated that, in response to rumours of repressive measures against Italian citizens in Yugoslavia, the Ministry required all prefects to provide a record of the movement of the "*sudditi jugoslavi*" (Yugoslavian subjects) residing in or travelling to the region.²²⁶ This list was comprised by the questore and forwarded to the Ministry of the Interior at the end of each month. Regional economic institutions, such as the *Consiglio e Ufficio Provinciale dell'Economia Corporativa*, would also send updates on the establishment or closure of any Yugoslavian economic enterprises. Although this document does not explain exactly what the Yugoslavs' "repressive measures" were, it is likely that this surveillance program was conceived in response to increased tensions between Yugoslavia and Italy due to Mussolini's support for the establishment of the Kingdom of Albania in 1928 and the rise of the Yugoslavian anti-Fascist militia (the TIGR), which fought against the oppression of the Slovenian and Croatian people in the region.²²⁷

The rise of extremist nationalist groups in both the Adriatic and South Tyrol in the latter half of the 1920s occurred in direct contradiction to public proclamations by Fascist officials who celebrated assimilationism as a great success. In April 1929, the prefect of Trieste "declared that by 1930, there would be no Slavs left in Istria who had not become

²²⁶ ASTs, PGT, b.366, f.068, Secret directive from the Ministero dell'Interno, Divisione Generale Della Pubblica Sicurezza to the Prefetti di Zara-Friume-Trieste-Gorizia-Udine-Pola-Venezia-Ancone-Padova-Milano-Bologna and the Questura di Roma, 2 September 1929.

²²⁷ The abbreviation stands for Trst (Trieste)-Istria-Gorica (Gorizia)-Reka (Rijeka). Sluga, *The Problem of Trieste*, 50.

pro-Italian.”²²⁸ A few months later, following the institution of regulations that abolished all bilingualism in the South Tyrol, the prefect of Bolzano sent a telegram to Mussolini declaring that the Italianization of South Tyrol was complete:

Fascist Italy, the most sublime expression of all the forces which are under your command, now presses its iron heel deeply and finally in this Roman territory. The laws of the erstwhile Austro-Hungarian monarchy, which represented the Reich of the past, gave place in July of this year to Italian law, created by a thousand years of culture and tradition.²²⁹

However, these declarations of the success of Italianization demonstrated the great divide between Fascist narratives and reality.

The professed successes of Italianization were an attempt to hide the shortfalls of assimilation and the dangerous resentments felt by minority communities in the borderlands who had endured Fascist terror and persecution for almost a decade. These resentments led to the rise of extremist nationalist groups in Italy and in neighbouring countries, which aimed to protect and preserve German and Slovenian culture in the borderlands. Far from suppressing subversion, repressive measures against Germans, Slovenes and Croats in the borderlands only agitated and radicalized anti-Italian feeling.

The practice of civil disobedience that characterized South Tyrolean resistance throughout the 1920s shifted towards a more militant-nationalist orientation in the 1930s. South Tyrolean, Austrian and German youth were instrumental in bringing about this shift. As stated by Georg Grote, “this new, politicized youth no longer voiced their protest through the channels of traditional catholic institutions [such as the *Deutsche Verband*], but rather found a new way to express themselves through the ‘*Befreiungsidologie des Nationalsozialismus*’ [liberation ideology of National Socialism] even though this

²²⁸ “Yugoslavia Angered by Italian Charges,” *New York Times*, 17 April 1929, 12.

²²⁹ “Tyrol’s Latinization Declared Complete,” *New York Times*, 4 October 1929, 18.

National Socialism was a variant of the governing fascism.”²³⁰ The *Nibelung* student group celebrate Tyrolese culture, history, literature and politics, and hosted lectures and musical events in celebration of Tyrolese *völkisch* heritage. Another group, the Gau-Jugend-Rat (GJR, District Youth Council), established the foundation upon which the South Tyrolean National Socialist movement was built.²³¹ Members of this politically minded organization would go on to lead and support the region’s most prominent NSDAP association, the *Völkischer Kampfring Suedtirols* (VKS; South Tyrolean National Front), which was founded following Hitler’s appointment as Chancellor of Germany in 1933.²³² The GJR and VKS believed that their “national renaissance” would come about, not through the reunification with the Austrian Tyrol but instead, through South Tyrol’s unification with the new German Reich.²³³

The power of the new politicized youth was also felt in the Adriatic and Yugoslavia. In the latter half of the 1920s and early 1930s, two underground rebel groups based in Yugoslavia—ORJUNA (*Organizacija Jugoslavenskih Nacionalista/Organization of Yugoslav Nationalists*) and TIGR (*Revolucionarna organizacija Julijske kranjine T.I.G.R./Revolutionary Organization of the Julian March T.I.G.R*)—carried out a series of violent attacks on Fascists and their collaborators, including *allogeni* who enrolled their children in Fascist schools or supported Fascist associations.²³⁴ These organizations drew their support from Slovene and Croatian youth groups on both sides of the border and

²³⁰ Georg Grote, *The South Tyrol Question, 1866-2010: From National Rage to Regional State* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2012), 58.

²³¹ Steininger, *South Tyrol*, 46.

²³² Grote, *The South Tyrol Question*, 60; Gerald Steinacher, “‘The Cape of Last Hope’: The Postwar Flight of Nazi War Criminals through South Tyrol/Italy to South America,” in *Transatlantic Relations: Austria and Latin America in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, eds. Klaus Eisterer and Gunter Bischof (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2006), 205.

²³³ Grote, *The South Tyrol Question*, 59.

²³⁴ Moehrle, *Judenverfolgung in Triest*, 121.

from exiles from Trieste and other parts of the Adriatic. In the latter half of the 1920s and throughout the 1930s it is estimated that the ORJUNA, TIGR and other underground Yugoslavian groups carried out more than a hundred attacks in Venezia Giulia, including attacks on schools, Fascist officers and Slovenian collaborators.²³⁵

Two of the most prominent attacks occurred in 1930 when the TIGR attempted to bomb Trieste's Victory Lighthouse and successfully bombed the office of the newspaper *Il Popolo di Trieste*. These attacks resulted in one of the largest trials of the Special Tribunal for the Defense of the State. In April 1930, nine alleged members of the groups responsible for the bombings were arrested. They were put on trial in September, along with eighteen other suspected terrorists accused of various bombings and attacks in the region and "were charged with having conspired to bring Venetia Julia (Venezia Giulia) under foreign dominion by means of 'armed insurrection, devastation, massacres and preparation of asocial organization which would, in the event of war, operate behind the back of the Italian army and against it.'"²³⁶ Almost all of the men were said to have confessed their guilt, although there were rumors that these confessions were induced through threats and torture. One of the leading figures, Francesco Marusic, reportedly confessed to Belgrade's promise of money to the terrorist group and the planning of an assassination plot against Mussolini.²³⁷

Four of the conspirators were sentenced to "death 'by shooting in the back'" in the nearby town of Basovizza and the rest were "condemned to serve terms of imprisonment

²³⁵ According to Cattaruzza, these attacks included "eighteen fires set to schools and kindergartens, thirteen attacks against Fascist squads and barracks, and thirteen against Slovenian police informers and policemen." Cattaruzza, *Italy and Its Eastern Border*, 139.

²³⁶ "Four Sentenced to Die in Plot Against Italy," *New York Times*, 6 September 1930, 4.

²³⁷ "Links Yugoslavia to Terror in Italy," *New York Times*, 5 September 1930, 4.

varying from four to thirty years.”²³⁸ The executions were carried out the very next day: the men “were blindfolded and bound to chairs, with their backs to the firing squad, which was composed of fifty-six Blackshirts.” As a warning to other *allogeni* who might consider participating in such terrorist activities, officials posted “a copy of the death sentence” in every community.²³⁹ The trial and execution of these men caused an outrage in Yugoslavia and throughout Europe. Newspapers in the Czech Republic provided a damning assessment of the unjust trial and executions: “the only crime of these young Slovenes...is that they recognized their racial duties and were therefore made victim of the ‘inhuman attempt of the Fascisti to provoke Yugoslavia to warlike measures.’”²⁴⁰ In response to these critiques, the Fascists published the “Justice and Lead” order sheet with this ominous warning: “more lead awaits other backs. There are some who have deserved it for a long time. They shall have it.”²⁴¹ Many family members of the convicted men were later arrested and put on trial. The Special Tribunal trials were later moved to Rome to minimize further unrest in the border region.

The *leggi fascistissime* provided the Fascists with the legal and moral justification to forcibly assimilate and systematically oppress the *allogeni*. Yet, the authoritarian laws and repressive police state which the Fascists imposed on the *allogeni* had, in fact, created the conditions for assimilationism’s demise. The passage of authoritarian laws which allowed for the censorship of the press and publishing houses, the closure of Slavic and German schools and associations, the expansion of the Fascist policing and surveillance,

²³⁸ “4 Sentenced to Die in Plot Against Italy,” *New York Times*, 6 September 1930, 4.

²³⁹ “Fascisti Execute Four Yugoslavs,” *New York Times*, 7 September 1930, 12.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ “‘More Lead’ Awaits Others, Fascisti Warn,” *New York Times*, 9 September 1930, 3.

and the monitoring, arrest and imprisonment of “anti-Italian” agents, were intended to make Italianization more efficient and effective. In reality, these policies led to the intensification of anti-Italian sentiment amongst the *allogeni* which inspired more individuals to take up the irredentist cause and join radical anti-Fascist movements. Instead of the “inclusionary” vision of assimilation that the Fascists promoted, their policies and the increasing suspicion and harassment of Fascist officials resulted in the widespread alienation of the borderland population from the Fascist national community. This alienation became more acute following the expansion of Fascist social programs and associations, which changed the conditions of inclusion and belonging for *allogeni* citizens. Far beyond what was imagined by the irredentists of the 19th and early 20th century, this authoritarian mission required unwavering loyalty and fidelity to the Fascist socio-political mission. The attributes of *italianità*—knowledge of Italian history, language and culture, and participation in Italian customs, rituals and communal life—were fully subsumed under the Fascist agenda. Adherence to the principles of *italianità* were therefore necessary for inclusion, but not sufficient. True belonging could only be achieved when the expression of *italianità* coincided with Fascist ideals and principles. In other words, one could not be a true Italian if they were not a true Fascist. For German and Slovene subjects, the prerequisites for inclusion thus became narrower and more difficult to attain, while the characterization of anti-Italian subversion and criminality became more expansive and invasive.

Through the institution of the *podestà*, the strengthening of the powers of the prefect and police, the reorganization of provincial boundaries and the Italianization of institutions and associations, the Fascist government was able to more tightly bind the

institutions of the borderlands with those of the state. However, these policies, in addition to the suppression of German and Slovene cultural and communal life, were not enough to disentangle the multilayered mental maps and socio-cultural networks that bound the *allogeni* to their histories, cultures, identities and their national brethren across the border. In other words, the policies that were meant to shape and tether the mental maps of the borderland communities towards the Italian centre only contributed to their further entwinement with cross-border communities and foreign powers. The Fascist government's attempts to isolate the *allogeni* from their heritage and identity pushed them further from the Italian state and strengthened the relationship between the *allogeni* and the more militant nationalist circles in Germany, Austria and Yugoslavia. Furthermore, the failures of assimilation led to the adoption of more brutal and oppressive measures which threatened Italy's relations with neighbouring states. Narratives surrounding the "enemy within," became more acute as assimilation faltered and rebellion mounted. By the end of the 1920s, it became clear to Mussolini and other Fascist authorities that forced assimilation could only go so far in addressing Italy's minority problem. The eradication of difference and the unification of all Italians under one identity and purpose would require more extreme measures.

CHAPTER THREE

FROM ASSIMILATION TO EXCLUSION: THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF FASCIST RACISM, 1930-1943¹

In 1932, Mussolini relayed and revised the regime's political doctrine and sacred mission in his essay *The Doctrine of Fascism*.² Much had changed over a decade of Fascist rule, yet Mussolini continued to promote the ideals of duty and unity as the foundation of a strong nation-state. These principles were also the basis of Italy's imperialist spirit, which became the focal point of Mussolini's ideological program in the 1930s. In describing the role of the state, Mussolini wrote:

The State, as conceived and realized by fascism, is a spiritual and ethical entity for securing the political, judicial, and economic organization of the nation, an organization which in its origin and growth is a manifestation of spirit. The State guarantees the internal and external safety of the country, but it also safeguards and transmits the spirit of the people, elaborated down the ages in its language, its customs, its faith. The State is not only the present; it is also the past and above all the future. Transcending the individuals brief spell of life, the State stands for the immanent conscience of the nation. The forms of which it finds expression change, but the need for it remains. The State educates the citizens to civism, makes them aware of their mission, urges them to unity; its justice harmonizes their divergent interests; it transmits to future generations the conquests of the mind in the field of science, art, law, human solidarity; it leads men up from a primitive primal life to that highest manifestation of human power, imperial rule. The state hands down to future generations the memory of those who laid down their lives to ensure its safety or to obey its laws; it sets up as examples and records for future ages the names of the captains who enlarged its territory and of the men of genius who have made it famous. Whenever respect for the state declines and the

¹ A portion of this chapter was presented as a paper at the Lessons and Legacies Conference at Washington University in St. Louis in November 2018 and will be part of the upcoming Lessons and Legacies volume. See Elysa McConnell, "Building the Nation at the Periphery: Fascism, Italianization and Racial Persecution in Italy's Eastern Borderlands," in *Lessons and Legacies XV: Global Perspectives and National Narratives*, eds. Erin McGlothlin and Avinoam Patt (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, Forthcoming).

² The first two sections of the *Doctrine* were attributed to Mussolini, but in fact, the first section was composed by his former education minister Giovanni Gentile.

disintegrating and centrifugal tendencies of individuals and groups prevail, nations are headed for decay.³

It is clear from this passage that the nation had lost its primacy of place and that the State had become the ultimate expression of the spirit of the nation and will of the masses. For the Fascist state to fulfill its sacred mission it required absolute unity, loyalty and discipline from its citizens. However, the ideal image that Mussolini painted did not align with reality. Fascism's policies of terror and repression had silenced many dissenting voices within the regime, but the Italian people had yet to live up to the ideals of discipline and duty that Mussolini had envisioned.

The State's failure to create a unified people was most clearly demonstrated in the borderland regions, where political and racial Others continued to live outside of the ideological boundaries of the state. By the end of the 1920s, assimilation was increasingly seen as insufficient for the manifestation of a unitary and imperialist spirit and new boundary-drawing practices were required to define, delimit and exclude subversive Others. Instead, the resettlement of Italians from the old Kingdom to ethnically-mixed regions was perceived as the surest way to dominate, suppress and eliminate the German and Slavic communities who the state increasingly viewed as "unassimilable." However, the state's resettlement program did not provide the economic and social support required to make the program a success, and many of the Italians who were sent to the borderlands failed to live up to the standards expected of members of the "superior" race.⁴ To tackle the degeneration of the Italian people and set the nation back on the path to redemption,

³ Mussolini, "La dottrina del fascismo," in *Scritti e discorsi*, 727-728. For an English translation see Benito Mussolini, *Fascism: Doctrine and Institutions* (Rome: Ardita Publishers, 1935), 7-42.

⁴ On the experiences of Italian settlers in the borderland and colonial resettlement programs see chapter 3 of Pergher, *Mussolini's Nation Empire* (2018).

the Fascist state embarked on a program to re-educate its citizens, not as members of a nation but as members of a race.

This chapter will examine Fascist Italy's transition from assimilation to racial exclusion and discuss the impact of Italianization, the Italian invasion of Ethiopia and the rise of Nazi Germany on Fascist approaches to linguistic, cultural and religious minority communities in the borderlands. The assimilationist programs of the 1920s sought to absorb and eradicate difference through policies of education and denationalization, while programs of racialized exclusionary-othering, popularized in the 1930s, intended to segregate and expel racial and ideological Others from the national body. For our purposes, exclusionary-othering refers to the societal, cultural and political narratives, often constructed by the dominant class, surrounding the "otherness" or "foreignness" of certain individuals or groups within a nation, which are used to legitimize the segregation and exclusion of "non-national" and "anti-patriotic" groups. Exclusionary-othering was not a new concept for Italian Fascists. Since the Italian Wars of Unification irredentists, nationalists and Fascists had developed narratives of exclusionary-othering towards Germanic and Slavic Others at the national frontier, and countless *allogeni* teachers, lawyers, state employees, politicians, business owners and intellectuals were excluded from Italian society for their resistance to assimilation. But it was not until the institution of the Fascist empire and racial laws that racialized narratives of exclusionary-othering were adopted as a central program of Fascist authoritarianism, marking a shift away from assimilation towards the establishment of a new racial hierarchy.

Scholars often look to the Italo-Ethiopian War and the rise of Nazi Germany to explain Italy's adoption of its racial-imperialist program, but the experience of

Italianization and impact of the assimilationist program on the development of the Fascist racial program are rarely included in these analyses.⁵ Furthermore, there is often no mention of the borderland assimilation campaigns in scholarship on the Italian racial laws. Recently, scholars have paid more attention to the connection between anti-Slavism and antisemitism, but an examination of the convergences and divergences between Fascist persecution of the *allogeni* and Italy's Jewish minority are less prevalent. I argue that an account of Fascism's movement towards official racism and exclusionary-othering is incomplete without a discussion of the development of the borderland assimilationist campaigns in the 1920s and 1930s. This chapter examines the continuities and differences between Fascist approaches to assimilation and racial exclusion with particular focus on the boundary-drawing practices utilized in each program and examines the trends of inclusion and othering to illuminate the uniquely "Italian characteristics" of each program.

PERSECUTION AND PROSPERITY: JEWISH LIFE IN SOUTH TYROL AND TRIESTE BEFORE THE RACIAL LAWS

SOUTH TYROL

Under Habsburg rule, the Jewish communities of Tyrol and Trieste experienced periods of persecution and prosperity. In the Tyrolean Crown Lands, a series of blood libel accusations in the 14th and 15th centuries led to the murder and expulsion of the region's once prospering Jewish communities. In 1475 antisemitic violence was unleashed on the Jewish community of Tyrol when a Christian infant named Simon went missing in Trent. His body was found near a Jewish residence and the entire Jewish community was arrested

⁵ With the notable exception of the South Tyrolean *Opzione* (Option).

and put on trial. Most of the Jewish men were tortured and executed, while the women and children were forced to convert to Christianity. In the wake of the blood libel trial of 1475 the German-speaking alpine valleys were overrun with “accusations of infanticide” and Jews were effectively run out of Tyrol.⁶ A *herem* (ban) was rumored to have been placed on Trent by the rabbis of Italy which prevented the settlement of Italian Jews in the region.⁷ The well-documented and publicized trial resulted in the cancellation of the papal protection of Jews accused of ritual murder, which ushered in a new era of antisemitic violence throughout Europe.⁸

The Jews of Tyrol were the target of numerous persecutory measures leading up to the 19th century, including the 1551 order that all Jews must wear a yellow patch—which Bolzano Jews were forced to wear until 1614—the imposition of an “annual *pizzo*” (tax) by Empress Maria Theresa in 1768, the forced Germanization of Jewish names in 1784, and the restriction on the number of Jewish inhabitants, known as the “*Schutznummer*,” during the short-lived Bavarian rule of 1806-1814.⁹ In spite of their long persecution, in the latter half of the 18th century Jewish traders, artisans and practitioners helped transform Bolzano and Merano into important centers of trade and health care. Jewish traders incorporated Bolzano into a vast trading network, connecting the city to important hubs in Italy and Germany.¹⁰ Merano became a popular travel destination for Jews and other residents of the Hapsburg empire seeking the most advanced medical treatments at

⁶ Sabine Mayr and Joachim Innerhofer, *Quando la patria uccide. Storie ritrovate di famiglie ebraiche in Alto Adige* (Bolzano: Edition Raetia, 2017), 35.

⁷ Shlomo Simonsohn, “Trent” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 2nd ed., vol. 20 (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 131.

⁸ Magda Teter, *Blood Libel: On the Trail of an Antisemitic Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020), 6-7. For more see R. Po-Chia Hsia, *Trent 1475: Stories of a Ritual Murder on Trial* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).

⁹ Mayr and Innerhofer, *Quando la patria uccide*, 40-42.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 45

Merano's world renowned health resorts and a reprieve from daily life. In 1879, only 26 Jews were listed in the Merano town records, but the city welcomed around 600 Jewish guests each year.¹¹ Some of the most famous visitors included Empress Elisabeth of Austria (also known as Empress Sisi), the early Zionist thinker and Hebrew writer Peretz Smokenskin and the famous Bohemian novelist Franz Kafka. In the mid-19th century Jews from Eastern and Central Europe began to resettle in Merano to escape anti-Jewish violence in their homelands.

The Merano Jewish community became the centre of Jewish life in South Tyrol, joining together the communities of Merano, Bolzano and Trento. As part of the Austrian Crown Lands, Merano's Jewish community was under the jurisdiction of the Jewish Council of Hohenems in the state of Vorarlberg. In 1872, the Meran Königswarter Foundation was established to support Jewish life and institutions in Merano, including the building of the synagogue which was inaugurated on 27 March 1901. The Königswarter Foundation helped lobby for the creation of a Jewish Community in Merano, which was officially established in 1905 under the leadership of Aaron Tänzer. Tänzer had previously held the position of Rabbi for Tyrol and Vorarlberg and presided over the inauguration of the Merano synagogue.¹² According to Federico Steinhaus, by 1931 Venezia Tridentina was home to 1,293 Jewish residents. Of those residents, 332 were members of the Jewish community of Merano and 1,144 held foreign citizenship.¹³

¹¹ Sabine Mayr, "The Annihilation of the Jewish Community of Merano," in *A Land on the Threshold. South Tyrolean Transformations, 1915-2015*, eds. Georg Grote and Hannes Obermair (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2017), 60.

¹² The year of his election as rabbi of Merano Tänzer published his book *Die Geschichte der Juden in Tirol und Vorarlberg* (The History of the Jews of Tyrol and Vorarlberg). Mayr and Innerhofer, *Quando la patria uccide*, 30.

¹³ *Ibid*, 104.

The successes and contributions of South Tyrol's Jewish community exacerbated antisemitic fervour in the region. Conservative groups in South Tyrol perceived Jewish Emancipation as a "symptom of the disintegration of the divine order of creation" and portrayed Jews as "a destabilizing element of the tranquil and 'devout' Tyrolean society."¹⁴ Cinzia Villani identifies two "currents" of antisemitism prevalent in South Tyrol and Austria—Christian-social (religious antisemitism) and German-national (biological antisemitism). She notes that support for antisemitic and nationalist propaganda was more prevalent in areas experiencing higher levels of socio-political tension due to the confrontation of competing nationalist and ethno-linguistic groups, such as Tyrol, Carinthia and Bohemia. In the 1880s newspapers such as the *Tiroler Volksblatt* and *Der Tiroler*, the same organizations which promoted Pan-Germanism, spread antisemitic rhetoric portraying Jews as harbingers of liberalism and modernity.¹⁵

In the 1890s, Pan-German cultural, sport and student associations in Tyrol promoted antisemitism and the exclusion of individuals who were unable to prove their "German" heritage. These antisemitic campaigns gained greater support during the First World War, and swastikas and signs forbidding Jewish patrons began to appear in the alpine valleys.¹⁶ Jews were blamed for Austria's defeat, the fracturing of the Tyrol, and the post-war economic crisis. In fact, Jewish business owners played a vital role in Merano's post-war economic recovery.¹⁷ After the fall of Austria-Hungary, Jewish leaders hoped to establish an independent Jewish community in Merano but were discouraged due to fears they

¹⁴ Quoted in Cinzia Villani, "Antisemitismo ed ebraismo in Alto Adige: La Comunità Israelitica di Merano," *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 55, n.1 (Rome: Unione della Comunità Ebraiche Italiane, 1989), 106-107.

¹⁵ Mayr, "The Annihilation of the Jewish Community of Merano," 58.

¹⁶ Villani, "Antisemitismo," 108.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 99.

“would be branded as traitors,” by their Catholic neighbours.¹⁸ The Jewish Community of Merano did not gain official status as an independent community until after November 1921 when South Tyrol was official annexed by Italy.

The establishment of the Anti-Semitic League in Innsbruck in 1919 brought together various political factions to fight against the Jewish “contamination” through antisemitic publications and attempts to restrict their rights to property and employment. Many individuals who were part of Pan-German and anti-Jewish association before the 1930s would go on to participate in the South Tyrolean Nazi association VKS. Villani argues that the antisemitic ideology propagated by South Tyrolean Nazi associations was “nothing new for the South Tyroleans...the ideologies of antisemitism, racism and anti-Bolshevism were all already present for some time in the [Tyrolean] political panorama,” and became increasingly radicalized with the rise of Nazi Germany.¹⁹

TRIESTE

Like the Jews of Tyrol, Trieste’s Jewish population experienced periods of prosperity and persecution, however, with Trieste being one of the most important trading and banking centres in the Habsburg Empire, Trieste’s Jewish population grew exponentially between the 17th and 20th century. Jewish bankers and their families became central figures in Trieste’s economy and two Triestine Jews were named *Hoffaktor* by the Austrian Emperor.²⁰ Attempts to expel Trieste’s Jews were unsuccessful but the Jewish community—about 70 people from 11 families—were ordered to reside in the Trauner

¹⁸ Ibid, 100.

¹⁹ Villani, “Antisemitismo,” 112.

²⁰ The *Hoffaktor* (Court Jew) was a Jewish banker appointed to the role of accountant and lender to Austrian and German nobility.

ghetto in 1695. The site of the ghetto was moved to the Riborgo neighbourhood in the centre of the city after the Jewish community successfully petitioned for a more favourable location. Their proximity to the harbour allowed the community to capitalize on the growth of Trieste's port, which became a vital centre of trade and commerce in the 18th century. The Jewish Community of Trieste, officially established in 1746 under the name *Università degli ebrei*, was favoured by Empress Maria Theresa, who was known for her ruthless antisemitism.²¹ Wealthy families were permitted to live outside the confines of the ghetto and Trieste's *Nazione Ebraica* were bestowed with special privileges by the Empress in 1771. The Great Synagogue was built in 1775 and the Jewish school was established in 1796. Following the passage of Emperor Joseph II's *Toleranzedikt* (Edict of Tolerance; also known as the *Toleranzpatent*) of 1782, Trieste's Jewish ghetto was abolished and Jews were allowed to reside anywhere in the city. The Edict—one of the first of its kind in all of Europe—granted Jews social and economic freedoms previously denied to them.²² At the time of the Jewish community's establishment in 1746 there was an estimated 120 Jews living in Trieste. By 1788 that number had increased to 670 and in 1800 numbered 1,200 Jews. These numbers continued to grow in the 19th century, which was considered to be the “the golden age of Trieste Jewry...In 1848 there were around 3,000 Jews, in 1869 there were 4,421, and in 1910, 5,160 Jews lived in Trieste.”²³ This

²¹ Karl Vocelka, “Enlightenment in the Habsburg Monarchy: History of a Belated and Short-Lived Phenomenon,” in *Toleration in Enlightenment Europe*, eds. Peter Ole Grell and Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 201.

²² See Paul P. Bernard, “Joseph II and the Jews: The Origins of the Toleration Patent of 1782,” *Austrian History Yearbook 4* (1968): 101-119, doi:10.1017/S0067237800013163; and Lois C. Dubin, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste: Absolutist Politics and Enlightenment Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 64-94.

²³ Shlomo Simonsohn, “Trieste,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, eds. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 2nd ed., vol. 20 (Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 145.

number slightly declined after Trieste's annexation to Italy—the 1931 census listed 4,671 members, of which 1,437 were foreign Jews.²⁴

Trieste's Jewish community was influential in shaping the city's cultural, economic and political landscape. As Tullia Catalan writes, through the “mutual economic collaboration between minorities and majorities [and the] continual exchange of know-how and culture” the small city of Trieste transformed into one of the most successful trading centres in the Hapsburg empire.²⁵ As a crossroads between European civilizations and a gateway to the world, the port city became one of the most diverse and cosmopolitan cities of the 18th and 19th centuries—at one point, garnering the distinction of “‘Philadelphia of Europe’...a port in which castaways find shelter and a new, promising life.”²⁶ The city's “port Jews” established themselves as important players in the multifaceted economy, allowing many to rise to the highest ranks of Triestine and Austrian society.²⁷ One of the most famous examples was the financier and poet Giuseppe Lazaro Morpurgo who in 1831 founded the *Assicurazione Generali di Trieste*, one of Europe's most prominent insurance companies.²⁸ Trieste Jews were highly integrated and there were more mixed marriages in Trieste than anywhere else in the Austrian Empire.²⁹

²⁴ Simonsohn, “Trieste,” 145.

²⁵ Tullia Catalan, “The Ambivalence of a Port City. The Jews of Trieste from the 19th to the 20th Century,” *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of Fondazione CDEC*, n. 2 (October 2011): 83, doi:10.48248/issno.2037-741X/747.

²⁶ This moniker was given by the French nobleman Count Charles-Albert de Moré in a letter that he wrote in 1807 to his brother after the latter had moved to Trieste. Quoted in Reill, *Nationalists Who Feared the Nation*, 81.

²⁷ On the history of Trieste's “port Jews” see Dubin, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste* (1999); Lois C. Dubin, “Researching Port Jews and Port Jewries: Trieste and Beyond,” in *Port Jews. Jewish Communities in Cosmopolitan Maritime Trading Centres, 1550-1950*, ed. David Cesarani (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2002). On “port Jews” see David Sorkin, “The Port Jews: Notes Toward a Social Type,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 50, n.1 (1999): 87-97, doi:10.18647/2168/JJS-1999; and David Sorkin, “Port Jews and the Three Regions of Emancipation,” in *Port Jews*, 31-46.

²⁸ *Assicurazioni Generali S.p.A* or *Generali Group* is still in operation in Trieste and is one of the largest insurance companies in the world.

²⁹ Tullia Catalan, “Ambivalence of a Port-City,” 90.

However, Trieste's world-renowned cosmopolitanism did not provide immunity from the viruses of nationalism or antisemitism that spread across Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Catalan points to the beginning of the *Risorgimento* (1848) and emancipation (1867) as the time when “an early and uncertain nationalist identity began to flourish within the restricted circles of Trieste intellectuals, for the most part [amongst] young men belonging to the middle class.”³⁰ Over time, Trieste's Jewish community became enthusiastic contributors to the irredentist and nationalist movements and helped shape Italian culture and identity, with some abandoning their religious identity altogether to adopt the “religion of the fatherland.”³¹ The Trieste newspaper, *Il Corriere Israelitico* (The Jewish Courier) promoted the new Italian Kingdom amongst Triestine Jews and the connection between Trieste's Jewish community and the Italian nation continued to grow as political antisemitism spread across the empire.³² The ideals of the *Risorgimento* inspired the emancipation and integration of Italian Jewry and irredentism played an important part in this nationalization process. In the 1930s, Italian historian Arnaldo Momigliano described this as the “parallel nationalization” of Jews and other Italians:

The development of Italian consciousness for Jews is parallel to the formation of a national consciousness in the Piedmontese, the Neapolitans, or the Sicilians: it is a part of the same process and characterizes the process itself...Obviously, this has not prevented Jews from retaining, to a greater or lesser extent, Jewish peculiarities, just as the fact of becoming Italian has not stopped the Piedmontese or the Neapolitans from retaining regional characteristics.³³

³⁰ Ibid, 77.

³¹ Ibid, 78.

³² Klein, *Italy's Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*, 27.

³³ Quoted in Arnaldo Momigliano, *Pagine ebraiche*, ed. Silvia Berti (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1987), 241.

Yet the unifying force of irredentism and nationalism that Momigliano celebrated would soon destroy the cosmopolitanism underlying Trieste's economic success.

The rise of militant nationalist movements in Trieste in the latter half of the 19th century coincided with the rise of political antisemitism. Beginning in 1880, around the same time that political irredentism started to take hold in the city, Trieste's Catholic press began to promote and distribute antisemitic propaganda. Inspired by the political antisemitism of the Mayor of Vienna, Karl Lueger, the Catholic propagandists accused Trieste's Jewish community of corruption and of holding disproportionate control and influence in areas of commerce, finance, and politics. Catalan notes that "the height of the political instrumentation of antisemitism in Trieste" occurred between 1897-1904, when the Christian-Socialist party and other political groups "adopted anti-Jewish positions," as a means to oppose "the election of Liberal-Nationals and pro-Italian politicians of Jewish origins."³⁴

Trieste's Jewish community continued to flourish despite the rise of political antisemitism. Construction of the new Great Synagogue of Trieste began in 1908 and was completed in 1912. When Italy joined the First World War, 101 Triestine Jews joined the Italian Army, of which 18 died in combat.³⁵ Jewish businessmen were instrumental to the success of border fascism, providing both financial and political support to the movement. Edoardo Morpurgo, one of Trieste's most prominent Jewish figures, allowed early Fascist meetings to be conducted in buildings owned by the *Assicurazioni Generali*.³⁶ The establishment of the *fascio di combattimento Triestino* on 3 April 1919 was spearheaded

³⁴ Catalan, "Ambivalence of a Port-City," 93.

³⁵ René Moehrle, "Fascist Jews in Trieste: Social, Cultural and political Dynamics 1919-1938," *Quest-Focus* n.11 (2017): 50, doi:10.48248/issn.2037-741X/814.

³⁶ Moehrle, "Fascist Jews in Trieste," 58-59.

by Triestine Jew Pietro Jacchia, one of five Italian Jews to be present at the founding of Fascism in Milan just ten days prior. According to Rene Moehrle, “Pietro Jacchia is the be considered the initiator and most important protagonist of Triestine Fascist from April 1919 to May 1920,” until he was replaced by the more radical Francesco Giunta.³⁷ As with other Italian Jews, the Triestine Jewish community, the majority of which belonged to the middle class, supported fascism as the safer alternative to the destructive and chaotic forces of socialism, and were integral to the success of the Fascist takeover.³⁸ Triestine Jews held positions of prominence in Fascist Italy until the enactment of the Racial Laws in the fall of 1938.

Once portrayed as the ideal model of Jewish assimilation in Europe, in recent years scholars have questioned the usefulness of assimilation in understanding the Italian Jewish experience. As discussed in Shira Klein’s book *Italy’s Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*, since the 1890s historians have described Jewish assimilation as process of erasure in which the forces of nationalization and modernization had diminished the “Jewishness” of Italian and western European Jews. Scholars began challenging this view in the 1980s, arguing that Italian and other western and central European Jews did not lose their Jewish culture or identity, but had experienced a process of “acculturation.”³⁹ In other words, they “absorbed the norms and culture of the majority group but maintained certain distinctive Jewish features.”⁴⁰ Italian historiography largely maintained the “erasure” narrative until the 2000s, when scholars began to pay more attention to the

³⁷ Ibid, 60. Jacchia fought in the Spanish Civil War and was killed in combat in Majadohonda, Spain on 14 January 1937.

³⁸ Klein, *Italy’s Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*, 44.

³⁹ The term “acculturated” was used by Marsha Rozenblit in her book *The Jews of Vienna* (1983). Ibid, 9.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

continuation of Jewish culture and identity in Italy after emancipation and the many ways that Jews adapted their traditions and social structures to fit within the framework of the nation-state. Words like “acculturation” and “integration” have been proposed as better reflections of the Italian Jewish experience, while others have altogether dismissed the concept of assimilation for the analysis of Italian Jewish history.⁴¹ While assimilation may not accurately reflect the Jewish experience, I believe that the idea of assimilation is a useful and important concept for understanding the Fascist world view and their approach to religious and racial minorities in Italy.

The assimilation of Italian Jews and the *allogeni* diverged in two significant ways. First, Jewish assimilation was largely a self-motivated phenomenon. Italian Jews on the peninsula and in the borderlands were willing and enthusiastic supporters of Italian nationalism and irredentism. The emancipation of Italian Jews in the wake of unification helped foster an Italian-Jewish identity that was intimately bound to the ideals of duty, patriotism, and a profound love of the fatherland. The low level of political antisemitism in Italy helped to instill this love of the *patria* amongst the Kingdom’s Jewish minority. The borderlands’ Germanic and Slavic linguistic populations, on the other hand, often held strong regional identities or felt belonging and allegiance to a different national community. After the First World War, these communities did not rejoice in their unification with the *patria* and rejected Italian claims to their homeland. Assimilationism was forced upon the *allogeni* and as such, did not produce the feelings of belonging, duty, loyalty and consent which characterized Jewish assimilation. While Italian Jews found liberation through assimilation, the *allogeni* only experienced repression and alienation.

⁴¹ Ibid, 7.

Before 1938, the Fascist government maintained different approaches to the Jewish and *allogeni* communities, which contributed to their diverging experiences of assimilation as liberation (self-motivated) vs. assimilation as repression (forced).

It is important to note two events which impacted the rights and freedoms of both the Jewish minority and the *allogeni*. The first were the educational reforms (known as the *Lex Gentile*) of 1922-1923, which undermined the religious equality established during the Liberal era. These laws required Christian religious instruction in every elementary school classroom, as well as the display of the crucifix. As stated by Gentile the “Catholic religion [was to be] ‘the principal foundation of the system of public education and of the moral restoration of the Italian spirit in its entirety.’”⁴² These laws led some to question the place of Jewish teachers in public schools. For Michele Sarfatti, the suppression of linguistic and religious minority groups at this early stage “were part of a political process by the substitution of the new concept of ‘supremacy’ for the previous ‘cohabitation’ or ‘peaceful competition.’”⁴³ Yet, while the *Lex Gentile* laid the foundation for the state-sanctioned closure of Germanic and Slavic educational institutions, Italian Jews were allowed to build more Jewish schools in response to the Catholicization of the public education system. The second event was the establishment of the *podestà* in 1926, which stripped the *allogeni* and Jews of their autonomy to elect their own local and community councils. This led to the “fascistization” of the Jewish communities and the establishment of a single and centralized national Jewish organization which operated according to the provisions, and under the strict supervision, of the Fascist state.⁴⁴ The loss of autonomy

⁴² Giovanni Gentile, *Il fascismo al governo della scuola (novembre '22-aprile '24): Discorse e interviste* (Palermo: Sandron, 1924), 35. Quoted in Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 44.

⁴³ Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 45.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 54.

was a hard blow for both the Jewish minority and the *allogeni*, however, the Jewish community was still afforded a certain level of control over the community.

Despite these restrictions, before 1938 Jewish life flourished in Fascist Italy. Italian Jews were free to celebrate their heritage, culture and religion while also being full participants in all aspects of Italian national life. Jews were permitted to establish their own schools, religious institutions, publishing houses and newspapers, they could use and teach the Hebrew language, and offer courses on Jewish history. Italian Jews were also given prominent positions in Italian political life and international relations. The freedom to be both Jewish and Italian further instilled feelings of belonging and loyalty to the *patria*.⁴⁵ For the *allogeni* assimilation meant the total rejection and erasure of their language, culture, history and institutions. In the era of self-determination, one could not be German and Italian or Slovenian and Italian without challenging the basis of Italian sovereignty and Fascist supremacy. While Italian Jews were, initially and generally, seen as being of a different religion but belonging to the Italian nation, the *allogeni* were perceived as members of another nation or as Italians who had been corrupted by foreign rule. While Italian Jews had enthusiastically adopted *italianità* and promoted both Italian nationalism and fascism, the *allogeni* rejected the supremacy of *italianità* and fought to maintain their distinct language, culture and traditions. Assimilation did not make Italians of the *allogeni* and, in fact, further actualized their belonging and allegiance to other national communities. However, despite years of Jewish support, devotion and inclusion within the regime, some of the Fascist elite believed that assimilation had not made Italians of the Jews either.

⁴⁵ For more on Jewish life in Fascist Italy see chapter 2 of Klein, *Italy's Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*.

With the decline of the assimilationist model and the racialization of the Fascist program in the 1930s this sentiment spread and drastically altered the regime's approach to Italian Jews. The inclusion of the Jewish minority in the national community was challenged as accusations of their "dual national loyalty" became more prominent.⁴⁶ By 1938, in the eyes of the Fascist state, Jews were no longer part of a religious community but members of a race and nation that was antithetical to fascism. After almost seven decades of inclusion in the Italian national community, it was no longer possible to be both Jewish and Italian, and generations of Italian Jews who had devoted and sacrificed themselves to the Italian nation were cast out as foreigners, enemies and Others.

THE PRESTIGE OF THE RACE: ASSIMILATION IN THE AGE OF NAZISM AND COLONIALISM

In the latter half of the 1930s, life in Fascist Italy changed dramatically for Jews in Venezia Giulia and Venezia Tridentina. The period of assimilation and inclusion came to an end following the promulgation of the *Manifesto della Razza* (Manifesto of Race) on 14 July 1938 and the enactment of a series of anti-Jewish laws in the fall of 1938—the *leggi razziale* (racial laws)—which culminated in the passage of RD 17 November 1938, nr.1728, also known as the *Provvedimenti per la difesa della razza italiana* (Provisions for the defense of the Italian race). These laws stripped foreign and Italian Jews of their rights as citizens and excluded them from almost every facet of Italian social, economic and political life. The following section will chart the internal and external pressures—namely, the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, rise of Nazi Germany and failure of

⁴⁶ The term "dual national loyalty" is referenced in Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, 8.

Italianization—which together moved fascism from assimilationism to exclusionary-othering.

In the 1930s, the Fascist regime experienced a crisis of identity. The Great Depression and failure of the corporatist system prevented it from achieving economic success, while many of its social programs, including Italianization, had lacklustre results. Fascism had exerted moderate control over the state apparatus but had yet to penetrate the souls of the people. Throughout the decade, Mussolini charted a new course towards the ideological unification of the populace through the establishment of the new Fascist man. At the centre of this transformation was the expansion of the Italian empire, which began with the Italian invasion of Ethiopia on 3 October 1935. Imperial conquest had long been a dream of fascism, but it was not until the failure of corporatism in 1934 that the regime shifted its focus towards the realization of this dream. As stated by De Grand, “the next phase of the regime, from 1935 to 1940, became racist, imperialist and colonialist.”⁴⁷

The history of the Italo-Ethiopian War (October 1935-May 1936) and its impact on the development of Fascist racial policy is a complex topic that exceeds the scope of this project.⁴⁸ For our purposes, it is important to note how the colonial project impacted Fascist conceptions of inclusion and othering, shaped its foreign policy goals, and pushed the Fascist regime to adopt more radical solutions against racial Others. First, the expansion of the Fascist empire and the government’s desire to establish clear boundaries between the conquering people and their imperial subjects led to the redefinition of the overlapping categories of citizenship, race and national belonging. Nicola Labanca argues

⁴⁷ De Grand, “Mussolini’s Follies,” 127.

⁴⁸ On Italian colonialism and Fascist imperialism see Del Boca, *Italiani, brava gente* (2005); and Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller, *Italian Colonialism* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008).

that the racism underlying the Fascist colonial enterprise was not new in Italy, however, the regime's "codification of racist legislation" and the important "strategic and ideological function" that this new racial legislation played within the nation and empire marked a definite shift in the Fascist program.⁴⁹ One of the most important boundary-drawing practices was the implementation of measures restricting intimate relations between Italian men and African women. The desirability of the beautiful and overly-sexualized African woman was a popular trope in the Italian psyche long before the rise of fascism. Seeing that few Italian women moved to the colonies, many Italian officials in Somalia, Eritrea and Libya engaged in sexual and romantic relationships with local women. Following the Italian invasion of Ethiopia and Mussolini's declaration of empire on 9 May 1936, relationships between Italian men and Ethiopian women became, according to Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci, a problematic "political 'question' and one of the regime's principal battlegrounds."⁵⁰ Knowing that the complete separation of Italian men and African women was unrealistic, Fascist officials instituted government-regulated brothels. However, the common practice of cohabitation (*madamismo*) between Italian men and African women (*madams*) in the colonies, and the growth of a population of mixed-raced children (*meticci*) became intolerable in Mussolini's vision of the Fascist nation-empire.⁵¹

While *meticci* were initially granted the option to obtain Italian citizenship with the Organic Law of Eritrea and Somalia in 1933, after the invasion of Ethiopia the Fascist

⁴⁹ Nicola Labanca, *Outre-mer: Histoire de l'expansion coloniale italienne* (Grenoble: UGA Éditions, 2016), 147.

⁵⁰ Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci, "Italian Fascism's Ethiopian Conquest and the Dream of a Prescribed Sexuality," in *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe's Twentieth Century*, ed. Dagmar Herzog. (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009): 92.

⁵¹ On the relationship between nation and empire see Pergher, *Mussolini's Nation-Empire*, 15-18.

government began to shut down any legal or social avenue that would allow the *mettici* to integrate into Italian society as Fascist officials perceived “the admission of an African to one of the metropolitan Fascist organizations [as] an affront ‘to the prestige of the dominant nation.’”⁵² The dangers posed by the *meticci* were presented as both racial and moral: “not only did the *meticciato* threaten the prestige of the race [they were also] presented as either a potential delinquent or a hopeless person.”⁵³ The success of the empire depended on the establishment of a homogenous ruling class and any exemptions granted to *meticci* by their Italian “blood” before 1935 was stripped away by the perceived racial and moral ambiguities caused by their African heritage. The Fascist regime first addressed the source of the problematic *meticci* through the regulation and restriction of the practice of cohabitation. Following the declaration of empire, Italian officials in the colonies were forbidden to live abroad for more than six months without a white woman. This policy was meant to avoid “the terrible and predictable effects of *meticciato*.”⁵⁴ Conjugal relations were banned outright with the law of 19 April 1937 and transgressors were subject to trial and faced up to five years in prison.⁵⁵ On 13 May 1940 the *mettici* were definitively separated from Italians with the passage of RD n.822. Articles 3 and 4 banned the *meticci* from claiming the citizenship or family name of their Italian parents, while article 6 forbade the *meticci* from attending local schools and prohibited the establishment of educational institutions for mixed-race children.⁵⁶ Following the

⁵² De Grand, “Mussolini’s follies,” 142.

⁵³ Matard-Bonucci, “Italian Fascism’s Ethiopian Conquest,” 96.

⁵⁴ Quoted in *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁵⁶ LaBanca, *Outre-mer*, 147-148.

institution of the racial laws, the *meticci* were categorized as “African subjects” and were denied any official status as Italians of mixed race in Fascist Italy’s new racial hierarchy.⁵⁷

The second transformation brought by colonial expansion relates to Fascist approaches towards the suppression of rebels and racial Others. Since its early days, violence had been a tried-and-tested tool in the Fascist toolbox, capable of tearing down the foundational structures of Liberal Italy and rebuilding the new Fascist landscape. Having experienced defeat in the First Italo-Ethiopian war and its climatic Battle of Adwa in March 1896, Fascist Italy went to great lengths to ensure the success of their first imperial campaign. At Mussolini’s behest, but needing little encouragement, colonial leaders Rodolfo Graziani and Pietro Badoglio used any means necessary including indiscriminate bombings, the murder of civilians and local elite, and poison gas to squash Ethiopian rebellion and exert their rule. In contravention of the Geneva Protocols of 1925 which banned the use of chemical weapons in warfare, the Italian army sprayed mustard gas from aircrafts, harming both soldiers and civilians. Captured Ethiopian soldiers were brutally executed, sometimes publicly, or sent to concentration camps. In retaliation for a series of well-executed attacks by resistance fighters in Addis Ababa, including the assassination attempt on Graziani on 19 February 1937, Graziani carried out “major colonial police operations” to suppress the anti-fascist resistance.⁵⁸ During these operations, harvests were destroyed, villages were set on fire, and thousands of Ethiopians were murdered or imprisoned. Estimates of the death toll following the assassination attempt vary. According to Angelo Del Boca, 3,000 Ethiopians were murdered within

⁵⁷Matard-Bonucci, “Italian Fascism’s Ethiopian Conquest,” 98.

⁵⁸ Quoted in LaBanca, *Outre-mer*, 223.

three days of the attack.⁵⁹ De Grand states that between 1,400 and 6,000 Ethiopians were killed in the initial weeks after the incident, and another “2,500 in the succeeding four months,”⁶⁰ while other scholars estimate that between 14,000-20,000 Ethiopians were murdered.⁶¹

De Grand argues that the brutality of Fascist rule in Ethiopia was a reflection of “the essential nature of the movement from its inception. It was no aberration in the African ‘heart of darkness,’ but part of the bleakness at the centre of fascism itself.”⁶² In Africa the Fascists were free to act in “a world without moral limit,” in which they could carry out the most heinous and brutal population control measures only dreamed of on the peninsula.⁶³ The colonial campaign should therefore be seen as both an extension of earlier Fascist methods and a radicalization of these methods. Like the violent campaigns against the socialists during the early years of the regime, the experience of colonization was meant to band the Italian people behind one great purpose. For the Fascist elite, true supremacy could only be achieved through the establishment of a new racial hierarchy that would legitimize the violent oppression and exclusion of all “non-Italian” subjects of the Italian empire. This new racial hierarchy was to be achieved through the institution of a “vast re-education project,” to imbue the imperialist spirit and make Italians “less tender-hearted.”⁶⁴ According to Sarfatti, the declaration of the Italian Empire in May 1936 marked the “transition from a ‘colonial’ racist policy to a ‘pure’ racist policy.”⁶⁵ In this

⁵⁹ Ibid, 224.

⁶⁰ De Grand, “Mussolini’s follies,” 141.

⁶¹ Ian Campbell, *The Addis Ababa Massacre: Italy’s National Shame* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 308. The official number of the Ethiopian government is 30,000. Ibid.

⁶² De Grand, “Mussolini’s follies,” 139.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 143. “Less tender-hearted” quote came from Ciano’s diary but was attributed to Mussolini. Ibid, 138.

⁶⁵ Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy*, 99.

new era, the success of the empire and redemption of the Fascist nation-state depended on the unification of those who belonged to the state and the absolute suppression and exclusion of those who did not.

Italy's invasion of Ethiopia was widely condemned by the international community, and yet, Mussolini faced meagre consequences for his infringement of international treaties and Ethiopian sovereignty.⁶⁶ Both Italy and Ethiopia were members of the League of Nations, which proved to be disastrously ineffective in protecting Ethiopia from Mussolini's colonial ambitions. In a response spearheaded by Britain, the League of Nations placed economic sanctions on Italy. These sanctions did little to deter Mussolini from his colonial project and no effective moral or military challenge was launched against Fascist Italy. Protecting Ethiopia's sovereignty was simply not important enough for Britain and other European powers to declare war on Italy, especially with the growing threat of Nazi Germany. The project of collective security established through numerous peace treaties and enshrined in the mandate of the League of Nations was shown to be too weak to counter the territorial and political aggression of the Fascist and Nazi regimes. As Ben-Ghiat states, "Ethiopia, not Munich, was the first example of appeasement of Fascist aggression."⁶⁷ However, Britain's approach did not strengthen its defense against Nazi Germany. Fascist Italy's alienation from Britain and France after the invasion of Ethiopia led to the dissolution of the Stresa Front and pushed Mussolini to pursue an alliance with

⁶⁶ On the international response to the invasion of Ethiopia see G. Bruce Strang, ed., *Collision of Empires: Italy's Invasion of Ethiopia and its International Impact* (London: Routledge, 2016); and Joseph O'Mahoney, *Denying the Spoils of War: The Politics of Invasion and Non-recognition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018).

⁶⁷ Ruth Ben-Ghiat, "When Fascist aggression in Ethiopia sparked a movement of Black solidarity," *The Washington Post*, 3 August 2020.

Nazi Germany.⁶⁸ The injury to the League of Nations' credibility following the Italian invasion of Ethiopia was a mortal wound. In the years that followed, two of its four permanent members—Italy and Japan—and Germany left the League, and the institution found itself to be incapable of preventing Europe's march to war in the latter half of the 1930s. Fascist Italy's invasion of Ethiopia created a deep fissure in the foundations of European peace and co-operation, which continued to grow as Fascist ambitions abounded.

The extension of Italy's imperial boundaries occurred as it was facing a new threat at its sacred frontier in the Triveneto borderlands. Zara Steiner argues that German rearmament in the Rhineland and Mussolini's desire to expand Italy's territory before Germany renewed its campaign for *Anschluss* was one of the factors that pushed Mussolini to carry out his invasion of Ethiopia.⁶⁹ However, as noted above, Italy's war in Ethiopia and subsequent alienation from western powers enabled the reconciliation between Mussolini and Hitler and the resolution of the *Anschluss* debate.⁷⁰ The rise of Nazi Germany posed both a geopolitical and ideological challenge to Italian Fascism. The destructive power of German nationalism, which Mussolini attempted to harness in pursuit of his own ends, flourished as Hitler's popularity grew.⁷¹ A stronger, more radical Germany threatened to upend the balance of power in Europe and weaken Italy's position in it. The struggle between Nazism and Fascism was most obviously exhibited in the

⁶⁸ The Stresa Front was a coalition between Britain, France and Fascist Italy established in April 1935 to address the threat of German rearmament and territorial expansion.

⁶⁹ Zara Steiner, *The Triumph of the Dark: European International History 1933-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 101.

⁷⁰ Steiner, *The Triumph of the Dark*, 156-157.

⁷¹ Cassels, "Mussolini and German Nationalism," 138.

debate surrounding Austrian sovereignty and the long-fought question of German-Austrian unification. Hitler, an Austrian citizen by birth, was adamant about the righteousness of a German-Austrian union. Fearing the loss of the Austrian buffer between Fascist Italy and a rising German state, Mussolini declared himself for the cause of Austrian independence. In the latter half of the 1920s, Mussolini invested both money and resources into the establishment of a politically allied Austrian neighbour to ensure the security of the northern border and to promote Italy's economic and military interests.

In 1927, Mussolini began to insert himself into Austrian domestic politics and actively worked to undermine the Austrian government through his support of the Catholic right-wing paramilitary group known as the *Heimwehr* (Home Guard). Mussolini believed the Heimwehr to be the most effective avenue through which to assert his influence as they had proven themselves to be the only force strong enough to counter Austria's rising socialist movement and the growing influence of the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs* (SPD).⁷² This support was also conditioned on the Heimwehr's assurance that, upon its rise to power, it would rescind Austrian claims to South Tyrol.⁷³ Mussolini's encouragement for the creation of a Fascist corporatist government in Austria, and the radicalization of Austria's internal political and economic issues, pushed the Heimwehr to adopt a Fascist program in 1930s, as was clearly demonstrated with their adoption of the Korneuburg oath in the fall of 1930.⁷⁴ With this oath, all members declared their

⁷² Mussolini's infiltration of Austrian domestic political life was instigated by his fears of a "socialist takeover" following the burning of the Justizpalast (Palace of Justice) by a socialist mob in July 1927. R. John Rath, "The Deterioration of Democracy in Austria, 1927-1932," *Austrian History Yearbook*, Vol. XXVIII (1996): 221-222, doi:10.1017/S0067237800005890.

⁷³ Rath, "Deterioration of Democracy," 223.

⁷⁴ On the development of the Austrian Fascist and Austrian Nazi movements see Michael Mann, "Austro-Fascists, Austrian Nazis," in *Fascists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 207-236.

support for the “fundamental renewal” of Austria, their “‘undaunted’ belief in the fatherland and restless eagerness in a common endeavor.”⁷⁵

Mussolini’s support for the Heimwehr became even more crucial with the rise of Nazism in Germany and Austria, which threatened to undermine Italy’s position in Europe and reawaken the threat of Anschluss. “Even though Fascist Italy is on good terms with Nazi Germany,” wrote the *New York Times* in August 1933, “the friendship stops where the interests of Italy are involved. Rome cannot tolerate any form of ‘Anschluss’ warm or cold, which would bring a powerful Reich to the gates of Italy. Austria is a harmless neighbour, but a nationalist Germany would be a potential danger.”⁷⁶ The appointment of Engelbert Dollfuss as the Chancellor of Austria in 1932 was a major win for the Heimwehr and their Italian backers.⁷⁷ Under the mentorship of Mussolini, Dollfuss went on to establish his own pseudo-Fascist dictatorship following the dissolution of Parliament and establishment of the Patriotic Front (*Vaterländische Front*) in March 1933.⁷⁸ However, Mussolini’s influence in Austria was dealt a devastating blow following the failed Nazi putsch in July 1934. The coup ended in failure but Mussolini’s close ally Dollfuss, was murdered by a group of Austrian Nazis after they stormed the Chancellery building in Vienna. As a result of the attempted coup, the Austrian Nazis were temporarily weakened,

⁷⁵ Tim Kirk, “Fascism and Austrofascism,” in *The Dollfuss/Schuschnigg Era in Austria: A Reassessment*, Vol. 11, eds. Anton Pelinka, Gunter Bischof and Alexander Lassner (UK: Taylor & Francis Group, 2003), 16.

⁷⁶ “Austria’s Battle with Nazis Holds Attention of Europe,” *The New York Times*, 18 June 1933, 3.

⁷⁷ Dollfuss was a member of the Christian Social Party (CSP), which was politically supported by the Heimwehr. On the relationship between the CSP, the Heimwehr and the rise of Austrian Fascism see Jill Lewis, “Conservatives and fascists in Austria 1918-1934,” in *Fascists and Conservatives: The Radical Right and the Establishment in Twentieth-century Europe*, ed. Martin Blinkhorn (London: Routledge, 1990), 98-117.

⁷⁸ Dollfuss’ Patriotic Front was first announced in a speech in Innsbruck in March 1933. Martin Kitchen, *The Coming of Austrian Fascism* (London: Routledge, 1980), 173. On the development of fascism in Austria and its connection to Italian fascist policies see Julie Thorpe, “Austrofascism: Revisiting the ‘Authoritarian State’ 40 years on,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 45, n. 2 (2010): 315-343, doi:10.1177/0022009409356916.

but the threat and promise of Anschluss lingered. Dollfuss' successor, Kurt Schuschnigg, attempted to secure a guarantee from the Italian, British and French government's to protect Austria from Nazi Germany, but Italy's refusal to compromise with France and the Little Entente, Mussolini's alienation from Britain and the League of Nations following the invasion of Ethiopia, and the growth of the Italian-German alliance, lead to the demise of a military alliance that would help Austria withstand German encroachment.⁷⁹ Almost four years after the July Putsch, one of Mussolini's oldest fears came to pass. Hitler invaded Austria, annexing the independent nation-state to the German Reich on 13 March 1938. Almost thirty years after Mussolini's warnings of the threat of Pan-Germanism in his book on the Trentino, and twenty years after the end of the Great War, the "Teutonic menace" had once more made its way to Italy's doorstep.

The rise of National Socialism had a profound impact on life in the Austrian-Italian borderlands. In February 1930, Mussolini and Austrian Chancellor Johann Schober signed a "treaty of friendship" which would guarantee the "conciliation and the judicial settlement of disputes," between the two powers. At no point was the South Tyrol question raised, giving the impression that the dispute was to be considered "closed." The government in Vienna attempted to set aside their former animosities with Italy and expected local governments to fall in line. Anti-Italian sentiments were condemned by the Austrian government which insisted that citizens and state officials "respect the country's foreign interests and avoid attacking foreign states." However, the matter was far from

⁷⁹ Alexander Lassner, "The Foreign Policy of the Schuschnigg Government 1934-1938: The Quest for Security," in *The Dollfuss/Schuschnigg Era in Austria: A Reassessment*, Vol. 11, eds. Anton Pelinka, Gunter Bischof and Alexander Lassner (UK: Taylor & Francis Group, 2003), 163-186.

closed for Tyroleans in Austria and Italy, who did not share Vienna's attitude of reconciliation and continued to condemn Fascist Italy's oppressive policies.⁸⁰

Just across the border from South Tyrol, the Austrian province of Tyrol and the city of Innsbruck became a battleground for opposing nationalist organizations competing to assert their political and ideological supremacy. In February 1931, Viennese newspapers criticized the Governor of Tyrol, Dr. Franz Stumpf, for offering safe haven to "numerous criminals belonging to the 'Bolsheviki of the Right.'"⁸¹ The German and Austrian governments attempted to stamp out these radical nationalist groups but the animosity between them, and their popularity amongst the population, continued to grow. Hitler's appointment as Chancellor in January 1933 reignited the fight for Anschluss, resulting in an increase of violent confrontations in Austria and the Italian borderlands. To the dismay of the Fascist government, the Austrian Nazis were especially popular in Tyrol and Lower Austria, where they gained a good share of votes in local elections. One of their greatest political victories came with the Innsbruck municipal election of April 1933 when the Nazis received 41% of the votes.⁸² Inspired by Hitler's vision of a Greater Germany and disillusioned with the Heimwehr's leadership and trajectory, many Heimwehr members in Tyrol left to join the National Socialists.⁸³ Despite Hitler's continued insistence that his government would not make a claim on South Tyrol, Tyroleans clung to the hope that the Nazis would liberate them from Fascist Italy and reunite the province.

⁸⁰ "Austria and Italy Sign Pact of Amity," *New York Times*, 8 February 1930, 6.

⁸¹ "Hitler Aide in Austria Arrested for Berlin," *The New York Times*, 14 February 1931, 8.

⁸² Kirk, "Fascism and Austrofascism," 18.

⁸³ Rath, "Deterioration of Democracy," 236.; Bruce F. Pauley, "A Case Study in Fascism: The Styrian Heimatschutz and Austrian National Socialism," *Austrian History Yearbook* 12, n.1 (1976): 260, doi:10.1017/S0067237800008389.

The clash between the Nazis and Heimwehr on the issue of Anschluss escalated in the summer of 1933 as the Nazi campaign against Austrian independence gained momentum. On 6 June 1933, the Heimwehr sent a contingent of armed men from Innsbruck to the German border to act as frontier guards to prevent the movement of Nazi extremists between Bavaria and Tyrol.⁸⁴ Auxiliary police were also organized to prevent violent clashes in cities and towns earmarked for Nazi aggression. The next week, on 12 June 1933, the Nazis carried out “a campaign of violence” in Innsbruck and Vienna, which culminated in the attempted assassination of the leader of Tyrols Heimwher party, Dr. Richard Steidle and the governor of Styria, Dr. Anton Rintelen.⁸⁵ Police raids in Innsbruck uncovered more than two hundred bombs believed to have been made by the Nazi supporters and all Nazi leaders in Innsbruck were arrested. In response to the June attacks, Dollfuss banned the Austrian Nazi Party and National Socialism became an illegal movement in Austria. All Nazi “Brown Houses” were closed, soldiers in the Austrian army affiliated with the Nazis were dismissed, and many prominent Nazis were arrested and expelled, while others fled from Austria to evade arrest.⁸⁶

Mussolini and Fascist officials in the borderlands were alarmed by the political upheaval caused by the rise of Nazism and the threat of a greater German Reich. The conflict between Germany and Austria threatened the security of the Fascist state’s sacred border, especially in the wake of the failed coup in 1934, after which Trieste and South Tyrol became places of refuge for Austrian Nazis who were either expelled or had fled to

⁸⁴ “Dollfuss Says Rome Backs ‘Free’ Austria,” *New York Times*, 7 June 1933, 10/

⁸⁵ “All Nazi Quarters Closed in Austria,” *The New York Times*, 13 June 1933, 6.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*; Kitchen, *The Coming of Austrian Fascism*, 150.

escape punishment for their support of Nazism.⁸⁷ Nazis who fled to the Italian borderlands received support from National Socialist groups in Trieste, Merano and Bolzano and emboldened the Tyrolean “‘Heim ins Reich’ [Return to the Empire]” movement.⁸⁸

Fearing the growth of the Nazi movement amongst the German-speaking minority in Italy, the Ministry of the Interior in Rome and local *prefetti*, *questore* and *carabinieri* ramped up surveillance efforts to weed out individuals and groups who promoted Pan-Germanism or the National Socialist agenda. Both public and private demonstrations of support for Nazism and the Anschluss, or exhibition of one’s Germanic or Tyrolean heritage, were perceived as an act of criminality. Fascist officials targeted individuals who publicly supported Nazism, foreign students and workers who were suspected of radicalizing locals, and those who criticized, undermined or refused to participate in Fascist communal life.

In South Tyrol, Nazi symbols were adopted as symbols of resistance against Fascist oppression and Italianization. The display of the *croci uncinata* (swastika) was reported in households and public spaces throughout the province. In April 1935, the prefect of Bolzano filed a report with the Ministry of the Interior’s Public Security Office regarding the painting of swastikas throughout the city of Merano, “three of which on flyers recently posted by the Prefectural Commissioner regarding the use of the Italian language.” Through their investigation, police identified young three men to be involved in the illegal

⁸⁷ According to a report in the *New York Times*, in December 1933, Prince Bernhard of Saxe-Meiningen a “German aristocrat who [had been] sentenced to six weeks’ imprisonment for conducting Nazi propaganda in Carinthia...[fled] his castle of Pitzelstetten to Italy with his wife, Princess Margot.” Disguised as tourists in traditional Alpine attire, they crossed the Italian pass and made their way to Trieste where they were welcomed by members of the city’s anti-Austrian Nazi group. “Nazi Prince and Princess Flee Austria, Abusing Freedom German Envoy Obtained,” *The New York Times*, 11 December 1933, 1.

⁸⁸ On the “Heim ins Reich” movement see Grote, *The South Tyrol Question*, 61-62.

drawings. The first two, Enrico D. and Giovanni W. were both Italian citizens and residents of Merano, while the third man, Riccardo M. (b.1914), had been born in Merano but was a citizen of Czechoslovakia.⁸⁹ Soon after the incident Enrico was arrested. With little hesitation he confessed that, “having read the posters displayed by the Prefectural Commissioner of Merano, he had the idea of defacing some with swastikas.” He enlisted Giovanni as the look-out while Riccardo provided the paint, which he had previously used “to draw swastikas on the stones of the riverbed of the Passiria river in Merano.” Based on Enrico’s confession, Giovanni and Riccardo were arrested and confessed to their willing involvement, “stating that they had painted the swastika because they knew the Nazi element in Germany and abroad use[d] these symbols to express their sentiment of protest against the Italians.” The prefect of Bolzano determined that, although Enrico and Giovanni were Hitlerian sympathizers, they had no record of previous anti-Fascist activity. However, “the Czechoslovakian citizen,” was said to have “professe[d] Nazi sentiments in politics,” and to have been “an idle young man,” previously convicted of theft. The prefect opted to let Giovanni off with a warning due to his young age but proposed that Enrico “be assigned to police confinement and that the Czechoslovakian...be expelled from the Kingdom.” In accordance with art. 150 of RD 18 June 1931, n.733 Riccardo was expelled on 12 April 1935.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ These young men were between the ages of 16-21. Their first names were likely Italianization, however, only one of the three men had an Italian surname.

⁹⁰ Archivio Centrale dello Stato (ACS), Ministero dell’Interno, Divisione affari generali e riservati (1870-1958) (MI-DAGR), A18, busta 1. Report from the Prefetto di Bolzano to the Ministero dell’Interno, Divisione Generale della Pubblica Sicurezza, 3 April 1935. Almost a year later, on 26 March 1926, Riccardo was arrested in Merano in contravention of his expulsion. He had illegally entered the country to visit his mother, who continued to reside in Merano and had filed a petition with the Interior Minister asking for the revocation of her son’s expulsion. Giuseppe Mastromattei, the prefect of Bolzano, approved his re-expulsion on 10 June 1936. ACS, MI-DAGR, A18, b.1. Notice of Expulsion, 10 June 1936.

Nazi symbols were also intertwined with symbols of Tyrolean culture, especially amongst the region's youth, to emphasize the bond between the German national struggle and South Tyrolean resistance. On 2 February 1935, the Prefect of Bolzano sent a report to the Ministry of the Interior outlining an altercation that occurred between a group of German South Tyroleans and a group of the Italians in the community of Lana, just south of Merano. According to the report, the group of *Avantguardia* skiers were travelling back to Merano from Monte San Vigilio (Vigiljoch), singing Fascist hymns as they travelled. Having heard the singing of the *Avantguardia*, a group of South Tyroleans repeatedly shouted "Heil Hitler" and hurled insults at the Italians as they made their way to the train station. The assailants were driven off by the leaders of the *Avantguardia* group but they soon returned to accost the Italians as they waited for their tram. One man, later identified as Giovanni P. in an act of "political provocation, raised his long trousers, showing the white socks he wore."⁹¹ The group continued to shout "Heil Hitler" as the *Avantguardists* rode off on the tram towards Merano. When he was later interrogated, Giovanni admitted to showing his white socks, "with the intent to irritate them and to show that he was not afraid like other *allogeni*." Only two of the men were identified as having connections to the local National Socialist movement that had been discovered in Lana in 1934, but neither man had obtained a criminal record prior to this incident. Due to their clean records, young age—most identified participants were between the ages of 17 and 20—and the inability of the *Avantguardia* leaders to positively identify all of their attackers, the accused were let off with a warning.

⁹¹ ACS, MI-DAGR, A18, b.2. Report from the Prefetto di Bolzano to the Ministero dell'Interno, Divisione Generale della Pubblica Sicurezza, 18 February 1935. White socks were a part of the traditional Tyrolean peasant costumes.

A few months after this incident, the prefect of Bolzano reported that, “around 9:30 pm on 23 June 1935, three fires were lit on the Santner peak of the Sciliar mountain [Alpe di Siusi/Seiser Alm] near the town of Castelrotto, in celebration of the Germanic feast of the solstice.” The Prefect believed that inexperienced climbers would not be able to reach the area where the fires were lit, and through an investigation determined that a group of climbers from Castelrotto had visited the peak the night of the incident. Further investigation revealed that the group later sought refuge at the Club Alpino Italiano (CAI; Italian Alpine Club) on the peak of Euringer. One man named Giuseppe P. signed the visitors log and underneath his signature wrote “the well-known initials H.88, which in conventional jargon of the Nazi non-native sympathizers means, ‘Heil Hitler.’” Upon their arrest, the members of the group admitted that they had climbed Santner peak that night but denied any involvement in the lighting of the fires.⁹²

Fascist authorities did not provide a consistent response to these displays of Nazi and Tyrolean symbols. Many were given warnings and placed under surveillance, while others were punished with house arrest, confinement or expulsion. More severe punishments were given to those caught yelling the Nazi salute or distributing Nazi propaganda, and those who were known associates of Nazi or Pan-German associations. This suspicious and threatening atmosphere drove many to flee from South Tyrol. Fascist officials attempted to keep a close watch on individuals who left the country without the state’s permission, which the government referred to as “*espatrio clandestino*” (clandestine expatriation). Some fled to Austria or Germany to support nationalist causes,

⁹² Ibid, Report from the Prefetto di Bolzano to the Ministero dell’Interno, Divisione Generale della Pubblica Sicurezza, 22 July 1935. The summer solstice fires are lit annually in celebration of the Festival of the Sacred Heat of Jesus.

while others left to evade further persecution at the hands of the Fascist government. Due to the treacherous nature of the Tyrolean mountains some did not survive the journey. In July 1931, the *New York Times* reported on the untimely death of Dr. Joseph Luchner, the former Burgomaster of Merano, whose body was found “on an 8,000-foot-high-pass just inside Austrian territory, where he dropped dead after fleeing on foot from an alleged Fascist persecution.” Dr. Luchner had represented South Tyrol in the Austrian National Assembly before its annexation to Italy and “had incurred the hostility of the [Fascist] authorities by taking an active part in the teaching of the German language to school children.” Hoping to resettle in Austria, Luchner applied for a visa which was denied so he “set out on foot over the Oetztal Glacier but died of heart trouble a few yards after he reached Austrian soil.” One might assume that the Fascist government would be in favour of the legal or clandestine expatriation of *allogeni* subjects, but Italian officials preferred to keep influential and well-connected *allogeni* under their control. Troublesome foreigners without Italian citizenship could easily be expelled, but Fascist officials did not want prominent Tyroleans crossing the border to settle just outside of the reach of the Fascist state, where they could more easily congregate and conspire against Italy.⁹³

In addition to their surveillance of public activities, Fascist officials intercepted correspondence between residents of Italy and their friends, family and colleagues in Germany and Austria. Greater attention was given to letters of those who had expatriated or were expelled, foreign students and workers living in Italy, and known *tedescofili* (Germanophiles) and Nazi supporters in the region. In these letters, individuals laid bare their true feelings of the Fascist regime, Nazism, and the events in Austria and Ethiopia.

⁹³ “Drops Dead Fleeing Italian ‘Persecution’,” *New York Times*, 11 July 1931, 8.

Many of these letters criticized the Fascists for their continued oppression of the South Tyrolean people and described the government's attempts to stamp out pro-German and Nazi sentiments. In a letter to his father in Worgl Austria, Federico O. described how residents of the town of Silandro (Schlanders) drew swastikas on their houses every night, enraging Fascist officials. "The Italians have gone mad," he wrote, "they have taken everyone to the barracks; they have interrogated them, threatening that they will be shot. But no one has said anything." He also reported that, during a protest in Merano, the Fascists "shot at those who wore white socks."⁹⁴ These are just some of the many accusations of intimidation and violence carried out by Fascist officials to suppress Pan-Germanism and Nazism in South Tyrol.

The letters also provide a glimpse into the frustration and anger surrounding the conscription of South Tyroleans into Italy's colonial war.⁹⁵ These letters describe the poor conditions in which the soldiers were expected to live, both at home and abroad, and the disdain felt by Tyroleans forced to fight for their oppressor. The number and frequency of "clandestine expatriations" increased significantly as Italy prepared to go to war in Ethiopia, with many men fleeing the country to avoid conscription. A letter from one "*altoatesini disertori*" (South Tyrolean deserter) described the influx of South Tyrolean who arrived at the Innsbruck Tyrolean Refugee Camp "from all parts and valleys of South

⁹⁴ ACS, MI-DAGR, A18, b.2. Letter from Federico O. (Silandro) to Lodovico O. (Worgl, Austria), 16 February 1935. A few months after this letter was intercepted Federico, an Austrian citizen, was accused of distributing Hitler's manifesto in Silandro and he was expelled. Ibid, Notice of expulsion, 18 March 1935.

⁹⁵ On South Tyroleans in the Italo-Ethiopian War see Gerald Steinacher ed., *Zwischen Duce und Negus: Südtirol und der Abessinienkrieg 1935-1941* (Bolzano: Athesia-Verlag, 2007); and Andrea Di Michele, ed., *Geschichte und Region/Storia e regione 25/1 (2016): Abessinien und Spanien: Kriege und Erinnerung/Dall'Abissinia alla Spagna: Guerra e memoria* (Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2016).

Tyrol.”⁹⁶ In an incredibly bold and scathing letter, one woman named Maria P. described the depressing state that South Tyroleans were forced to live in to her brother abroad:

In filthy Italy we now find ourselves in bad state. The discontent against the war underway shines through everywhere. Everywhere you look you see nothing but scandals. All the fathers of the families are forced to leave for Africa. Here with us they rule with such tyranny...Prices go up disproportionately. There is little to no enjoyment. The people of Merano are all slowly going bankrupt. This is the situation of dear Italy ruled by that megalomaniac Mussolini, who pokes his nose everywhere, even in places where he has no claim, and who sacrifices so many human lives for his cursed lust for conquest. Here they are all indignant against him, even the Italians. Recently 500 Alpini arrived at the hour of their departure for Abyssinia. Before leaving, they turned and completely pierced a portrait of Mussolini with bayonets. Three of them were shot at the station...They came looking for you a couple of times, but I always replied that I had no knowledge of your whereabouts. What does it matter to them that they know everything?⁹⁷

Criticisms of the Fascist government were often matched by adoration for Hitler and Nazi Germany. Many South Tyroleans, especially its young people, looked to Hitler as their saviour despite Hitler’s continued renunciation of South Tyrol. “We, the oppressed youth of South Tyrol, are all enthusiastic about Hitler,” wrote 19-year-old Herline M., “but unfortunately our feet and hands are tied, and we can only venerate him in secret. Greetings with the true German salute, Heil Hitler!”⁹⁸ These letters contained both a hope and a warning—hope that Nazi Germany would free South Tyrol from its Fascist oppressors and a warning of the wrath that would befall the Italians when the day of liberation arrived. “Let them do it,” South Tyrolean student Sepp P. wrote of plans to

⁹⁶ ACS, MI-DAGR, A18, b.2. Letter from Alberto M. (Munich) to friend Francesco P. (Bolzano), 30 July 1935.

⁹⁷ Ibid, Letter from Maria P. (Merano) to her brother Antonio P. (Innsbruck), 1 February 1936.

⁹⁸ ACS, MI-DAGR, A18, b.1. Letter from Herlinde M. (Brunico) to Federico B. (Obermenzing, Munich), 14 February 1935.

demolish the Bolzano Museum tower, “the day of the plebiscite will come for South Tyrol, but in Tyrolean style!”⁹⁹

With most translated letters or incident reports, the prefect provided information on the individual, including their age, family, citizenship, residence, and their moral and political conduct. When assessing an individual’s political conduct the prefect observed who they associated with, if they were part of non-Italian political or cultural associations, whether they were members of the PNF and other Fascist organizations, and their movement across the border. This criteria was used to assess the individual’s public and private sentiments and distinguish those who were engaged in overt forms of subversion from those who were covertly working against the Fascist state. The criteria for moral conduct were more difficult to define and often situational. In both Venezia Tridentina and Venezia Giulia men were less likely to be accused of moral misconduct than women. For the most part, men were scrutinized solely on their political activities. One notable exception were male priests who participated in anti-Italian activity. The moral standing of these men was discredited through accusations of their sexual relations with local women.¹⁰⁰ However, a woman’s moral standing was often directly linked to her political activities, her personal and professional relationships, and her position in the community.

In one example from Venezia Tridentina, a woman named Margherita P. was accused of “dubious morality and doubtful Italian sentiments” due to her familial

⁹⁹ ACS, MI-DAGR, A18, b.2. Letter from Sepp P. (Auna di Sotto, Renon) to Carlo S. (Munich), 5 January 1936.

¹⁰⁰ Adolfo P., a priest from Marlengo/Marling was expelled due to his anti-Italian political activity, which included the promotion of pan-German propaganda and support for the *Associazione irredentista ‘Andrea Hofer’*, criticisms against the Italian campaign in Abyssinia and in light of his ‘immoral’ behaviour. He was reported to have “intimate relations with some local women,” causing a scandal within the community. Ibid, Report from the Prefetto di Bolzano to the Ministero dell’Interno, Divisione Generale della Pubblica Sicurezza, 4 February 1936.

associations and her correspondence with the German charitable organization *Volksbünd für das Deutschtum im Ausland* (VDA; Society for Germans Abroad).¹⁰¹ According to the prefect's report, Margherita was an Italian citizen born out of wedlock to an unknown father. She married a man from Munich who had abandoned Margherita and emigrated back to Germany due to his "hostile sentiments towards Italy and the [Fascist] regime."¹⁰² A poor resident of Laion (Lajen), Margherita corresponded with the VDA-Munich, requesting "linens, shoes, sausages and books for her children." She criticized the high living cost and poor education in South Tyrol: "in the schools not a single German word is learned, the children do not understand their teachers, nor are they understood by their pupils." Margarita's familial background, her association with the German charitable organization and her criticisms of the Fascist regime all contributed to this accusation of "immorality."

Teachers and school employees were also more prone to accusations of "dubious morality" due to their direct influence over the political and moral education of local children. This is exemplified in the denouncement and investigation into Maria Dujc, a 53-year-old janitor working at an elementary school in the Comune of Cossana.¹⁰³ A 1934 report from the *carabinieri* of Trieste to the Trieste prefecture states that Maria had "for some time demonstrated her Slavic sentiments, giving cause to doubt her attachment to our institutions," and insists that "the members of her family are of bad moral and political behavior." In the preceding years, her two sons were sentenced to three months of arrest

¹⁰¹ Ibid, Report from the Prefetto di Bolzano to the Ministero dell'Interno, Divisione Generale della Pubblica Sicurezza, 23 December 1936.

¹⁰² Ibid, Letter from Margherita B. to the VDA: *Volksbund für das Deutschtum in Ausland*, 13 November 1936.

¹⁰³ After the Second World War, Crenovizza (Hrenovice) and Cossana (Košana) became part of Yugoslavia and later Slovenia.

and fined 2000 lire for crossing the border illegally; later, one would also be sentenced to four years of police confinement for an undisclosed “anti-national demonstration.” Even though both sentences were eventually reduced, the report asserts that neither man had “given any proof of repentance and demonstrate with their behavior an aversion to our institutions.” Most interesting is the report’s condemnation of Maria’s three daughters. One was accused of “moral misconduct” without clarification as to why she was given this distinction, while Maria’s other two daughters were accused of “moral misconduct” due to their having intimate relations with both local men and men in “neighboring countries.”¹⁰⁴ According to the report, teachers at the elementary school were displeased after Dujc and her two pregnant daughters arrived at the school to assist their mother. The women were said to be making a “deplorable spectacle of their advanced pregnancy” in front of the children and it was advised that, in the preservation of the good name of the school and community, they should not allow for the presence of people of such “bad morality.” The report’s continued references to the family’s bad “political and moral behavior” served as proof of the family’s unwillingness to embrace fascism and, seeing that Maria’s maiden name appears to be of Italian origin, pointed to her failure to fully Italianize her husband and children. Her sons’ political actions were perceived to be evidence of their anti-Italian sentiments, but crucially, the actions of her daughters, namely their presumed intimate relations with Slavic men suggested a deeper, more profound disloyalty to the state than the political actions of her sons.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ All of Maria’s children were in their twenties at the time that this report was written.

¹⁰⁵ ASTs, PGT, b.366, f.068, Report from the Legione Territoriale Carabinieri Reali di Trieste to the Regia Prefettura per la Provincia di Trieste, 11 December 1934.

While we cannot make any assumptions about the consensual or non-consensual nature of these relationships, both the teachers at the school and local officials perceived the daughter's pregnancies as a product of their sexual proclivity and immoral character. Just as Maria's pro-Slavic inclinations had corrupted her children, in the eyes of the state, her daughters' immorality would corrupt the moral life of their home, community, and nation as a whole. Furthermore, as women's bodies did not exist in any subjective way but instead were seen as a "vital national resource"¹⁰⁶ in the fight against the regime's declining birth rate, their relationships with foreign men and resulting non-Italian children was perceived as a corruption of the Italian racial stock. In December 1934, following the *carabinieri's* assessment of the Dujc family, Maria was fired from her position, leaving her, her daughters and new grandchild destitute.¹⁰⁷

In both the colonial campaign and Italianization of the 1930s, Fascist Italy attempted to combat social decay through the regulation of intimate relationships, harsher restrictions on the social mobility and freedom of movement of "foreign" subjects, and the exclusion of politically and morally subversive elements. In this new imperial era, the practices of assimilation and cohabitation adopted in the early years of fascism no longer served Mussolini's purpose. The establishment of Fascist Italy's supremacy over its foreign subjects could only be achieved through the narrowing of the criteria for inclusion

¹⁰⁶ Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 41. For more on women under fascism see Lucia Re, "Fascist Theories of 'Woman' and the Construction of Gender," in *Mothers of Invention: Women, Italian Fascism, and Culture*, Robin Pickering-Iazzi, ed (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1995): 76-99; and Mariolina Graziosi, "Gender Struggle and the Social Manipulation and Ideological Use of Gender Identity in the Interwar Years," in *Mothers of Invention: Women, Italian Fascism, and Culture*, Robin Pickering-Iazzi, ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1995): 26-51.

¹⁰⁷ ASTs, PGT, b.366, f.068. Report from the Podestà di Comune di Cossana to the Regia Prefettura di Trieste, 9 March 1935.

and citizenship, and the state's total domination over Others. Crucial to this endeavour was the identification and eradication of difference and dissent. In the 1920s, Fascist theorists argued that the superiority of *italianità* would stamp out the inferior “foreigners,” who would be reborn as true Italians. In the borderlands, the elimination of “foreignness” was pursued through the nationalization of the education system, the centralization of local government, and the forced assimilation of the *allogeni* through the eradication of their institutions, traditions, language and identity. However, their attempts eliminate the ideological and cultural differences of the *allogeni* resulted in more extreme forms of resistance to assimilation. By 1935, an entire of generation of Slovenian and German Tyrolean children had grown up under Fascist rule and yet Italianization had not “made Italians” of them. Despite what Mussolini and other Fascist officials reported, by the end of the decade Italianization existed as a superficial phenomenon and the *allogeni* population continued to live outside of the ideological boundaries of the state—as made apparent by the pro-German and pro-Slavic sentiments expressed by the *allogeni*. In the 1930s, the continued existence of “foreign” subjects within the state, and their refusal to abandon their cultural and linguistic heritage and faithfully adopt Fascist *italianità*, led many to conclude that the *allogeni* were inherently inferior and altogether unassimilable.¹⁰⁸

The experiences and failures of Italianization was one of the many forces that drove Fascist Italy away from assimilationism and towards exclusion and segregation in the 1930s. The mission to “kill the foreigner in the *allogeno*” through repression and re-

¹⁰⁸ As with most fascist narratives there were some exceptions. German South Tyrolean peasants were seen as innocent and virtuous inhabitants who were being corrupted by their political leaders. See Andrea Di Michele, “The Fascist view of the ‘allogeni’ in the borderlands,” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 28, no.1 (2023): 102-106, doi:10.1080/1354571X.2022.2122369. See also footnote 140.

education was replaced with the desire for the wholesale segregation of all racial, ideological and political Others from the Italian national community. This transition marked a shift in the relationship between the Fascist centre and its national and imperial peripheries. Boundary-drawing practices that were meant to draw Others closer to the Fascist centre were replaced with more exclusionary boundary-drawing practices to segregate and dominate Others within Italy's ever expanding empire. Only those of the Italian race would be welcomed into the inner circle of the Fascist hierarchy, while racial Others would be permanently fixed to the outer spheres. Throughout this transition, the xenophobia that existed at the core of Italianization acted as an ideological touchstone for Fascist racism and antisemitism. Despite the flaws and failures of Italianization, the policies, institutions and procedures put in place during the borderland assimilationist campaigns were important precursors to anti-Jewish persecution and provided a model for Fascist officials tasked with the implementation of the racial laws and the establishment of Italy's new racial hierarchy.

*FULMINI DA UN CIELO LIMPIDO: THE ITALIAN RACIAL LAWS*¹⁰⁹

The Italian occupation of Ethiopia, rise of Nazi Germany and failure of Italianization brought Fascist xenophobia the centre of Italian political life. The movement towards antisemitism and the establishment of the racial laws can be understood as Fascist xenophobia turned inwards, stemming from the growing obsession with the eradication of racial and ideological Others. Before fascism, antisemitic outbursts were often linked to

¹⁰⁹ The term "*fulmini da un cielo limpido*" translates to "lightening from a clear sky," often used to describe the Italian Jewish communities' feeling of being blindsided by the Italian anti-Jewish laws and their exclusion from a society in which they had no experience of persecution.

international controversies such as the Libyan War and the First World War. In the wake of the invasion of Libya in 1911 the Italian nationalist press launched an antisemitic attack blaming the Jews for inciting an international conspiracy against the invasion. In November 1916, as the Italian army faced defeat in the Battles of the Isonzo, Italian nationalist Francesco Coppola attacked Italian Jews, “accusing them of anti-national spirit” and of collaborating with “the international Jewish bancrocracy.”¹¹⁰

In the 1920s and throughout the 1930s, Mussolini denied the existence of antisemitism in Italy or the Fascist program.¹¹¹ Contrary to Mussolini’s assertions, political antisemitism had existed in Fascist circles since its inception, but it was not a popular movement in the party or the public. Before the enactment of the racial laws, Italian antisemitism primarily focused on the issue of the “foreignness” of Italian Jews. Fascism’s Janus-faced approach to Italy’s Jewish community can be seen in the statement issued by Fascist leadership before the March on Rome: “a Jewish question does not exist in our county and let us hope that there never shall be one, at least not until Zionism poses Italian Jews with the dilemma of choosing between their Italian homeland and another homeland.”¹¹² This “dilemma of choosing” became less of a choice and more of a threat as debates surrounding Jewish loyalty gained prominence, especially surrounding the issue of Zionism. From the beginning of Fascist rule, the security and inclusion of the Jewish minority was predicated on their expressions of *italianità* and loyalty to the state,

¹¹⁰ Quoted in Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, 18.

¹¹¹ One of the Mussolini’s most famous declarations against the existence of antisemitism in Italy appeared in his interview with Emil Ludwig, in which he asserted that “anti-Semitism does not exist in Italy...Italians of Jewish birth have shown themselves good citizens, and they fought bravely in the war.” Ludwig, *Talks With Mussolini*, 70.

¹¹² Quoted in Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy*, 43.

and the rise of antisemitism was portrayed as the direct result of their anti-Italian and anti-Fascist provocations.

The growth of the Zionist movement in Italy conjured fears of a “Jewish international conspiracy” within the national borders and further instigated accusations of the community’s “dual loyalties.” In July 1928, the Ministry of the Interior’s Office for Public Security requested an investigation into the character, presence and activity of the “international Masonic Jewish movement” in Trieste to better assess the threat of Zionism.¹¹³ Between July-September the prefect and questura collected information on the political, charitable and economic activities of Trieste’s Jewish community, which were distinguished by their professed religion and not by their belonging to a “race.”¹¹⁴ A few months later in November 1928, a meeting of the Zionist Congress was hosted in Milan which caused a stir amongst Fascist authorities. In response, Mussolini publicly questioned Jewish belonging with the following provocation: “We ask the Italian Jews: are you a religion or are you a nation?”¹¹⁵ According to Sarfatti, the requested “clarification” related to Mussolini’s concerns over the “incompatibility...of simultaneous allegiance on the part of Italian Jews to the nation and to the Zionist movement,” as well as his assertion that the “regime’s support of the Italophile and para-Zionist work” of Italian Jews in the Mediterranean “did not denote approval of Jewish support of Zionism in the peninsula itself.”¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Silva Bon, *Gli ebrei a Trieste, 1930-1945: identità, persecuzione, risposte* (Gorizia: Libreria Editrice Goriziana, 2000), 28.

¹¹⁴ Bon, *Gli ebrei a Trieste*, 27.

¹¹⁵ “Religion o Nazione?,” *Popolo di Roma*, 29 November 1928; Quoted in Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy*, 59; and Klein, *Italy’s Jews*, 54.

¹¹⁶ Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy*, 60.

The timing of Mussolini's initial call for "clarification" in 1928 is striking, as it occurred just a few weeks before *Il Duce's* correspondence with the prefect of Bolzano, in which he declared his lack of faith in the assimilation of *allogeni* adults and desire to place greater resources into the program of Italianization through resettlement. The assimilation of Italy's minority communities was clearly taking too long in Mussolini eyes, yet he still expressed some hope in the assimilation of *allogeni* children and Italian Jews who were not yet fully corrupted by Zionism.¹¹⁷ However, this hope was fading. The call for clarification from the Jewish minority and the directive to focus on the resettlement of Italians over the Italianization of the *allogeni* marked the beginning of a shift in the Fascist program, which saw the progressive invalidation of the assimilationist program towards Others—a crucial step in fascism's turn towards official racism.

Mussolini reiterated his calls for "clarification" in his anonymous article "*Il Soluzione*," published in *Il Popolo d'Italia* on 17 February 1934, in which he urged Jews to fully assimilate and rid themselves of any divergences which might call into question their full commitment to the Italian nation. Yet, unlike his previous call for clarification, Mussolini did not silence the antisemitic debates that followed his 1934 publication. Sarfatti sees this as an indication that, although Mussolini did not publicly support antisemitism, by this time he "considered it legitimate and entitled to exist."¹¹⁸ Less than a month later, the arrest of "anti-Fascist" Jews in Turin set off a virulent antisemitic attack by the Italian national press, the likes of which Fascist Italy had never seen. These arrests

¹¹⁷ Following Hitler's rise to power, Bolzano prefect Giovanni Battista Marziali recommended that the Italianization of South Tyrol should be achieved through the "absorption of the young *allogeni* into the old provinces in both public and private sector employment." He also praised the young *allogeni*: "From the intellectual to the porter, they are all excellent, obedient, hard-working, serious and honest, and also have the advantage of knowing two languages." Quoted in Di Michele, "The Fascist view of the 'allogeni,'" 101.

¹¹⁸ Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 68.

also led to a series of investigations by the provincial prefectures into the Jewish communities. In Trieste, officials investigated the leaders, members and associations of the Jewish community.¹¹⁹ These investigations usually resulted in a reaffirmation of the good political and moral behaviour of the Jewish communities, and their commitment to the regime.¹²⁰ Faced with the rise of antisemitism, many Jews redoubled their efforts to prove their belonging and allegiance to Italy and fascism, one example of which was the publication of the Jewish journal *La Nostra Bandiera (Our Flag)*, which publicly denounced anti-Fascism and Zionism.¹²¹

Italy's invasion of Ethiopia and declaration of empire further solidified Italy's turn towards official antisemitism and by the end of 1936 Mussolini had begun to cut ties with the Jewish community. This shift is represented in Mussolini's refusal to meet the Felice Ravenna, an Italian Jew who held the post of mayor of Ferrara, due to the alleged publication of a hostile article in *Il Regime Fascista* which described the different ways that Jews "understand nationality."¹²² Debates surrounding the question of Jewish "nationality," subversion and belonging began to appear more frequently in the antisemitic press. One of the most influential books on the subject, Paolo Orano's *The Jews in Italy* (1937), argued that "European Judaism [was] anti-fascist and subversive," and warned that Italian Jews must abandon support for their "co-religionists"¹²³ or "suffer a new ghetto."¹²⁴ Jews were to prove their devotion to fascism through declarations "of obedience, fidelity, and consent to the Fatherland,"¹²⁵ and through the community's vocal

¹¹⁹ Bon, *Gli ebrei a Trieste*, 38.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 38-39.

¹²¹ Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 75.

¹²² Quoted in *Ibid*, 105.

¹²³ Paolo Orano, *Gli ebrei in Italia* (Roma: Pinciana, 1937), 165.

¹²⁴ Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, 44.

¹²⁵ Orano, *Gli ebrei in Italia*, 188.

condemnation of the political and subversive activities of their Jewish brethren and rejection of Zionism.¹²⁶ However, other racial theorists rejected the path to redemption which Orano extended to Italian Jewry. Gino Sottocchia condemned the idea of the “assimilated” Jew in his book *Sotto la Maschera d'Israele* (Under the Mask of Israel, 1937), which cast Judaism as a “nation-religion” and all Jews as nefarious foreigners, “even if they enjoy the benefits of perfect citizenship and occupy positions of government or authority, even if they abjure or abdicate their inherited Jewish psychophysical essence.”¹²⁷ *Under the Mask of Israel* exemplified the xenophobic ideology inherent in Fascist anti-Zionism and antisemitism, accusing Jews of being “essentially internationalist and intimately anti-national, with a distinctly communist socio-political program” while believing themselves to be “‘the chosen people’, destined to conquer all peoples and all religions.”¹²⁸ A year later, *Il Tevere*’s Telesio Interlandi argued against assimilation as a means to solve the Jewish problem and cast Jews as foreigners who had only recently inhabited Italy, thereby separating them from Italians of the “ancient race.”¹²⁹

As Jews were cast as dangerous Others, the logic of assimilationism was increasingly denied. By undermining the criteria of nationality and belonging which underpinned the “parallel nationalization” of Italians and Italian Jews during the time of the *Risorgimento*, the Fascist regime was preparing the public for its new criteria of inclusion. This point is exhibited in the printed exchange between Rino Alessi’s *Il Piccolo di Trieste* and Roberto Farinacci’s *Il Regime Fascista*. In January 1938, Alessi responded to the rise of antisemitic propaganda with an article entitled “*Un problema*” in which he denounced antisemitism

¹²⁶ Ibid, 166-167.

¹²⁷ Quoted in Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, 54.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy*, 122-123.

and defended Italy's Jewish minority. For Alessi, who was not himself Jewish, Italian Jews had proved their loyalty and belonging to the nation as all other Italians had. Alessia argued that Jews, "did their national duty during the Risorgimento and with irredentism, and continue to do so in times of war and times of peace, in the Fascist revolution, in the conquest of the empire and in Spain; [they are] Italians of sure faith and of a single homeland ready to risk their property as well as their person for the good of Italy."¹³⁰ In response to accusations of the disloyalty of *Il Piccolo* from the antisemitic press, Alessi pointed to the newspaper's long history as defenders of *italianità* and Italy's borders, and once again praised the commitment and loyalty of Trieste Jews who fought and died for Italian unity and whose names are inscribed "on the walls of the noblest shrine of Italian patriotism: the cell of Guglielmo Oberdan."¹³¹ Alessi maintained his view of the "foreignness" of Italian antisemitism after the war and continued to praise Italian civilization for its unique ability to "assimilate populations of other civilizations."¹³² Farinacci rejected Alessi's argument outright, arguing that Alessi alluded to "things from the past which we no longer speak of" and accused him of "chasing butterflies under the arch of Titus through which the Jews do not pass."¹³³ It is clear from this exchange that the criteria for belonging upon which the nation had been built (i.e. consent, duty, sacrifice and unwavering commitment to the *patria*) were no longer sufficient for inclusion of those branded as Others. The unity of being and spirit long exhibited by Italian Jews was portrayed as a lie, as Jews were seen as incapable of being Italian or as covertly acting against the Fascist state under the guise of assimilation and belonging.

¹³⁰ Rino Alessi, "Un problema," *Il Piccolo*, 1 January 1938, 1.

¹³¹ Rino Alessi, "Situazioni che non pesano," *Il Piccolo*, 25 January 1938, 3.

¹³² Bon, *Gli ebrei a Trieste*, 46.

¹³³ Quoted in Bon, *Gli ebrei a Trieste*, 47.

The next month Mussolini published his circular *Informazione Diplomatica* n.14, in which he addressed the Alessi-Farinacci controversy. Mussolini once more insisted that “the Fascist government has never thought and does not think of adopting political, economic, moral measures” against Jews, “except in cases involving elements hostile to the regime.” Furthermore, he refused to introduce any measures that would result in “religious abjurations or artificial assimilation” of Italian Jews. Yet while he argued against the existence of Jewish problem in Italy, he blamed the global anti-Fascist movement, “regularly headed by Jewish elements,” for stirring up the antisemitic debate in Italy. Crucially, he stated that “the government reserves the right to supervise the activity of Jews who have recently arrived in our country and to ensure that the part of Jews in the overall life of the nation is not disproportionate to the intrinsic merits of individuals and to the numerical importance of their community.”¹³⁴ This statement was the first indication of Mussolini’s intention to institute some sort of *numerus clausus* policy in which the involvement of Jews in Italy’s economic, political and cultural life was to be restricted. Many scholars agree that this document marked the beginning of Fascism’s turn towards official antisemitism.¹³⁵

Antisemitism in the borderlands became increasingly prevalent with the influx of German and Austrian Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi persecution. As the first point of entry, the border regions experienced the refugee crisis firsthand. Trieste was a popular location as both a port of escape and a place of refuge.¹³⁶ South Tyrol and especially Merano were

¹³⁴ BMOO XXIX, 494-495.

¹³⁵ For more see Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy*, 122; and Giorgio Fabre, “L’informazione Diplomatica n.14 del febbraio 1938,” *La Rassenga mensile di Israel* 72, n.2 (2007): 45-101.

¹³⁶ See Maura Hametz, “Zionism, Emigration and Antisemitism in Trieste: Central Europe’s ‘Gateway to Zion,’ 1986-1943,” *Jewish Social Studies* 13, n.3 (2007): 103-134; and Maura Hametz, “Foreigners in their Own City: Italian Fascism and the Dispersal of Trieste’s Port Jews,” *Jewish Culture and History*, 9, n.2-3 (2007): 17-32.

popular areas for relocation as Austrian and German refugees did not have to learn another language—a clear indication of the failure of Italianization—the region’s proximity to their home countries, and the existence of a Jewish community that could offer support. Before the rise of Nazi Germany there were no restrictions on immigration for German and Austrian Jews, but the spread of antisemitism in Italy and the growing friendship between Hitler and Mussolini transformed the region from a place of refuge to a place of danger. A few weeks before the Nazi’s violent campaign in Innsbruck and Vienna in June 1933, antisemitic incidents were reported throughout South Tyrol. In Merano, the offices of some of the city’s Jewish lawyers were graffitied with swastikas and the word “Schwein” (pigs). In response the prefect of Bolzano, Giovanni Battista Marziali, instituted stricter surveillance to prevent similar instances. The next month the Interior Minister and Chief of Police requested that all prefects provide information on the number of German Jewish refugees in Italy and the relief organizations assisting them.¹³⁷

The attitude of Fascist authorities towards Italian Jews and Jewish refugees changed dramatically after the signing of the Italian-German secret police agreement on 2 April 1936 and the Austro-German agreement on 11 July 1936.¹³⁸ Established with the goal of combatting freemasonry and communism, the Fascist allies agreed to share resources and information to combat subversive and anti-fascist activity. As Villani argues, following the police agreement, Fascist authorities began to see Jewish refugees and other foreigners as “suspicious” persons and potential enemies, who were no longer welcome on the peninsula.¹³⁹ An October 1936 report by the prefect Mastromattei noted that some foreign

¹³⁷ Cinzia Villani, *Ebrei fra leggi razziste e deportazioni nelle province di Bolzano, Trento e Belluno* (Trento: Società di studi trentini di scienze storiche, 1996), 9-13.

¹³⁸ Villani, *Ebrei fra leggi razziste e deportazioni*, 15.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, 16.

Jews were identified as communists and would be removed from the region, while also acknowledging that the “majority of Jews maintained a calm and respectful conduct towards the authorities.”¹⁴⁰ Foreign Jews were placed under strict surveillance and threatened with expulsion, while Fascist authorities began stripping Jewish refugees of the economic freedoms which had allowed them to build their new lives in Italy. Without a means to support themselves, authorities believed they would have no choice but to leave. Fascist authorities shared the list of foreign Jews with German authorities and efforts to arrest and expel foreign Jews ramped up in anticipation of Hitler’s first visit to Italy in May 1938. Following the Anschluss, the Fascist government announced that all foreign Jews were banned from entering the country and those within Italy were arrested throughout South Tyrol. Stateless Jews and refugees were only allowed to enter Italy with the necessary documentation to prove they were transiting through Italy to leave Europe.¹⁴¹

On 14 July 1938, just six months after the unification of Austria and Germany, the Italian *Manifesto della razza* (Manifesto of the Race) was published in *Il Giornale d’Italia*. Signed by Fascist doctors and scientists, the manifesto established the “scientific” and ideological parameters of the Italian Racial Laws, enshrining antisemitism as a central tenet of Italian Fascism. The fortification of geographical and social frontiers and protection of the Fascist state against the permeation of racial and ideological Others was a central facet of this new national program.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Villani, *Ebrei fra leggi razziste e deportazioni*, 19.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, 20-24.

¹⁴² For more on the Manifesto see Aaron Gillette, “The origins of the ‘Manifesto of racial scientist,’” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 6, no.3 (2001): 305-323, doi:10.1080/13545710110084253.

The implementation of the Racial Laws first required a census of Jewish citizens and foreign Jews in Italy. The Fascist government officially began to develop the Jewish census in August 1938, but in Trieste, this endeavour was first undertaken in June 1937 when an anonymous author, later identified as the lawyer Piero Pieri, sent a 104-page document to Rome listing the names, addresses and occupations of all Triestine Jews.¹⁴³ The author insisted that “he had ‘considered only race as a criterion and not the practiced religion.’”¹⁴⁴ Moehrle argues that this Triestine list propelled rumors of a Jewish conspiracy in Italy and had a “strong impact on leading Fascist and anti-Semitic circles in Rome.”¹⁴⁵ Some Triestine residents, officials and institutions were early supporters of fascism’s antisemitic turn. In the fall of 1937, a year before the implementation of the Racial Laws, the prefettura began to receive racial assessment requests from the *Intendenza di Finanza* (Internal Revenue Office) regarding the appointment of Jews to positions within agencies such as Trieste’s District Tax Commission. The prefettura also began drafting lists of Jews in the Fascist Labor Unions and other administrative and economic agencies.¹⁴⁶

Leading up to the announcement of the Racial Laws, denunciations were a common occurrence in Trieste, particularly against those who held prominent positions in politics and business. Following the announcement of Mussolini’s planned visit to Trieste, “concerned” citizens wrote to the prefect with warnings of a Jewish conspiracy. In July 1938, the prefect received a letter signed by the *Giovane Triestini* (The Youth of Trieste)

¹⁴³ Bon, *Gli ebrei a Trieste*, 40-41.

¹⁴⁴ File 363, Reel 1, RG-40.015M, Selected Records from the Prefettura di Trieste, 1938-1944, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), Washington, DC. List sent to the Prefetto di Trieste, 17 June 1937.

¹⁴⁵ Moehrle, “Fascist Jews in Trieste,” 54.

¹⁴⁶ Files 362 and 363, Reel 1, RG-40.015M, Selected Records from the Prefettura di Trieste, 1938-1944, USHMM.

denouncing the city's Podesta Enrico Paolo Salem, who was described as "a Turkish Jew with an oriental surname." The letter outlined the groups' anger at having a mayor of Jewish ancestry:

We do not want a Jew (and therefore an anti-Fascist) an ardent and devious supporter of Jews, a semitizer of the city, a former Freemason, and ambitious and disliked social climber, to take advantage of our faith and our enthusiasm to better assert himself in a moment in which Jewish arrogance must appear threatened. Whether he is baptized or not does not matter in the face of the racist principle now enshrined in the well-known manifesto, recommended for observance by the Federal Party Secretary. So, what is this gentleman waiting for to resign? Perhaps a hostile demonstration? Well, we are ready for this too. If on the day the Duce comes among us [and] Trieste still has the shame...of being governed by a Jewish Podestà, we will invoke our liberation from the Duce, shouting under the balcony of the prefettura when he looks out on it: 'Trieste to the Italians – Jews out.'¹⁴⁷

Emboldened by the July 1938 manifesto, antisemitic denunciations continued to pour into the prefettura. One of the more popular targets of denunciation was prominent businessman Cesare Sacerdoti, member of the Fascist party since 1923, who had played a critical role in the revival of the port of Trieste and Italy's shipping industry after the First World War. In these anonymous letters Sacerdoti is described as a contemporary Rothschild and a "cardinal pillar in the Trieste Masonic Jewish system," using "Hebrew-Freemasonry methods" to establish illegal monopolies and "accumulate millions" for his family.¹⁴⁸ In these denunciations, Trieste is portrayed as a city dominated by nefarious Jewish tyrants who used occult forces to exert control over the city's press, economy, law and politics, "offending the self-love of every honest citizen who knows he has to keep silent and suffer this shame, on pain that he and his family would be forced into

¹⁴⁷ File 363, Reel 1, RG-40.015M, Selected Records from the Prefettura di Trieste, 1938-1944, USHMM. Anonymous letter sent to the Prefetto di Trieste, 22 July 1938.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, Anonymous letters sent to the Prefetto di Trieste, 22 July 1938 and 23 January 1938.

starvation.” Jewish “tyranny” in Trieste was explained as a consequence of “the complex circumstances in which the cities [of Venezia Giulia] found themselves before 1918, which allowed the establishment of that Jewish power which is still visible today.” Local Fascists who had been “caught by the Jewish octopus” were criticized for their corruption and scolded for allowing “the profound anti-fascism carried out by the high-class Jewish masonic,” in exchange for “Jewish gold.”¹⁴⁹

Trieste’s Jewish community was also under suspicion for assisting foreign Jews through the protection of assets through marriage and schemes to smuggle Austrian Jews across the border. In July 1938, the Prefects of Trieste and Gorizia received a report from the Ministry of the Interior concerning rumors that “the Jewish community of Trieste is actively seeking to find among its members bachelors, of all ages and conditions, willing to travel to Austria to marry Jewish women, young or old, rich and business owners, for the purpose of making them Italian citizens by marriage, thus securing them from any persecution [and] from any seizure of assets by the National Socialist authorities.”¹⁵⁰ Following an investigation, the prefect of Trieste reported that one man, Coen P., travelled to Vienna where he wed Elena B., a Jewish women of former Austrian citizenship. Coen then “returned to Trieste alone, after having reportedly received the sum of thirty thousand lire.”¹⁵¹ Another report accused the Jews of Trieste of taking advantage of the precarious situation of Austrian Jews, pointing to one man who had “earned large sums of money” by transporting Austrian Jews to Trieste in his Fiat 1500.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, Anonymous letter sent to the Prefetto di Trieste, 22 July 1938.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, Report from the Ministero dell’Interno, Divisione Generale della Pubblica Sicurezza to the Prefetto di Trieste and Gorizia, 27 July 1938.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, Report from the Prefetto di Trieste to the Ministero dell’Interno, Divisione Generale della Pubblica Sicurezza, 14 August 1938.

¹⁵² Ibid, Report from the Legione Territoriale dei CC.RR. di Trieste, Tenenza di Monfalcone to the Comando Gruppo CC.RR and Comando Compagnia Esterna CC.RR., 12 August 1938.

The protection of Jewish persons and assets through marriage and clandestine border crossings angered the National Socialist government, who requested that the Italian government order the “temporary seizure of all property of German and Austrian Jews in Italy, until it is ascertained how much they owe the German state by way of taxes.”¹⁵³ This order garnered a great deal of attention from Italian newspapers and led to a new wave of virulent antisemitic propaganda. In the wake of this public outcry against Jewish refugees, “Italian bookstores had to remove all Jewish foreign literature...from their window,” in addition to books by Italian Jews and Hitler’s adversaries such as German novelist Thomas Mann. The influx of Jewish refugees complicated Italy’s relationship with Nazi Germany, while rumors of an international Jewish conspiracy raised suspicions towards all foreign-born Jews residing or seeking refuge on the peninsula. To address the problem of foreign Jews in Italian borders, the government announced the passage of RDL 7 September 1938, no.1381, which prohibited foreign Jews from entering or residing in Italy and revoked citizenship from those who obtained it after 1 January 1919.¹⁵⁴

On 18 September 1938, Italy’s antisemitic program was officially announced during Mussolini’s long-awaited visit to Trieste. In front of a large crowd in the Piazza Unità, Mussolini made a declaration to Trieste and the world of Fascist Italy’s adoption of official antisemitism and the segregation of Jews in Italy. In this speech Mussolini contradicted all previous claims that there was no Jewish problem in Italy, stating “that for sixteen years World Jewry has been an irreconcilable enemy of Fascism.”¹⁵⁵ He insisted that “Jew of Italian citizenship [with] unquestioned military or civil merit in the eyes of Italy and

¹⁵³ Ibid, Report titled “Sequestro del patrimonio degli ebrei tedeschi in Italia,” 16 July 1938.

¹⁵⁴ Articles 3 and 4 of RDL 7 September 1939, n.1381.

¹⁵⁵ BMOO XXIX, 146.

the regime will find understanding and justice,” however, in the case of foreign and subversive Jews, “a policy of separation will be followed.”¹⁵⁶ In light of the Anschluss and Nazi Germany’s occupation of the Sudetenland, he also reassured the crowd of Trieste’s sacred place in the Italian nation declaring that “Trieste knows that geography is not an opinion,”¹⁵⁷ and as stated by Paul Baxa, “any problems raised by geography would be solved from the center, through a ‘totalitarian’ solution.”¹⁵⁸ The pageantry of Fascist ritual displayed during Mussolini’s visit was intended to reaffirm the city’s Roman heritage and its important role at the frontier of the new Roman Empire.¹⁵⁹

In the months following Mussolini’s visit to Trieste, the government announced a series of decrees which removed Jews from Fascist associations, educational institutions, the military, state and civil offices and placed restrictions on their right to own property, travel and engaging in trade, banking and business. These laws were ultimately codified in RD 17 November 1938, nr.1728. The *Direzione Generale per la Demografia e Razza* (Department of Demography and Race), also referred to as the Demorazza, was established under the Ministry of the Interior in July 1938 and was responsible for the interpretation, general oversight and enactment of the racial laws. However, the Demorazza was reliant on provincial institutions, specifically the offices of the *prefettura*, *questura*, *carabinieri* and *podesta*, to enact these new regulations.

In implementing the anti-Jewish laws, the Demorazza and regional state offices used procedures, methods and approaches first developed under Italianization to extract and

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. For an English translation of *Il Discorso di Trieste* see “Text of Mussolini’s Trieste Speech,” *New York Times*, 19 September 1938, 2.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 145.

¹⁵⁸ Paul Baxa, “‘Il Nostro Duce’: Mussolini’s visit to Trieste in 1938 and the workings of the cult of the Duce,” *Modern Italy: Journal of the Association for the Study of Modern Italy* 18, n.2 (2013): 120, doi:10.1353/jwh.2005.0061.

¹⁵⁹ Baxa, “‘Il Nostro Duce,’” 122.

exclude subversive *allogeni* in the borderlands. In both campaigns, Fascist officials first prioritized the identification and dismissal of “non-Italian” employees in state and civic institutions. The Aryanization of Italian society followed similar methods as the Italianization of South Tyrol and Trieste, including the banning of Jewish literature and the dismantling of the Italian Jewish press, the removal of Jews from cultural associations and sports clubs, and the forced closure or sale of Jewish-owned businesses, property and assets to Italians—a fate which befell Teodora Mayer, who was forced to sell his newspaper *Il Piccolo* to his non-Jewish director Rino Alessi.

One of the longest standing and most important campaigns of both the borderland assimilationist program and the racial laws was the Italianization of educational institutions. The segregation of Jews from Italian schools began with the passage of the *Provvedimenti per la difesa della razza nella scuola* (Measures for the Defense of the Race in Schools) also known as RDL 5 September 1938, n.1390, which banned Jewish teachers and students from Italian educational institutions.¹⁶⁰ This law was predicated on art 3, n.2 of RD 31 January 1926, no.100—part of the same decree that legitimized the dismissal and transfer of *allogeni* teachers. In the week following Mussolini’s speech in Trieste, the *Provveditori agli Studi di Trieste* received notice (circular letter no. 5194) from the Minister of Education Giuseppe Bottai of a forthcoming decree law segregating Jewish students from their “Aryan” classmates. This law decreed that “children of the Jewish race” counting ten or more would be removed from classrooms and placed into their own schools. The regional educational ministers were charged with “ensur[ing] that the schools operate[d] in premises which [were] completely separate from those intended

¹⁶⁰ RDL 5 settembre 1938-XVI, n.1390, in Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, 190-191.

for children of the Italian race.” If the relocation of Jewish students to another building was not possible, administrators were expected to provide Jewish students with a separate entrance. Jewish teachers were to teach the same curriculum taught in Italian schools, excluding Catholic religious instruction. The provisions were expected to be put in place by 16 October 1938.¹⁶¹

On 22 September 1938, the Jewish Community of Trieste was given permission to run a school for Jewish pupils between the ages of six and fourteen at its headquarters at Via del Monte 5. The school administrator was instructed to provide a list of all students registered at the school by October 5 and “indicate numerically, always with subdivision by class and by sex...how many are to be considered Italian and how many [are] foreigners.”¹⁶² The decree laws segregating Jews from Italian schools was codified under RDL 15 November 1938, n.1779 which also banned Jews from scientific, literary and artistic academies and associations. Jewish students who “professed the Catholic religion” were allowed to attend Italian schools with permission from ecclesiastical authorities.¹⁶³ In the South Tyrolean town Lana, the Jewish *Landschulheime* training center was closed on 1 December 1938 and all of its instructors were left without employment.¹⁶⁴

The Aryanization of Italian schools, state offices and the economy were enacted by the same offices (prefettura, questore, carabinieri, provveditori agli studi, etc.) responsible for Italianization and used many of the methods and procedures developed in the 1920s, but important differences separated Fascist assimilationism from anti-Jewish persecution.

¹⁶¹ File 362, Reel 1, RG-40.015M, Selected Records from the Prefettura di Trieste, 1938-1944, USHMM. Circular letter n.5194 sent from the Ministero dell’Educazione Nazionale-Direzione Generale Istruzione Elementare (Div II) to the Provveditori agli Studi, September 1938.

¹⁶² Ibid, Letter from the Provveditori agli Studi to the Presidente della Comunità Israelitica di Trieste, 20 September 1938.

¹⁶³ RDL 15 novembre 1938-XVII, .1779 in Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, 191.

¹⁶⁴ Villani, *Ebrei fra leggi razziste e deportazioni*, 15.

Italianization was founded on the belief that difference would be suppressed and assimilated under the superiority of *italianità*. Through the eradication of German and Slavic institutions, language and cultural traditions, the Italianization of the education system and the removal of subversive elements, Others would be absorbed into the Italian community until no detectible difference existed. The logic of assimilation was evident in the closure of German and Slavic schools and the “integration” of *allogeni* students into the Italian education system. Anti-Jewish persecution was instead predicated on the belief that difference could not be assimilated and that the protection of Fascist *italianità* could only be achieved through the complete segregation of the Other from Italian society. As opposed to the experience of *allogeni* children, Jewish children who had been integrated into the Italian school system for generations were removed from Italian schools and segregated to their own institutions.

The decree to strip all Jews of citizenship obtained after 1 January 1919 had a disproportionate effect on Jews in Venezia Tridentina and Venezia Giulia as these provinces were not officially incorporated into Italy until 1919. As such, all Jews in the northeastern borderlands were ostensibly foreigners in the eyes of the law, and subject to higher scrutiny than Italian Jews who relocated to the borderlands from the old kingdom. Some “foreign” Jews who could prove that they had exercised their “right of option”—i.e. that they had applied for Italian citizenship upon the borderlands unification with Italy—were allowed to maintain their citizenship.¹⁶⁵ All others were instructed to leave to county by 12 March 1939, whereafter they would be subject to arrest, face a 5,000 lire fine and possible expulsion “in accordance with Article 150 of Law n.773 of 18 June 1931

¹⁶⁵ Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 138.

on public security.”¹⁶⁶ This law also provided the legal basis for the expulsion decrees of subversive Germans and Slavs in the borderlands, including the Czechoslovakian citizen accused of painting swastikas in Merano. Foreign Jews who were sixty-five and older or who were married to an Italian citizen before 2 October 1938 were exempt from the expulsion decree.

In Venezia Giulia, the racial credentials of foreign-born citizens were rigorously scrutinized. Examples include Dr. Antonio Giuppani, who had been born in a former Austrian territory that had become part of Yugoslavia after the First World War. The prefect faced difficulties in obtaining records from Antonio’s place of birth, which complicated the racial assessment process and caused the prefect and revenue office to doubt both his Italian and Aryan racial credentials. Remigio Andretti (italianized from Andretich) and his wife Erta Unterweger, both born in Pola before the region’s annexation to Italy who had relocated to Monfalcone in 1937, were also investigated due to their “foreign” births and non-Italian names.¹⁶⁷ In these and other cases, the individual’s status as foreign-born or Italianized citizens made officials question suspicious of their possible Jewish heritage.¹⁶⁸ The denunciation and investigation of foreign citizens before and during the development of the racial census speaks to the profound xenophobia at the heart of Fascist antisemitism. Many foreigners were suspected to be Jews, while all Italian Jews were suspected to be foreigners, unless proven otherwise.

The line between foreign Jew, Italian Jew and Aryan Italian was often difficult to discern, especially in Trieste, due to the high rates of intermarriage and conversions. For

¹⁶⁶ RDL 17 November 1938 n.1728.

¹⁶⁷ File 362, Reel 1, RG-40.015M, Selected Records from the Prefettura di Trieste, 1938-1944, USHMM.

¹⁶⁸ After investigating their racial credential, Fascist officials determined that all three individuals were Aryan. *Ibid.*

this reason, the criminalization of intermarriage and miscegenation was central to Fascist efforts to root out the Jewish Other. Even before the adoption of the racial laws, fears over the protection of the prestige of the race against the “threat” of miscegenation began to colour Fascist approaches to the *allogeni*, as made apparent in the 1935 assessment of the Dujc family. The *Dichiarazione sulla Razza del Consiglio del Fascismo*, approved by the Fascist Grand Council on 6 October 1938, outlined the required steps to assure the “quantitative and qualitative improvement of the Italian race” which they asserted “could be seriously compromised, with incalculable political consequence, by crossbreeding (*incroci*) and racial degeneration (*imbastardimenti*).”¹⁶⁹ The first of these steps was the prohibition of marriages between “Italian citizens of the Aryan race with a person belonging to another race,” unless permission was given by the Ministry of the Interior.¹⁷⁰ Fascist were not only concerned with intermarriage and “crossbreeding” between Italians, Jews and Africans. They also wanted to prevent intermarriage with other “foreign” races—as was made apparent by their criticisms of *allogeni* women who were married to or rumored to have intimate relations with Slavic men.

Article 8 of RD 17 November 1938 laid out the conditions discerning Jews from non-Jews. Individuals was considered to be part of the Jewish “race” if they were born to Jewish parents—even those who had converted to Christianity—if they had one Jewish parent and one non-Italian parent, a Jewish mother and unknown father, or if both parents had converted to Judaism. Individuals “born to parents of Italian nationality, of which one is of the Jewish race...who belonged to a religion other than Judaism” before 1 October

¹⁶⁹ Dichiarazione sulla razza della Gran Consiglio del Fascismo del 6-7 ottobre 1938 in Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, 187.

¹⁷⁰ RDL 17 novembre 1938-XVII, n. 1728, in Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, 193.

1938 were not considered to be of the Jewish race. Article 11 allowed the state to remove a baptised child from the care of a Jewish parent if it was found that the parents provided them with “an education which [did] not correspond to their religious principles or national purpose.” The status of *discriminazione* (discrimination) would be awarded by to Ministry of the Interior to individuals who had in some way distinguished themselves as patriots. This included soldiers and the families of soldiers who fought and died “in the Libyan War, the World War, the Ethiopian War and the Spanish War,” members of the National Fascist Party who joined between 1919-1922 and the second half of 1924, members of the Legionaries of Fiume, decorated veterans and those “who [had] earned exceptional merits.”¹⁷¹

As opposed to the Nazi racial laws, the Fascist government did not have a specific category for mixed (“*misti*”) Jews.¹⁷² An individual either was or was not part of the Jewish race. When determining whether some was or was not Jewish, Michael Livingston finds that the Demorazza had a “tendency to consider religious and cultural as well as racial evidence.”¹⁷³ In determining the status of mixed individuals, the Demorazza determined that individuals who were a quarter or half Jewish would be considered Aryan, however, if they continued to identify with or align themselves with the Jewish community or religion their status would be revised.¹⁷⁴ Unlike the Nazi racial model in which the presence of any Jewish blood was a “denigration” of the German racial line, in the Italian case, it was initially believed that the “Jewishness” of a mixed individual would be

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 193-197.

¹⁷² Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 131. Note that the term mixed or *misti* referred to Jews who had Jewish and Catholic parents and grandparents.

¹⁷³ Livingston, *The Fascists and the Jews of Italy*, 25.

¹⁷⁴ Those who were a quarter or half Jewish were considered a member of the Jewish race if they exhibited “one of five indicia of Jewishness,” which included marriage with a Jewish spouse or educating one’s children in the Jewish religion after 1 October 1938. Livingston, *The Fascists and the Jews of Italy*, 40.

overcome through the “racial superiority of Italian blood and with [one’s] personal, ethical, religious and political manifestations.”¹⁷⁵ This approach was clearly influenced by Fascist rhetoric concerning the superiority and assimilative power of *italianità*, and the belief that redemption was possible for certain mixed individuals who whole-heartedly abandoned anything which separated them from the Italian, and now Aryan, national community.

Provincial prefects were tasked with the registration of all Jews under their jurisdiction, which was carried out in two ways. In accordance with Article 9 of RD 17 November 1938, Jews were required to make a declaration of race to local authorities. Fascist officials and institutions were also required to carry out racial assessments to determine the status of non-declared or mixed Jews and those applying for *discriminazione*. These assessments were almost identical to those carried out in the assessment of *allogeni*, providing information on place of birth, parents, citizenship, and moral and political conduct, with the addition of the new racial criteria. As opposed to the countless accusations of anti-Italian political activities in Fascist reports on the *allogeni*, Jewish racial assessments often relayed the pro-Italian and pro-Fascist activities of Jewish citizens. Some, like Guido W. and Ignazio B., were fervent supporters of Italian irredentism and fascism. Guido was an employee of the Province of Trieste and had been identified as a mixed Jew in a report from his office to the prefect on 10 September 1938.¹⁷⁶ Born in Trieste to a Jewish father and a Catholic mother, Guido had converted to Catholicism and had been an early member of the Trieste Fascist action squad. In his

¹⁷⁵ Quoted in *Ibid*, 39.

¹⁷⁶ File 362, Reel 1, RG-40.015M, Selected Records from the Prefettura di Trieste, 1938-1944, USHMM. Report on Jewish employees from the Provincia di Trieste to the Prefetto di Trieste, 1 September 1938.

assessment, Fascist officials discuss Guido's "Fascist merits," including a certification of his participation in the March on Rome, signed by the Duce himself.¹⁷⁷ In the case of Ignazio, the prefect of Trieste received an anonymous letter complaining that "a Jew" had received a promotion at the A.C.E.G.A.T (*Azienda Comunale Elettricità, Gas, Acqua e Tranvie*).¹⁷⁸ In response, the questore provided a report on Ignazio, a resident of Trieste since birth and son of a Jewish father and Catholic mother. He had been a member of the Jewish community until 1920, when he married a woman identified to be "of Aryan race and Catholic religion." His two children were baptized at birth. According to the questore's report, Ignazio "was a fervent irredentist and member of the *Giovane Trieste*" before the war and had fought as a *volontario giuliano* (Julian volunteer) in the Royal Italian Army.¹⁷⁹ Ignazio's original German surname was Italianized in 1916 when he was captured as a prisoner of war by the Austrian army. For mixed Jews, their "Fascist merits" and other criteria of belonging were important determining factors for their racial assessment.

Some Jews in Venezia Giulia and Venezia Tridentina received praise for their willingness to assist in Italianization. The prefect of Trieste issued the following report on Edgardo Fronti of Merano, an Austrian citizen by birth:

He is of excellent moral and political conduct, has been regularly registered with the PNF since 1 January 1928 and has always carried out his political activity in accordance with the directives of the Regime. He was one of the local elements who continually and effectively collaborated with the authorities and hierarchies of the Party, changing his own surname to the Italian form of "Fronti."

He has also held numerous and important positions in a highly praiseworthy manner, among which I will limit myself to mentioning that of Vice President of the Fascist Provincial Union of Industrialists of Bolzano

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. Copy of certification of participation in the March on Rome.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. Anonymous letter to Prefetto di Trieste.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. Report from the Regio Questura di Trieste to the Prefetto di Trieste, 21 November 1938.

and Vice President of the local Provincial Administration, from which he recently resigned.

He is married to Berta Moriggl, born in Lana on 20 November 1895, belonging to the Aryan race and of Catholic religion and already of Italian citizenship before marriage

Fronti, for the excellent precedents and the merits acquired in the positions held is worthy of every consideration and his case must therefore be examined with every possible benevolence.¹⁸⁰

Having gained Italian citizenship in 1923, Fronti fit the criteria for revocation and expulsion. However, in light of his Fascist merits, political connections and collaborative spirit, officials chose not to revoke Fronti's citizenship and approved his status as "not belonging to the Jewish race."¹⁸¹

When it came to *discriminazione* requests, Fascist officials were more likely to award racial exemptions to individuals who held prominent positions in Fascist circles. However, those with discriminated status were still forced out of politics and business, regardless of their exemption. In the case of Enrico Paolo Salem, "Italian nationalist, decorated war veteran, *ante marcia* Fascist...PNF-Member since 1921," and Trieste's mayor since 12 October 1933, the leader of the Carabinieri condemned antisemitic attacks against the mayor, who was "generally recognized in the city, in the province and also in neighbouring provinces with the merit of having made Trieste a truly great city." He described Salem as "a tenacious defender of [Trieste's] municipal heritage" and a "courageous, intelligent and upright administrator and an exemplary citizen." The carabinieri leader concluded that "the great mass of citizens see the Catholic Podestà Salem, as being born to a Catholic mother and belonging to a family of patriots residing

¹⁸⁰ Folder "Edgardo Fronti," RG-40.030, USHMM, Report from the Prefetto di Bolzano to the Demorazza, 29 December 1938.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, Notice from Il Prefetto di Bolzano to the Commissario Prefettizio del Comune di Terzano, 27 July 1939.

in Trieste since 1770,” and denounced the author’s ignoble feelings towards the podestà. Despite his many Fascist merits, Salem was forced to resign on 10 August 1938 and was awarded discriminated status by the Ministry of the Interior following his written protest of his Aryan descent.¹⁸²

Those without strong political connections or social currency faced greater challenges in obtaining discriminated status. Aldo Castelletti, for example, had many of the qualifications for *discriminazione*. An Italian Jew born in Mantua in 1891, Castelletti fought bravely in the First World War, received the Cross of War Merit and had been a member of the PNF since 1923. Castelletti married his second wife Ermelinda (Linda) Barla Ricci who was not Jewish, after the death of his first wife in 1928. In the spring of 1933, the couple moved to Bolzano. After the announcement of the racial laws Castelletti applied for discriminated status but was denied. A damning assessment of Castelletti by the questore of Mantua helped to seal his fate. He was accused of bad moral conduct and of having a lifestyle which did “not give sufficient guarantee of his Fascist faith.” He was accused of squandering his wealth on a life of vice and, in a true exhibition of Fascist antisemitism, was described as being, “both in appearance and in character, the prototype of his race.”¹⁸³ Castelletti attempted to have his two daughters from his previous marriage baptized, but it did not spare them from persecution. Aldo’s granddaughter, Franca

¹⁸² File 363, Reel 1, RG-40.015M, Selected Records from the Prefettura di Trieste, 1938-1944, USHMM. Report from the Carabinieri di Trieste to the Prefetto di Trieste, 29 July 1938. For more on Enrico Paolo Salem and other Jewish figures in Trieste see René Moehrle, “Fascist Jews in Trieste” 61-72; and Silva Bon, *Un Fascista Imperfetto: Enrico Paolo Salem, podesta “ebreo” di Trieste* (Gorizia: Grafica Goriziana, 2009).

¹⁸³ Folder “Aldo Castelletti,” RG-40.030, USHMM, Following Castelletti’s application for discrimination an investigation was conducted by the questura of Bolzano. In a report from 17 August 1939, the questura shared the Mantua questura’s negative assessment of Castelletti with the prefect of Bolzano, who then forwarded the report to the Demorazza. Castelletti’s application for discriminated status was denied in June 1941, *Ibid.* See also Mayr and Innerhofer, *Quando la patria uccide*, 372.

Avataneo, later recounted the difficulties that her mother Luciana faced in trying to understand the coldness with which her former friends and schoolmates had treated her after the announcement of the racial laws. According to Avataneo, her mother was never “able to explain the indifference and detachment with which the classmates, who until the day before had shared studies, snacks and walks with her, had accepted such painful discrimination, without showing her the slightest hint of sympathy or closeness.”¹⁸⁴ The family left Bolzano in October 1939, living in Milan until their house was destroyed in a bombing raid. They relocated to Fondo (Val di Non) in 1941.

From these examples we see clear inconsistencies with the application of the racial laws. The “Fascist merits” of some were held in higher esteem than others, but racial exemptions did not guarantee freedom from persecution. The high level of assimilation and long-established economic, social and political networks between Jews in Italy and their Catholic neighbours made the distinction between Jews and non-Jews a complex endeavour. In light of this complexity, in their assessment of mixed, foreign and discriminated Jews, Fascist officials developed a system of “degrees of otherness” which determined the level of segregation and exclusion to be implemented on a case-by-case basis. Those deemed to be Jewish by Fascist authorities were stripped of their Italian identity and citizenship, while *misti* were expected to forgo all ties to their Jewish heritage and identity to become fully integrated.

¹⁸⁴ Mayr and Innerhofer, *Quando la patria uccide*, 371.

FASCIST ITALY AND THE *ALLOGENI* AFTER 1938

By the end of the 1930s, Mussolini's alliance with Hitler, his fears over the territorial expansion of Nazi Germany, and desire to rid Italy of all subversive Others, pushed *Il Duce* to agree to an ambitious program that had been developed in association with his Nazis allies—later known as the *Opzione* (Option). For years, Hitler continually denied South Tyroleans their dream of liberation, despite widespread support for Nazism amongst the borderland community. In a meeting in Munich on 31 March 1932, Hitler told a South Tyrolean delegation that he could not make claims to South Tyrol for strategic and ideological reasons. Hitler did not want to jeopardize his relationship with Mussolini and argued that “South Tyrol did not have the same claims on the Reich's protection as the Germans in Poland, who he felt...were clearly oppressed by ‘an inferior race.’”¹⁸⁵ Instead, Hitler envisioned a South Tyrol that would act as a bridge between Italy and Germany. Hopes for unification with the German Reich were revived amongst South Tyroleans after the Saarland referendum on 13 January 1935, in which 90.7 per cent voted for reunification, and the Anschluss in March 1938.¹⁸⁶

However, Hitler continued to prioritize his strategic friendship with Mussolini over South Tyrolean ambitions. On 7 May 1938, Hitler travelled to Rome to provide reassurances to Mussolini of the inviolability and “integrity of the Brenner border,” in an effort to preserve their alliance following the Anschluss. These reassurances bore their intended results, and on 22 May 1939, Hitler and Mussolini established a military alliance with the signing of the Pact of Steel. As a gesture of goodwill and cooperation, the Fascist dictators decided to tackle the South Tyrolean question once and for all. In October 1939,

¹⁸⁵ Grote, *The South Tyrol Question*, 65.

¹⁸⁶ Steininger, *South Tyrol*, 47.

Hitler and Mussolini drew up the terms for a mass relocation program which provided German “South Tyroleans a choice: to leave their *Heimat* and become ‘*Reichsdeutsche*’ [citizens of the German Reich] in the Reich or to remain in the *Heimat* and become fully Italianized.”¹⁸⁷ South Tyroleans, and more specifically German-speaking “Italian citizens of Austrian descent,” were expected to make a decision by 31 December 1939.¹⁸⁸

The Option was a divisive enterprise for the South Tyroleans, who were thereafter divided between those who chose to stay (*Dablieber*) and those who chose to leave (*Optanten*). Many *Optanten* did not intend or desire to leave South Tyrol but hoped that a majority of *Optanten* votes would push Nazi Germany to pursue annexation instead of resettlement. Fascist officials were also divided on the issue of South Tyrolean resettlement. Ettore Tolomei and Giovanni Preziosi, who together drafted the 1923 *Provvedimenti per l’Alto Adige*, fully supported the total exodus of the German minority. A few years prior, Preziosi had advised Mussolini that the German Tyroleans would never be made into Italians and urged him to abandon assimilation. Others, such as the prefect of Bolzano Giuseppe Mastromattei, felt that a large portion of South Tyroleans had been successfully Italianized and would opt to stay in their homeland.¹⁸⁹ Instead, Mastromattei hoped that the resettlement program would facilitate the emigration of the approximately 10,000 German citizens who had not obtained Italian citizenship after annexation “who were deemed to be a stronghold of Germanism in the area.”¹⁹⁰ However, the results of the vote proved to be an embarrassment for the Fascist government, while the enterprise in

¹⁸⁷ Grote, *The South Tyrol Question*, 67.

¹⁸⁸ Pergher, *Mussolini’s Nation-Empire*, 216.

¹⁸⁹ Emmanuel Dalle Mulle and Alessandro Ambrosino, “The 1939 Option Agreement and the ‘Consistent Ambivalence’ of Fascist Policies towards Minorities in the Italian New Provinces,” *The Historical Journal* 66, no. 4 (2023): 903-904, doi:10.1017/S0018246X23000158.

¹⁹⁰ Mulle and Ambrosino, “The 1939 Option Agreement,” 904.

general appeared as an “admission of defeat” by the regime.¹⁹¹ Of the 250,000 German residents of South Tyrol, eighty-six per cent declared their intention to leave.¹⁹²

Hitler’s sacrifice of South Tyrol helped pave the way for the Rome-Berlin alliance, but it did little to solve the South Tyrolean problem. Germany did not have enough land or resources to relocate over two hundred thousand people, and the Italians were unable to pay the compensation that was promised to the *Optanten*. In the end, the *Opzione* was a failed experiment. By 1943, about a third of the *Optanten*—around 75,000—had resettled, and by the end of the war around 20-25,000 of those who resettled returned to South Tyrol.¹⁹³

The announcement of the Italian racial laws in addition to the *Opzione* agreement had devastating consequences for the Jewish refugees in South Tyrol. During their first meeting to discuss the *Opzione* program in Berlin in June 1939, Fascist and Nazi officials agreed that it was imperative for the success of the program to expel all non-Italian immigrants and Jews from the province who had obtained Italian citizenship after 1933. The next month, the Fascist government forbade all foreign citizens except German tourists, from residing in the province of Bolzano, while those already living in the province were instructed to leave within 48 hours. This affected an estimated 340 foreign Jews, most of whom had left the province by mid-August. However, many resettled in the province of Trento and further measures were required to remove them from the region. By 1939, almost all of the Jews residing in Merano had left the city. The thriving

¹⁹¹ Pergher, *Mussolini’s Nation-Empire*, 206.

¹⁹² German and Italian numbers differed, but it is generally agreed that the number who opted to leave was around 86 percent. While the Germans reported 90.7 percent, the Italians claimed that 69.4 percent opted for German citizenship. Pergher, 223. See also Renzo De Felice, *Il problema dell’Alto Adige nei rapporti itali-tedeschi dall’Anschluss alla fine della seconda Guerra mondiale* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1973), 54.

¹⁹³ Grote, *The South Tyrol Question*, 69.

community of about 700-800 Jews in 1938 was reduced to around 30-40 by 1940. Those who remained were either over the age of 65 or too sick to relocate, while others who had obtained permission to stay in Italy were not allowed to remain in South Tyrol.¹⁹⁴ The *Opzione* agreement did not result in the mass exodus of *allogeni* from South Tyrol, but it did facilitate the successful expulsion of the vast majority of foreign Jews from the region, which, as Sarfatti notes, made it one of the “first place[s] on the continent to be ‘cleansed’” of Jews.¹⁹⁵

As with the German South Tyroleans, Fascist officials hoped to find a solution to the Slavic “problem” in Venezia Giulia. Between 1936 and 1939, there was a short period of reconciliation between Yugoslavia and Italy following the signing of various trade agreements and border treaties.¹⁹⁶ In June 1938, almost ten years after the initiation of the *sudditi jugoslavi* surveillance program, the Foreign Minister abruptly cancelled the initiative.¹⁹⁷ However, the Fascist government continued to perceive the *allogeni* as disloyal citizens and collaborators with the nation’s enemies. On 9 December 1939, Italo Sauro—the Fascist government’s expert and main advisor on the “Slavic question”—published a memorandum outlining measures that should be adopted “for a more rapid denationalization of the Slovenian and Croatian populations of Venezia Giulia.”¹⁹⁸ Among the memorandum’s various recommendations were the prohibition of the sale of land to the *allogeni*; the relocation of peasant families and workers to the interior and

¹⁹⁴ Villani, *Ebrei fra leggi razziste e deportazioni*, 35-43.

¹⁹⁵ Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy*, 143.

¹⁹⁶ For a contemporary look at the development of Italian-Yugoslavian relations in this period see H.L. “Italy, Yugoslavia and the Danube Basin,” *Bulletin of Internationale News* 13, no. 21 (April 17, 1937).

¹⁹⁷ ASTs, Prefettura di Trieste Gabinetto (1923-1952), b. 366, f. 068, Telegram from the Ministero dell’Interno to the Prefetto di Trieste (Zara, Fiume, Gorizia, Udine and Pola), 14 June 1938.

¹⁹⁸ Italo Sauro’s “Memorandum” of 9 December 1938, in Milica Kacin-Wohinz, “La Minoranza Sloveno-Croata sotto l’Italia Fascista,” *Quaderni VIII* (1984-1985), 137.

colonies; the transfer of greater numbers of Italians to leadership positions within Venezia Giulia (priests, teachers, administrators); and the establishment of “a close network of surveillance and [the collection of] information on those who work as Slavic troublemakers and agitators,” and in particular those with familial connections to Yugoslavia or who had studied or lived across the border.¹⁹⁹

However, plans to resettle Italians, relocate Slavic peasants, and to expel “anti-Italian” agitators were complicated following the Axis invasion of Yugoslavia in April 1941, which ended with the division of Yugoslavia between Germany, Italy and Hungary. Italy was awarded southern Slovenia, including Ljubljana, the long-sought Dalmatian coastline, as well as Montenegro and Kosovo. In the wake of the Italian occupation, Venezia Giulia—a province at the periphery of the nation—gained a new purpose as a gateway to Italy’s Balkan empire. In Italian-occupied Yugoslavia, Fascist authorities unleashed a reign of terror on the Slovenian and Croatian population. In order to suppress and contain the Slavic population, which far outnumbered occupying forces, the Italian government established a network of concentration camps in occupied Yugoslavia and on Italian soil to detain political opponents. One such camp was built in the fall of 1941 in the small commune of Gonars between Udine and Trieste. Initially constructed to house Soviet POWs, Gonars was transformed into a detention center for former Yugoslav civilians and Slovenian political prisoners. On 22 February 1942 the 2nd Infantry Division carried out a mass roundup of adult males in the city of Ljubljana.²⁰⁰ Many of those arrested were transferred to the Gonars camp. By 25 February 1943, “there were 5,343

¹⁹⁹ Kacin-Wohinz, “La Minoranza Sloveno-Croata sotto l’Italia Fascista,” 139.

²⁰⁰ Frida Bertolini, “Gonars,” in *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos 1933-1945, Volume III: Camps and Ghettos under European Regimes Aligned with Nazi Germany*, ed. Joseph R. White (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018), 432.

internees at Gonars, including 1,643 children.”²⁰¹ The camp’s overcrowded and unhygienic conditions led to widespread disease and starvation among its detainees.

Another important camp was established on the island of Rab/Arbe southeast of Fiume, known to the Italians as the *campo di concentramento internati civili Arbe* (the Arbe concentration camp for civilian internees). As noted in the *USHMM Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos*, Arbe was built by the Italian army and guarded by “approximately 2,000 soldiers and carabinieri,” and was estimated to have held more than 10,000 civilians between July 1942 and September 1943: “five thousand inmates originated from Ljubljana province, around 1,900 from the Fiume province (particularly from the Čabar area), and 350 from the Monigo, Chiesanuova, and Gonars camps in Italy.”²⁰² These civilians were interned under the category of *repressivi* (punitives). Jews from Italian-occupied Yugoslavia accounted for 2,761 of Arbe detainees. Many internees were forced to sleep in tents and received very little food, leading many of the punitive camp internees to die of malnutrition and starvation. The Italians allotted more privileges and resources to the Jewish camp. They were allowed to establish a “self-administration committee,” were provided medical care from Jewish doctors interned in the camp and were provided with barracks in which they had their own library, kitchen and school.²⁰³ The camp was liberated by members of the Slovenian Liberation Front on 11 September 1943. Around 1,600 inmates would go on to form a partisan group with the Slovenian Liberation Front. Some Jewish inmates were able to cross the Adriatic Sea to British-controlled Italy, but

²⁰¹ Bertolini, “Gonars,” 433.

²⁰² Carlo Spartaco Capogreco and Jens Hoppe, “Arbe,” in *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos 1933-1945, Volume III: Camps and Ghettos under European Regimes Aligned with Nazi Germany*, ed. Joseph R. White (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018), 541. In June 1942 the Second Army rounded up teachers, professionals and priests who had left Venezia Giulia for Yugoslavia during the Fascist *ventennio*. Cattaruzza, *Italy’s Eastern Border*, 167.

²⁰³ Capogreco and Hoppe, “Arbe,” 542.

approximately 250 Jews who could not leave the island, such as children, women, the sick and elderly, were deported to Auschwitz via the Risiera di San Sabba camp in Trieste following the arrival of German forces on the island.²⁰⁴

The discrepancies between the Italian treatment of Jews and Yugoslavians in concentration camps was, to some extent, a reflection on Fascist approaches to anti-Slavism and antisemitism before the fall of Mussolini in 1943. Anti-Slavic and anti-communist rhetoric had been a central component of Fascist ideology since its inception, Fascist racism and anti-Slavic rhetoric contributed to the horrors inflicted on Yugoslavian civilians in Italian-occupied territories. The dehumanization and repression of the *allogeni* in Venezia Giulia in the first two decades of fascism laid the ideological groundwork for the much deadlier campaign in the new Balkan empire.²⁰⁵ In this colonial era, the new Fascist man would not desire to assimilate the “inferior” foreigners but would instead strive for their complete exclusion and even their annihilation. Evidence of active or passive subversion was no longer needed to justify the arrest and internment of anti-Italian actors. In 1941, Jews were portrayed and treated as racial Others but were not seen to pose the same political or ideological threat as Slavs. The reasons for Italy’s refusal to deport Yugoslav Jews under their jurisdiction are contested—some argue that the Italians did not want to give in to Germany’s demands as proof of their independence from their ally,

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ On Italian concentration camps and the Italianization of Italian-occupied territories see Davide Rodogno, *Fascism’s European Empire: Italian Occupation During the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); and Carlo Spartaco Capogreco, *Mussolini’s Camps: Civilian Internment in Fascist Italy (1940-1943)* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019). On the Italian occupation of Slovenia see Amedeo Osti Guerrazzi, *The Italian Army in Slovenia: Strategies of Antipartisan Repression, 1941-1943*, trans. Elizabeth Burke and Anthony Majanlahti (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Marina Cattaruzza, “The Italian Occupation in Slovenia and Dalmatia: 1941-43,” in *Italy and Its Eastern Border*, 154-179; and Marco Cuzzi, *L’occupazione italiana della Slovenia (1941-1943)* (Roma: Stato Maggiore dell’esercito, Ufficio storico, 1998).

while others perceived it as an intentionally humanitarian act. In either case, it is apparent that antisemitism did not carry the same ideological weight or urgency as anti-Slavism in Italian occupied territories before 1943.

Between the introduction of the racial laws in the summer of 1938 and the fall Italian armistice in 1943, the government furthered its antisemitic program through the establishment of the Centers for Racial Study. Led by Ettore Martinoli, the Trieste Center was part of a network of centers that “served as mouthpieces for the most radical antisemitic elements in the Fascist movement.”²⁰⁶ In April 1942, the prefect of Trieste sent a notice to the *podesti* of Venezia Giulia asking to be notified of any marriages between Aryans and Jews and informed of the movements or changes of residence of Jewish individuals and families. Crucially, it asked for any information that would provide the prefecture and Ministry of the Interior with “more precise knowledge of the moral and social figure” of full and mixed Jews and that would assist in possible future revisions of the anti-Jewish measures.²⁰⁷ In the following months, the *Demorazza* and Trieste Centre sent further requests for updates to the Jewish census, paying special attention to mixed Jews and Italian families accused of having unreported Jewish relations. The requests from the *Demorazza* and Trieste Centre for more stringent racial assessments from the prefect and *podesti* were met with no protest—only with a call for clarification that they were, indeed, now expected to include *misti* who had previously been exempted from the registry.²⁰⁸ Similar to the borderland assimilationist campaigns, as time progressed Fascist

²⁰⁶ Peter Staudenmaier, “Preparation for Genocide: The “Center for the Study of the Jewish Problem” in Trieste, 1942-1944,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 31, no.1 (Spring 2017): 3, doi:10.1093/hgs/dcx022.

²⁰⁷ File 367, Reel 2, RG-40.015M, Selected Records from the Prefettura di Trieste, 1938-1944, USHMM.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.* This request for clarification was original drafted by the *Commissario prefettizio* of the Comune di Trieste and sent to prefect of Trieste in July 1942, who then forwarded the request to the *Demorazza*.

authorities further refined the criteria for inclusion and mixed Jews who were previously exempted from persecution were placed under increased surveillance and scrutiny.

The adoption of the racial laws in 1938 marked the beginning of a new phase of the Fascist redemptive struggle, yet the transition from assimilation to racial exclusion began at least a decade before the announcement of the discriminatory laws. We cannot point to one single event to explain this transition. Instead, one must look at the series of events and crises that pushed Mussolini and the Fascist regime towards a racial program. Fears over the degeneration of the Italian people, as expressed in Mussolini's Ascension Day Speech in 1927, were compounded by the security threat posed by a political unstable Austria and a rise of Pan-Germanism and Nazism. The creation of a homogenous and unified Italian populace capable of withstanding threats beyond Italy's borders became a necessity if Italy was to maintain its position and protect itself against anti-Fascist forces. Before 1928, the creation of a homogenous populace in which each individual were unified in being and spirit, was to be achieved through the assimilative power of *italianità*. However, between 1928-1938 the assimilationist model was increasingly delegitimized which made Mussolini and Fascist authorities more susceptible and accepting of a racial model that would eliminate subversion, difference and disharmony from the national body.

In this transitional period, fascism incrementally abandoned the ideals of assimilation and the criteria for belonging that shaped the nation-building process during the *Risorgimento*, Liberal era and early Fascist period. Unity of being and spirit, and concepts of consent, duty and sacrifice were still fundamental for the Fascist nation-state,

however, traditional expressions of belonging (i.e. the use of the Italian language, participation in Italian and Fascist organizations, fighting for one's nation, etc.) were no longer sufficient, as only those of the Italian race were considered capable and worthy of inclusion. By 1938, hereditary and racial criteria for belonging far outweighed one's expressions and sentiments, and the project of "making Italians" out of Others became antithetical to the Fascist program. This transition is apparent in the regime's shifting approach to both the *allogeni* and the Jews. In the case of the former, Germanic- and Slavic-linguistic communities were told that if they adopted the Italian language, participated in Italian communal life, and showed allegiance to Fascist institutions, that they would be included in the national community. However, *allogeni* who lived according to the abovementioned criteria were treated with suspicion and their expressions of belonging were perceived as inauthentic, which led to their further exclusion and alienation from Italian society. On the other hand, Italian Jews had enthusiastically expressed their belonging and commitment to the Italian nation and, later, to the Fascist state, but as assimilation fell out of favour the foundation upon which their inclusion was granted gave way. Narratives surrounding the "foreignness" of both Italian and non-Italian Jews and of their "dual loyalty"—to their religion, to Zionism, to their coreligionists abroad, to the Jewish international and eventually, to members of their "race"—legitimized their transformation into ideological and racial Others. Any expression of *italianità* or support for fascism was also deemed to be inauthentic and as a mask to hide their nefarious and anti-Fascist activities.

Although the Fascist regime abandoned assimilation for racial exclusion, numerous procedures, methods and boundary-drawing practices developed under Italianization were

adapted for the regime's racial program. Many of the discriminatory measures adopted for the borderland Italianization campaigns and racial laws were built upon the same legal framework. RD 31 January 1926, n.100 was used as the basis for the dismissal and transfer of *allogeni* teachers (art. 1). In the 1930s, the same decree was used to justify the enactment of RDL 7 September 1938, n.1381 prohibiting foreign Jews from entering or residing in Italy and created the legal precedent for the enactment of the racial legislation of RDL 17 November 1938, n.1728 (art. 3). Article 150 of RD 18 June 1931 was used to expel non-Italian citizens in the borderlands and foreign Jews.

In addition to the legal framework that underpinned both Italianization and the racial laws, the same institutions were responsible for the implementation for the assimilationist and racist policies. Fascist authorities in the borderlands had a great deal of experience monitoring, tracking and investigating Germanic and Slavic citizens and had surveilled and collected data on *allogeni* and Austrian, German and Yugoslavian citizens in Italy. The expertise obtained during the assimilationist programs by both the Ministry of the Interior and borderland institutions was crucial for the composition of the racial census and in establishing the inter-department procedures for the implementation of the regime's discriminatory policies. Furthermore, the boundary-drawing practices of Italianization and the racial laws had many of the same demographic and institutional targets. The Italianization and Aryanization of the press, educational institutions, state offices, and cultural, scholastic and sports organizations were some of the most important campaigns of each program, which both targeted so-called foreigners and anti-Italian elements. In both the assimilationist and racial campaigns, we see a progression towards harsher, more exclusionary measures. This was especially true for mixed individuals—the *meticci*, *misti*

and children of marriages between Italians and non-Italians (*stranieri* and *allogeni*)— who were both “us” and Other. In both programs, these “borderline” cases were increasingly excluded from society, as their foreignness/otherness was seen to outweigh their Italian cultural or racial attributes.

There were also some crucial differences between the two programs. First, while each programs shared similar targets, the boundary-drawing practices had certain strategic differences. In the case of Italianization, policies of repression and assimilation were meant to draw solid boundaries between the *allogeni* and the Germanic and Slavic communities across Italy’s borders in order to integrate and absorb them into the Italian national body. This required the dismantling of the networks, institutions and “anti-Italian” sentiments separating these communities from other Italians. In the case of Italy’s Jews, who had successfully integrated and acculturated into the national community, strict boundaries were drawn between the Jews and their “Aryan” neighbours, in order to separate and exclude them. While the *allogeni* were prohibited from establishing their own schools and organizations, Italian Jews were forced into a new legal, economic and social ghetto in which they could only participate within their own community. Of course, many *allogeni* were excluded from society, while some Jews were allowed to remain within the boundaries of the national community, but each program was based on different premises. However, it can be argued that the intended outcomes of each program—namely, the eradication of difference and unification of the Italian populace—were the same.

Second, the policies of Italianization were always, to some extent, restricted by Italy’s foreign policy interests and practical limitations. The assimilationist campaigns

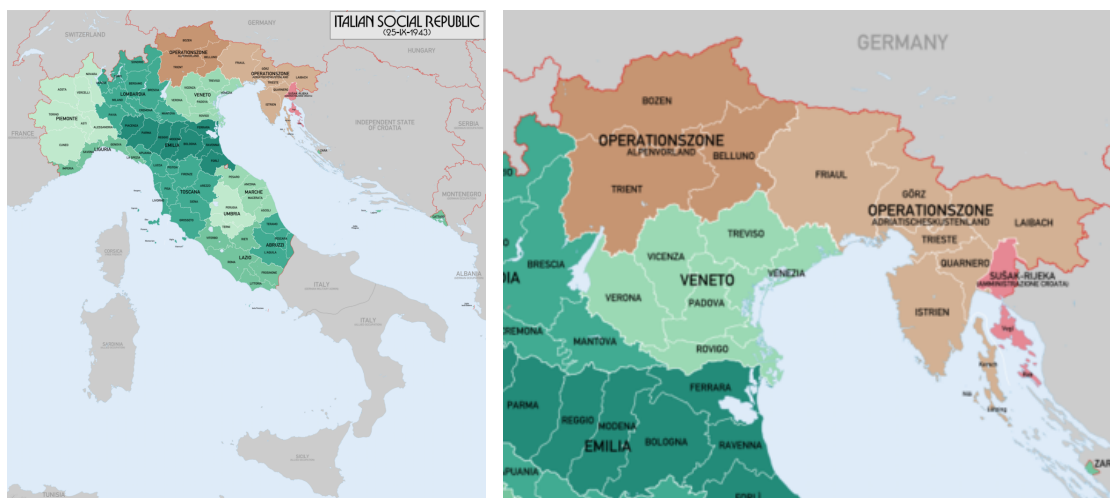
progressed at a much slower pace, partly due to the Fascist government's desire to maintain cordial relations with neighboring states. Furthermore, the wholesale exclusion of the *allogeni* was neither practical nor desired, considering that Italy's claims to these regions rested heavily on narratives regarding the Italian heritage and character of the borderland population. Numerically, the *allogeni* were too great for total re-settlement, a point which was verified by the shortcomings of the *Opzione*. Foreign and Italian Jews, on the other hand, did not have a national power to speak out on their behalf and were numerically much smaller than the *allogeni* population. However, Fascist authorities also faced practical limitations regarding the expulsion of foreign Jews, and instead chose to pursue a policy of internment or house arrest.

By the end of the 1930s the Fascist hierarchy of Others had undergone a fundamental transformation. Boundaries between spheres which had once been porous had become solid borders dividing "true" Aryan Italians from all ideological and racial Others. Italian Jews were deemed to be foreign and unassimilable, and as such were relegated to the periphery of the spheres, where they would remain until they had been eradicated from Fascist society. In the case of South Tyroleans the policy of assimilation was replaced with domination through the resettlement of Italians, and eventually the program for the ethnic cleansing of the region through the *Opzione*. Those who chose to leave were removed from the Fascist hierarchy, having no place within Italian society, whereas those who chose to stay were to remain within the spheres under strict conditions. For the Slavic communities, policies of assimilation, resettlement and exclusion would continue to be implemented, but the racial "inferiority" of these communities would prevent their inclusion in the inner circles of the Fascist hierarchy. "Mixed" individuals

were placed in a liminal space between spheres, at once included and excluded, but overtime, these borderline cases were increasingly cast out.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE NAZI OCCUPATION AND THE HOLOCAUST IN THE TRIVENETO BORDERLANDS, 1943-1948



Map 6: The Italian Social Republic and the German Operation Zones, 1943

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Italian_Social_Republic_1943_Map.png

On 25 July 1943, the Fascist *ventennio* ended abruptly when the Fascist Grand Council, having lost all confidence in *Il Duce*, voted Mussolini out of power. The Fascist leader was arrested, and Marshall Pietro Badoglio was named as prime minister. The arrival of Allied forces on the shores of Sicily earlier that month and their eventual invasion of the mainland on 3 September, compelled Badoglio to negotiate an armistice with the Allies while he continued to reassure the Germans of Italy's commitment to the Axis alliance. Anticipating the announcement of the armistice, German forces had collected at Italy's northeastern border and, according to Steinacher, following Mussolini's removal from power "around a dozen SD agents secretly crossed the border

into Italy [and] organized intelligence cells.”¹ German forces quickly occupied the region following the announcement of Italy’s surrender on 8 September 1943.² Italian armed forces, who had no knowledge of the armistice prior to its announcement, were not sure how to respond to the movement of the *Wehrmacht* soldiers. As such, the Wehrmacht’s invasion of Venezia Tridentina and Venezia Giulia proceeded with little resistance from the Italian army. Some fought back and were arrested or killed, others laid down their weapons and were detained, and many tried to flee or hide to avoid arrest. An estimated 650,000 Italian soldiers were deported to concentration camps in Germany after their refusal to fight with German forces.³

Mussolini was sprung from captivity by SS paratroopers and placed in charge of the German puppet-state dubbed the *Repubblica Sociale Italiana* (RSI; Italian Social Republic or Republic of Salò). On 10 September 1943, Hitler announced the creation of two military operation zones in Italy, and the Triveneto borderlands were placed directly under German command. Venezia Tridentina became the *Operationszone Alpenvorland* (OZAV; Operational Zone of the Alpine Foothills), while Venezia Giulia and Italian-occupied Yugoslavia became the *Operationszone Adriatisches Küstenland* (OZAK; Operational Zone of the Adriatic Littoral). The OZAV encompassed the Trentino, South Tyrol and Belluno, while the OZAK spanned across Friuli, Udine, Trieste, Istria and Ljubljana.

¹ Gerald Steinacher, “Dolmetscher, Spione und Mörder: Südtiroler im Sicherheitsdienst des Reichsführers SS in Italien 1943-1945,” GR/SR 22 (2013): 113.

² German soldiers had already arrived in Venezia Giulia on 1 September 1943. Moehrl, *Judenverfolgung in Triest*, 313.

³ Cattaruzza, *Italy and its Eastern Border*, 180.

From September 1943 to the end of the war in May 1945, the population of Venezia Tridentina and Venezia Giulia lived under Nazi occupation and partisan warfare. This chapter explores the “fall from grace” of Fascist redemption and the trends of revenge, persecution, solidarity and collaboration amongst the occupiers and ethnic communities in the occupation zones. First, it examines how German forces used and undermined existing administrative structures to carry-out their repressive policies and discusses their reliance on the collaboration of local officials and civilians in the arrest, internment and deportation of Jews, partisans and political prisoners. Second, it explores the Italian response to the loss of sovereignty in the Triveneto borderlands. Finally, it analyzes the impact of Fascist repression on shifting group-dynamics and inter-ethnic conflict during the Nazi occupation and the new battle for South Tyrol and Trieste at the war’s end.

A NEW CENTER OF GRAVITY: THE NAZI OCCUPATION OF THE TRIVENETO BORDERLANDS

Following the establishment of the operation zones, two German *Gauleiter* (senior ranking regional leader) were appointed to the role of supreme commissioner. The OZAV was placed under the jurisdiction of Franz Hofer, Nazi Gauleiter of Tyrol-Vorarlberg, while Friedrich Rainer, Gauleiter of Carinthia, was appointed as supreme commissioner of the OZAK. The RSI had no authority over the supreme commissioners, who officially took orders from Rudolph Rahn, the representative of the Greater German Reich in Italy, but in reality, the Gauleiters were placed “exclusively and directly under” the Fuhrer’s

command.⁴ Hitler and other high-ranking German officials assured Mussolini that the establishment of the operation zones was a temporary, but strategically necessary, military measure. However, throughout the occupation, German authorities exerted absolute control over civil administration in the region and Italian authorities in the RSI were completely cut off from borderland institutions. The RSI's alienation from the political, economic and administrative institutions of the region, in addition to the pro-German and pro-Slavic policies instituted under the Gauleiters, led many to believe that the temporary occupation was, in fact, the first step towards the outright annexation of the Triveneto borderlands.

For many South Tyroleans, the arrival of German forces was a cause for celebration as their dream of liberation and redemption had finally been realized.⁵ Before the occupation, the Nazi regime had established ties with South Tyrolean informants and undercover agents who were strong believers in Nazi ideology, as well as the South Tyrolean Nazi organization, the VKS, and the departments responsible for the *Opzione*.⁶ These pre-established relationships helped facilitate the Nazi takeover of the region. The German occupation marked the end of the *Opzione*, but the organizations related to the emigration program were repurposed for the use of the SD.⁷ In the first days of the invasion, Gauleiter Hofer established the *Südtiroler Ordnungsdienst* (SOD)—a police force

⁴ Michael Wedekind, "Die nortitalienischen Operationszonen im Herrschaftsgeflecht des 'Dritten Reichs' (1043-1945)," in Gerald Steinacher, *Südtirol Im Dritten Reich :NS-Herrschaft Im Norden Italiens, 1943-1945 = L'Alto Adige Nel Terzo Reich : L'occupazione Nazista nell'Italia Settentrionale* (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2003), 23.

⁵ Gerald Steinacher, *Südtirol und die Geheimdienste 1943-1945* (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2000), 17.

⁶ Gerald Steinacher, "Dolmetscher, Spione und Mörder," 112.

⁷ Steinacher, "Dolmetscher, Spione und Mörder," 115; Wedekind, "Die nortitalienischen Operationzone," 35.

comprised of South Tyroleans under the command of SS officials.⁸ The SOD and VKS participated in the rounding up of Italian soldiers, *Dableiber* and Jews in South Tyrol. Leading members of the *Dableiber* camp and those who vocally opposed the Option agreement were branded as “traitors” and were hunted down, arrested, expelled and deported.⁹ SOD units and personnel were some of the most ardent Nazi supporters in the region and they played an important role in the institution of the Nazi’s repressive police state throughout Italy.

There is little consensus as to the Nazi’s long-term plan regarding the operation zones, but it is apparent that Gauleiter Hofer intended to unify Tyrol, either within the Third Reich or an independent Austria should the Nazi empire fall. Hofer plead with Hitler to annex South Tyrol, but the Nazi leader refused, arguing that it would cause great injury to his relationship with Mussolini and instigate anti-German feeling in the region. Despite Hitler’s protestations to Tyrol’s unification, Hofer implemented Germanization policies in anticipation of the region’s incorporation into the Third Reich. Hofer received unofficial support for his annexation mission from Rudolph Rahn, so long as his activities were conducted in a covert manner.¹⁰ Hofer instituted numerous policies to undermine and abolish Italian legal and administrative sovereignty in the region. Border controls were established between the operation zone and the RSI, local officials such as the prefect were appointed by German leadership without consultation with Fascist officials, the judiciary system and police were placed under the control of German occupying forces

⁸ On the role of local South Tyroleans in the Holocaust and war crimes in Italy see Steinacher, “Dolmetscher, Spione und Mörder”: 109-136.

⁹ Michael Wedekind, *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien 1943 bis 1945: die Operationszonen “Alpenvorland” und “Adriatisches Küstenland”* (München: Oldenbourg, 2003), 414-415.

¹⁰ Steinacher, *Südtirol und die Geheimdienste*, 23-24.

and the Fascist party was banned. In March 1944, Hofer officially declared the annulment of Fascist sovereignty in Venezia Giulia and forbade Italian officials from giving the oath of allegiance to the RSI.¹¹

Born outside of Salzburg to a Tyrolean father and Vorarlbergerin mother, Hofer grew up in Innsbruck and was an avid promoter of Tyrolean culture.¹² In his role as Gauleiter, Hofer organized sports and costume clubs, folk dancing events and the *Standeschützen* (shooting clubs), which promoted the revival of local Tyrolean culture while mobilizing Tyroleans for the German war effort.¹³ Upon his arrival in South Tyrol, Hofer quickly began to abolish the anti-German cultural policies implemented under Italianization. Having endured twenty years of cultural and linguistic suppression, South Tyroleans rejoiced at the dismantling of the policies and institutions of Fascist *italianità* and enthusiastically collaborated with Hofer's regime. As Michael Wedekind notes, there was no denying that "Nazism was probably more brutal [and] inhumane," than fascism, but the prevailing sentiment amongst South Tyroleans was that it, "at least spoke German."¹⁴ Bilingualism was reinstated with most place names, street signs, railway lines, stamps and mail services, in addition to all administrative decrees. German-language schools and newspapers were once more allowed to operate, while radio broadcasts spread Nazi propaganda. Yet, as Wedekind states, "the war and manpower situation did not permit any radical 'Germanizing' solutions."¹⁵

¹¹ Ibid, 26.

¹² On Franz Hofer see Horst Schreiber, *Nationalsozialismus und Faschismus in Tirol und Südtirol: Opfer, Täter, Gegner* (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2008), 86-88.

¹³ Steinacher, *Südtirol und die Geheimdienste*, 19.

¹⁴ Wedekind, *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien*, 409.

¹⁵ Ibid, 420.

Following the establishment of the OZAV, Italian authorities and civilians found themselves in a hostile and seemingly foreign territory. On 10 September 1943, Ettore Tolomei, the “gravedigger of South Tyrol,” was arrested, transferred to the Reichenau transit camp and eventually imprisoned in Dachau. Thanks to the intervention of the RSI’s foreign minister, Tolomei was moved to a sanatorium in Thuringia in March 1944, where he remained until the end of the war.¹⁶ The Italian administrative infrastructure was, for the most part, kept intact and utilized by German forces. High-ranking Italian officials were removed from their positions and many workers fled from the occupation zone to the RSI. Some Italian schools were allowed to remain open, but Fascist sport and cultural clubs were disbanded, Italian books were removed from bookstores, and only one Italian newspaper, *Il Trentino*, was allowed to operation. In October 1944, it was announced that Italians were barred from entering the German operation zones without prior approval by the supreme commissioner.¹⁷ Italians who had relocated to the province from central and southern Italy were intimidated and harassed by the SOD, forcing an estimated 50,000 Italian residents to leave the region.¹⁸

In July 1944 the Ministry of the Interior of the RSI began drafting a report on the political situation of the Triveneto borderlands. The main purpose of the report was to determine (1) the legal and administrative changes implemented by Nazi command; (2) the relationship between the Nazis and the *allogeni*; (3) the treatment of Italians by the German occupiers and *allogeni*; (4) the threat against *italianità* and Italian sovereignty in the occupied regions and (5) partisan activity in the operation zones. The Ministry’s report

¹⁶ Schreiber, *Nationalsozialismus und Faschismus*, 360; Steinacher, *Südtirol und die Geheimdienste*, 17-18.

¹⁷ Steinacher, *Südtirol und die Geheimdienste*, 35-36.

¹⁸ Wedekind, *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien*, 422.

on Venezia Tridentina described the RSI's complete isolation from the province, having been completely cut off from any contact with local administration. Many of the high-ranking state and administrative posts had been filled with pro-German actors, such as Peter Hofer who was named prefect (Prefecture) of Bolzano on 21 September 1943. The report accused the supreme commissioner Franz Hofer and prefect Peter Hofer of the "more or less violent destruction of the vestiges of *italianità*" including the defacement of the Bolzano Victory Monument and the monument of the Alpine troops in Merano:

And so, with the monuments all the Italian writings have gone: the signs of the shops, the street signs (renamed with the old names), the road signs of all kinds; even the stone bollards with the mile markings! Everything that remembered Italy and the Italians has disappeared, has been destroyed, in the cities and village. The Italian podesti have been replaced with German Burgomasters, the Italian employees of the municipalities and other entities have largely been dismissed and replaced with German elements and with 'Optants' who have already migrated to Germany and are returning in droves to take their jobs...In all public offices where there are still Italian officials, a German 'Berater' has been placed, who is the real master of the house. The police are completely Germanic and are assisted by the SOD. This body in which only German Atesians have enrolled is made up of anti-Italian elements at the highest level.¹⁹

The Italians who remained in the province of Bolzano were described as completely "disheartened because they do not see themselves protected by an Italian authority" and "worried about the future of South Tyrol," which they believed *Il Duce* had willingly abandoned to the Fuhrer "as compensation for his liberation and for military support given to Republican Italy." While some Italians continued to work in the civil administration offices, many Italian employees were reported to have deserted their post, either having fled to the interior or transferred to another province in the RSI. Certain aspects of the

¹⁹ ACS, Ministero dell'Interno, Gabinetto, Archivio Generale, RSI Affari generali 1942-1945 (MIG-RSI), busta 6. Report by the RSI's Ministry of the Interior on the political situation in the 'Prealpi,' July 1944-February 1945. The exact date that the report was written or distributed is not listed.

report were either exaggerated or misinformed, such as the claim that German had been made the exclusive language of instruction in schools, courts and administrative correspondence. However, the general sentiment of the report, that “one has the precise impression of not being in Italy anymore, but in a foreign country,” was widely felt by the Italians of the region. The report on South Tyrol ended with the assertion that “the Alto Atesini are anti-Italian, *‘toto et intimo corde.’*”²⁰

The Ministry took great offense to the Nazi’s inclusion of the provinces of Trentino and Belluno in the OZAV and presented Gauleiter Hofer's modification of the provincial boundaries as a “violation of the international conventions of the Hague.” The July 1944 report mentions three serious policies undertaken by the “extremist” prefect of Trentino, the lawyer Adolfo de Bertolini, who was accused of attempting to transform the Trentino into a politically autonomous province within a Greater Germany. The first was the replacement of the emblem of the Italian State with the “purple eagle on a silver field...the coat of arms of the ancient principality of Trento” which began to appear on the stamp of the office of the prefecture. Second, the Italian police were disbanded and replaced with a Trentino police force. This new police force wore German uniforms with the badge of the Trentino eagle emblem, which distinguished them from German soldiers who wore “the eagle with the swastika of the Reich.” Third, De Bartolini was said to have banned the residency of Italian citizens not registered in Trentino before July 1943. The Court of Appeal of Trento was also “transformed into a Court of Appeal with jurisdiction over all three provinces of the Prealps area so that even judicially the three provinces [were] no

²⁰ The Latin phrase “toto et intimo corde,” roughly translates to “whole and innermost heart,” ACS, MIG-RSI, b.6.

longer dependent on the judicial authority of the Republic.”²¹

The report reflected on the *italianità* of the region and its people and recounted the history of the Trentini’s fight for autonomy against the Austrian crown. It recalled “the beautiful figures of the martyr Cesare Battisti” and other political actors of the Trentino as evidence of the Trentini’s pro-Italian leanings: “they are beautiful pages of *italianità* that belong to the moral heritage of the lineage (*stirpe*).” It noted that the Trentini’s bid for autonomy did not end after the region’s “redemption” in 1918, but that this movement for autonomy did not seem to have a secessionist character, unlike their South Tyrolean neighbours. Peter Hofer’s “support for these autonomous tendencies” was seen a part of a devious plan to return the Trentino to Tyrol, after which all promises of autonomy would be denied. The ministry’s praise of the Trentini’s loyalty and support for *italianità* was a far cry from the accusations of distrust and subversion launched against them by Fascist officials in previous years.²²

Mussolini, RSI officials and the Italian residents of the operation zone perceived the Germanization of Venezia Tridentina as a great injustice, which fed the growth of the Fascist resistance movement in the OZAV. The RSI provided moral and material support to the illegal movement, which gained momentum in the winter of 1943. In an effort to preserve Italian sovereignty in Venezia Tridentina, the RSI encouraged the institution of an Italian police force, and the promotion of pro-Fascist propaganda and RSI associations in the region.²³ Mussolini made numerous attempts to exert some level of control over the

²¹ Ibid, Section on the “Trentino.”

²² Ibid.

²³ Steinacher, *Südtirol und die Geheimdienste*, 39-40. On the activities of the “secret fascist party” in South Tyrol see Carlo Romeo, “L’atteggiamento del gruppo italiano in Alto Adige nel Zone di Operazioni nelle Prealpi tra difesa nazionale, attendismo e resistenza,” in *Südtirol Im Dritten Reich: NS-Herrschaft Im Norden Italiens, 1943-1945 = L’Alto Adige Nel Terzo Reich: L’occupazione Nazista nell’Italia Settentrionale*, ed. Gerald Steinacher (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2003), 121-139.

OZAV, but these attempts were continually rebuffed. Indebted to Hitler, there was little Mussolini and his puppet regime could do to counter the dismantling of twenty years of Italianization. In addition to the Fascist resistance movement, two other organizations fought for control over Venezia Tridentina. The first was the Italian nationalist organization the *Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale* (CLN; National Liberation Committee) and the other was the *Andreas Hofer Bund* (AHB), the only German-speaking resistance group in the OZAV. Both fought against fascism and the German occupying forces, but the CLN worked to maintain the Brenner border, while the AHB fought for the establishment of a united Tyrol in an independent Austrian republic. To this end, the AHB cooperated with the network of espionage and resistance established by the British and French security services.²⁴

German authorities used the Reichenau camp near Innsbruck, and later the Bozen-Gries camp to detain and deport political prisoners, anti-Fascist resistance fighters and racial enemies from central and northern Italy. First established in 1941 as a detainment centre (*Auffanglager*) for Italian workers fleeing inhumane conditions in German factories and work sites, it became a *campo di rieducazione al lavoro* (*Arbeitserziehungslager*; work education camp) for eastern European workers in 1942 and was repurposed as a transit camp (*Durchgangslager*) for Jews and political prisoners in 1943.²⁵ Some detainees were kept in the camp as forced labourers but most passed through to their final destinations to camps throughout the Third Reich and Nazi-occupied Poland. Following

²⁴ Steinacher, *Südtirol und die Geheimdienste*, 13. On South Tyrolean resistance see Martha Verdorfer, "Südtiroler Widerstand gegen Nationalsozialismus und Krieg 1943-1945," in *Südtirol Im Dritten Reich : NS-Herrschaft Im Norden Italiens, 1943-1945 = L'Alto Adige Nel Terzo Reich : L'occupazione Nazista nell'Italia Settentrionale* (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2003), 241-258.

²⁵ Schreiber, *Nationalsozialismus und Faschismus*, 196; 200.

the closure of the Fossoli concentration camp in the summer of 1944, German occupying forces established the Bozen-Gries concentration camp, which included numerous subcamps in South Tyrol.²⁶ Bolzano was an ideal location for the new camp, as it was within the German occupational zone and near the Brenner railway.²⁷ Political prisoners, Jews, members of the anti-Fascist resistance, POWs, criminals and hostages were interned in the camp and each group was given a different coloured triangle distinguishing them from other members of the “prisoner society.”²⁸ In his study on the detainees of the Bozen-Gries Camp, Dario Venegoni provides the names of 7,982 individuals interned at the camp and notes the approximately 1,000 internees have yet to be identified.²⁹ In total, an estimated 11,116 prisoners were interned at the Bozen-Gries camp between the summer of 1944 and spring of 1945.³⁰

As with Hofer in the OZAV, Carinthian Gauleiter Fredrich Rainier asserted absolute control over the *Operationzone Adriatisches Kunstenland* (OZAK). However, Rainer and the German authorities were not welcomed as liberators by the inhabitants of Venezia Giulia. Instead, OZAK officials encountered a great deal of hostility from Italians and Slovenians within the operation zone. Intent on combatting the “fighting gangs” and

²⁶ Wedekind, *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien*, 374; For more see Carla Giacomozzi and Giuseppe Paleari, *The Concentration Camp in Bolzano: Pictures and Documents of the Nazi Concentration Camp in Bolzano (1944-1945)* (Bolzano: City of Bolzano Dept. of Cultural Affairs Historical Archives, 2003).

²⁷ Barbara Pfeifer, “Das Polizeiliche Durchgangslager Bozen 1944-1945,” in *Südtirol Im Dritten Reich : NS-Herrschaft Im Norden Italiens, 1943-1945 = L’Alto Adige Nel Terzo Reich : L’occupazione Nazista nell’Italia Settentrionale* (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2003), 202. According to Pfeifer, plans to establish the camp can be traced back to January 1944, Ibid.

²⁸ Pfeifer, “Das Polizeiliche Durchgangslager Bozen 1944-1945,” 204.

²⁹ Dario Venegoni, *Uomini, donne e bambini nel Lager del Bolzano: Una tragedia italiana in 7.982 storie individuali*, 2nd ed. (Milano: Fondazione Memoria della Deportazione/Mimesis, 2005), 8-9.

³⁰ Wedekind, *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien*, 374.

partisan resistance groups that had developed in the region, German authorities presented the occupation of Venezia Giulia as a strategic necessity.³¹ While there was no official plan to annex the territories of the OZAK, Rainer implemented numerous measures to erode and subvert Italian sovereignty in the region. Decree no.1 of 1 October 1943 endowed Rainer with complete oversight over the region's judiciary and court system.³² Two weeks later, the *Verordnungs- und Amtsblatt des Obersten Kommissars in der Operationszone Adriatisches Küstenland* ("Ordinance and Official Gazette of the Supreme Commissioner in the Operational Zone of the Adriatic Coast") containing almost 70 ordinances, was transcribed into law, establishing the legal foundations of Rainer's rule over the OZAK.³³

As in the OZAV, positions such as the prefect and podesta were appointed by the Germans without input from the RSI. Administrative ties between the RSI's interior minister and the prefects, podesta and questure of Venezia Giulia were severed and the administrative apparatus was instead used to carry out Rainer's bidding.³⁴ The Nazi regime found many willing collaborators within the region's economic and administrative offices. On 28 October 1943 Bruno Coceani, one of the earliest supporters of fascism in Trieste, was appointed as prefect of Trieste and the role of podestà was assigned to Cesare Pagnini. According to Moehrle, by allowing "themselves to be integrated into the German

³¹ Nazi leadership referred to the resistance groups as "fighting gangs" and "bandits" to minimize and delegitimize the anti-fascist movement. On 18 October 1942, Hitler ordered the distribution of "a propaganda print specially published for the OZAK, describing the 'gang warfare' as a Bolshevik evil directed against the population, against peaceful peasants and their inland towns and villages," and stated that ethnically-mixed regions were "the perfect breeding ground for these 'gangs.'" Moehrle, *Judenverfolgung in Triest*, 395. On 9 November 1943, partisan activity had become so prevalent in the Adriatic that Himmler designated the area as a '*Bandenkampfgebiet*' (gang fighting area). Wedekind, *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien*, 312.

³² Wedekind, *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien*, 299.

³³ Moehrle, *Judenverfolgung in Triest*, 325.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 320.

government apparatus,” Coceani and other Italian officials helped to “minimize” the possibility of a popular uprising against the German occupiers.³⁵

To legitimize Germany’s presence in the region, Rainer appropriated the “Habsburg myth” and established an administrative, economic and cultural program meant to “evoke the climate of Old Austria and construct continuity with the Nazi administration.”³⁶ To further separate the regime from its Fascist predecessors and promote the superiority of the German model, Rainer rolled back many of the anti-Slavic policies enacted under fascism. In regions inhabited by a Slovenian majority, the ban on the use of Slovenian in public life was lifted, Slovenian signs and place names were allowed to be posted, Slovenians were welcomed in positions in municipal and provincial offices, and Slovenian schools, cultural organizations and sports clubs were allowed to resume their activities. Following Coceani and Pagnini’s protestations, the Slavic population of Trieste was not offered any concessions except the broadcast of a “Slovene-language radio program,”³⁷ however, in one letter to Mussolini, Coceani lamented that “the Slovene tongue and Slovene singing could be heard again in the streets and public places of Trieste.”³⁸

RSI officials anxiously reported on Rainer’s program to establish an “ideal barrier” between Venezia Giulia and the RSI and his attempts to assert “strict control over every branch of political, administrative and economic activity in the region.”³⁹ Rainer’s “‘ideal barrier” had, in fact, transformed into a “border line,” barring Fascist Italy from any involvement in the region’s economic and business operations. RSI officials warned that

³⁵ Ibid, 423.

³⁶ Wedekind, *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien*, 283.

³⁷ Sluga, *The Problem of Trieste*, 77.

³⁸ Quoted in Ibid, 81.

³⁹ ACS, MIG-RSI, b.6, Report by the RSI’s Ministry of the Interior on the political situation in the “Adriatic Littorale.”

this border would soon become a “political frontier,” exemplified by a map reported to be seen in Rainer’s office:

If you visit the offices of the supreme commissioner who has taken up his room in the grandiose courthouse, you will be able to see some beautiful geographical maps of the provinces of the Adriatic coast: Udine – Gorizia – Trieste – Pola – Fiume – Ljubljana, which are delimited by a large red line both towards the provinces of the Italian republic and towards the Croatian state while no delimitation exists towards Germany, so that one has the impression of a ‘continuity of territory.’ One wonders at the sincerity of the Reich’s declarations that whether the Reich’s declaration that this is only a temporary occupation due to military defense needs.⁴⁰

Germany’s machinations for the annexation of Trieste were also prevalent in the cultural sphere. Radio Trieste was detached from Fascist Italy’s public service broadcaster *Ente Italiano per la Audizioni Radiofoniche* (EIAR) and reconstituted as the “autonomous” *Radio Litorale Adriatico* (RLA). The RLA was reported to be under direct control of the German authorities with programming in both Italian and German. In promotion of the “Habsburg myth,” a “Vienna greets Trieste and Trieste greets Vienna” event was planned, “with broadcasts of Viennese and Italian music.” The supreme commissioner took complete control over the press and established the German-language daily newspaper *Adriazeitung*, which focused on events in the Reich and the promotion “Austrian reminiscences.”⁴¹

Instead of perceiving Coceani as a collaborator and traitor, the RSI’s interior ministry praised him for his efforts to resist German encroachment and protect the *italianità* of Trieste. As stated in the 1944 report, in opposition to “King Rainer” stood “the beautiful figure of Bruno Coceani, irredentist, fighter, volunteer in the First World

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

War,” and protector of “Trieste’s Italian character.” Coceani was described as a thorn in Rainer’s side, leading “a daily exhausting struggle of resistance against the hidden abuses of the supreme commissioner.” This resistance included Coceani’s refusal to approve the commissioner’s oversight of local budgets, refusal of Rainer’s request that “the official bulletin of the Prefecture [be] published in Italian and Slovenian,” and resistance to the use of Slovenian in court proceedings and sentencing. In response to the “Vienna greets Trieste and Trieste greets Vienna” event, Coceani was said to have organized a lecture series on Dante. Described as a “vibrant manifestation of Italian spirit in which the very Italian soul of Trieste participates,” Coceani was reported to have declared: “with this act Italian Trieste embraces her sister Florence.”⁴²

The RSI was especially critical of the pro-Slavic policy carried out by occupation authorities in the Slavic and mixed-race area of Venezia Giulia. The existence of Slavic irredentism in these regions was seen as a consequence of the “ill-fated annexation of the province of Ljubljana, orchestrated by Minister Ciano in 1941” and not as the result of the decades long suppression of the Slovenian communities by Fascist Italy. Ljubljana was described as a “land that had never had cultural relations with Italy” and of being wholly “Slavic, anti-Italian, a den of Slavic irredentism and a centre of attraction for the *alloglot* populations of Venezia Giulia.” As stated in the RSI’s report:

The consequence of the autonomy in Ljubljana provoked a real outcry among the Slovenes of the Upper Soča, the Vipava Valley, the Conca di Postumia, demanding similar treatment. Propaganda leaflets, newspapers, especially religious books, began to flood those quiet valleys which had resigned to being assimilated, copiously spread by Ljubljana from which no borders and no controls existed to separate them. And the patient twenty-year work of Italian penetration (in truth not always skillful, but which nevertheless had given good results) was first opposed, then fought.

⁴² ACS, MIG-RSI, b.6, Section on “The Prefect of Trieste.” On the complex relationship between Coceani, Rainer and the RSI see Moehrl, *Judenverfolgung in Triest*, 421-424.

Strengthened by the support coming from Ljubljana (center of intellectual life and home to the state's university), the Slovenes began to resist, first veiled, then energetically. The building of *italianità* patiently implemented by the architects of victory began to crumble, until it collapsed miserably under the blows inflicted on it by the Germanic authorities concerned only with pacifying those lands at any cost, even if at the total expense of Italian prestige and the incipient Italian character of those areas.⁴³

The Slovenian population were described as “irreducibly anti-Italian,” collectively plotting to annex the Slovenian regions of Venezia Giulia with support from the Reich.⁴⁴

As part of their pro-Slavic policy, the Germans were reported to have allowed for the establishment of the “*domobranzi*’, an armed militia established to maintain order in the Slavic areas of Venezia Giulia.”⁴⁵ This militia were said to be acting at their own discretion and accused of subjecting the few Italians under their jurisdiction to “hostilities, oppression and abuses.” Under German occupation, these Italian communities became targets upon which the Slavs could “vent their anger and their feelings of hatred against Italians under which they were for so long oppressed.” Italians from the old kingdom who had been resettled in the border area were “forced to leave and abandon everything” to avoid violent retribution. Postumia (Postojna) was identified as an especially volatile area, where Slovenian was reintroduced as the language of instruction in elementary schools, while Italian police and railway workers were laid off and replaced.⁴⁶

In light of the critical situation in Venezia Giulia, the Ministry reminisced on the missed opportunity to address the Slavic threat: “How it would have been better to have

⁴³ ACS, MIG-RSI, b.6, Section on “Slovenia, the Slavs and the Slavophile politics of the Germans.”

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ The term ‘*domobranzi*’ refers to the *Domobranzi*—Slovene auxiliary police, also known as the ‘Home Guard’ or ‘White Guard’, who worked alongside German occupying force. Sluga, *The Problem of Trieste*, 76-77.

⁴⁶ ACS, MIG-RSI, b.6. On inter-ethnic conflict in Postumia and other regions in the OZAK see Wedekind, *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien*, 400-403.

welcomed, five decades ago, a proposal made by clairvoyant elements but considered too audacious by the useless government of the time; to provoke the exodus of the Slavic people from Venezia Giulia to Yugoslavia or to transfer them *en masse* to the interior of the country (Greece and Turkey have solved the problem of the *alloglot* populations so well and radically by exchanging them).⁴⁷

The RSI was clearly appalled with the policies of German occupying forces in the OZAK. Never before, in their assessment, had “a power occupied parts of the territory belonging to another power, allied and friendly, replacing this power, without its consent, in the administration of that territory, thereby preventing it in the most absolute way from exercising one’s sovereignty over it.” The RSI denounced Germany’s infringement in regional politics and civil administration, thereby “detaching these territories from the body of the State to which they belong and inhibiting the Italian state from any interference as if it were an enemy state.”⁴⁸

Rainer’s pro-Slavic policies further agitated anti-Slavic sentiment within the RSI and in the occupation zone. Rainer intended to capitalize on these inter-ethnic tensions to prevent the creation of a unified resistance movement. Yet these agitations only weakened Germany’s position, making it more vulnerable to growing resistance from Italian and Yugoslavian anti-Fascist organizations.⁴⁹ According to Glenda Sluga, the anti-Fascist resistance movement in Venezia Giulia was divided between two camps, “each championing its own view of a future Italo-Yugoslav border, and the form of national sovereignty and self-government that would guarantee democracy in the postwar.”⁵⁰ The

⁴⁷ ACS, MIG-RSI, b.6.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Wedekind, *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien*, 403-404.

⁵⁰ Sluga, *The Problem of Trieste*, 63.

first was the Slovene Liberation Front (*Osvobodilna Fronta*; SLF) which comprised of Slovene nationalists, communists and groups of Italians and Slovenians fighting Nazism and Fascism under the banner of “Italo-Slovene brotherhood.” Within the Italo-Slovene brotherhood and SLF, an important distinction was drawn between Fascists and Italians—a distinction that was almost impossible before the fall of the Fascist regime.⁵¹ In other words, this was a fight between ideologies, not nationalities. Beginning in 1943, the SLF began to work alongside Josip Broz Tito’s partisan forces until the SLF’s eventual incorporation into the Yugoslavian Liberation movement. The other resistance movement was the Italian nationalist and anti-Fascist CLN, active in Fiume, Gorizia and Trieste. The Trieste CLN was completely dismantled twice by German forces, following the arrest, murder and deportations of the committee’s leadership, but on each occasion the organization resurfaced to continue its resistance activities.⁵²

Due to the CLN’s strong anti-Slavic sentiments and feelings of ethnic and cultural superiority, the organization refused to collaborate with Slovene anti-Fascist forces. While members of the Communist “Italo-Yugoslav brotherhood” promoted the liberation of both Italians and Slovenes in Venezia Giulia within the Yugoslavian federation, the CLN fought for a return to the pre-1941 border and reinstatement of Italian supremacy and sovereignty.⁵³ The SLF and Tito’s partisans had greater success in the region due to their much larger numbers and the support they received from the British and American governments.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Alessandro Volk, “Una realtà multiforme. Omogeneità e disomogeneità nella memoria degli sloveni di Trieste,” in *In Storia e Memoria degli Sloveni del Litorale: Fascismo, Guerra e Resistenza*, eds. Marta Verginella, Alessandro Volk and Katja Colja (Trieste: Quaderni 7, Istituto regionale per la storia del movimento di liberazione nel Friuli-Venezia Giulia, 1997), 115.

⁵² Wedekind, *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien*, 320.

⁵³ On competing claims to Trieste see Cattaruzza, *Italy and its Eastern Border*, 193-199.

⁵⁴ Sluga, *The Problem of Trieste*, 64-72.

Himmler sent his most ruthless SS officers and *Einsatzkommando* to Venezia Giulia to suppress and eliminate the region's anti-Fascist resistance movements. On 18 September 1943, SS General Odilo Globocnik was transferred to Trieste—his place of birth. Before arriving in Italy, Globocnik oversaw Aktion Reinhard (Operation Reinhard) and presided over the establishment of the Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka death camps. Globocnik had also been involved in the training of the “Trawniki men”—an auxiliary police guard composed of Ukrainian POWs which guarded the Aktion Reinhard camps and presided over the deportation and liquidation of Polish ghettos. Police captain Christian Wirth and Franz Stangl were also sent to Trieste. Wirth had been one of the leading officers of the Aktion T4 euthanasia program, which developed methods of ‘extermination’ for patients with disabilities. These methods, which included lethal injection, starvation and poison gas, were later adapted for the Final Solution. As a member of Aktion Reinhard, Wirth acted as director of the extermination divisions at Treblinka, Sobibor and Belzec. Franz Stangl worked under Globocnik and Wirth as commander of the Sobibor and Treblinka concentration camps.⁵⁵ It is estimated that between the autumn of 1941 and fall of 1943, Globocnik and his henchmen presided over the murder of 1.7 million Jews in mass shooting operations and in extermination camps established under Akton Reinhard.⁵⁶

Three “Aktion R” divisions were established in Venezia Giulia—R1 in Trieste, R2 in Fiume and R3 in Udine. These divisions were responsible for the arrest and deportation

⁵⁵ Susan Zuccotti, *The Italians and the Holocaust : Persecution, Rescue, and Survival* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 184-187.

⁵⁶ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “Operation Reinhard,” Holocaust Encyclopedia. <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/operation-reinhard-einsatz-reinhard>.

of Jews and anti-Fascist partisans from the operation zone.⁵⁷ German criminal police worked closely with Italian administrative bodies such as the prefect, questure and carabinieri to carry out their repressive measures. In addition, the *Ispettorato Speciale di Pubblica Sicurezza per la Venezia Giulia* assisted in the fight against the anti-Fascist resistance movement. In cooperation with German officials, the office of the *Ispettorato* “arrested interrogated [and] tortured” members of the nationalist, anti-Fascist and communist resistance organizations.⁵⁸

Initially, Trieste’s Coroneo prison was used to imprison Jews and political enemies, but in October 1943, German occupying forces established the Risiera di San Sabba concentration camp. Overseen by the architects of terror, Globocnik, Wirth and Stangl, the *Polizeihaftlager* was erected in an old rice husking facility on the outskirts of Trieste.⁵⁹ The camp had two main purposes: the collection and deportation of Jews from Italy and Yugoslavia, and the suppression of partisan warfare and civic unrest through what Tristano Matta describes as the “imprisonment, torture [and] elimination of members of the Resistance.”⁶⁰ The Risiera di San Sabba was the only concentration camp in Western Europe to have a crematorium.⁶¹ Jews, partisans and Germany’s political enemies were detained in inhumane conditions in the camp. Individuals were kept in cramped quarters

⁵⁷ Moehrle, *Judenverfolgung im Triest*, 351.

⁵⁸ Wedekind, *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik*, 349.

⁵⁹ On Globocnik, Wirth and Stangl and the Risiera di San Sabba see Ferruccio Fölkel and Frediano Sessi. *La Risiera di San Sabba* (Milano: BUR, 2000), 109-119; Wedekind, *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien*, 357-370; Tristano Matta and Lanfranco Di Genio, “L’occupazione nazie et le *Polizeihaftlager* di San Sabba à Trieste,” *Revue d’Histoire de la Shoah* 204, no 1 (2016): 235-273, doi:10.3917/rhsho.204.0253; and Susanne C. Knittel, *The Historical Uncanny: Disability, Ethnicity, and the Politics of Holocaust Memory* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2014).

⁶⁰ Tristano Matta, “La deportazioni dalla Risiera di San Sabba,” in *Fascismo, Foibe, Esodo: Le tragedie del Confine orientale* (Milan: Associazione Nazionale Ex Deportati nei Campi Nazisti, 2005), 79.

⁶¹ The crematorium was designed by Erwin Lambert, the same man who oversaw the construction of crematoriums in Treblinka and Sobibor. Zuccotti, *The Italians and the Holocaust*, 184.

with little food and almost no fresh air. Camp guards continually beat, tortured and murdered detainees. Gas vans were parked in garages and used to kill “several dozens” of prisoners, after which their bodies were cremated and their ashes thrown into the nearby harbour.⁶² The most violent actions were conducted at night and loudspeakers were used to drown out the murderous deeds, which included torture, shootings and strangulation.⁶³ It is estimated that between 3,000-5,000 individuals were killed in the camp.⁶⁴ As will be discussed in the next section, thousands of Jews from Venezia Giulia and the former Italian-occupied territories were sent to the San Sabba camp, the majority of which were deported to extermination and concentration camps in Nazi-occupied Europe.

The failure of the Fascist redemptive struggle in the Triveneto borderlands unleashed a wave of violence, repression, and retribution. The loss of Venezia Tridentina and Venezia Giulia to the “Teutonic menace” was a fate that Mussolini had worked to avoid for the entirety of his time in power. After September 1943, he was unable to stop the dismantling of the Fascist system and the destruction of *italianità* in the borderlands. The Fascists had played an important role in their own demise. The German occupation of the Triveneto borderlands unleashed deep-seated resentments that had been contained under Fascist oppression for over two decades. These resentments mutated into a “nexus of violence” after the arrival of German forces, and allowed for the “settling of scores,” which the occupiers used to their own advantage. However, their arrival also led to instances of solidarity and collaboration between these groups.

⁶² Knittel, *The Historical Uncanny*, 148.

⁶³ Moerhle, *Judenverfolgung im Triest*, 359.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 369.

Despite their indignation over the loss of sovereignty in the borderlands, Italian officials in the RSI and borderlands had few options but to cooperate. That is not to say that they were forced into cooperation, but instead, that the only way to maintain some modicum of power was to collaborate with the Germans. Mussolini's authority in the RSI was completely dependent on Hitler's graces. He could not fight for Italian sovereignty in the borderlands without jeopardizing his position. In the case of Coceani, it is likely that his protestations against pro-Slavic policies would have fallen on deaf ears if he had not proved himself to be an important ally for the Germans in Trieste. The Germans also found many willing collaborators amongst the Italian, South Tyrolean and Slavic populations. Through their collaboration, the resentment of competing national groups was weaponized by the occupying forces and, for a time, helped the Germans to assert their dominance in the region.

CACCIA AGLI EBREI: THE 'HUNT FOR THE JEWS' IN SOUTH TYROL AND TRIESTE

Following the invasion of Italy, Nazi occupying forces proceeded swiftly with the arrest, deportation and murder of the Jews in Italy. Having lost much of their independence and authority, Mussolini and RSI officials entered into a deadly "competition" with the German occupying forces through their assertion of control over the arrest and detention of Jews under their jurisdiction.⁶⁵ On 14 November 1943, members of the *Partito Fascista Repubblicano* met to establish the policies and procedures of the new regime. In the 18-point memorandum drafted from this meeting, point 7 stated that "persons belonging to

⁶⁵ Lilianna Picciotto, "The Shoah in Italy: Its History and Characteristics," in *Jews in Italy Under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945*, ed. Joshua D. Zimmerman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 209.

the Jewish race are aliens, and during this war belong to an enemy nationality.”⁶⁶ Two weeks later, Police Order n.5 of 30 November 1943 decreed that Italian and foreign Jews in Italy were subject to arrest and internment. Their belongings and property would be seized by the RSI. With the arrival of the Germans, the Italian approach to the Jews shifted from persecution to active collaboration in their capture, detainment and deportation.

The situation in the borderland occupation zones was markedly different from that of the rest of the peninsula. In the RSI, Italian officials, police and civilians asserted their control over the capture and internment of Jews, but in the operation zones German officials oversaw all aspects of the program of elimination. German officials did rely on the assistance of informants and civil police, such as the SOD, but the program was primarily organized by the Nazi occupiers.⁶⁷ However, the arrest and massacre of Jews in the operation zones occurred before the SS divisions had officially established themselves in the region and preceded the RSI’s involvement in the extermination program. Liliana Picciotto argues that these early roundups and massacres in Bolzano and Trieste should not be counted as “part of the classic extermination policy,” but instead were a result of the development of the war and initial occupation.⁶⁸

The official order for the arrest of “pure Jews” (*Volljuden*) in South Tyrol was given by SS-Brigandeführer Karl Brunner, on 12 September 1943.⁶⁹ However, the first round-

⁶⁶ Quoted in Picciotto, “The Shoah in Italy,” 215.

⁶⁷ Cinzia Villani, “The Persecution of the Jews in Two Regions of German-Occupied Northern Italy,” in *Jews in Italy Under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945*, Joshua D. Zimmerman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 245.

⁶⁸ Picciotto, “The Shoah in Italy,” 211?

⁶⁹ Cinzia Villani, “La persecuzione degli ebrei: arresti, deportazioni e spoliazioni di beni (1943-1945),” in *Südtirol Im Dritten Reich: NS-Herrschaft Im Norden Italiens, 1943-1945 = L’Alto Adige Nel Terzo Reich: L’occupazione Nazista nell’Italia Settentrionale*, ed. Gerald Steinacher (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2003), 189. The order to arrest Italian Jews who were previously exempt from deportation was given by the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Central Office for Reich Security) on 23 September 1943, *Ibid.*

up of Jews in South Tyrol, and in fact all of Italy, occurred in Bolzano on 9 September 1943.⁷⁰ Father and son Renzo and Alberto Carpi were arrested as part of this round-up by a group of German soldiers and “partly uniformed men” from South Tyrol, including doctor Paul Knapp and local merchant Joseph Clementi.⁷¹ Before the announcement of the racial laws, Renzo had owned a grocery import store and knew Clementi through his business. The men were first taken to Hotel Bristol and then moved to the Bolzano prison. According to Sabine Mayr and Joachim Innerhofer, “without the participation of the citizens of South Tyrol, the capture of Renzo and Alberto on 9 September 1943 would probably not have taken place.”⁷² Renzo Carpi begged his wife Lucia Rimini to leave South Tyrol with their two daughters Germana and Olimpia, but she refused to go anywhere without her husband and son.⁷³ Tragically, Lucia and her daughters were arrested and, on 16 September 1943, were deported with twenty-two Jews arrested in Merano to the Reichenau concentration camp.⁷⁴ The Merano roundup was carried out by the Commander of the Gestapo in Merano, Alfons Niederwieser and by members of the SS and SOD.⁷⁵ This was the first convoy of Jewish detainees to be deported from Italy after the German occupation. Around six months later, Renzo, Lucia, Alberto, Germana and Olimpia and the rest of the Bolzano and Merano internees were sent to Auschwitz. All five members of the Carpi family perished in the extermination camp.

Some were killed immediately after the arrival of German forces. Giacomo Buko

⁷⁰ Villani, “The Persecution of the Jews,” 245.

⁷¹ Mayr and Innerhofer, *Quando la patria uccide*, 392.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid, 393.

⁷⁴ Ibid. The Jews caught in the Merano round-up were taken to the Casa del Balilla in Merano before they were transferred to Reichenau. Lucia Rimini and her daughters were also taken to the Casa del Balilla following their arrest. Villani, “La persecuzione degli ebrei,” 190.

⁷⁵ Villani, “La persecuzione degli ebrei,” 190.

Papo was visiting the village of Slum southeast of Trieste when the Nazis arrived on 4 October 1943.⁷⁶ Papo was a resident of Trieste but he was originally from Bulgaria and had obtained Italian citizenship after 1919. His citizenship was revoked on 22 December 1938 and he became stateless, but was able to avoid expulsion.⁷⁷ On 5 October 1943, the day after the arrival of German troops in Slum, Papo “presented himself to the German commander who identified him as being part of the Jewish race.” The following day German officers “invited [Papo] to accompany them out of the village, where he was shot.” Papo was not killed but was severely wounded. He returned to the village and sought refuge in one of the village houses. As Papo laid in bed, the Germans learned of his place of refuge and broke into the house, where he was shot and killed. It is likely that Papo’s stateless status contributed to the brutality with which he was treated by occupying forces, however, it did not prevent the kindness afforded to him by the Slum villager who offered him refuge.⁷⁸

Many of the Jewish detainees from Trieste had been arrested by German SS officers in round-ups on 9 and 29 October 1943.⁷⁹ Some were transported directly from their place of arrest to the San Sabba, while others were first detained in the Coroneo prison and later transferred to the camp to await deportation.⁸⁰ On 7 December 1943, the first train left Trieste’s central station carrying Jews and political prisoners to Auschwitz.⁸¹ In total,

⁷⁶ Slum was incorporated into Yugoslavia after the Second World War and is now a town in Croatia.

⁷⁷ Archivio Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea (CDEC), Vicissitudini dei singoli, Serie 1, 1938-1997, busta 3, fascicolo 86. Letter from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Branch Office for Italy, 9 December 1957. Copy of revocation decree also in this file.

⁷⁸ Ibid. Declaration of Death, Comitato Popolare di “Slum” Distretto Pinguente-Carso, 27 October 1946.

⁷⁹ Francesco Fait, ed. *The Risiera of San Sabba. Monumento Nazionale* (Trieste: Comune di Trieste, 2016), 34.

⁸⁰ Matta, “La deportazioni dalla Risiera di San Sabba,” 83.

⁸¹ In this transport were 159 Jews interned at the Coroneo prison. Moehrl, *Judenverfolgung im Triest*, 370.

twenty-two trains left Trieste for Auschwitz, making up more than half of the transports out of Italy. Around 1,400 Jews from the OZAK were deported from San Sabba, 700 of whom were from Trieste.⁸² Current estimates on the total number of deportees from the Adriatic Littoral are around 8,200, which accounted for “around one quarter of the total deportations from Italy, in a territorial area representing just 5.9% of the Kingdom of Italy.”⁸³ Tristano Matta argues that the high rate of deportation from this region can be explained by Trieste position “as the nerve centre of the Nazi-fascist repression of the Italian resistance.”⁸⁴ In the case of the OZAV, forty-two Jewish residents of South Tyrol were deported from the province throughout the occupation.⁸⁵ Jews accounted for many of the approximately 300 prisoners who were murdered in the Bozen-Gries camp,⁸⁶ and 207 Jews transferred from the Fossoli camp were deported from Bozen-Gries.⁸⁷

Skilled labourers and individuals chosen for forced labour often remained in the camps. This included Edgardo Fronti (Freund), who had been awarded a racial exemption (*discriminazione*) from Fascist authorities in July 1939. His collaboration with the Fascist government made him a target of harassment for German South Tyroleans before the occupation. Members of the VKS denounced him to the Wehrmacht immediately after their arrival and he was arrested on 9 September 1943—the same date as Renzo and

⁸² Cattaruzza states that 708 individuals of Trieste’s Jewish community were deported, while Moehrle lists 754. Cattaruzza, *Italy and its Eastern Border*, 190; Moehrle, *Judenverfolgung in Triest*, 370.

⁸³ Francesco Fait, ed. *The Risiera of San Sabba. Monumento Nazionale*, 39.

⁸⁴ Matta, “La deportazioni dalla Risiera di San Sabba,” 87.

⁸⁵ Villani, “The Persecution of the Jews in Two Regions of German-Occupied Northern Italy,” 246.

⁸⁶ Zuccotti, *Italians and the Holocaust*, 183. Zuccotti estimates that there were approximately 150 Jews on the first train to Auschwitz (24 October 1944) and 80 Jews on the train to Flossenber and Ravensbruck (14 December 1944). *Ibid*, 184.

⁸⁷ Daniel Carpi, Federica Francesconi and Susan Zuccotti. "Bolzano," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., eds. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, Vol. 4 (Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 51. The Fossoli camp was shut down on 1 August 1944 due to the advancement of Allied armed forces and partisan activity. For more on Fossoli see Alexis Herr, *The Holocaust and Compensated Compliance in Italy: Fossoli Di Carpi, 1942-1952* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.)

Alberto's arrest.⁸⁸ Fronti was interned at Reichenau from 14 March 1944 to 2 March 1945 and would ultimately survive the war. Under the watchful eye of German, Italian, Ukrainian and even South Tyrolean guards, Jewish internees and political prisoners were kept, as described by one camp survivor, like "beasts of burden"⁸⁹ and assigned tough jobs often related to the German war effort, including the cleaning debris after air raids and the diffusion of bombs.⁹⁰ Workshops were set up for skilled labourers, such as printers, mechanics, carpenters, and tailors.⁹¹ Prisoners were also enlisted to sort through property stolen from Jews who had been arrested and deported.

While detained in Bozen-Gries, Ruggero Jenna was part of a group of Jews sent to "a small secret camp at Certose (Karthausen) in Val Senalis." According to a fellow inmate, Samuel Spritzmann, in large barracks the SS hid "enormous quantities of lire, shoes, alcohol, cigarettes" and other goods "coming from the warehouses of Trieste and Merano." The Jewish labourers were sent there to clear and repair a nearby road that had been damaged by falling boulders. Spritzmann later recalled the immense toll that the work had on Jenna's physical and mental health. In October, Jenna was deported to Auschwitz and upon arrival, was selected to join a group designated for "light work," which included "other old men and women with children." At Auschwitz, Spritzmann and Jenna had one last encounter: "I caught his glance but, I think he was unaware of the painful fate that awaited him, like all the others in his group." Jenna and the rest of the group were murdered soon after their arrival.⁹²

⁸⁸ Mayr and Innerhofer, *Quando la patria uccide*, 128.

⁸⁹ CDEC, Vicissitudini dei singoli, 1/b.12, f.351. Statement by Samuel Spritzmann to Attilio Reichenbach on the death of Ruggero Jenna in Auschwitz, 12 October 1945.

⁹⁰ Wedekind, *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien*, 374.

⁹¹ Pfeifer, "Das Polizeiliche Durchgangslager Bozen 1944-1945," 205.

⁹² CDEC, Vicissitudini dei singoli, 1/b.12, f.351. Statement by Samuel Spritzmann to Attilio Reichenbach on the death of Ruggero Jenna in Auschwitz, 12 October 1945.

Alberto Kabilio was one of the few Jewish internees to remain in San Sabba until the end of the German occupation.⁹³ On 4 March 1944 Kabilio arrived at San Sabba from Arbe with about 100 other, mainly Yugoslavian, Jews. After the war he recalled his harrowing experiences in the Trieste concentration camp:

After three days of imprisonment, we were taken by two coaches to San Sabba and immediately deprived of money, jewels, clothes... San Sabba consisted of a courtyard approximately 50 meters long, to the left of which stood a three-storey building. When we arrived, the first floor was uninhabited, the second floor was occupied by Aryans. We were accommodated on the third floor. We slept on the bare ground without blankets, sheltered from the cold with our coats...In the evening, the large room in which men, women, the old and the sick were crammed was illuminated by a light bulb; very little sleep was possible, because during the night the Germans continually accompanied new Jews to the camp; the old and sick were thrown to the ground like animals. We heard the footsteps of the unfortunate people who climbed the stairs, those who could not manage quickly due to their advanced age were beaten and pushed forward by the drunken Germans who laughed at them. Altogether we were about 180 Jews...together with us, there were Italian Jews who had been arrested in Trieste, Venice and Padua.⁹⁴

After two days in San Sabba, the group was approached by two SS officers asking for skilled labourers (electricians, shoemakers, tailors, etc.). Fourteen individuals, including Kabilio—a master shoemaker—were taken to a warehouse to organize items stolen from Jewish shops and apartments. Upon returning to the camp all of the other Jewish internees had been deported. He recalled that a new transport of Jews and political prisoners was sent to Germany every three weeks. As a skilled worker, Kabilio remained in San Sabba throughout the war doing various jobs such as cleaning the stables and courtyard, while the women cleaned and washed laundry. Eventually a dressmaker and cobbler's shop were opened: "The work was very hard. And we had to work quickly, because behind us were the Germans with whips in hand; several of us, having finished the work, fell

⁹³ The last name Kabiglio is also used in some sources.

⁹⁴ CDEC, Vicissitudini dei singoli, 1/b.13, f.364. Alberto Kabilio, written testimony.

exhausted without being able to eat...Everyone, men and women, had to work until the moment of deportation.”⁹⁵

Throughout his time at the camp, Kabilio witnessed the torture and murder of his fellow inmates:

In San Sabba...a small number of Jews, about 20 to 30, insane and sick, were eliminated. The Germans told us that the sick would be transported to the hospital, instead they were sent from the courtyard to the gas chambers and burned during the night. The guests on the second floor (Aryan partisans) were killed in the gas chamber.

If the lights were turned off after 10 pm without any alarm, one could be certain that unfortunate people would be eliminated. One by one they took them to a shed used as a gas chamber and there they suppressed from 30 to 100 people at a time.

On Hitler’s birthday, Jews and Aryans were placed together on the 1st floor, because the 2nd floor was to be reserved for Italian soldiers who did not want to collaborate with the Germans; after a couple of days all the prisoners of the SS were gathered in the courtyard to witness the shooting of two Italian soldiers who, before dying, shouted: "Long live free Italy!"

Men and women were continuously taken as hostages who, without any interrogation, ended up in the gas chamber. When these unfortunates were killed, we had to remain shut up and we were forbidden to lean out of the windows. Meanwhile a radio was playing light music or, in front of the garage, an engine was started to drown out the cries of the unfortunate.⁹⁶

Throughout his time at San Sabba, Kabilio met Jews who had been denounced to the Germans by the Triestine Jewish informer Mauro Grini, an employee of Franz Stangl. It is reported that Grini “betrayed a total of around 300 Jews, including 100 in Trieste, 22 in Venice, 1 in Mestre, 7 in Padua, 2 in Milan, 1 in Conegliano and 1 in Cervignano,” in exchange for 7,000 lire per victim.⁹⁷ He was also accused of extorting large ransoms from

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid. A month after Hitler’s birthday, in May 1944, seven hundred soldiers in the “Davide” battalion, under the command of Italian Lieutenant Colonel Giovanni Davide Ferrero, were arrested and imprisoned at San Sabba after suspicion spread over the unit’s planned defection to the partisans. On the “Davide” battalion see Giuliano Giorcelli, *Il battaglione “Davide:” Piemonte, Trieste San Sabba, Jugoslavia, 1944-45: cronaca e storia* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell’Orso, 2014). Kabilio’s reference to a “gas chamber” in Risiera di San Saba is likely a reference to the use of gas vans.

⁹⁷ Moehrle, *Judenverfolgung in Triest*, 448.

Jewish individuals before turning them over to the SS. Most of Grini's victims were killed after they were denounced.⁹⁸

For some, the status of *misti* or belonging to a mixed marriage helped them to evade arrest and deportation. In September 1943, Aldo Castelletti, his wife Linda and two daughters were denounced by a neighbour in Fondo, arrested and taken to the Merano prison. A few days after their imprisonment Linda, who was not Jewish, was released with her two stepdaughters. The daughters, who were considered “full Jews” under the racial laws, never learned of the circumstances of their release but “believed that [their father Aldo] had managed to make the guards believe that [they] were born from his second marriage [and therefore] mixed.”⁹⁹ Aldo Castelletti was sent to the Reichenau camp on 23 October 1943 and died sometime after his deportation to Auschwitz.¹⁰⁰ Having been freed from jail due to their “mixed” status, the daughters were able to escape their father's fate. Living in hiding with the help of friends and partisans, they made way to Switzerland where they survived the war.

Enrica Levi of Trieste provided testimony of the brutality experienced by her father and her miraculous escape from arrest. On 30 January 1943, long before the Nazi occupation of Venezia Giulia, Enrica's father, brother and uncle—Alberto, Giuseppe and Beniamino—were subjected to the “antisemitic violence of a fascist squadron.” To mark the 10th anniversary of the Reich, a group of Fascists attacked the men as they exited the

⁹⁸ Moehrl, *Judenverfolgung in Triest*, 447-448; Wedekind, *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien*, 311; Zuccotti, *The Italians and the Holocaust*, 195-197.

⁹⁹ Mayr and Innerhofer, *Quando la patria uccide*, 372-373.

¹⁰⁰ Linda lost her husband and her only son Francesco during the war. Francesco, a partisan fighter, was killed on 10 October 1944 during a series of reprisal killings known as the Marzabotto massacre. Mayr and Innerhofer, *Quando la patria uccide*, 375.

Great Synagogue which had been desecrated by Fascists in July 1942.¹⁰¹ They were “beaten and thrown to the ground,” causing serious injury. In September 1944, Enrica’s father was arrested by an SS officer, “who according to witnesses, also hit him on the head with the butt of a pistol and pushed him violently into a car.” Alberto was deported to Auschwitz and later died in Buchenwald. After Alberto’s deportation, Enrica’s mother received a note that he had “thrown onto the snow upon arrival at Auschwitz,” which was found by a carabinieri escorting the train. This “noble and generous person,” as Erica describes, transported the note back to his family in Trieste which read: “I have arrived at my destination; during my trip I saw huge ruins. Have faith, the war will soon be over. See you soon!”¹⁰² Enrica strongly felt that her “mixed” status helped her avoid internment and deportation, which she relayed in her post-war testimony:

Sometime after the capture of my father, I was stopped at the public garden by an Italian agent in civilian clothes, in the service of the SS: I believe I was stopped during a round-up, however my identity card clearly denounced my Jewish origin (after the racial laws of 1938 it is known that all Jews were registered in the Prefecture and in the registry office and this provided an excellent research base for the Nazis) and therefore the agent decided to take me to the Commissariat of Piazza Dalmazia; but, due to an air alarm, he dragged me to the refuge in Viale XX Settembre, where he continued to ask me various questions, to which I answered sincerely. Later, he wanted to check if the address on the identity card matched and we travelled to our house in Rion del Re, where my sister Alice was also, as well as my mother, who was not of Jewish origin. The agent wanted to take my sister to the police station too, but then, we don't know for what reason, pitying my mother's tears, he gave up on his endeavour and left, leaving both of us to be free. Of course, the following hours and days were terrible for us because we feared the arrival of the SS at any moment but as the days passed, we realized that the agent had not denounced us. Indeed, I saw him again later...we do not know what happened to him, we do not even know his name and we are sorry, because this person deserves, at least for this generous act of his, public recognition.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ The Nazis used the synagogue to store art, books and other property that had been stolen from Jewish families during their occupation.

¹⁰² CDEC, Vicissitudini dei singoli, 1/b.14, f.411. Enrica Levi, written testimony.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

As demonstrated by the experiences of the Castelletti and Levi sisters, Italian officials and collaborators were, at times, less inclined to arrest or deport mixed-race Jews than their German counterparts.¹⁰⁴

As Picciotto notes, the unwillingness of some Italians to deport mixed-race Jews or Jews in mixed-marriages is related to the different definitions of Jewishness held by the Italians and Germans. In the RSI, children born of mixed-marriages who had been baptized before October 1938 were often exempted from arrest or were arrested and soon after released. German officials did not consider Jews born of mixed-marriages to be exempt if they had three grandparents of the Jewish race, or had close ties to the Jewish community.¹⁰⁵ These discrepancies primarily caused issues between German and Italian officials in the RSI, but the distinctly Italian definitions of Jewishness also impacted how Italians in the occupation zones defined who was and was not part of the Jewish “race.” In the minds of certain officials and residents, those with mixed status were still part of the national community. This afforded mixed Jews a certain level of sympathy that was not as readily available to “full” or foreign Jews. Of course, this was not true for every encounter—the Castelletti sisters were denounced by a neighbour and Enrica was placed under citizen’s arrest—but their mixed-race status provided them with a life-saving reprieve, as their ability to escape detention and deportation certainly increased their chances of survival.

¹⁰⁴ In South Tyrol only full Jews (*Volljuden*) were to be arrested according to Brunner’s order, so most Jews born of mixed-marriages were not arrested or arrested and released. Jews in South Tyrol who were married to non-Jews were arrested. However, according to Villani, in the RSI the arrest of mixed-race Jews and Jews in mixed marriages did not begin until February 1944. Villani, “La persecuzione degli ebrei,” 191-192.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁵ Picciotto, “The Shoah in Italy,” 216.

The impact of the unique categorizations of the Italian racial laws on an individual's chances of survival was also felt by Wilma Gaspard. Born in Trieste, 19-year-old Gaspard was caught in an SS roundup in Motta di Livenza (Treviso) in January 1944. She just happened to be in the city collecting food with some friends when she was arrested as a political prisoner. Unbeknownst to the SS officials, Gaspard was—by German standards—Jewish. Her mother was Jewish and her father was Catholic, and Gaspard had been baptized in 1938. The Italian racial office did not designate Gaspard as Jewish and her name was not recorded on the Jewish census or later lists. As a political prisoner, Gaspard was first transferred by truck to Klagenfurt and then deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Gaspard became very ill in Auschwitz and spent time in the camp hospital, but states that she “always managed to escape selection [in part due] to the generous help of a Polish doctor who, perhaps out of sympathy, moved [her] from block to block when the SS came for selection.” She remained in Auschwitz-Birkenau until June 1944 when she was transported to Ravensbrück. She remained there for a month until she was sent to Buchenwald to work in the munitions factory. In February 1945 she returned to Ravensbrück where she stayed for two months until her transfer and eventual liberation in Mauthausen on 5 May 1945. She returned to Trieste a month after the camp's liberation and after the war, provided testimony on a number of Triestine Jews, known to her before her deportation, whom she encountered during her time at Auschwitz.¹⁰⁶

Some “full Jews” were arrested during chance encounters, while others were spared by their would-be captors. Galliano Morpurgo's mother Gisella Gentilomo was arrested at her home by SS officers when they arrived to looking for another stateless Jewish man

¹⁰⁶ CDEC, *Vicissitudini dei singoli*, 1/b.10, f.297. Testimony of Wilma (Vilma) Gaspard.

subletting her home. Their intended target, a man named Ernesto Levi, was not at the house when they arrived and Gentilomo was arrested in his place and taken to Coroneo prison.¹⁰⁷ In an act of great bravery and sacrifice, Levi turned himself in to the police hoping that they would release Gentilomo but having determined her to be of the Jewish race, the SS officers refused to release her and Levi was also detained. After eight days in Coroneo, Gentilomo was deported to Auschwitz and was never heard from again.¹⁰⁸

Following his mother's arrest, Galliano visited her house to collect personal items when two Italian police officers arrived. He recalled this tense encounter after the war. When confronted about how he had accessed the home, Galliano "impetuously affirmed that [he] was the son of Mrs. Gisella Morpurgo (Gentilomo)," and had used his set of keys to enter her home. In response the two Italian police officers, "after having consulted with a glance," asked Galliano "to close the shutters and doors, and leave immediately without ever returning to house, it being understood that they had not found anyone in the house" during their search. His brother, Umberto Morpurgo, was married to a Catholic woman with two children and was initially able to avoid arrest by the Gestapo due to the "providential intervention of a friend." The SS did eventually find Umberto and on 25 October 1944 he was arrested and detained at the Coroneo prison. It is presumed that he died in December 1944. After the war Galliano was able to determine that both his mother and brother were sent to Auschwitz. A family friend who had also been deported to the camp claimed that he witnessed Gentilomo "enter the gas chamber at Birkenau," and

¹⁰⁷ Ernesto Levi was born in Spalato but relocated to Trieste. His citizenship was revoked by fascist officials, *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ CDEC, *Vicissitudini dei singoli*, 1/b.10, f.303. Gallano Morpurgo, written testimony.

another woman testified that she saw Umberto being pushed into a train carriage leaving Trieste for Auschwitz on 1 November 1944.¹⁰⁹

Aryan Italians who attempted to hide and assist their Jewish family members or friends were subject to torture, imprisonment and deportation by the SS. Lidia Colombo and her husband, Giuseppe Ceccatelli, were living in Milan when her brother Tullio was arrested and taken to the San Vittore prison.¹¹⁰ Her husband contacted a lawyer in an attempt to organize his release, for which he was asked to pay 200,000 lire. Ceccatelli was assured that his brother-in-law would be released but when the lawyer arrived at San Vittore with the order for release he was detained and the money was seized.¹¹¹ The day after their lawyer's arrest, SS officers arrived at the Ceccatelli residence. Ceccatelli instructed his wife to hide under a truck in a nearby garage:

I heard that they were asking about me and he replied that he had accompanied me to Switzerland. They got angry, slapped him and said that having accompanied a Jewess to Switzerland was worse than if he had killed. They went up to the house, searched everywhere and took him away. I never saw him again.¹¹²

Her brother-in-law and father-in-law were also taken to the San Vittore prison, but knowing nothing of her whereabouts, were later released.¹¹³ Colombo's mother and father

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ According to Lidia Colombo's testimony, her brother was co-owner of the shop "Il Sportivo," in Corso Vittorio Emanuele and in October he had been informed that the shop was the target of a major theft and "his presence was urgently needed." When Tullio arrived at the shop he was met by German SS who arrested him and took him to San Vittore. Lidia claimed that her brother's arrest, "had all been a trick by one of the his ex-clerks who he had fired years ago for theft." CDEC, Vicissitudini dei singoli, 1/b.5, f.149. Lidia Colombo, written testimony.

¹¹¹ Ibid. "Promemoria."

¹¹² Ibid. Lidia Colombo, written testimony.

¹¹³ Many Jews who were denounced or arrested in and around Milan were detained in the San Vittore prison before their deportation to Nazi-occupied Europe. Men, women and children were kept in the prison with little food and water. All of their belongings were taken from them when they entered the jail. In the cold months the cells were not heated and many of the old and sick detainees died from exposure to the cold. Men and women were regularly interrogated and beaten in special rooms in the hopes that they would give the guards the names of Jews in hiding. CDEC, Vicissitudini dei singoli, 1/b.17, f.496. Evelina Montefiore, written testimony. On the persecution of Milan's Jewish community and the San Vittore

had attempted to escape to Switzerland before the arrest of her husband, but an injury to her father's leg prevented them from crossing. They were hidden in a nunnery in Brugora (Besana di Brianza) for a year and eventually ended up in the Niguarda Hospital. In January 1945, both her parents went missing from the hospital. Colombo discovered that the prefect of Milan arranged for them to be transferred to San Vittore. At this time, Colombo was living in hiding in Belgirate, where she cared for an acquaintance's child, but upon hearing of her parents imprisonment, she decided to return to Milan.¹¹⁴

One evening, having gathered the courage, I went to the Galleria del Corso where there was a Fascist command. I introduced myself to the Commander and asked him if he knew where Mr. and Mrs. Colombo were. At his request I said that I was their daughter and a Jewess. Perhaps amazed, he said that they had been transferred to the concentration camp in Bolzano at the beginning of February, and to leave immediately so as not to be seen again. I fled in a hurry, wandered around the city in fear of being followed. I went to a friends to sleep but they didn't want me there. They didn't want trouble.¹¹⁵

Colombo was eventually able to obtain a pass to travel to Bolzano, “with an all-German military column.” She was given “a letter of introduction” to an Italian man who lived in the city, whom she stayed with for two weeks before he asked her to leave. She met another acquaintance who assisted in getting a package to her parents. Soon after, she received a letter from her mother stating that her father had died in the camp on April 10. Colombo was in Bolzano on April 28 when the prisoners were released from the Bozen camp. She barely recognized her mother when she found her: “she weighed 39 kg, she was 1.72 tall.”¹¹⁶ After the war, Lidia discovered her husband's fate—“branded an anti-

prison see Liliana Picciotto Fargion, *Gli ebrei in provincia di Milano, 1943-1945: persecuzione e deportazione* (Milano: CDEC, 1992); and John Foot, “The tale of San Vittore: prisons, politics, crime and Fascism in Milan, 1943-1946,” *Modern Italy* 3, n.1 (1998): 25-48, doi:10.1080/13532949808454790.

¹¹⁴ CDEC, *Vicissitudini dei singoli*, 1/b.5, f.149. Lidia Colombo, written testimony.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Nazi and aider of Jews,” he was transferred to Mauthausen where he died on 23 June 1944. A fellow inmate recalled that Ceccatelli attempted to escape from the San Vittore prison, which prompted his deportation.¹¹⁷ The circumstances of her brother’s death are unknown. He was last seen being taken away from the San Vittore prison on 5 December 1943, but there is no record of his deportation.¹¹⁸

The trends of revenge, solidarity, bystanding and perpetration during the Nazi occupation of the Triveneto borderlands are complex and often overlapping. The few stories discussed in this chapter illustrate the multifaceted circumstances that led to the arrest, deportation, murder and survival of Jews in the region. Fascist Italy’s persecution of the Jews—the institution of the racial laws, spread of antisemitic propaganda, the census and the social death of Italian Jews—certainly destroyed many of the bonds of solidarity that existed between Catholic and Jewish Italians before the racial laws. Fascist Italy’s persecution of the Jews also assisted German forces in their program of extermination, the implementation of which was made possible through the collaboration of Italian officials, police and civilians and with the information and records collected by local administrative offices and racial institutions. The lists and records collected by Ettore Martinoli at the Centre for the Study of the Jewish Problem in Trieste and lists of Jewish residents in Venezia Tridentina that Fascist officials shared with the SS, were especially useful.¹¹⁹ Greed, revenge and feelings of domination led some to relish in the power that they had been given by the German occupiers. However, it is apparent that for some

¹¹⁷ Ibid. Statement by Paolo Arisi, 12 September 1945.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. “Promemoria.”

¹¹⁹ On Ettore Martinoli and the German occupation see Moehrl, *Judenverfolgung in Triest*, 428-429. On the list of Jews in Venezia Tridentina see Wedekind, *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien*, 353.

Italians, these bonds were not completely severed. Whether due to feelings of friendship, the Italian's unique definitions of Jewishness, or one's own unwillingness to assist in the arrests and deportations, some Jews were able to escape deportation and survive the war. In particular, Fascist Italy's decision to exclude many "mixed" Jews from their census and records had a significant impact on their chances of survival.

The trends of revenge and solidarity amongst the South Tyrolean, Slovenian and Italian communities in the Triveneto borderlands were equally complex. The arrival of the German army emboldened German South Tyroleans, many of whom felt greater affinity for the Nazis than the Fascists or their Italian neighbours. Crucially, feelings of hostility, resentment and revenge were also turned inward and directed at the German *Dableiber* who were seen as traitors. According to Wedekind, the persecution of the *Dableiber* by the SOD and Nazi officials was often harsher than the treatment experienced by Italians in the region.¹²⁰ In Venezia Giulia, the divisions between Italian and Slovenes remained in place, but some attempted to overcome these divisions. In their collective struggle against fascism and the Nazi occupiers, some Italians and Slovenes were able to overcome their mutual distrust to work alongside each other towards their common mission. Unfortunately, the feelings of solidarity between Italian and Slovene communists waned after the war, as both sides fought for control over the territories of Venezia Giulia. However, their ability to overcome decades of ethno-national conflict and to envision a world in which Italians and Slovenes could live as people with multi-layered identities and loyalties, and not as competing national groups, was profound and certainly contributed to the eventual defeat of the Fascist sympathizers and German occupiers who

¹²⁰ Wedekind, *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien*, 416.

continually tried to divide them. As will be discussed in the next section, the arrival of Italian refugees from the lost territories of Pola, Istria and Fiume, would also challenge the national solidarity between Italians on the peninsula and Italian from the eastern territories, who were often cast as communists and foreigners.

ESCAPE AND EXILE: THE TRIVENETO BORDERLANDS, 1945-1948

The Triveneto borderlands remained under Nazi occupation from September 1943 to May 1945. On 1 May 1945, Josip Broz Tito's Yugoslav 4th Army arrived in Trieste. Three months prior, Tito met with Allied powers at the Yalta Conference, where it was agreed that, upon reaching Venezia Giulia, the Allied and Yugoslavian forces would divide control over the region. British and American forces would occupy Trieste, Gorizia and regions northwest of the Isonzo River, and Yugoslavia would administer the former Italian lands of Istria, Dalmatia, Zara and Fiume. In violation of the agreements made at the Yalta Conference, Tito instructed Yugoslav forces to occupy Trieste. Between 1 May and 12 June, the Yugoslavian army terrorized the Italian population of Trieste, carrying out reprisals, deportations and "political murders" of known Fascists and any Italian who denied Yugoslavia's claim to Trieste. The Yugoslavian army and communist partisans were also accused of murdering Italian soldiers, police, and civilians in the *foibe*—large pits that are a common topographic feature of the Karst region of the Adriatic Littoral. In June 1945, control over the northeastern border region was split between the Anglo-American and Yugoslavian governments. Trieste, Gorizia, Udine and Pula were placed within Zone A under the administration of the Allied Military Government (AMG), while

Istria, Fiume, Postumia and Zadar were placed under the control of Tito's Communist Yugoslavia in Zone B. The ensuing border dispute would last almost 30 years.¹²¹

The end of the war effectively broke open the gates of the *Triveneto* borderlands. In the final months of the conflict, South Tyrol became an important place of refuge for prominent Nazis trying to escape capture by Allied forces.¹²² In his study of the “Nazi escape hatch” over the Brenner Pass, Gerald Steinacher discusses South Tyrol's “virtually ideal conditions” as a port of harbour for Nazi war criminals, which existed as a “sort of ‘no man's land’ territorially, but also politically.”¹²³ Many who sought refuge in South Tyrol would eventually make their way from Bolzano to Genoa and on to South America. Merano—dubbed the “El Dorado of Nazi Fascists”—also became a place of refuge and recovery for Jewish refugees and Holocaust survivors. South Tyrol was an important waystation for Jewish and Eastern European refugees attempting to leave the continent from the ports of Trieste and Genoa, enroute to Palestine, Canada, the United States and South America.¹²⁴ Around sixty-five ships transported Jewish refugees from Italian ports to Palestine between 1944-1948.¹²⁵

¹²¹ On Tito's occupation of Trieste and the post-war border dispute see Sluga, *The Problem of Trieste*; and Elysa McConnell, “International Disputes at the Italian-Yugoslavian Borderlands,” *Les Cahiers Sirice* 1, n.22 (2019): 117-134, doi:10.3917/lcsi.022.0117. On the foibe massacres see Gaia Baracetti, “Foibe: Nationalism, Revenge and Ideology in Venezia Giulia and Istria, 1943-45,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 44, n.4 (2009): 657-674, doi:10.1177/0022009409339344; Gianni Oliva, *Foibe: le stagi negate degli italiani della Venezia Giulia e dell'Istria* (Milano: Mondadori, 2002); and Pamela Ballinger, *History in Exile: Memory and Identity at the Borders of the Balkans* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

¹²² On the end of the war in South Tyrol see Eva Pfanzelter, “Kriegsende und amerikanische Verwaltung,” in *Südtirol Im Dritten Reich: NS-Herrschaft Im Norden Italiens, 1943-1945 = L'Alto Adige Nel Terzo Reich : L'occupazione Nazista nell'Italia Settentrionale* (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2003), 347-360.

¹²³ Gerald Steinacher, “‘The Cape of Last Hope’: The Postwar Flight of Nazi War Criminals through South Tyrol/Italy to South America,” in *Transatlantic Relations: Austria and Latin America in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, eds. Klaus Eisterer and Gunter Bischof (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2006), 205.

¹²⁴ On the “underground railway” that brought Jewish refugees from South Tyrol to Italy's southern ports, see Eva Pfanzelter, “Between Brenner and Bari: Jewish Refugees in Italy 1945 to 1948,” *Journal of Israeli History* 19, no.3 (1998): 83-104, doi:10.1080/13531049808576140.

¹²⁵ Federica Di Padova, “Jewish Displaced Persons in Italia (1945-1950),” *E-Review* 4 (2016): 2, doi:10.12977/ereview117.

In addition to the Nazi escapees and Jewish refugees, Italians repatriated to Italy *en masse* through the South Tyrolean pass.¹²⁶ In the first weeks of May 1945, between 2,000 to 6,000 people travelled through the province each day, but this number increased exponentially by the end of the month when 90,000 refugees arrived in the province.¹²⁷ The Allied government, with the assistance of the United National Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) and Red Cross, provided support for refugees and were responsible for the administration of displaced persons camps. One such camp was established at the Bozen-Gries *Durchgangslager*, renamed “Evacuation Camp 23 Bolzano” or IT 23. Thousands of forced labourers and displaced persons passed through the camp between the end of the war and the fall of 1949, staying for a short time until they were transported further south.¹²⁸

The responsibility for displaced persons in Italy was handed over to the Italians following the dissolution of the Allied Military Government in Bolzano on 31 December 1945. On 5 September 1946, the Italian Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi and Austrian Foreign Minister Karl Gruber signed the Gruber-De Gasperi Agreement. As part of the agreement, the Italian government provided assurances that it would respect and protect the cultural, linguistic and political rights of Germans living in South Tyrol, provide for the restoration of Italianized surnames, and work towards economic cooperation and the normalization of the movement of people and goods at the Italian-Austrian border.¹²⁹ In February 1947, almost thirty years after the signing of the Treaty of Saint Germain, Italian

¹²⁶ Pfanzerter, “Between Brenner and Bari,” 84.

¹²⁷ Gerald Steinacher, “Alto Adige come regione di transito dei rifugiati (1945-1950),” *Studi Emigrazione/Migration Studies* XLII, n.164 (2006): 823.

¹²⁸ Steinacher, “Alto Adige come regione,” 826.

¹²⁹ On the 1946 agreement see *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, Paris Conference: Documents*, vol. IV (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1970), 808-811.

claims to South Tyrol were once more affirmed by Europe's victorious powers. However, the citizenship of hundreds of thousands of South Tyroleans Optants—whom the “Italian government basically considered...to be foreigners”—was not resolved until the announcement of the “Optants Decree” in 1948.¹³⁰

Refugees from across Europe also made their way to Venezia Giulia and the port of Trieste. A great majority of these refugees were ethnic Italians fleeing the Yugoslavian-occupied territories of Dalmatia, Zara and Fiume—which came to be known as the *esodo* (exodus). The first wave of Italian refugees from the Adriatic arrived in Trieste and Udine in the fall of 1943 and included families and entire communities attempting to escape the Allied bombing campaigns and partisan violence. Before the Second World War, Zara/Zadar was home to “28,000 inhabitants...of which 24,000 were Italians and 4,000 were Croatians, Albanians and Serbs.”¹³¹ According to Elio Varutti, “from 2 November 1943 to 1 November 1944, the city suffered as many as 54 carpet bombings by the Anglo-American air force, destroying at least 85% of homes and killing civilians. On November 1, Tito's communist partisans arrived...3,000 were killed and 20,000 *zaratini* were forced into exile.”¹³²

The second and third waves of refugees comprised of individuals and families who opted to leave their homelands following their annexation to Tito's Yugoslavian regime after the Paris Peace Accords (1947) and London Memorandum (1954). The Paris Peace Accords of 1947 further solidified the re-territorialization of the Italian-Yugoslavian border in two ways. First, it marked the official transfer of the provinces of Zadar and

¹³⁰ Steinacher, “The Cape of Last Hope,” 208.

¹³¹ Elio Varutti, *Italiani d'Istria, Fiume e Dalmazia esuli in Friuli 1943-1960. Testimonianze di profughi giuliano dalmati a Udine e dintorni* (Udine: Provincia di Udine, 2017), 23.

¹³² Varutti, *Italiani d'Istria, Fiume e Dalmazia esuli in Friuli 1943-1960*, 23-24.

Fiume, and the annexation of Pula—originally part of Zone A—to Yugoslavia. Second, the treaty offered ethnic Italians in the annexed lands the option to emigrate to Italy and obtain Italian citizenship. The majority of Italians from the Adriatic chose to leave their ancestral homelands and retain their Italian citizenship. As Ballinger states, there were various “reasons for migration [including] outright persecutions and fear, to rejection of the communist nationalization of property and the creation of cooperatives to a desire to practice Catholicism without intimidation.”¹³³ In the case of Pula 28,000 of the region’s 32,000 inhabitants chose to



Map 7: Division of Venezia Giulia between Zone “A” and Zone “B” after the Second World War

Source: *American Foreign Policy 1950-55*, v.1 (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957), 420.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Confini_Trieste-Istria2.jpg#/media/File:Confini_Trieste-Istria2.jpg

remain in Italy.¹³⁴ In the city of Rovinj, “80% of the population chose exile,” due to their fears over the “inevitable effects of desertification and consequent economic decline” that

¹³³ Pamela Ballinger, “Borders of the Nation, Borders of Citizenship: Italian Repatriation and the Redefinition of National Identity after World War II,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49 no.3 (2007): 719. doi:10.1017/S001041757000680.

¹³⁴ Gustavo Corni, “The Exodus of Italians from Istria and Dalmatia, 1945-56,” in *The Disentanglement of Populations: Migration, Expulsion and Displacement in Postwar Europe, 1944-9*, eds. Jessica Reinisch and Elizabeth White (Basingstoke UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 81.

would result from the mass exodus.¹³⁵ The third wave of refugees arrived in Trieste in response to the withdrawal of the AMG from Zone A and the official return of Trieste to Italy. Many Italians who chose to stay in Istria believed that the Italian government would fight for its claim to the region. Yet over the years, it became apparent that the government was both unable and unwilling to continue fighting for Istria, and so in 1953-1954 “the final stage of the exodus began.”¹³⁶ According to Ballinger, “between 1943 and 1955, an estimated 200,000 to 350,000 persons emigrated from Istria.”¹³⁷

Following the end of the war and the signing of the Peace Accords, the Italian government and international aid organizations, such as the International Refugee Organization (IRO) worked to resettle and rehabilitate the countless DPs in the region. The region’s main internment camps, known as the *Centri di Raccolta Profughi* (CRP; or Refugee Collection Centers) included the Silos, Padriciano, San Sabba and Opicina. These camps were composed of run-down, dilapidated buildings with little space and no amenities. Some stayed in the Trieste CRPs for years, while others moved on immediately – often taken to the Refugee Distribution Centre in Udine where they were eventually relocated to camps within the peninsula.¹³⁸ A major concern for officials was the “sorting-out” of DPs between national and foreign refugees.¹³⁹ This “sorting-out” process became

¹³⁵ Patrizia Audenino, “Memoria ferita: esuli e rimpatriati nell’Italia repubblicana,” *Meridiana* no.86 (2016): 86.

¹³⁶ John Foot, “Memories of an Exodus: Istria, Fiume, Dalmatia, Trieste, Italy, 1943-2010,” in *Totalitarian Dictatorship: New Histories*, eds. Daniela Baratieri, Mark Edele and Giuseppe Finaldo. (New York: Routledge, 2014), 232.

¹³⁷ Ballinger, “Borders of the Nation, Borders of Citizenship,” 722.

¹³⁸ For more on the refugee system in Venezia Giulia see Varutti, *Italiani d’Istria, Fiume e Dalmazia esuli in Friuli 1943-1960*.

¹³⁹ Pamela Ballinger, “‘National Refugees’, Displaced Persons, and the Reconstruction of Italy: The Case of Trieste,” in *The Disentanglement of Populations: Migration, Expulsion and Displacement in Postwar Europe, 1944-9*, eds. Jessica Reinisch and Elizabeth White (Basingstoke UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 117.

more crucial following the announcement Peace Treaty of 1947, which instituted the “right to option” for Italian citizens residing in Italian territories before 10 June 1940. The option applied to individuals over eighteen who spoke Italian as their “customary language.”¹⁴⁰ Fearing that a large influx of “Balkan refugees” would challenge the “*civiltà* (civilization/civility) and *italanità*.” of the city, and further undermine Italy’s long-standing—if briefly interrupted—denationalizing efforts, both linguistic and ethnic criteria were employed to separate national and foreign DPs.¹⁴¹

Between 1943-1945, the Fascist RSI and Italian nationalist organizations tried to maintain Italy’s grasp over Venezia Tridentina and Venezia Giulia. During the period of Nazi occupation, Mussolini and the institutions of the RSI were unable to affirm Italian sovereignty in the regions, choosing instead to maintain cordial relations with the Nazi occupying forces at the expense of the borderlands. Italian administrative institutions were absorbed into the German system and used to carry out the policies of the occupying regime. Many Italian officials willingly collaborated with the Nazis, and some officials, such as Bruno Coceani, were able to preserve certain aspects of *italianità* while pushing back against the occupying regime’s pro-Germanic and pro-Slavic policies. Free from the repressive policies and institutions of the Fascist regime, German South Tyroleans and Slovenes in Venezia Giulia were given linguistic and cultural freedoms that had been withheld from them over twenty years. With these freedoms came furious retribution and the desire for the “settling of scores” between the *allogeni* and their Italian oppressors.

¹⁴⁰ “The Treaties of Peace of 1947 – (1) Treaty of Peace Between the Allied and Associated Powers and Italy, Paris, 10 February 1937,” in *International Law Documents, 1946-1947*, vol. XLV (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1948), 13.

¹⁴¹ Pamela Ballinger, “‘National Refugees’,” 126.

However, the trends of revenge and solidarity did not always align with ethnic divisions. In the Adriatic, Italian and Slovene partisans fought together to bring down their mutual enemies—Nazism and Fascism—while some German South Tyroleans were persecuted by Nazi officials and members of their own community. Venezia Tridentina and Venezia Giulia, which had once been a place of refuge for Italian and foreign Jews, became one of the most dangerous spaces in all of Italy. While some Italians willingly assisted in the arrest and internment of their Jewish neighbours, others—including family, friends, strangers and police officers—attempted to prevent their capture and deportation.

The end of the Fascist “redemptive struggle” in the borderlands did not mark the end of Italy’s fight for the borderlands. In the post-war period, the Italian government and nationalist organizations continued to promote the Italian character and heritage of these regions and worked to ensure that they would be reintegrated into the new Republic. It is apparent that Trento and Trieste were not merely unimportant Fascist symbols that could easily be done away with. Since the First World War, the redemption of the borderlands had become a central pillar of the Italian national myth, and this myth had permeated the psyche of the Italian national community, which took up the redemptive struggle after the fall of fascism. However, to the dismay of the exiled Italians, the Italian government would only go so far in their fight for the Adriatic lands that had been lost to Yugoslavia. The war-weary government instead focused on rebuilding the nation after the Fascist *ventennio* and Nazi occupation, and on protecting the borderlands from communists and “Balkan refugees” who threatened to undermine these efforts. The Italian-Austrian and Italian-Yugoslavian borderlands continued to exist as spaces of conflict for Italians, South Tyroleans and Slovenes for the remainder of the century. In the hearts of some, this

conflict continues today, more than a century after the rise of Mussolini and the Fascist nation-state.

CONCLUSION

FASCIST REDEMPTION AND THE “PROBLEM” OF NATIONAL MINORITIES

An examination of the borderland Italianization and antisemitic programs through the theme of redemption enriches our understanding of the conditions that led to the radicalization of Fascist minority policies and offers new insights into the long-term development of the Fascist ideological program. In the latter half of the 19th century, the Trento and Trieste movement transformed from a fringe regional movement to one of the most important symbols of Italian nationalism in the pre-war era. After the war, irredentist narratives and the idea of *Italia irredenta* helped to shape the narratives of unity, identity and sacrifice at the foundation of the Fascist revolution. Although Mussolini was not himself an irredentist, his time in Trento and experience of irredentism influenced his turn from socialism to nationalism and helped to shape his rhetorical style and philosophy. His early experience with pan-Germanism also shaped his approach to the “Teutonic menace” and the redemption of the borderlands throughout his time in power.

Following the eruption of the Great War, irredentism became an important pillar of the nationalist and interventionist movements which pushed Italy to join the war on the side of the Entente. Throughout the conflict, the geographic redemption of the borderlands became a symbol of national regeneration and unification. Yet, by the war’s end, the victory and sacrifice of the Italian nation had been marred by rumors of the *vittoria mutilata*, the controversy over Italy’s territorial claims, the criticisms of the Liberal government’s failure at the treaty negotiations, and the economic and political crisis of the *biennio rosso*. In the wake of these crises, fascism presented itself as the only movement

with the strength and will to overcome the internal and external threats and weaknesses which attempted to undermine Italian victory, unity and sovereignty.

Following their ascension to power in the 1920s, the Fascist redemptive struggle strove to regenerate and elevate the Italian nation through the creation of a collective being and spirit based on Italian-Fascist concepts of identity, morality, duty and spirit. Under fascism and united by their common language, culture, will and purpose, Fascist supporters believed that the Italian national community would finally be able to carry out its sacred mission and establish Italy as a great power within Europe and its ever-expanding empire. The *allogeni* posed a major obstacle to this redemptive-regenerative project, as the presence of ethno-linguistic Others within the national borders undermined the basis of Italian sovereignty in the region and prevented the creation of a united national community.

In order to shape and control the Italian national community, the Fascist regime established a hierarchy of Others based on an ever-evolving criteria of inclusion and othering. Throughout the *ventennio* the government attempted to bring the national community closer to the Fascist centre through the eradication of difference and dissonance. In the first decade of Mussolini's dictatorship, assimilation and Italianization were the main methods through which the regime attempted to suppress and absorb Others. The passage of the *leggi fascistissime* endowed the Fascist government with far-reaching legal powers which enabled them to carry out their repressive policies. Through the incorporation of the borderlands into the legal, political and administrative framework of the Italian state, the spread of *italianità* through the education system and the press, and the repression of "foreign" influences, fascism would reawaken the Italian heart of the

allogeni and redraw the mental maps of the borderland communities. Wielding the powers of the law, police and state administration Fascist officials worked to identify, survey and weed out subversive Others and “enemies-within”—all in the name of redemption and unification. However, by the end of the decade it became apparent that the “assimilatory force” of *italianità* and repressive boundary-drawing practices could not fully erase the “foreignness” of the *allogeni*. The Fascist regime’s inability to “make Italians” out of the *allogeni* undermined the narratives of cultural superiority that formed the basis of nationalist, irredentist and Fascist myths, and contributed to the demise of assimilationism and the rise of a new racial-redemptive model.

No single event instigated the Fascist regime’s transition from assimilation to racial exclusion. Changes at both the national and international level contributed to the radicalization of Fascist solutions to the “problem” of minorities. The expansion and fortification of the Fascist state following the passage of the *leggi fascistissime* provided the government with virtually unchecked powers over the public and private lives of citizens and were essential for the implementation of both the borderland Italianization campaign and racial laws. The expansion of Fascist authoritarian powers also impacted the government’s approach to foreign policy, which in turn influenced internal policies and procedures. In the immediate post-war period, the rise of socialism across Europe and in Italy, the contentious peace treaty negotiations, and the challenges to Italian claims to the new provinces—brought against Italy by members of the international community, governments in neighbouring states, and the Germanic and Slavic-language communities in the borderlands—all contributed to the growth of the Fascist movement and the adoption of increasingly repressive measures against the *allogeni*. That is not to say that

these repressive measure can be solely explained as a consequence of the continuing controversy surrounding Italian claims, but rather that these challenges heightened the importance of the borderland redemptive struggle within the Fascist program and made finding a solution to the minority problem a more pressing concern. In the first years of the Fascist regime, Mussolini often prioritized foreign policy goals over the Italianization program, as Fascist denationalization policies threatened the normalization of relations with the Yugoslavian and Austrian governments. Following the establishment of the *leggi fascistissime*, Mussolini's approach to foreign policy and Italianization became more aggressive and less conciliatory. This new mood was also influenced by the shifting geopolitical situation—including Germany's resurgence after the Locarno Treaty and Yugoslavia's turn to the Little Entente—and by Mussolini's frustration over what he perceived to be foreign infringement into the national sphere, as seen with the “battle of words” between Mussolini and Stresemann and the numerous and widely publicized protests against Fascist Italianization policies in the borderlands by the Austrian and Yugoslavian public.

The continued, if not always consistent, pressure that foreign governments placed on Mussolini and Fascist officials to rollback their oppressive Italianization policies, the borderland communities' protests and resistance to these policies, and Italian fascism's own prejudices towards ethnolinguistic Others led many in the regime to question the efficacy of the assimilationist project by the end of the 1920s. In 1928, we see evidence of *Il Duce* himself acknowledging that assimilation could not eradicate difference amongst a group of people who were increasingly seen as unassimilable Others. The demise of assimilation led Fascist officials to seek out a new model for the eradication of difference,

which would require a reconceptualization of the narratives and criteria of inclusion and belonging.

Through an examination of the shift from assimilation to racial exclusion, it becomes clear that this transition began at the end of the 1920s when Mussolini and other Fascist officials began to question the feasibility of the assimilationist model. Around the same time that Mussolini began to express his concerns over the regime's inability to assimilate the *allogeni*, he started to publicly—although anonymously—question the character and loyalty of Italy's Jewish minority. Mussolini's calls for "clarification" of whether the Jews constituted a "religion or a nation" was reflective of his greater concerns over the assimilationist model, which formed the bedrock of Jewish integration into the national community. The growth of the Zionist movement and questions over the "foreignness" and "dual loyalties" of Jews in Italy propelled antisemitism from the fringes of society to its centre.

The rise of Nazism, the Anschluss, Italy's invasion of Ethiopia, and the growing friendship between Hitler and Mussolini only furthered the demise of Fascist assimilationism. Increasing fears over the security of the Italian state and its borders, the weakness of the Italian people, the permeation of enemies and subversives, and most importantly, the failure of the assimilationist model to protect the Italian national community from sources of corruption and decay, propelled the Fascist state towards a racial model in the 1930s. In this new era, redemption would be won through the separation and exclusion of racial Others, regardless of an individual's efforts to assimilate or their previous inclusion in Italian society, as seen with the Jews and the *mettici*. Ultimately, the Fascist government's attempts to build a racial hierarchy and to assert total

control over the borderlands would not result in the affirmation of Italian sovereignty and supremacy, and fascism's repressive policies would ultimately contribute to its demise. The arrival of German forces in 1943 unleashed a "nexus of violence" that resulted in the internment, deportation and death of thousands of civilians, soldiers and partisans in the Triveneto borderlands. However, trends of retribution and solidarity did not always follow ethnic divisions, as might be expected. Germanization policies in South Tyrol and the harassment of Italian officials and locals by Nazi occupying forces and South Tyrolean police did lead many Italians to leave the region, however German authorities and South Tyrolean *Optanten* also persecuted and punished the *Dablieber* and those who spoke out against unification with the Third Reich. In Venezia Giulia, Slovene and Italian communists and partisans worked together to subvert and attack Nazi occupying forces. Finally, many "mixed" Jews were able to evade arrest and deportation due to the unique Italian definitions of "Jewishness," which posited that "mixed" Jews continued to be part of the Italian national community, despite their Jewish heritage.

The contradictions which shaped Fascist minority policies are astounding and difficult to explain. The Fascists strove to "make Italians" out of communities which they acknowledged to be ethnically, culturally and linguistically Other, thereby undermining the criteria for inclusion (language, culture, consent, etc.) at the basis of the Italian national community. Even individuals who identified as Italian and supported Italianization, such as the Trentini or *allogeni* who attempted to adhere to the Italianization policies and integrate into Italian society, were treated as foreigners and subversives. Regarding antisemitism, Mussolini had spent over a decade denying its existence and on numerous

occasions acknowledged Italian Jewry to be enthusiastic supporters of *italianità*, fascism and the *patria*. And yet, Mussolini betrayed the Jewish community, painting them as foreign and racial Others working against the state. By casting the Jews from the national community Mussolini, once again, contradicted the criteria for inclusion and belonging that formed the bedrock of the Italian nation.

Many of these contradictions stemmed from the ambiguous and ever-changing relationship between fascism and the nation-state, yet fascism is not wholly to blame for these contradictions. They had their origin in the era of Unification and irredentism, and the difficulties in creating a unified national community from a populace characterized by innumerable regional differences and narratives of racial heterogeneity. These contradictions also stemmed from opposing concepts of the boundaries of the nation and the basis of sovereignty—i.e., whether the boundaries of the nation existed at its “natural borders” or at the “ethno-linguistic” frontier. Fascism attempted to address these contradictions by aligning the natural border with ethnolinguistic boundaries, and by unifying the Italian people in both being and spirit. However, fascism was itself a product of these contradictions—it praised Italy’s victory while scorning its defeat, it celebrated the nation’s assimilatory powers while fretting over the presence of Others, and eventually, it would promote the strength of the “race” as it criticized and condemned the weakness of the Italian people. As such, the government adopted contradictory approaches to tackle the immensely difficult task of unifying the nation. Over time, the eradication of difference through exclusion, not assimilation, became the focal point of the Fascist program.

Despite fascism’s many contradictions, the regime was consistent in its desire to bring about the redemption of the nation and unification of the Italian populace through

any means necessary. As such, the shift towards the racial program should not be seen as a deviation from the early redemptive program, but as a consequence of both its successes and shortcomings. Through the borderland assimilationist programs, the Fascist regime developed many of the narratives and procedures that were later adopted for the racial program, while also learning about the limitations of the assimilationist model in “facing modernity,” or more precisely, in creating the modernity that fascism envisioned. Furthermore, the institution of the racial laws did not mark a total deviation from the hierarchy of Others already in place. Instead, it was based on a more exclusive and exclusionary vision of this hierarchy, in which Others were not drawn closer to the Fascist centre, but were fixed to the outer realms where their “corrupting” influence could be controlled and nullified. As this study has shown, by placing the racial laws in conversation with the borderland assimilationist programs we can better understand the progression of Fascist minority policies as part of a greater redemptive program, while gaining greater insights into the causes and consequences of the regime’s changing conceptions of identity and belonging.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

ARCHIVIO DI STATO DI TRIESTE (ASTs) – TRIESTE, ITALY

Archivio di Stato di Trieste (ASTs), Prefettura di Trieste, Gabinetto (1922-1954) (PTG).

ASTs, PTG, busta 43, fascicolo 068

ASTs, PTG, b.61, f.068

ASTs, PGT, b.103, c.068

ASTs, PGT, b.142, c .068

ASTs, PTG, b. 151, f. 068

ASTs, PGT, b.192, f.068

ASTs, PGT, b.366, f.068

ARCHIVIO CENTRALE DELLO STATO (ACS) – ROME, ITALY

Archivio Centrale dello Stato (ACS), Ministero dell'Interno, Divisione affari generali e riservati (1870-1958) (MI-DAGR).

ACS, MI-DAGR, A18, b.1

ACS, MI-DAGR, A18, b.2

ACS, Ministero dell'Interno, Gabinetto, Archivio Generale, RSI Affari generali 1942-1945 (MIG-RSI).

ACS, MIG-RSI, b.6

FONDAZIONE CENTRO DI DOCUMENTAZIONE EBRAICA CONTEMPORANEA (CDEC) – MILAN, ITALY

Archivio Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea (CDEC), Vicissitudini dei singoli, Serie 1, 1938-1997.

CDEC, Vicissitudini dei singoli, 1/b.3, f.86.

CDEC, Vicissitudini dei singoli, 1/b.5, f.149

CDEC, Vicissitudini dei singoli, 1/b.10, f.297

CDEC, Vicissitudini dei singoli, 1/b.10, f.303

CDEC, Vicissitudini dei singoli, 1/b.12, f.351

CDEC, Vicissitudini dei singoli, 1/b.13, f.364

CDEC, Vicissitudini dei singoli, 1/b.14, f.411

CDEC, Vicissitudini dei singoli, 1/b.17, f.496

UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM (USHMM) – WASHINGTON, D.C.

RG-40.015M, Selected Records from the Prefettura di Trieste, 1938-1944. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington DC.

RG-40.030M, Selected Records from the Prefettura di Trieste, 1938-1944. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC.

RG-59.006M, Foreign Office General Correspondence, FO 371. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington DC.

PRIMARY SOURCES

EDITED & PRINTED SOURCES

Barone Quaranta di San Servino, Bernardo, ed. *Mussolini as Revealed in his Political Speeches*. London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1923.

Battisti, Cesare. *Il Trentino: Saggio di Geografia Fisica e di Antropogeografia*. Trento: Giovanni Zippel Editore, 1898.

-----*Il Trentino Italiano*. Milano: Ravà & Co., 1915.

Bidussa, David ed. *Scritti e discorsi 1904-1945*. Milano: Giangiaco Feltrinelli Editore, 2022.

Collotti, Enzo. *Il fascismo e gli ebrei. Le leggi razziali in Italia*. Rome: Editori Laterza, 2008.

----- Dicharazione sulla razza della Gran Consiglio del Fascismo del 6-7 ottobre 1938, 187-190.

----- RDL 5 settembre 1938-XVI, n.1930, 190-191.

----- RDL 15 novembre 1938-XVII, N.1779, 191-193.

----- RDL 17 novembre 1938-XVII, n. 1728, 193-197.

Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, Paris Conference: Documents, vol. IV, Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1970.

- Freiberg, Walter and Josef Fontana. *Südtirol und der Italienische Nationalismus: Entstehung und Entwicklung einer europäischen Minderheitenfrage. Teil 2: Dokumente*. Innsbruck: Wagner, 1990.
- Gentile, Giovanni. *Il fascismo al governo della scuola (novembre '22-aprile '24): Discorse e interviste*. Palermo: Sandron, 1924.
- H.L. "Italy, Yugoslavia and the Danube Basin." *Bulletin of Internationale News* 13, no. 21 (April 17, 1937).
- Herder, Johann Gottfried von "Materials for the Philosophy of the History of Mankind, 1784," *Modern History Sourcebook*, Fordham University.
- International Law Documents, 1946-1947*, vol. XLV. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1948.
- Jäckel, Eberhard and Alex Kuhn, eds. *Hitler: Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen, 1905-1924*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1980.
- Lorenzoni, Giovanni. *Cesare Battisti and the Trentino*. New York: Italian Bureau of Public Information, 1919.
- Ludwig, Emil. *Talks with Mussolini*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1933.
- Mazzini, Joseph. "General Instructions for the Members of Young Italy." In *Joseph Mazzini: His Life, Writings and Political Principles*. New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1872.
- The Duties of Man and Other Essays*. London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1961.
- Momigliano, Arnaldo. *Pagine ebraiche*, edited by Silvia Berti. Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1987.
- Mussolini, Benito. *Il Trentino veduto da un socialista, Note e Notizie*. Firenze: Casa Editrice Italiana, 1911.
- Opera omnia*, edited by E. and D. Susmel, 44 vols. Florence, 1951-1960, Rome 1978-1980. [hereafter BMOO].
 BMOO XII
 BMOO XVI.
 BMOO XXII
 BMOO XXIX
- Orano, Paolo. *Gli ebrei in Italia*. Roma: Pinciana, 1937.

Pitteri, Riccardo. *Discorsi per la Lega Nazionale*. Rome: Editori Alfieri & Lacroix, 1919.

Renan, Ernest. "What is a Nation?" Text of a conference delivered at the Sorbonne on March 11, 1882. In *Que'est-ce qu'une nation?* Translated by Ethan Rundell. Paris: Presses-Pocket, 1992.

Reut-Nicolussi, Eduard. *Tyrol: Under the Axe of Italian Fascism*, translated by K.L. Montgomery. London: George Allen & Undwin Ltd, 1930.

Saffi, Aurelio. "Mazzini e i confine d'Italia. Lettera al circolo 'Garibaldi' di Trieste. Bologna, 2 marzo 1886" In *Ricordi e Scritti di Aurelio Saffi*, vol. XIV, 233-237. Florence: Tipografia Barbèra, 1905.

Kacin-Wohinz, Milica. "Italo Sauro's 'Memorandum' of 9 December 1939." In "La Minoranza Sloveno-Croata sotto l'Italia Fascista." *Quaderni VIII* (1984-1985: 137-139.

NEWSPAPERS & JOURNALS

Archivio per l'Alto Adige *VXIII* (1923); *XXII* (1927); *XXIV* (1929).

Avanti! (1914)

Corriere della Sera (1904)

Der Tiroler (1920)

Gerarchia (1927)

Il Piccolo (1904; 1921; 1923; 1926; 1938) and *Il Piccolo della Sera* (1921)

La Stampa (1921)

New York Times (1904; 1911; 1913; 1915; 1917-1919; 1921-1922; 1923; 1925-1931; 1933)

Popolo di Roma (1928)

The Atlantic (1920)

The Times (1923; 1925-1926)

SECONDARY SOURCES

- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. Revised Edition. London: Verso, 2016.
- Anderson, Malcolm. *Frontiers: Territory and State Formation in the Modern World*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996.
- Ara, Angelo and Claudio Magris. *Trieste Un'Identità Frontiera*. Torino: Giulio Einaudi, 2015.
- Audenino, Patrizia. "Memoria ferita: esuli e rimpatriati nell'Italia repubblicana." *Meridiana* no. 86 (2016): 79-96.
- Bajc, Gorazd. "Crimes Committed by the Fascist Regime in the Slovene Territory." In *Crimes Committed by Totalitarian Regimes*, edited by Peter Jambrek, 125-134. Ljubljana: Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 2008.
- Ballinger, Pamela. *History in Exile: Memory and Identity at the Borders of the Balkans*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.
- 'National Refugees', Displaced Persons, and the Reconstruction of Italy: The Case of Trieste." In *The Disentanglement of Populations: Migration, Expulsion and Displacement in Postwar Europe, 1944-9*, edited by Jessica Reinisch and Elizabeth White, 115-140. Basingstoke UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- "Borders of the Nation, Borders of Citizenship: Italian Repatriation and the Redefinition of National Identity after World War II." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49 no. 3 (2007): 713-741.
doi:10.1017/S001041757000680.
- Baracetti, Gaia. "Foibe: Nationalism, Revenge and Ideology in Venezia Giulia and Istria, 1943-45." *Journal of Contemporary History* 44, no. 4 (2009): 657-674.
doi:10.1177/0022009409339344.
- Barocci, Antonio. "Political arrest of women under fascism: gender and the special tribunal in Italy 1926-1928." *GeoJournal* 87 (2002): 749-764.
- Barsotti, Edoardo Marcello. *At the Roots of Italian Identity: 'Race' and 'Nation' in the Italian Risorgimento, 1796-1870*. New York: Routledge, 2021.
- Bartolini, Stefano. *Fascismo antislavo: Il tentativo d "bonifica etnica" al confine nord orientale*. Pistoia: I.R.S.Pt Editore, 2008.

- Baud, Michiel and Willem Van Schendel. "Towards a Comparative History of Borderlands." *Journal of World History* 8, no. 2 (1997): 211-242. doi:10.1353/jwh.2005.0061.
- Baxa, Paul. "'Il Nostro Duce': Mussolini's visit to Trieste in 1938 and the workings of the cult of the Duce." *Modern Italy: Journal of the Association for the Study of Modern Italy* 18, no. 2 (2013): 117-128. doi:10.1080/13532944.2013.781836.
- Ben-Ghiat, Ruth and Mia Fuller. *Italian Colonialism*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008.
- Ben-Ghiat, Ruth. "When Fascist aggression in Ethiopia sparked a movement of Black solidarity." *The Washington Post*, 3 August 2020.
- Bernhard, Patrick. "Blueprints of Totalitarianism: How Racist Policies in Fascist Italy Inspired and Informed Nazi Germany." *Fascism (Liedon)* 6, no. 2 (2017): 127-162. doi:10.1163/22116257-00602001.
- Bernard, Paul P. "Joseph II and the Jews: The Origins of the Toleration Patent of 1782." *Austrian History Yearbook* 4 (1968): 101-119. doi:10.1017/S0067237800013163.
- Bertolini, Frida. "Gonars." In *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos 1933-1945, Volume III: Camps and Ghettos under European Regimes Aligned with Nazi Germany*, edited by Joseph R. White, 432. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018.
- Bertrand, Charles. "The Biennio Rosso: Anarchists and Revolutionary Syndicalists in Italy, 1919-1920." *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques* 9, no. 3 (1982): 383-402.
- Bidussa, David. *Il mito del bravo italiano*. Milan: il Saggiatore, 1994.
- Biguzzi, Stefano. "A Revolutionary in Trentino." In *Mussolini 1883-1915: Triumph and Transformation of a Revolutionary Socialist*, edited by Spencer M. Di Scala and Emilio Gentile, 97-103. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
- Bon, Silva. *Gli ebrei a Trieste, 1930-1945: identità, persecuzione, risposte*. Gorizia: Libreria Editrice Goriziana, 2000.
- *Un Fascista Imperfetto: Enrico Paolo Salem, podesta "ebreo" di Trieste*. Gorizia: Grafica Goriziana, 2009.
- Bosworth, R.J.B. *Mussolini*, 2nd ed. London: Bloomsbury, 2010.

- Brambilla, Chiara, Jussi Laine, James W. Scott and Gianluca Bocchi, eds.
Borderscaping: Imaginations and Practices of Border Making. New York: Routledge, Publisher, 2016.
- Brighi, Elisabetta. *Foreign Policy, Domestic Politics and International Relations*. London: Routledge, 2013.
- Brustein, William. "The 'Red Menace' and the Rise of Italian Fascism." *American Sociological Review* 56, no. 5 (1991): 652-664. doi:10.2307/2096086.
- Campbell, Ian. *The Addis Ababa Massacre: Italy's National Shame*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Capano, Fabio. "From a Cosmopolitan to a Fascist Land: Adriatic Irredentism in Motion." *Nationalities Papers* 46, no. 6 (2018): 976-991. doi:10.1080/00905992.2017.1344626.
- Capogreco, Carlo Spartaco and Jens Hoppe. "Arbe." In *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos 1933-1945, Volume III: Camps and Ghettos under European Regimes Aligned with Nazi Germany*, edited by Joseph R. White, 540-543. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018.
- Capogreco, Carlo Spartaco. *Mussolini's Camps: Civilian Internment in Fascist Italy (1940-1943)*. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019.
- Carpi, Daniel, Federica Francesconi and Susan Zuccotti. "Bolzano," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., edited by Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 50-51. Vol. 4. Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007.
- Cassata, Francesco. *Building the New Man: Eugenics, Racial Science and Genetics in Twentieth-Century Italy*. Translated by Erin O'Loughlin. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011.
- Cassels, Alan. "Mussolini and German Nationalism, 1922-1925." *The Journal of Modern History* 35, no. 2 (1963): 137-157. doi:10.1086/243656.
- *Mussolini's Early Diplomacy*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970.
- Catalan, Tullia. "The Ambivalence of a Port City. The Jews of Trieste from the 19th to the 20th Century." *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of Fondazione CDEC*, no. 2 (October 2011): 69-98. doi:10.48248/issno.2037-741X/747
- Cattaruzza, Marina. *Italy and Its Eastern Border, 1866-2016*. Translated by Daniela Gobetti. New York: Routledge, 2017.

- Čermelj, Lavo. *Life-and-Death Struggle of a National Minority: The Yugoslavs in Italy*, 2nd ed. Ljubljana: Tiskarna Ljudske Pravice v Ljubljana, 1945.
- Clark, Martin. *The Italian Risorgimento*. 2nd edition. London: Routledge, 2013.
- Cole John W. and Eric R. Wolf. *The Hidden Frontier*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.
- Cole, Laurence. "Divided Land, Diverging Narratives: Memory Cultures of the Great War in the Successor Regions of Tyrol." In *Sacrifice and Rebirth: The Legacy of the Last Habsburg War*, edited by Mark Cornwall and John Paul Newman, 18:258-286. New York: Berghahn Books, 2018.
- Collotti, Enzo. *Il fascismo e gli ebrei. Le leggi razziali in Italia*. Rome: Editori Laterza, 2008.
- "Sul razzismo antislavo." In *Nel nome della razza. Il razzismo nella storia d'Italia, 1870-1945*, edited by Alberto Burgio, 33-61. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1999.
- Corni, Gustavo. "The Exodus of Italians from Istria and Dalmatia, 1945-56." In *The Disentanglement of Populations: Migration, Expulsion and Displacement in Postwar Europe, 1944-9*, edited by Jessica Reinisch and Elizabeth White, 71-90. Basingstoke UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Crawford, Timothy W. "The Entente Realigns Italy, 1915." In *The Power to Divide: Wedge Strategies in Great Power Competition*, 72-85. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2021.
- Cuzzi, Marco. *L'occupazione italiana della Slovenia (1941-1943)*. Roma: Stato Maggiore dell'esercito, Ufficio storico, 1998.
- Dai Prà, Elena and Nicola Gabellieri. "Bridging geographical research and political action: the Trentino Italian region in the scientific and socialist writings of Cesare Battisti, 1895-1914." *Journal of Historical Geography* 71 (January 2021): 83-93. doi:10.1016/j.jhg.2021.01.005.
- Dagnino, Jorge. "The Myth of the New Man in Italian Fascist Ideology." *Fascism* 5 (2016): 130-148. doi:10.1163/22116257-00502003.
- Dalle Mulle, Emmanuel and Alessandro Ambrosino. "The 1939 Option Agreement and the 'Consistent Ambivalence' of Fascist Policies towards Minorities in the Italian New Provinces." *The Historical Journal* 66, no. 4 (2023): 887-908. doi:10.1017/S0018246X23000158.

- De Felice, Renzo. *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo*. Turin: Einaudi, 1961.
- *Mussolini Il Rivoluzionario, 1883-1920*. Turin: Einaudi, 1965.
- *Il problema dell'Alto Adige nei rapporti itali-tedeschi dall'Anschluss alla fine della seconda Guerra mondiale*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1973.
- *The Jews in Fascist Italy: A History*. New York: Enigma Books, 2001.
- De Grand, Alexander. "Mussolini's Follies: Fascism in Its Imperial and Racist Phase, 1935- 1940." *Contemporary European History* 13, no. 2 (2004): 127-147. doi: 10.1017/S0960777304001602.
- De Grazia, Victoria. *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.
- Del Boca, Angelo. *Italiani, brava gente? un mito duro a morire*. Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 2005.
- Delanty, Gerard. "Borders in a Changing Europe: Dynamics of Openness and Closure." *Comparative European Politics* 4, no. 2/3 (2006): 183–202. doi:10.1057/palgrave.cep.6110073.
- DiScala, Spencer. *Italy from Revolution to Republic, 1700 to the present*. Boulder: Westview Press, 2009.
- Di Capua, Giovanni. *Faccetta Nera, canti dell'ebbrezza fascista*, Saggi, critici, testi, spartiti, commeti. Scipioni: Valentano, 2000.
- Di Michele, Andrea. *L'Italianizzazione imperfetta: L'amministrazione pubblica dell'Alto Adige tra Italia liberale e fascismo*. Alessandria IT: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2003.
- "Trento, Bolzano e Innsbruck: L'occupazione Militare Italiana del Tirolo (1918-1920)." In *Trento e Trieste: Percorsi degli italiani d'Austria dal '48 all'annessione*, edited by Fabrizio Rasera, 427-442. Roverto: Accademia roveretana degli agiati, 2014.
- "I podestà italiani della provincial Bolzano," GR/SR 8 (1999): 51-103.
- "Fascismo e prefetti a Bolzano." In *La regione Trentino Alto Adige/Südtirol nel XX secolo* (2007): 203-217.
- ed., *Geschichte und Region/Storia e regione 25/1 (2016): Abessinien und Spanien: Kriege und Erinnerung/Dall'Abissinia alla Spagna: Guerra e memoria*. Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2016.

- “Fascist Monuments on the Border. The Case of Bolzano/Bozen, South Tyrol,” in *Rethinking Fascism: The Italian and German Dictatorships*, edited by Andrea Di Michele and Filippo Focardi, 247-274. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022.
- “The Fascist view of the ‘allogeni’ in the borderlands.” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 28, no. 1 (2023): 90-112. doi:10.1080/1354571X.2022.2122369.
- Di Padova, Federica. “Jewish Displaced Persons in Italia (1945-1950),” *E-Review* 4 (2016): 1-10. doi:10.12977/ereview117.
- Dubin, Lois C. *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste: Absolutist Politics and Enlightenment Culture*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999.
- “Researching Port Jews and Port Jewries: Trieste and Beyond.” In *Port Jews. Jewish Communities in Cosmopolitan Maritime Trading Centres, 1550-1950*, edited by David Cesarani, 47-89. London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2002.
- Ebner, Michael. *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini’s Italy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Elazar, Dahlia Sabine. “Class, State, and Counter-Revolution: The Fascist Seizure of Power in Italy, 1919-1922.” *European Sociological Review* 16, no. 3 (2000): 301-321.
- Ellery, Eloise. “Mussolini’s Warlike Threats to Germany.” *Current History (1916-1940)* 23, n.6 (March 1926): 906-911.
- Ermacora, Matteo. “Assistance and Surveillance: War Refugees in Italy, 1914-1918.” *Contemporary European History* 16, no. 4 (2007): 445–59. doi:10.1017/S0960777307004110.
- Fabre, Giorgio. “L’informazione Diplomatica no. 14 del febbraio 1938.” *La Rassenga mensile di Israel* 72, no. 2 (2007): 45-101.
- Fait, Francesco ed. *The Risiera of San Sabba. Monumento Nazionale*. Trieste: Comune di Trieste, 2016.
- Ferrandi, Maurizio. *Il nazionalista. Ettore Tolomei. L’uomo che inventò l’Alto Adige*. Merano: Alpha & Beta Verlag, 2020.
- Finaldi, Giuseppe. *Mussolini and Italian Fascism*, 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2013.
- Fölkel, Ferruccio and Frediano Sessi. *La Risiera di San Sabba*. Milano: BUR, 2000.

- Foot, John. "The tale of San Vittore: prisons, politics, crime and Fascism in Milan, 1943-1946." *Modern Italy* 3, no. 1 (1998): 25-48. doi:10.1080/13532949808454790.
- "Memories of an Exodus: Istria, Fiume, Dalmatia, Trieste, Italy, 1943-2010." In *Totalitarian Dictatorship: New Histories*, edited by Daniela Baratieri, Mark Edele and Giuseppe Finaldo, 244-262. New York: Routledge, 2014.
- Fredrickson, George M. *Racism: A Short History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.
- Friedländer, Saul. *Nazi Germany and the Jews, Volume 1: The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1998.
- *Nazi Germany and the Jews, Volume 2: The Years of Extermination, 1939-1945*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2008.
- Frizzera, Francesco. *Cittadini dimenzati: I profughi trentini in Austria-Ungheria e in Italia (1914-1919)*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2018.
- Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism*. Malden MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.
- Gentile, Emilio. *La Grande Italia: The Myth of the Nation in the Twentieth Century*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009.
- Giacomozzi, Carla and Giuseppe Paleari. *The Concentration Camp in Bolzano: Pictures and Documents of the Nazi Concentration Camp in Bolzano (1944-1945)*. Bolzano: City of Bolzano Dept. of Cultural Affairs Historical Archives, 2003.
- Gibelli, Antonio. "Italy." In *A Companion to World War I*, edited by John Horne and translated by Paul O'Brien, 464-465. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell: 2010.
- Gillette, Aaron. *Racial Theories in Fascist Italy*. London: Routledge, 2001.
- "The origins of the 'Manifesto of racial scientist.'" *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 6, no.3 (2001): 305-323. doi:10.1080/13545710110084253.
- Giorcelli, Giuliano. *Il battaglione "Davide": Piemonte, Trieste San Sabba, Jugoslavia, 1944-45: cronaca e storia*. Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2014.
- Goeschel, Christian. *Mussolini and Hitler: The Forging of the Fascist Alliance*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018.
- Graziosi, Mariolina. "Gender Struggle and the Social Manipulation and Ideological Use of Gender Identity in the Interwar Years." In *Mothers of Invention: Women*,

- Italian Fascism, and Culture*, edited by Robin Pickering-Iazzi, 26-51. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1995.
- Grote, Georg. *The South Tyrol Question, 1866-2010: From National Rage to Regional State*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2012.
- Grote, Georg and Hannes Obermair eds., *A Land on the Threshold: South Tyrolean Transformations, 1915-2015*. Bern: Peter Lang AG, International Academic Publishers, 2017.
- Guerrazzi, Amedeo Osti. *The Italian Army in Slovenia: Strategies of Antipartisan Repression, 1941-1943*. Translated by Elizabeth Burke and Anthony Majanlahti. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Gunther, Eyeck F. *Loyal Rebels. Andreas Hofer and the Tyrolean Uprising of 1809*. Lanham, MD: U.P. of America, 1986.
- Habermas, E.J. *Nations and nationalism since 1780: Programme, myth, reality*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Hametz, Maura. "The Carabinieri stood by: The Italian State and the "Slavic threat" in Trieste, 1919-1922." *Nationalities Papers* 20, no. 4 (2001): 559–74. doi:10.1080/00905990120102093.
- *Making Trieste Italian, 1918-1954*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005.
- "Zionism, Emigration and Antisemitism in Trieste: Central Europe's 'Gateway to Zion,' 1986-1943." *Jewish Social Studies* 13, no. 3 (2007): 103-134.
- "Foreigners in their Own City: Italian Fascism and the Disperal of Trieste's Port Jews." *Jewish Culture and History*, 9, no. 2-3 (2007): 17-32.
- Herr, Alexis. *The Holocaust and Compensated Compliance in Italy: Fossoli Di Carpi, 1942-1952*. Baskingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
- Hsia, R. Po-Chia. *Trent 1475: Stories of a Ritual Murder on Trial*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992.
- Hochman, Erin R. *Imagining a Greater Germany: Republican Nationalism and the Idea of Anschluss*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016.
- Jacobson, Jon. *Locarno Diplomacy: Germany and the West, 1925-1929*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972.
- Killinger, Charles. *Gaetano Salvemini: A Biography*. Westport CT: Praeger Publishers, 2002.

- Kirk, Tim. "Fascism and Austrofascism." In *The Dollfuss/Schuschnigg Era in Austria: A Reassessment*. Vol. 11, edited by Anton Pelinka, Gunter Bischof and Alexander Lassner, 10-31. UK: Taylor & Francis Group, 2003.
- Kitchen, Martin. *The Coming of Austrian Fascism*. London: Routledge, 1980.
- Knittel, Susanne C. *The Historical Uncanny: Disability, Ethnicity, and the Politics of Holocaust Memory*. New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2014.
- Kohn, Hans. *Nationalism*. Toronto: D. Van Nostrand, 1955.
- Labanca, Nicola. *Outre-mer: Histoire de l'expansion coloniale italienne*. Grenoble: UGA Éditions, 2016.
- Lanfranchi, Stéphanie and Elise Varcin. "Il trauma di Caporetto nei testi di Mussolini: propaganda e performatività." In *Il trauma di Caporetto: Storia, letterature e arti*, eds. Maria Pia de Paulis, Francesca Belviso and Alessandro Giaccone, 162-177. Accademie University Press, 2018.
- Lassner, Alexander. "The Foreign Policy of the Schuschnigg Government 1934-1938: The Quest for Security." In *The Dollfuss/Schuschnigg Era in Austria: A Reassessment*. Vol. 11, edited by Anton Pelinka, Gunter Bischof and Alexander Lassner, 163-186. UK: Taylor & Francis Group, 2003.
- Leeden, Michael Arthur. *The First Duce: D'Annunzio at Fiume*, 2nd ed. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2002.
- Levis Sullam, Simon. *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Origins of Fascism*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- Lewis, Jill. "Conservatives and fascists in Austria 1918-1934." In *Fascists and Conservatives: The Radical Right and the Establishment in Twentieth-century Europe*, edited by Martin Blinkhorn, 106-125. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Lill, Rudolf. *Südtirol in der Zeit des Nationalismus*. Konstanz: UKV Verlagsgesellschaft, 2002.
- Liotta, P.H. "Imagining Europe: Symbolic Geography and the Future." *Mediterranean Quarterly* 16, n.3 (2005): 67-85. doi:10.1215/10474552-16-3-67.
- Livingston, Michael A. *The Fascists and the Jews of Italy: Mussolini's Race Laws, 1938-1943*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Longhi, Enrico Serventi. *Il faro del mondo nuovo: D'Annunzio e i legionari a Fiume fra Guerra e rivoluzione*. Udine: Gaspari, 2019.

- Luconi, Stefano. "Recent trends in the study of Italian antisemitism under the Fascist regime." *Patterns of Prejudice* 38, no. 1 (2004): 1-17.
doi:10.1080/0031322032000185550.
- Maione, Giuseppe. *Il Biennio Rosso: Autonomia e Spontaneità Operaia al 1919-1920*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1975.
- Mann, Michael. "Austro-Fascists, Austrian Nazis." In *Fascists*, 207-236. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Marks, Sally. "Mussolini and Locarno: Fascist Foreign Policy in Microcosm." *Journal of Contemporary History* 14, no. 3 (1979): 423-439.
doi:10.1177/002200947901400304.
- Martinez, Oscar J. "The Dynamics of Border Interaction: New approaches to border analysis." In *Global Boundaries*, edited by Clive H. Shofield. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Mason, John. *The Dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, 1867-1918*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2013.
- Matard-Bonucci, Marie-Anne. "Italian Fascism's Ethiopian Conquest and the Dream of a Prescribed Sexuality." In *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe's Twentieth Century*, edited by Dagmar Herzog, 91-108. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Matta, Tristano and Lanfranco Di Genio. "L'occupazione nazie et le *Polizeihaftlager* di San Sabba à Trieste." *Revue d'Histoire de la Shoah* 204, no.1 (2016): 235-273.
doi:10.3917/rhsho.204.0253.
- "La deportazioni dalla Risiera di San Sabba." In *Fascismo, Foibe, Esodo: Le tragedie del Confine orientale*, 77-94. Milan: Associazione Nazionale Ex Deportati nei Campi Nazisti, 2005.
- McConnell, Elysa. "International Disputes at the Italian-Yugoslavian Borderlands." *Les Cahiers Sirice* 1, no. 22 (2019): 117-134. doi:10.3917/lcsi.022.0117.
- "Building the Nation at the Periphery: Fascism, Italianization and Racial Persecution in Italy's Eastern Borderlands." In *Lessons and Legacies XV: Global Perspectives and National Narratives*, edited by Erin McGlothlin and Avinoam Patt (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, Forthcoming).
- Mayr, Sabine and Joachim Innerhofer. *Quando la patria uccide. Storie ritrovate di famiglie ebraiche in Alto Adige*. Bolzano: Edition Raetia, 2017.

- Mayr, Sabine. "The Annihilation of the Jewish Community of Merano." In *A Land on the Threshold. South Tyrolean Transformations, 1915-2015*, edited by Georg Grote and Hannes Obermair (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2017), 60.
- McLean, Eden. *Mussolini's Children*. Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 2018.
- "The Un-'Common Sense' of National Identity: Luigi Molina, *Trentini* and the Fascist Italianisation Campaign in Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol." *Contemporary European History* (2023), 1-23.
doi:10.1017/S0960777323000139
- Moehrle, René. "Fascismo, antislavismo e antisemitismo: I rapporti dei consolati tedeschi a Trieste 1919-1945." In *Gli ebrei nella storia del Friuli Venezia Giulia: un'vincenda di lunga durata*, edited by Miriam Davide and Pierto Ioly Zorattini. Firenze: Giuntina, 2016.
- "Fascist Jews in Trieste: Social, Cultural and political Dynamics 1919-1938." *Quest-Focus* no. 11 (2017): 46-74. doi:10.48248/issn.2037-741X/814.
- Mondini, Marco and Francesco Frizzera. "Beyond the borders: displaced persons in the Italian linguistic space during the First World War." In *Europe on the Move: Refugees in the Era of the Great War*, edited by Peter Gatrell and Liubov Shvanko, 177-196. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017.
- Mosse, George L. *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Motta, Giuseppe. *The Italian Military Governorship in South Tyrol and the Rise of Fascism*. Rome: Edizioni Nuova Cultura, 2012.
- Musiedlak, Didier. "Religion and political culture in the thought of Mussolini." *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 6, no. 3 (December 2005): 395-406.
- Neville, Peter. *Mussolini*, 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2015.
- O'Dowd, Liam. "Contested States, Frontiers and Cities." In *A Companion to Border Studies*, edited by Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan. Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.
- O'Mahoney, Joseph. *Denying the Spoils of War: The Politics of Invasion and Non-recognition*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018.
- Ó Tuathail, Gearóid and Simon Dalby, eds. "Introduction: Rethinking Geopolitics. Towards a critical geopolitics." In *Rethinking Geopolitics*, 13-27. London: Routledge, 1998.

- Oliva, Gianni. *Foibe: le stagi negate degli italiani della Venezia Giulia e dell'Istria*. Milano: Mondadori, 2002.
- Paasi, Anssi. "The Changing Discourses on Political Boundaries: Mapping the Backgrounds, Contexts and Contents." In *B/ordering Space*, edited by Henk van Houtum, Oliver Kramsch and Wolfgang Ziefhofer, 17-31. Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2005.
- Pauley, Bruce F. "A Case Study in Fascism: The Styrian Heimatschutz and Austrian National Socialism." *Austrian History Yearbook* 12, no. 1 (1976): 251-273. doi:10.1017/S0067237800008389.
- Patriarca, Silvana and Valeria Deplano. "Nation, 'race', and racism in twentieth-century Italy." *Modern Italy* 23, no. 4 (2018): 349-53. doi:10.1017/mit.2018.38.
- Pergher, Roberta. *Mussolini's Nation-Empire: Sovereignty and Settlement in Italy's Borderlands, 1922-1943*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.
- "An Italian War? War and Nation in the Italian Historiography of the First World War." *The Journal of Modern History* 90, no. 4 (2018): 863-99. doi:10.1086/700561.
- Pfanzelter, Eva. "Between Brenner and Bari: Jewish Refugees in Italy 1945 to 1948." *Journal of Israeli History* 19, no. 3 (1998): 83-104. doi:10.1080/13531049808576140.
- "Kriegsende und amerikanische Verwaltung," in *Südtirol Im Dritten Reich: NS-Herrschaft Im Norden Italiens, 1943-1945 = L'Alto Adige Nel Terzo Reich: L'occupazione Nazista nell'Italia Settentrionale*, ed. Gerald Steinacher, 347-360. Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2003.
- Pfeifer, Barbara. "Das Polizeiliche Durchgangslager Bozen 1944-1945." in *Südtirol Im Dritten Reich: NS-Herrschaft Im Norden Italiens, 1943-1945 = L'Alto Adige Nel Terzo Reich: L'occupazione Nazista nell'Italia Settentrionale*, ed. Gerald Steinacher, 201-219. Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2003.
- Picciotto Fargion, Liliana. *Gli ebrei in provincia di Milano, 1943-1945: persecuzione e deportazione*. Milano: CDEC, 1992.
- Picciotto, Liliana. "The Shoah in Italy: Its History and Characteristics." In *Jews in Italy Under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945*, edited by Joshua D. Zimmerman, 209-223. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Pizzi, Katia. "Trieste: A Border Identity." *Cultures of Memory, Memories of Culture Conference*, University of Cyprus, Cyprus, 20-22 February 2004.

- Ponzio, Alessio. *Shaping the New Man: Youth Training Regimes in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015.
- Rath, R. John. "The Deterioration of Democracy in Austria, 1927-1932." *Austrian History Yearbook*, Vol. XXVIII (1996): 213-259.
doi:10.1017/S0067237800005890.
- Re, Lucia. "Fascist Theories of 'Woman' and the Construction of Gender." In *Mothers of Invention: Women, Italian Fascism, and Culture*, edited by Robin Pickering-Iazzi, 76-99. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1995.
- Re, Lucia. "Italians and the Invention of Race: The Poetics and Politics of Difference in the Struggle Over Libya, 1890-1913." *California Italian Studies* 1, no.1 (2010): 1-65. doi:10.5070/C311008862.
- Reill, Dominique Kirchner. *Nationalists Who Feared the Nation*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012.
- *The Fiume Crisis: Life in the Wake of the Hapsburg Empire*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 2020.
- Rochat, Giorgio. "The Italian Front, 1915-18." In *A Companion to World War I*, edited by John Horne, 82-96. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
- Rodogno, Davide. "Italiani brava gente? Fascist Italy's policy Towards the Jews in the Balkans, April 1941-July 1943." *European History Quarterly* 35, n. 2 (2005):213-40. doi:10.1177/0265691405051464.
- *Fascism's European Empire: Italian Occupation During the Second World War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Romeo, Carlo. "L'atteggiamento del gruppo italiano in Alto Adige nel Zone di Operazioni nelle Prealpi tra difesa nazionale, attendismo e resistenza." In *Südtirol Im Dritten Reich: NS-Herrschaft Im Norden Italiens, 1943-1945 = L'Alto Adige Nel Terzo Reich : L'occupazione Nazista nell'Italia Settentrionale*, ed. Gerald Steinacher, 121-139. Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2003.
- Rosenboin, Or. "Geopolitics and Nationalism: Interpreting Friedrich Ratzel in Italian, 1898-1916." In *Radicals and Reactionaries*, edited by Ian Hall, 17-42. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- Rusinow, Dennison. *Italy's Austrian Heritage, 1919-1946*. Oxford: Claredon Press, 1969.

- Sarfatti, Michele. *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy. From Equality to Persecution*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006.
- Schreiber, Horst. *Nationalsozialismus und Faschismus in Tirol und Südtirol: Opfer, Täter, Gegner*. Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2008.
- Simonelli, Federico Carlo. *D'Annunzio e il mito di Fiume: riti, simboli, narrazioni*. Ospedaletto, Pisa: Pacini editore, 2021.
- Simonsohn, Shlomo. "Trent." In *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, edited by Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. 2nd ed., vol. 20, 131. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007.
- "Trieste." In *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, edited by Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. 2nd ed., vol. 20, 144-146. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007.
- Sked, Alan. *The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire, 1815-1918*, 2nd ed. Abingdon Oxon: Routledge, 2013.
- Sluga, Glenda. *The Problem of Trieste and the Italo-Yugoslav Border: Difference, Identity and Sovereignty in Twentieth-Century Europe*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001.
- Sørensen, Gert. "The Dual State of Fascism." in *International Fascism, 1919-1945*, edited by Gert Sørensen and Robert Mallett, 25-40. London: Frank Cass, 2002.
- Sorkin, David. "The Port Jews: Notes Toward a Social Type." *Journal of Jewish Studies* 50, no. 1 (1999): 87-97. doi:10.18647/2168/JJS-1999.
- "Port Jews and the Three Regions of Emancipation." In *Port Jews. Jewish Communities in Cosmopolitan Maritime Trading Centres, 1550-1950*, edited by David Cesarani, 31-46. London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2002.
- Staudenmaier, Peter. "Preparation for Genocide: The "Center for the Study of the Jewish Problem" in Trieste, 1942-1944." *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 31, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 1-23. doi:10.1093/hgs/dcx022.
- Steinacher, Gerald, ed. *Zwischen Duce und Negus: Südtirol und der Abessinienkrieg 1935-1941*. Bolzano: Athesia-Verlag, 2007.
- *Südtirol im Dritten Reich :NS-Herrschaft im Norden Italiens, 1943-1945 = L'Alto Adige Nel Terzo Reich : L'occupazione Nazista nell'Italia Settentrionale*. Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2003.
- Steinacher, Gerald. "Fascist Legacies: The Controversy Over Mussolini's Monuments in South Tyrol." *European Yearbook of Minority Issues* 10 (2011): 647-666.

- *Südtirol und die Geheimdienste 1943-1945*. Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2000.
- “Dolmetscher, Spione und Mörder: Südtiroler im Sicherheitsdienst des Reichsführers SS in Italien 1943-1945.” *GR/SR* 22 (2013): 109-136.
- “‘The Cape of Last Hope’: The Postwar Flight of Nazi War Criminals through South Tyrol/Italy to South America.” In *Transatlantic Relations: Austria and Latin America in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, edited by Klaus Eisterer and Gunter Bischof, 203-224. Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2006.
- “Alto Adige come regione di transito dei rifugiati (1945-1950).” *Studi Emigrazione/Migration Studies* XLII, no. 164 (2006): 821-834.
- Steinacher, Gerald and Günther Pallaver. “Leopold Steurer: Historiker zwischen Forschung und Einmischung.” In *Demokratie und Erinnerung: Südtirol, Österreich, Italien: Festschrift für Leopold Steurer zum 60*, edited by Leopold Steurer and Christoph von Hartungen, 51-91. Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2006.
- Steininger, Rolf. *South Tyrol: A Minority Conflict of the Twentieth Century*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2003.
- Steiner, Zara. *The Triumph of the Dark: European International History 1933-1939*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Strang, G. Bruce. Ed. *Collision of Empires: Italy’s Invasion of Ethiopia and its International Impact*. London: Routledge, 2016.
- Surman, Jan. *Universities in Imperial Austria 1848-1918: A Social History of a Multilingual Space*. West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2019.
- Teter, Magda. *Blood Libel: On the Trail of an Antisemitic Myth*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020.
- Thorpe, Julie. “Austrofascism: Revisiting the ‘Authoritarian State’ 40 years on.” *Journal of Contemporary History* 45, no. 2 (2010): 315-343.
doi:10.1177/0022009409356916.
- Tucker, Spencer C. “Italian Wars of Independence (Wars of Unification) (1848-1849, 1859, and 1866)” In *The Roots and Consequences of Independence Wars: Conflicts that Changed World History*, 186-207. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2013.
- Ungari, Andrea. “New Italian Nationalism.” In *The New Nationalism and the First World War*, eds. L. Rosenthal et al., 47-64. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Operation Reinhard," Holocaust Encyclopedia. <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/operation-reinhard-einsatz-reinhard>.
- Valiani, Leo. "Italian-Austro-Hungarian Negotiations 1914-1915." *Journal of Contemporary History* 1, no. 13, 1914 (1966): 113-136
- Varanini, Gian Maria. "Irredentismi storiografici: il caso del Trentino tra Ottocento e Novecento." *Reti medievali rivista* 16, no. 1 (2015): 275-299. doi:10.6092/1593-2214/452.
- Varutti, Elio. *Italiani d'Istria, Fiume e Dalmazia esuli in Friuli 1943-1960. Testimonianze di profughi giuliano dalmati a Udine e dintorni*. Udine: Provincia di Udine, 2017.
- Venegoni, Dario. *Uomini, donne e bambini nel Lager del Bolzano: Una tragedia italiana in 7.982 storie individuali*, 2nd ed. Milano: Fondazione Memoria della Deportazione/Mimesis, 2005.
- Verdorfer, Martha. "Südtiroler Widerstand gegen Nationalsozialismus und Krieg 1943-1945." In *Südtirol Im Dritten Reich: NS-Herrschaft Im Norden Italiens, 1943-1945 = L'Alto Adige Nel Terzo Reich: L'occupazione Nazista nell'Italia Settentrionale*, ed. Gerald Steinacher, 241-258. Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2003.
- Verginella, Marta. "Antislavismo, razzismo di frontiera?" *Aut Aut 349: Il postcoloniale in Italia*, edited by Giovanni Leghissa. Milan: Il Saggiatore, 2011: 30-49.
- "Political Activism of Slovene Women in Venezia Giulia after World War I and the Rise of Fascism. From Autonomy to Subordination." *ACTA HISTRIAE* 26, no. 4 (2018): 1041-1062. doi:10.19233/AH.2018.43.
- "Women Teachers in the Whirlwind of Post-War Changes in the Julian March." *ACTA Histriae* 29 no. 4 (2021): 859-886. doi:10.19233/AH.2021.34.
- Villani, Cinzia. "Antisemitismo ed ebraismo in Alto Adige: La Comunità Israelitica di Merano." *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 55, no. 1. Rome: Unione della Comunità Ebraiche Italiane, 1989: 103-118.
- *Ebrei fra leggi razziste e deportazioni nelle province di Bolzano, Trento e Belluno*. Trento: Società di studi trentini di scienze storiche, 1996.
- "The Persecution of the Jews in Two Regions of German-Occupied Northern Italy." In *Jews in Italy Under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945*, edited by Joshua D. Zimmerman, 243-261. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

- “La persecuzione degli ebrei: arresti, deportazioni e spoliazioni di beni (1943-1945).” In *Südtirol Im Dritten Reich: NS-Herrschaft Im Norden Italiens, 1943-1945 = L’Alto Adige Nel Terzo Reich: L’occupazione Nazista nell’Italia Settentrionale*, ed. Gerald Steinacher, 187-199. Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2003.
- Vinci, Anna. “Esperienze triestine,” in *Enzo Collotti e l’Europa del Novecento*, edited by Simonetta Soldani, 189-207. Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2011.
- Vocelka, Karl. “Enlightenment in the Habsburg Monarchy: History of a Belated and Short-Lived Phenomenon.” In *Toleration in Enlightenment Europe*, edited by Peter Ole Grell and Roy Porter, 196-211. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Volk, Alessandro. “Una realtà multiforme. Omogeneità e disomogeneità nella memoria degli sloveni di Trieste.” In *Storia e Memoria degli Sloveni del Litorale: Fascismo, Guerra e Resistenza*, edited by Marta Verginella, Alessandro Volk and Katja Colja, 49-121. Trieste: Quaderni 7, Istituto regionale per la storia del movimento di liberazione nel Friuli-Venezia Giulia, 1997.
- Wedekind, Michael. *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien 1943 bis 1945: die Operationszonen “Alpenvorland” und “Adriatisches Küstenland.”* München: Oldenbourg, 2003.
- “Die nortitalienischen Operationszonen im Herrschaftsgeflecht des ‘Dritten Reichs (1943-1945),” In *Südtirol Im Dritten Reich: NS-Herrschaft Im Norden Italiens, 1943-1945 = L’Alto Adige Nel Terzo Reich : L’occupazione Nazista nell’Italia Settentrionale*, ed. Gerald Steinacher, 23-40. Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2003.
- Wilcox, Vanda. *The Italian Empire and the Great War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.
- Wolf, Eric R. “Cultural Dissonance in the Italian Alps.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 5, no. 1 (1962): 1–14. doi:10.1017/S0010417500001493.
- Wong, Aliza. *Race and the Nation in Liberal Italy, 1861-1911: Meridionalism, Empire and Diaspora*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
- Zuccotti, Susan. *The Italians and the Holocaust: Persecution, Rescue, and Survival*. New York: Basic Books, 1987.