

# **FASCISM WITHOUT BORDERS**

**Transnational Connections and Cooperation between  
Movements and Regimes in Europe from 1918 to 1945**

**Edited by Arnd Bauerkämper and  
Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe**



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## CORPORATIST CONNECTIONS

### The Transnational Rise of the Fascist Model in Interwar Europe

*Matteo Pasetti*

In the foreword to *Under the Axe of Fascism*—his famous book on Mussolini's dictatorship, published in 1936 in both New York and London—Gaetano Salvemini emphasized the extraordinary popularity of Fascist corporatism:

The Fascist "Corporative State" has awakened curiosity, hope, and even enthusiasm. Italy has become the Mecca of political scientists, economists, and sociologists, who flock there to see with their own eyes the organization and working of the Fascist Corporative State. Daily papers, magazines, and learned periodicals, departments of political science, economics, and sociology in great and small universities, flood the world with articles, essays, pamphlets, and books, which already form a good-sized library, on the Fascist Corporative State, its institutions, its political aspects, its economic policies, and its social implications. No details are omitted, no problem concerning its origins and sources is left unexplored, no connection or comparison with philosophical and economic systems is overlooked.<sup>1</sup>

Afterwards, the Italian historian used all the following pages of his book to reveal this collective illusion, to show that "the Fascist corporations existed only on paper," to prove that the corporatist policy was a total failure, or better, a "great humbug." Indeed—according to Salvemini—the worldwide success of the Fascist corporative state was the result of a "wonderfully organized propaganda," which had led people to believe in the birth of a new system of regulation of the relations between capital and labor, whereas "all the categories of the traditional economic system remain[ed] intact: profit, interest, and wages." In practice, Fascist corporatism was nothing more than an ideological smokescreen. The ineffective corporations neither

protected workers nor damaged capitalists in any way. If anything—in Salvemini's conclusion—big business had to only be afraid of "the expansion of bureaucratic control" that the Fascist state was extending over the economy.<sup>2</sup>

This judgment is well known and often quoted, but is a good place to start from in order to focus on three basic lines of thought. First, the transnational history of fascism is closely linked with the transnational development of antifascism.<sup>3</sup> The diaspora of Italian antifascists caused by the regime's oppression hindered the expansion of fascism as a universal movement. Unlike Italy, where dissent was almost totally silenced from 1926 onward, any attempt to spread fascism encountered antifascist counterpropaganda in many countries. Opposing transnational networks of fascists and antifascists grew in parallel. This had some important implications for the dissemination of corporatist projects, as well as for other issues relating to the fascistization of the political arena in the interwar period.

Second, Salvemini's analysis—like those of many other antifascist scholars, and even of some critical Fascists such as Camillo Pellizzi—highlights the weaknesses of the Fascist corporative system, and, above all, the gap between the magniloquence of the project and the modesty of its practice.<sup>4</sup> The idea that Fascist corporatism was a bluff has a long history. In fact, it has become the prevalent opinion in the historiographical debate from the first postwar years onward.<sup>5</sup> Certainly, there was some truth in this assessment, but the working of the system was not such a dismal failure as was thought. New studies have shown that, despite the undeniable disparity between their stated objectives and actual results, the policies inspired by corporatism produced effects that cannot be overlooked, mainly because they induced profound transformations in the relations between various socioeconomic interests and the state.<sup>6</sup>

Third, approaching the matter from a transnational perspective, the interpretation of Fascist corporatism as a bluff tends to overshadow or even underestimate its historical function in the interwar period (especially if what is meant by corporatism is both an ideological discourse and a set of more or less developed, but concrete, policies). And this may also provide an explanation for the frequent lack of attention toward this topic in the scholarship on fascism as a global or generic phenomenon, which often does not recognize the importance of corporatism as a key factor.<sup>7</sup> Instead, as Salvemini himself acknowledged in the foreword to his book, the Fascist message was spreading throughout Europe and across the Atlantic. Propaganda probably played a crucial role in this popularity but, at the same time,

another crucial precondition was the existence of a true interest in an experiment that dealt with common problems of economic, social, and political order.<sup>8</sup> Since the 1920s, such attentiveness generated a transnational circulation of ideas, knowledge, competences and experiences, working to legitimize the Fascist “solution” to the perceived profound crisis on an international scale.

Within the ongoing debate on the European dimension of fascism, this transnational perspective can reveal not only interconnections between fascist movements, but also their links with the wider political space of interwar Europe. This dynamic and multifaceted space was crowded by actors who interacted with the unfolding fascism, often regarding it with esteem or at least without negative preconceptions. They held divergent perceptions of fascist evolution and borrowed from it different political “lessons.”<sup>9</sup> In such a historical perspective, corporatist policy represents a key issue, because it highlights the “traveling potential” of Italian Fascism toward various political areas, even beyond the specifically fascist movements and regimes. In fact, though for different reasons and with variable intensity, Fascism corporatism drew the attention of the nationalist and radical Right, of Catholic and conservative forces, and even of some socialists and democrats. At least for some years (from about the mid-1920s to the early 1930s), corporatism worked as a *passe partout* on behalf of Fascism, opening national and political borders.

This chapter will outline the main implications of Fascist corporatism in European political life of the interwar period, focusing on specific issues such as the exchange of ideas across national borders, the importance of Fascist propaganda abroad, and the influence of the Italian experience on other corporatist experiments.<sup>10</sup> For this purpose, the text is divided into three sections proposing the following periodization: (1) the revival of corporatist cultures after World War I; (2) the rise of the new Fascist model in the second half of the 1920s; and (3) the appearance of corporatist “avatars” in the 1930s.

## **The Revival: The Recovery of Corporatist Projects in the Aftermath of World War I (1918–1925)**

Contrary to common belief, the popularity of corporatism was not an outcome of the Great Depression of 1929. In fact, corporatist leanings were widespread in various countries before that, in particular from the end of World War I onward. Sometimes these leanings updated some old corporatist traditions from the nineteenth century with new

ideas. Even though the manifold formulations of the theory do not lend themselves to being classified into a taxonomic scheme, three main political currents present in the corporatist revival in the aftermath of the war can be identified.

The first and oldest one was that of social Catholicism. This was the corporatist current, which showed strong continuity with the past: thinkers such as France's Frédéric Le Play, René de La Tour du Pin, and Albert de Mun, the German Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler, the Austrian Karl Freiherr von Vogelsang, the Italian Giuseppe Toniolo, and, above all, Pope Leo XIII with his encyclical letter, *Rerum Novarum* (1891), were still important in Catholic social thought.<sup>11</sup> This movement was characterized not only by religious inspiration, but also by concern for the social instability that the process of industrialization, as well as the postrevolutionary abolition of medieval guilds and the demise of the feudal order, had caused. Rejecting the liberal world because of the individualistic disintegration of society, the Catholic corporatists mourned the prerevolutionary past, seen as an idyllic golden age during which the old guild organization had ensured the functioning of the production system, respect for social hierarchy, and a form of communitarian protectionism: in two words, order and harmony. Therefore, the Catholic demand for the reconstruction of an organic society foresaw the restoration of legally recognized professional bodies as a cornerstone of a socioeconomic regime in which collective interests would prevail over individual interests, and in which antagonism between capital and labor would be resolved through a non-conflictual approach according to the spirit of Christian solidarity. It was, moreover, a "consensual-licensed" project of corporatism, because it supposed the autonomous collaboration between all social classes, without subordinating the corporatist system to the state.<sup>12</sup> After the Great War, this corporatist tradition permeated the programs of Catholic political parties and trade unions, which were rooted in much of the continent between the Iberian Peninsula and the Balkans<sup>13</sup>. One of the most significant examples may be the Austrian Christian Social Party (Christlichsoziale Partei, CSP), whose leader, the prelate Ignaz Seipel, became the spokesman of a corporatist design for the new republican constitution. However, although he served as federal chancellor twice during the 1920s, his corporatist projects were never implemented.<sup>14</sup>

The second corporatist current, which at times shared much with Catholicism, was that of the "new" nationalism, which acquired a particular ideological shape in the first two decades of the twentieth century. A prototype was the Action Française movement. During this period, the league of Charles Maurras experienced a generational

renewal of its leadership, diversifying its own ideological platform away from that of the religious forces. As regards the corporatist doctrine, the most important contribution came from a former anarcho-syndicalist, disciple of Proudhon and Sorel, then royalist from 1906: Georges Valois.<sup>15</sup> Like the Catholic theorists, he outlined a corporatist system that was not subordinate to the state, despite the need to entrust to the latter a control function on the working of the system itself, in order to safeguard the national “common good.” The linchpin of his project, however, was the idea of corporatist councils, intended as centers of mediation between union representatives of workers and employers; so the trade union organizations remained the basis of the system.<sup>16</sup> Valois assumed, therefore, a “syndical corporatism”—that is to say a model which in those years had supporters in other countries too, especially in Italy, where it found expression as a result of the ideological convergence between certain nationalists (such as Enrico Corradini) and revolutionary syndicalists (such as Alceste de Ambris, Sergio Panunzio, and Edmondo Rossoni). Hence, the evolution of this current was characterized by this process of ideological hybridization in the name of antiliberalism and antisocialism: the unions had to be included in a corporatist system for the purpose of integrating the nation’s labor force, suppressing the class struggle, and nationalizing the workers.<sup>17</sup>

The wing of revolutionary syndicalism that, especially in France and Italy, had approached nationalism was not the only group of the Left to participate in the revival of corporatist theories. In the aftermath of World War I, indeed, corporatist perspectives crossed other socialist groups, as well as that which had its nerve center in London and was known as guild socialism. This is the third current, whose roots, too, dated back to the prewar period, starting from the publication of Arthur Pentty’s book *The Restoration of the Gild System* (1906), and Alfred Orage’s weekly magazine *The New Age* (London, 1907–22). Also in this case, moreover, the war boosted support for the theory, which found its most complete formulation in the writings of G.D.H. Cole.<sup>18</sup> His guild socialism hinged on the concept of social “function,” outlining a kind of “industrial democracy” in which every worker would contribute responsibly to the smooth functioning of the economic system, and would see his group interests represented by certain institutional bodies. Unlike other corporatist theorists, Cole was not chasing the myth of an organic community, which moreover often held a certain nostalgia for a distant past, but he defended an idea of pluralism and individual freedom: all citizens should have the right to express their social plurality, because they shared different interests, some of which were tied to ideological beliefs or territorial issues, and

others determined rather by the individual citizen's "function" in the production system.<sup>19</sup> Despite not having a real impact on the European Left, guild socialism found supporters across the continent, appearing as an attractive alternative to both collectivism and syndicalism.<sup>20</sup>

These various corporatist leanings proved that the criticism aimed at the parliamentary institutions and the design of a new system of representation of socioeconomic interests did not entail the emergence of authoritarian tendencies. A common perspective involved, instead, the assertion of some autonomy of the corporatist organization regarding state power. Moreover, corporatist ideas permeated different political arenas, as well as crossing national borders (for example, *Rerum Novarum* was a reference text in every Catholic country; Action Française greatly influenced the Portuguese nationalist movement called Integralismo Lusitano; and Cole's theories were well known outside British socialism).

Overall, the corporatist revival in the postwar period was genetically related to the perception of the crisis of the liberal state, which was identified by certain law studies from the beginning of the twentieth century. This was aggravated by the experience of the war economy, a factor common to almost all European states.<sup>21</sup> During World War I, in fact, the dynamics of total mobilization had shown the inefficiency and the futility of the parliaments. Governments had used the skills of the social bodies (namely, their professional, technical, and management capabilities) to reorganize production to achieve the war targets, expanding public intervention above all in the fields of price fixing and labor control. At the same time, governments had sought trade union collaboration in order to ensure a well-functioning production system. This had brought about a partial suspension of the liberal order and parliamentary practices, creating a type of state capitalism, organized according to corporatist rules.<sup>22</sup> Although differing from state to state, the war economy model helped to revive the idea of corporatism as the most effective solution to overcome the weaknesses of the parliamentary system and to achieve social peace.

By the end of the war, the principle of corporatism had inspired manifold reform projects that, regardless of their political source, moved in two directions. On the one hand, corporatism seemed the best way to change the system of labor relations. Establishing institutional bodies capable of reconciling disputes between workers and employers, it was able to promote a kind of self-government of the production system in order to regulate labor relations and eliminate social conflict. The aim was to develop collaboration between all the components of the production system, bring an end to class struggle, and build a

harmonious society. On the other hand, corporatism seemed the best solution to provide the political representation of economic interests. By replacing the classic parliamentary system of the liberal state, based on a form of popular representation of ideological or territorial type, with a system founded on direct representation of the social bodies, it could give voice to economic actors in the legislative assembly. The goal was the inclusion of organized interests in the political institutions, with the power to manage both economic policy and the whole economy itself, protecting it from the anarchy of the free market.<sup>23</sup>

However, in the aftermath of the war and in the early 1920s, all attempts to proceed in one direction or another failed. As for the political representation of economic interests, only two new constitutions tried to introduce a parliamentary assembly of a corporatist kind: one in Portugal with constitutional reform implemented in 1918 under the regime of Sidónio Pais; and the other, two years later, in the Italian Regency of Carnaro, with the charter written by Alceste De Ambris and Gabriele D'Annunzio. In both cases, the new constitution established that one of the two parliamentary chambers (or only a portion, in the Portuguese instance) was elected directly by a certain number of corporations, thus giving a degree of legislative power to the representatives of economic interests. Nevertheless, both experiences were too short-lived to provide a significant test of the corporatist project.

With regard to the regulation of labor relations, a great number of experiments, from 1919 onward, could be mentioned: among others, the Whitley Council created in Great Britain; the local joint committees set up in Spain; the national industrial boards established in Belgium by the socialist labor minister Joseph Wauters; the two complex structures assembled in Germany, namely the *Zentralarbeitsgemeinschaft* (Central Labor Committee), following the agreement between Hugo Stinnes and Carl Legien, and the *Reichswirtschaftsrat* (Economic Council of the German Reich), established by the Weimar Constitution; and finally, the *Conseil National Économique* (National Economic Council), inaugurated in France after a difficult genesis in 1925. However, with the partial exception of the latter, which was at least able to serve as an arena for debate between social groups, none of these experiments lived up to expectations.<sup>24</sup> None of them, indeed, provided an institutional tool to resolve labor conflicts or manage the production system through formal collaboration between the organized interests, because these experiments only worked—at best—as advisory councils, without any effective decision-making powers.

The development of Fascist corporatism, and then its transnational prestige, can therefore be understood when considered within this

framework. In the European political culture of the twentieth century, Fascist corporatist ideology was an example of syncretism, or better, a mix of heterogeneous elements that were not well blended and derived from revolutionary syndicalism, organic nationalism, technocratic reformism, and economic productivism.<sup>25</sup>

Within the Italian regime, these currents remained separate, devising corporatist systems which differed in several aspects (institutional organization, role of trade unions, duties of the corporations, and so on).<sup>26</sup> Although the authoritarian and nationalistic scheme prevailed over the others, this genetic heterogeneity of Fascist corporatism had important implications. On the one hand, the actual outcomes of corporatist policies led to disappointments and tensions inside the regime; on the other hand, the plurality of the corporatist languages made it easier for many observers to see what they wanted in the Italian experience. These arbitrary interpretations facilitated transnational processes of selective reception and appropriation. As a consequence, the Fascist project had no difficulty finding an audience in different milieus, in Italy and abroad. Furthermore, beyond the ideological empathy that the corporatist theories were able to arouse, all European countries were moving toward greater institutionalization of economic, political, and social relations, with a shift of decision-making power away from parliaments, but without the creation of real procedural rules.<sup>27</sup> From this perspective, the initial stages of Fascist policy put into practice a new system for the political governance of organized interests, which diverged from other corporatist projects due to two essential differences: its effectiveness in labor conflict suppression, and its authoritarian and state-centric brand.

### **The New Model: The Rise of Fascist Corporatism (1926–1932)**

As acknowledged by many observers from several countries, the turning point in the development of corporatism was 1926. According to a Spanish book of that period, for instance, “in the contemporary era, corporations reappeared nominally, for the first time, with the Charter of Carnaro, ... but complete legislation was made in Italy on 3 April 1926, through the law for the legal regulation of labor, which laid its foundations through official state recognition of the associations.”<sup>28</sup> The author of this book was Eduardo Aunós Pérez, a Catalan jurist who had been appointed labor minister under the dictatorship of General Miguel Primo de Rivera. He had played a paradigmatic role in understanding the transnational circulation of the Fascist model.

From the beginning, Mussolini's seizure of power resonated considerably around the world, but further attention was drawn toward the Italian regime with the inauguration of corporatist policy in April 1926, when the Italian parliament approved the new legal order for collective labor relations.<sup>29</sup> Written by Justice Minister Alfredo Rocco and supplemented in July with two royal decrees outlining its implementation, this law must be considered a cornerstone of the Fascist state. Its provisions defined three cardinal rules of corporatist policy: first, the authoritarian regulation of labor conflict, through the abolition of the right to strike and lockout, and the creation of the Labor Courts (*Magistratura del Lavoro*); second, the Fascist monopoly on negotiating representation through the legal recognition of a sole employer association and a single labor union for every sector; and third, the creation of the first corporatist bodies through the constitution of the Ministry of Corporations and the National Council of Corporations (*Consiglio Nazionale delle Corporazioni*, which became operative only in 1930).<sup>30</sup> These elements created a new model of corporatism, without predecessors for its authoritarian structure and its strict subordination to the state. Whereas previously other corporatist projects had contemplated the protection of society from the interference of politics, or the entry of organized interests in the decision-making proceedings, the Fascist experiment attempted a passive integration of the masses into the state. In 1927, the Labor Charter (*Carta del Lavoro*) provided this model with ideological legitimacy, establishing in its first article that "the Italian nation is an organism having ends, life, and means that are superior, for potency and duration, to those of the individuals or groups of which it is composed. It is a moral, political, and economic unity, realized wholly in the Fascist state."<sup>31</sup> At the same time, Rocco's law only modified the system of labor relations and not the forms of political representation. The corporatist reform of the legislative assembly was postponed, leaving the parliament under the control of the National Fascist Party (*Partito Nazionale Fascista*, PNF).

Despite its authoritarian hallmark, this Italian legislation immediately attracted considerable interest. It was generally appreciated by the European press (especially in law reviews and trade unionist journals) for one reason in particular: it seemed to solve a common problem, the labor conflict, and to ensure social peace. It did so not by returning to the past through the elimination of trade unions, but by ushering in a new mode of subordination to the state. This opinion was shared by people of varying political persuasions and not only by those who swelled the fascist ranks: for instance, by representatives of nationalist paramilitary movements such as the *Heimwehr* and the *Stahlhelm*, Catholic

fundamentalism (Herman de Vries de Heekelingen), conservative milieux (Harold E. Goad), and even leftist groups (Juan Chabás).<sup>32</sup> Moreover, at the end of the 1920s, the Italian corporatist state became a case study for a generation of young jurists of the European academies, describing the fascist legislation as “the supreme experience of collaboration between the classes.”<sup>33</sup> Obviously, opinion was not always favorable, as demonstrated by the protests against the Italian Fascist delegation during the conferences of the International Labour Organization (ILO). Yet even within the ILO, some statements in favor of the Labor Charter came directly from the director general, Albert Thomas.<sup>34</sup>

Altogether, the Italian legislative experience in syndical matters crossed national boundaries and became a reference case from 1926 through the entire interwar period. For its authoritarian and state-centric imprint, this new model differed from the earlier corporatist projects, but it prefigured some developing directives which looked universally valid because they appeared to have been implemented with a certain effectiveness by the Italian regime. In other words, unlike the ephemeral experiments of the early 1920s, the Fascist “solution” seemed to demonstrate the technical feasibility of labor control by a corporatist policy. This was seen as proof of “the power of precedent,” an expression that some scholars have used to explain the influence of Italian Fascism abroad. What had started as a national policy in order to reform the syndicalist system in Italy soon became a transnational pattern for a universal solution. At the same time, national societies did not dissolve. Their specificities shaped the reception and evolution of corporatism emanating from the Italian “dictatorial laboratory” and more generally of the whole fascist experience. As an object of observation, perception and interpretation, Italian Fascism in general and its corporatism in particular were trajectories rather than static “models.”<sup>35</sup>

The first country that followed in the footsteps of the Italian model was Spain under Primo de Rivera’s dictatorship. From November 1926 to May 1928, Labor Minister Aunós Pérez was the main architect of the National Corporatist Organization (Organización Nacional Corporativa, ONC), a system based on the institution of *Comités Paritarios* (Joint Committees). They were joint committees of delegates elected in equal numbers by workers and employers from every professional sector.<sup>36</sup> Although it is incorrect to label Primo de Rivera and Aunós Pérez as “fascists,” mainly because they were not advocates of a single-party state, both were strongly attracted by Mussolini’s regime. Close diplomatic relations were immediately established between the two dictatorships. As is well known, Primo de Rivera went with King Alfonso XIII to Rome in order to meet the Duce on

his first official visit abroad in November 1923.<sup>37</sup> Corporatism was one of the most important elements of this attraction. As a matter of fact, Aunós Pérez did not discover corporatist theory through Fascism, but by means of previous ideological training shaped by three political traditions: Catalan nationalism, social Catholicism, and *krausism*—a cultural movement for the regeneration of liberal society, which was rooted especially in nineteenth-century Spain. However, as he himself admitted in his writings, Fascist legislation influenced him greatly. In fact, as labor minister, he followed this policy in the making during a visit to Italy in April 1926. He came into contact with Giuseppe Bottai, the leading spokesman for Fascist corporatism, and he studied carefully the Italian laboratory. Here, as he stated, “a full-fledged social-political experiment” was in progress, aiming to close the “individualistic era.”<sup>38</sup>

This is not to say that the ONC was copied from the Italian model. As Aunós Pérez himself, and later numerous scholars, revealed, the Spanish system was different in some key aspects: some degree of trade union freedom, the maintenance of the right to strike, collaboration with a part of the Socialist movement instead of its banning, and greater attention to the defense of workers’ interests in the working of the *Comités Paritarios*.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, as in the Fascist model, the state gained control over labor relations because the joint committees were placed in a pyramidal system subordinated to the Labor Ministry. The state, therefore, had the power to impose decisions on all workers and employers, irrespective of whether they were or were not represented in the joint committees.<sup>40</sup> In other words, the ONC, too, was a centralized and state-led system—“a totalitarian corporatist structure,” according to the definition of its creator.<sup>41</sup> Meanwhile, as in a game of mirrors, Italian Fascists paid similar attention to the evolution of Spanish legislation. In particular, Bottai described it in detail, emphasizing the influence of the Fascist model and above all its superiority. As he wrote in March 1927: “The Italian organization is the premise of a new conception of the state, while the Spanish one appears, at least for now, of much more modest scope.”<sup>42</sup>

In short, if a comparative analysis can stress similarities and differences between the Spanish and Italian systems, a transnational approach can bring to light connections between these two experiences, like the contacts between key actors, the mutual attention, the exchange of knowledge, and also the enhancement of their own diversity. However, comparative reviews and transnational perspectives are complementary, and not mutually exclusive. Quoting Jürgen Kocka, “*histoire comparée* and *histoire croisée* can be compatible and need each other.”<sup>43</sup> While comparative history cannot think of nations as watertight

compartments, a transnational approach cannot shirk comparison, because it needs to understand the historical peculiarities of national or local environments. Furthermore, transnational history is a topic of study more than a tool for historical research; equally, comparison might not only be a method but also a source—as a means used in the past for political purposes.<sup>44</sup> For example, regarding the case of corporatism in interwar European dictatorships, Aunós Pérez and Bottai had already proposed comparative analysis of their mutual experiences in order to emphasize convergences and divergences between them. Such reciprocal visions were a factor of the transnational development of corporatist debate.

Moreover, the attraction towards Fascist corporatism was pragmatically motivated, even before being ideological. It was the concrete policy put into practice by Mussolini's regime more than the theoretical debate that aroused interest in Spain, as well as in many other countries. Attention concentrated on the legislation and its benefits for social control. So the Fascist regime became aware that corporatism was offering a powerful tool for self-legitimation in the international field—as noted, for example, in a journal published by the Ministry of Corporations in 1928:

The corporatist concept of state, corporatist law, the making of corporatist legislation and practice arouse interest and curiosity abroad. Some study and discuss it, some praise it. ... The contact that Italian corporatism gained abroad, through the International Labour Organization, ... or through the correspondence with foreign civil services and scholars, or through the press, it shows itself to be an expansive force. We don't want to say that the universe will readily take it as an example; but, undoubtedly, we can look at this [corporatist policy] as an attempt at creating a majestic and attractive invention.<sup>45</sup>

Whereas propaganda had a role of secondary importance in spreading corporatism before 1928, Fascism began to use this keyword in its promotional campaign abroad in the following years, given that the label presented the social and modern side of the regime. So, from the late 1920s onward, Bottai—appointed Minister of Corporations in November 1929—became the leading figure in “marketing” corporatism abroad. He collaborated with a group of partners in order to apply the fascist label to the “corporatist solution” and to promote it as a “third way” between liberalism and socialism. This activity consisted of a series of initiatives in all European countries, such as academic conferences and diplomatic meetings, translations of texts and publications of reviews, and exhibitions promoting corporatist policy like the one set up at the International Exposition of Barcelona in 1929.<sup>46</sup>

In this way, a network of Italian politicians, public servants, and intellectuals was established between the end of the 1920s and the early 1930s. They spread the corporatist message to various countries, in particular France, Spain, and Portugal, but also Great Britain, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Greece, and Eastern Europe. The main centers of this network grew in all cities where there were Italian enclaves, such as communities of migrants, branches of the *Fasci Italiani all'Estero* (Fascist Foreign Relations Organization), cultural associations, and diplomatic corps. They established contacts with local fascist movements as well as with local governments, academic scholars, technocrats, syndicalists, employers, and anyone interested in the debate on the crisis of the state, which was due to the weakness of parliamentary institutions in governing social conflicts and representing economic interests.

Furthermore, through these corporatist connections, the fascist message crossed not only national boundaries, but also political borders. In fact, the Italian model reached a large part of the European political spectrum, from the right-wing to the left-wing. The idea of the corporatist representation of economic interests, capable of overcoming class divisions and restoring social peace for the good of the entire national community, found supporters in the arena of the extreme nationalism, among conservative circles, among Catholics, and in some socialist groups. In the latter case, the two most notorious instances were those of Henri De Man's "planism" and of the French "neo-socialism," although their "corporatist temptation" was at least partially due to the purpose of weakening the fascist message by exploiting its ideas.<sup>47</sup> But also beyond the Atlantic, inside New Deal's group of reformists, part of the talk of economic planning was inspired by experiments in Mussolini's regime. According to Daniel Rodgers, "corporatism's reputation was still in its high tide in the early 1930s, even among those repelled by the thuggish side of Italian Fascism."<sup>48</sup> Yet "corporatism" was a buzzword, allowing different—and occasionally even opposing—interpretations, and a wide range of adaptations.

To summarize, in a political background permeated by corporatist leanings, the new syndicalist legislation, the Labor Charter, and propaganda abroad raised the Fascist experience to the rank of universal model. In the early 1930s, the impact of the Great Depression increased the popularity of this model, partly because in the eyes of the world Italy seemed less affected by the economic crisis than other states.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, the crisis was perceived as the final phase in the collapse of capitalism and of its political-institutional framework (that is, the liberal-democratic system). This view reinforced the opinion that the Italian corporatist experiment was the only solution at hand, because

it was the real alternative both to the decline of liberal capitalism and to the rise of Soviet communism. Intellectuals from all over Europe consecrated Fascist corporatism as the “doctrine of the century.”<sup>50</sup> But probably the most significant praise came from the endorsement by Pius XI. In the wake of the convergence between the Italian regime and the Catholic Church, in encyclical letter *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) the Pope declared his appreciation for the Fascist corporatist state, which was realizing “the peaceful collaboration of classes, the repression of socialist organizations and their retchings, the moderating action of a special court.”<sup>51</sup> Undoubtedly, the position of the Pope was in some respects ambiguous, expressing fear of the excessive state intervention. However, notwithstanding the anathema against the sacralization of politics that appeared inherent in the “religious” dimension of Fascism, the Italian corporatist state seemed to represent the only real answer to the ills of capitalism and to the dangers of socialism.<sup>52</sup> The theoretical differences between the Catholic tradition and the Fascist state-centric perspective were to be ignored, at least temporarily.

### **The “Avatars”: The Coming of Other Corporatist Regimes (1933–1939)**

In the following years, while Mussolini’s regime completed its social corporatist system with the opening of twenty-two corporations in 1934, the term “corporatism” became a buzzword in Europe and beyond. It was often used with different meanings, but was usually associated with Fascism for propagandistic reasons. The fascist network continued to take its corporatist message abroad through conferences and publications. The number of translated texts from Italian into various languages increased significantly, with some intermediate civil servants of the regime carving out a leading role. This applied, for example, to Bruno Biagi, a dull ministerial official who became a spokesman for the corporatist experience throughout Europe.<sup>53</sup> In addition to these transnational exchanges, moreover, fascism tried to give itself an international dimension in that period.<sup>54</sup> In fact, some attempts were made to organize a real international movement, although this effort did not go beyond the organization of a league lacking in strength, called Action Committees for the Universality of Rome (Comitati d’Azione per l’Universalità di Roma, CAUR), and a few events such as the French–Italian meeting of corporatist studies held in Rome in May 1935.<sup>55</sup> However, with regard to the transnational

circulation of corporatist projects, a new phase was beginning in the 1930s. It was characterized by two changes.

In the first instance, starting from 1933, the Fascist model was joined by other corporatist systems, which were developed in Salazar's Portugal, Dollfuss's Austria, Pilsudski's Poland, Metaxas's Greece, Tiso's Slovakia, in the authoritarian regimes of Baltic countries, and under the royal dictatorships of Bulgaria and Romania. As well as the Spanish case in the 1920s, each of these was in part influenced by the Italian predecessor, but was also based on local features. These regimes were authoritarian dictatorships with certain elements of fascist hybridization, which "tended to create political institutions in which the function of corporatism was to give legitimation to organic representation and to ensure the co-optation and control of sections of the elite and organized interests."<sup>56</sup> At the same time, it was to ensure the repression of labor movements. Compared with the 1920s, the main innovation concerned the attempts to introduce a parliamentary chamber of a corporatist kind within the political systems. This was achieved in Portugal in 1933, in Austria in 1934, in Estonia and Romania in 1938, and then in Italy in 1939, although everywhere power within the legislative process was modest.

The emergence of new corporatist regimes awarded the Fascist model the honor of being the forerunner of an epoch-making solution for the institutional renewal of political life. But at the same time, the Italian variant was no longer the only reference experience. This rendered more complicated the identification of corporatism with Fascism, because each of these corporatist "avatars" generated new points of reference for other experiments, within the wider transnational dynamics of the interwar "authoritarian turn."<sup>57</sup>

An emblematic example can be drawn from the Portuguese experience, considered by Mussolini in an interview with António Ferro to be "one of the most intelligent in Europe"—along with the Italian one, of course.<sup>58</sup> The creation of the *Estado Novo* (New State) was formalized in 1933 by a new constitution that laid the foundation for a corporatist republic. As for the political system, the reform approved by Salazar established a single legislative chamber—the *Assembleia Nacional*. Its deputies were elected from a single list. But the regime also encompassed a consultative corporatist chamber representing local autonomy and social interests. As regards the regulation of labor relations, the foundation stone of the corporatist system was the National Labor Statute (*Estatuto do Trabalho Nacional*) of September 1933. It decreed a long series of intermediate unions of workers and employers that would lead to the creation of the corporations.<sup>59</sup> The

influence of the Fascist model on the genesis of this statute was quite clear, since the first article was an exact copy of the initial regulation of the Labor Charter. This was openly acknowledged even by Marcelo Caetano, one of the architects of the Portuguese corporatist state:

The Italian school has undeniably influenced the making of Portuguese corporatist policy, as seen in the constitution of Estado Novo and in the Estatuto do Trabalho Nacional. The latter, in its structure and its purposes, corresponds exactly to the Italian Carta del lavoro, from which certain doctrinal formulas and organizational principles have been translated. Just like Fascist corporatism, Portuguese corporatism does not allow syndical liberty; in every district it gives the functions of representation and of professional discipline to the authorized unions, namely the national unions.<sup>60</sup>

However, as Caetano himself admitted on the same pages, the Portuguese experience did not stem only from Italian Fascism. According to him and other scholars, it was indeed the result of a mix of ingredients: transfer from Fascism, but also domestic currents of thought (especially the *Integralismo Lusitano* [Lusitanian Integralism] and the Catholic corporatist doctrine, which had a long tradition in Portugal), as well as some other foreign theories such as the works of Othmar Spann and Mihail Manoilescu.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, as scholarship has demonstrated, Francisco Rolão Preto's National Syndicalism—namely, the main Portuguese fascist movement—did not provide an actual contribution to the making of this corporatist system.<sup>62</sup> On the one hand, the Italian prototype was more influential on the Catholic background of Salazar than on the Camisas Azuis (Blue Shirts); on the other hand, Salazar also used his corporatist project in order to deprive the national syndicalists of an attractive idea.

Ultimately, this corporatist system, like the others, was the outcome of the hybridization of different corporatist traditions and experiences.<sup>63</sup> This occurred within a transnational network of political exchanges, of which Italian Fascism was one of the main protagonists, but not the only one. The Fascist model exercised a broad influence, but it was not replicated in any one place. All “avatars” sought to emphasize their own differences from the Italian forerunner, in order to avoid the charge of copying foreign models and to show their nationalist credentials. As stressed by the methodological debate on transnational history, putting in relevance transfers and interconnections across national borders does not mean denying the historical importance of nations and nationalisms.<sup>64</sup> Paradoxically, while corporatism seemed to prevail in much of Europe, and Fascist propaganda proudly announced the triumph of the “third way,” the Italian model was beginning to lose its centrality.

In the same years, furthermore, the rise of another fascist “avatar,” namely the National Socialist dictatorship in Germany, introduced a different transnational model that gave less importance to the corporatist project. In fact, although the Italian laboratory gained prominence in various political sectors of the Weimar Republic, including a wing of the Nazi Party, corporatism played a secondary role in the institutionalization of Hitler’s regime. Despite certain similarities between the *Deutsche Arbeitsfront* (German Labor Front, DAF) and the Fascist corporatist organization, the Nazis distanced themselves from the Italian experience in the field of social and economic policy, rejecting the Fascist representation of organized interests (which included workers, although weakly) as inferior to its strongly hierarchical and racially homogenous idea of *Volksgemeinschaft* (people’s community).<sup>65</sup> It was not founded on the chimera of the collaboration between the classes, but on the unconditional acceptance of the cult of the “leader,” not least in labor relations. In the ambiguous relationship between Hitler’s Germany and Mussolini’s Italy, swinging from rivalry to cooperation, corporatism marked a divergence between two ways to envisage the fascistization of Europe.

In the second instance, a wave of disapproval rose up against Fascist corporatism from the antifascist forces in the 1930s. This was to obstruct the development of that transnational myth, which was legitimizing the Italian regime as a universal model. Opposition, likewise transnational, aimed to demonstrate both the inconsistency of Fascist corporatist policy and its repressive, coercive, and authoritarian hallmark. Composed of intellectuals and antifascists from all over the world, this other transnational network of political exchanges put into practice—not without difficulty—an ideological operation to discredit Fascist corporatism. It also aimed to rethink democracy and to reform the state. Unlike the authoritarian corporatism influenced by the Fascist regime, which had banned labor conflicts through a repressive policy and abolished social pluralism through a compulsory representation of the organized interests, the antifascist alternative outlined a new democracy, based on welfare policy and mass parties. It aimed to change the shape of citizenship and political participation.<sup>66</sup> From 1933/34 onward, the evolution of this transnational antifascist discourse meddled in the transnational dissemination of the Fascist corporatist model and curbed its popularity.

## Summary

Overall, even if the implemented institutions did not affect policy making as much as expected or claimed, scholarship should not underestimate the epochal importance of corporatism as a tool. It was used by Italian Fascism in order to legitimize itself inside the European political framework. In the interwar period, indeed, the corporatist experience (both as ideology and as policy) carried Fascism to the center of political debate, in particular between the second half of the 1920s and early 1930s. Corporatism created connections between Italian Fascists and interlocutors all over the continent. First of all, corporatism worked as one of the elements of mutual recognition between fascist movements, although not all fascist parties gave it identical importance. For example, it was a minor ideological component not only for the German Nazi Party, but also for Mosley's British Union of Fascists and Codreanu's Iron Guard. Moreover, corporatism worked as a point of contact between fascism and certain Catholic circles (among others, the Salazarist milieu in Portugal and the CSP in Austria), although different opinions on the kind of system persisted. Finally, corporatism worked as a "temptation" for a part of democratic and socialist culture. Not only did it attract De Man and the "neo-socialists," but also some figures within the ILO or near to Roosevelt's administration in the United States. These socialist and democratic variants had influenced the debate on the crisis of the liberal state in the aftermath of the World War I, but they had also been nourished by the appropriation of the corporatist option by Italian Fascism in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

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## Notes

1. Gaetano Salvemini, *Under the Axe of Fascism* (New York and London, 1936), 10.
2. Salvemini, *Axe of Fascism*, 11, 164, 429.
3. See Glenda Sluga, "Fascism and Anti-Fascism," in *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History*, ed. Akira Iriye and Pierre-Yves Saunier (Houndmills, 2009), 381–83.
4. Camillo Pellizzi, *Una rivoluzione mancata* (Milan, 1949; new ed. Bologna, 2009).
5. A classic instance of this historical scholarship is Alberto Aquarone, *L'organizzazione dello Stato totalitario* (Turin, 1965).
6. See, in particular, Alessio Gagliardi, *Il corporativismo fascista* (Rome, 2010).
7. Among the exceptions, see the definition of fascism proposed by Emilio Gentile, *Fascismo. Storia e interpretazione* (Rome, 2002), 71–73.
8. See Gianpasquale Santomassimo, *La terza via fascista: Il mito del corporativismo* (Rome, 2006), 17–31, 181–83.
9. See Aristotle Kallis, "The 'Fascist Effect': On the Dynamics of Political Hybridization in Inter-War Europe," in *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Europe*, ed. António Costa Pinto and Aristotle Kallis (Basingstoke, 2014), 13–41.
10. I have dealt with these themes in greater depth in Matteo Pasetti, *L'Europa corporativa. Una storia transnazionale tra le due guerre mondiali* (Bologna, 2016).
11. For an overview of the Catholic social theory during the "long" nineteenth century, see Paul Misner, *Social Catholicism in Europe: From the Onset of Industrialization to the First World War* (New York, 1991).
12. For a sociological distinction between "consensual-licensed" and "authoritarian-licensed" corporatism, see Peter J. Williamson, *Varieties of Corporatism: A Conceptual Discussion* (Cambridge, 1985), esp. 20–22 on the Catholic thought.
13. On the corporatist trend in the growth of Catholic trade unionism, see Patrick Pasture, *Histoire du syndicalisme chrétien international: La difficile recherche d'une troisième voie* (Paris, 1999), 17–24. For an investigation based on three case studies, see William Patch, "Fascism, Catholic Corporatism, and the Christian Trade Unions of Germany, Austria, and France," in *Between Cross and Class: Comparative Histories of Christian Labour in Europe 1840–2000*, ed. Lex Heerma van Voss, Patrick Pasture, and Jan De Maeyer (Bern, 2005), 173–201.
14. See Alfred Diamant, *Austrian Catholics and the First Republic: Democracy, Capitalism and the Social Order 1918–1934* (Princeton, NJ, 1960); Klemens von Klemperer, Ignaz Seipel: *Christian Statesman in a Time of Crisis* (Princeton, NJ, 1972); Helmut Wohnout, "Middle-Class Governmental Party and Secular Arm of the Catholic Church: The Christian Socials in Austria," in *Political Catholicism in Europe 1918–45*, ed. Wolfram Kaiser and Helmut Wohnout (London and New York, 2004), 172–94.

15. On the evolution of Action française, see the classic Eugen Weber, *Action française: Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth-Century France* (Stanford, CA, 1962). For some recent studies on Valois' political route, see Olivier Dard, ed., *Georges Valois, itinéraire et réceptions* (Bern, 2011).
16. See, for example, Georges Valois, *L'économie nouvelle* (Paris, 1919), 209–15.
17. Beyond the sharply criticized Zeev Sternhell's trilogy—*La droite révolutionnaire, 1885–1914. Les origines françaises du fascisme* (Paris, 1978); *Ni droite, ni gauche: L'idéologie fasciste en France* (Paris, 1983); *Naissance de l'idéologie fasciste* (Paris, 1989)—scholarship investigated thoroughly this convergence between nationalism and revolutionary syndicalism, demonstrating ultimately that this was not the only true ideological origin of fascism, contrary to the claim of Sternhell. Regarding the Italian case, see also Maddalena Carli, *Nazione e rivoluzione. Il "socialismo nazionale" in Italia: mitologia di un discorso rivoluzionario* (Milan, 2001); and Matteo Pasetti, *Tra classe e nazione: Rappresentazioni e organizzazione del movimento nazional-sindacalista (1918–1922)* (Rome, 2008).
18. For a recent introduction to the guild socialist movement, see Marc Stears, "Guild Socialism," in *Modern Pluralism: Anglo-American Debates since 1880*, ed. Mark Bevir (Cambridge, 2012), 40–59. For a biography of Cole, a classic reference is Arthur W. Wright, *G.D.H. Cole and Socialist Democracy* (Oxford, 1979).
19. See, for example, G.D.H. Cole, *Guild Socialism Re-stated* (London, 1920).
20. See, among others, some of Karl Polanyi's writings of the early 1920s: Karl Polanyi, "A gildsocializmus (Eszmék és emberek)," *Bécsi Magyar Újság*, 18 June 1922; idem, "Gild és állam," *Bécsi Magyar Újság*, 29 March 1923. I used the translation into Italian, in Karl Polanyi, *La libertà in una società complessa*, ed. Alfredo Salsano (Turin, 1987), 3–9.
21. On the postwar crisis of liberal democracy, see in particular Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (London, 1998); Jan-Werner Müller, *Contesting Democracy: Political Ideas in Twentieth-Century Europe* (New Haven, CT, 2011).
22. For a comparative view on several national cases, see Stephen Broadberry and Mark Harrison, eds., *The Economics of World War I* (Cambridge, 2005).
23. Although with various meanings, the distinction between "social corporatism" and "political corporatism" is present in much of the literature on this topic. For a recent definition, see António Costa Pinto, *The Nature of Fascism Revisited* (New York, 2012), 122.
24. On the birth and the working of the Conseil national économique, see Alain Chatriot, *La démocratie sociale à la française: L'expérience du Conseil national économique 1924–1940* (Paris, 2002).
25. On the origins of Fascist corporatism, see Matteo Pasetti, "Alle origini del corporativismo fascista: sulla circolazione di idee corporative nel primo dopoguerra", in *Progetti corporativi tra le due guerre mondiali*, ed. idem (Rome, 2006), 11–27.
26. On the coexistence of different theories within Fascist corporatism, see Gagliardi, *Il corporativismo fascista*, 12–25.

27. Here the classic reference is Charles S. Maier, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe: Stabilization in France, Germany and Italy in the Decade after World War I* (Princeton, NJ, 1975).
28. Eduardo Aunós Pérez, *Las corporaciones del trabajo en el estado moderno* (Madrid, 1928), 35 (my translation).
29. On the resonance of Mussolini's seizure of power, see, among others, Arnd Bauerkämper, "Transnational Fascism: Cross-Border Relations between Regimes and Movements in Europe, 1922–1939," *East Central Europe* 37, no. 2–3 (2010), 214–46, esp. 218–25. Generally, the impact of syndical legislation of 1926 has received insufficient attention in scholarship.
30. For an analysis of the reactions to the Rocco law and its importance in the building of the Fascist dictatorship, see Matteo Pasetti, "Neither Bluff nor Revolution: The Corporations and the Consolidation of the Fascist Regime (1925–1926)," in *In the Society of Fascists: Acclamation, Acquiescence, and Agency in Mussolini's Italy*, ed. Giulia Albanese and Roberta Pergher (New York, 2012), 87–107.
31. *La Carta del Lavoro. Illustrata da Giuseppe Bottai* (Rome, 1927), 136 (my translation).
32. See Francis L. Carsten, *Fascist Movements in Austria from Schönerer to Hitler* (London, 1977), 171; Alessandro Salvador, *La guerra in tempo di pace: Gli ex combattenti e la politica nella Repubblica di Weimar* (Trento, 2013), 161–62; on Catholic fundamentalism, see Herman de Vries de Heekelingen, *Le fascisme et ses résultats* (Brussels, 1927), 72–95; on conservative milieu, see Harold E. Goad, *The Making of the Corporate State* (London, 1932), 86–87; on leftist groups, see Juan Chabás, *Italia fascista (política y cultura)* (Barcelona, 1928), 116–18.
33. Edmond Fucile, *Le Mouvement Syndical et la réalisation de l'État Corporatif en Italie* (Paris, 1929), 11.
34. See *Report of the Director-General. International Labour Conference. Tenth Session* (Geneva, 1927), vol. 2, p. 6. On the relations between the ILO and Italian Fascism, see Stefano Gallo, "Dictatorship and International Organizations: The ILO as a 'Test Ground' for Fascism," in *Globalizing Social Rights: The International Labour Organizations and Beyond*, ed. Sandrine Kott and Joëlle Droux (Basingstoke, 2013), 153–71.
35. On "the power of precedent" and the importance of national contexts, see especially Aristotle Kallis, "Studying Inter-War Fascism in Epochal and Diacronic Terms: Ideological Production, Political Experience and the Quest for 'Consensus,'" *European History Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (2004): 9–42, esp. 22–32. In the literature on transnational history, the persistence of the nations has often been emphasized; see, for a recent viewpoint, George Steinmetz, "Comparative History and Its Critics: A Genealogy and a Possible Solution," in *A Companion to Global Historical Thought*, ed. Prasenjit Duara, Viren Murthy, and Andrew Sartori (Chichester, 2014), 427: "the rise of global and transnational approaches should not lead historians to ignore the continuing importance of nation-states and national boundaries."
36. The making of Spanish corporatist organization started from the decree of 26 November 1926, regarding only the industrial sector, and was

completed by the decree of 12 May 1928, which extended legislation to the agricultural sector. To set this corporatist policy in the dictatorial framework, in addition to the classic Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above: The Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in Spain 1923–1930* (New York, 1983), see Eduardo González Calleja, *La España de Primo de Rivera: La modernización autoritaria 1923–1930* (Madrid, 2005), esp. 153–63.

37. See Javier Tusell Gómez and Ismael Saz Campos, “Mussolini y Primo de Rivera, las relaciones políticas y diplomáticas de dos dictaduras mediterráneas”, *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* 179, no. 3 (1982): 413–83. On Spanish admiration for Mussolini, see also Giulia Albanese, “Alla scuola del fascismo: la Spagna dei primi anni venti e la marcia su Roma,” in *Pensare la nazione: Silvio Lanaro e l’Italia contemporanea*, ed. Mario Isnenghi (Rome, 2012), 111–22.
38. Pérez, *Las corporaciones del trabajo*, 172–74 (my translation). Among his main writings, see also Aunós Pérez, *La organización corporativa y su posible desenvolvimiento* (Madrid, 1929); idem, *Estudios de derecho corporativo* (Madrid, 1930); idem, *La reforma corporativa del estado* (Madrid, 1935). For a biographical and ideological sketch of Aunós Pérez, see Sergio Fernández Riquelme, “Política, Autoridad y Trabajo. Eduardo Aunós y Estado corporativo en España,” *Razón Histórica*, no. 10 (2010): 17–31.
39. In addition to Pérez, *Las corporaciones del trabajo*, 35–46, see, for example, Anselmo Anselmi, *L’organizzazione corporativa spagnuola dell’agricoltura* (Rome, 1928). For a summary of historiographical debate on this issue, see Marc Prat and Oscar Molina, “State Corporatism and Democratic Industrial Relations in Spain 1926–1935: A Reappraisal,” *Labor History* 55, no. 2 (2014), 208–27, esp. 211–14.
40. See, in particular, Miguel Ángel Perfecto, “Regeneracionismo y corporativismo en la dictadura de Primo de Rivera,” in *Las derechas en la España contemporánea*, ed. Javier Tusell, Feliciano Montero, and José María Marín (Barcelona, 1997), 177–96; idem, “El corporativismo en España: desde los orígenes a la década de 1930,” *Pasado y Memoria*, no. 5 (2006): 185–218, esp. 210–17.
41. Pérez, *La reforma corporativa*, 136 (my translation).
42. Giuseppe Bottai, “L’ordinamento corporativo spagnolo,” *Gerarchia*, 3 March 1927, 172 (my translation).
43. Jürgen Kocka, “Comparison and Beyond,” *History and Theory* 42, no. 1 (2003): 39–44, quotation p. 39.
44. For a recent focus on the transnational perspective in historical studies, see Pierre-Yves Saunier, *Transnational History* (New York, 2013), esp. 10–13 about the relationship with the comparative approach.
45. “Nota della quindicina,” *Informazioni corporative*, 10 July 1928, p. 1 (my translation).
46. For an overview, see Gaetano Napolitano, *La propaganda corporativa nella rivoluzione fascista* (Naples, 1932). In recent Italian scholarship, the topic of Fascist propaganda abroad has received growing attention: see, among others, Benedetta Garzarelli, “Parleremo al mondo intero.” *La propaganda del fascismo all’estero* (Alessandria, 2004); Stefano Santoro, *L’Italia e l’Europa orientale: Diplomazia culturale e propaganda 1918–1943* (Milan, 2005); Mario

- Ivani, *Esportare il fascismo: Collaborazione di polizia e diplomazia culturale tra Italia fascista e Portogallo di Salazar (1928–1945)* (Bologna, 2008); Francesca Cavarocchi, *Avanguardie dello spirito: Il fascismo e la propaganda culturale all'estero* (Rome, 2010).
47. On De Man and his plan, see, among others, Sternhell, *Ni droite, ni gauche*, ch. 6; Alfredo Salsano, *Ingegneri e politici: Dalla razionalizzazione alla "rivoluzione manageriale"* (Turin, 1987), 24–46; Gerd-Rainer Horn, *European Socialists Respond to Fascism: Ideology, Activism and Contingency in the 1930s* (New York, 1996), 74–95. On French "neo-socialism," see in particular Philippe Burrin, *La dérive fasciste: Doriot, Déat, Bergery, 1933–1945* (Paris, 1986). On the "corporatist temptation" among the ranks of European socialism, see also Emanuel Rota, "La tentazione corporativa: corporativismo e propaganda fascista nelle file del socialismo europeo," in *Progetti corporativi tra le due guerre mondiali*, ed. Matteo Pasetti (Rome, 2006), 85–98.
48. Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, 1998), 420.
49. In fact, the historical research has amply demonstrated that even Fascist Italy suffered an important economic slump. For a recent summary, see Paolo Frascani, *Le crisi economiche in Italia: Dall'Ottocento a oggi* (Rome, 2012), 101–19.
50. See, for example, the international conference held in Rome to celebrate the tenth anniversary of Mussolini's regime in November 1932: *Convegno di scienze morali e storiche. 14–20 novembre 1932-XI. Tema: l'Europa* (Rome, 1933). Among the speakers who praised the Italian system were Romanian professor Mihail Manoilescu, Spanish writer Ernesto Gimenez Caballero, the Italian ambassador in Paris Camillo Romano Avezzana, Italian-German sociologist Robert Michels, the Greek delegate to the League of Nations Nikolas Politis, and the German economist Werner Sombart.
51. Pius XI, "Quadragesimo Anno" (1931), in *Tutte le encicliche dei sommi pontefici* (Milan, 1940), 1132.
52. On Fascism as a political religion, see Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge, 1996). On the ambiguous relationships between Christianity and Fascism, see, for an overview, Emilio Gentile, *Contro Cesare: Cristianesimo e totalitarismo nell'epoca dei fascismi* (Milan, 2010); and for some case studies, see Jan Nelis, Anne Morelli, and Danny Praet, eds., *Catholicism and Fascism in Europe 1918–1945* (Hildesheim, Zurich, and New York, 2015).
53. Among the several translated writings of Biagi, see, for example, Bruno Biagi, *L'État corporatif* (Paris, 1935); idem, *Desarrollos actuales y futuros del corporativismo* (Madrid, 1938). The practice of translation always performed an important function in transnational cultural interactions, and not surprisingly the fascist regimes sought to exert a pervasive political control on this activity too. For some case studies, see Christopher Rundle and Kate Sturge, eds., *Translation Under Fascism* (New York, 2010).
54. For a conceptual distinction between "transnationalism" and "internationalism," see, among others, Patricia Clavin, "Defining Transnationalism," *Contemporary European History* 14, no. 4 (2005): 421–39, who

- specifies that in many historical cases “the practices of internationalism, transnationalism and multinationalism coexisted” (p. 425).
55. On this meeting, see Giuseppe Parlato, *Il Convegno italo-francese di studi corporativi* (1935) (Rome, 1990). On the attempt to organize a “Fascist International” through the foundation of CAUR in July 1933, see also Michael A. Ledeen, *Universal Fascism* (New York, 1972); Marco Cuzzi, *L'Internazionale delle camicie nere: I Caur, Comitati d'azione per l'universalità di Roma 1933–1939* (Milan, 2005).
  56. Costa Pinto, *Nature of Fascism Revisited*, 126, and 129–45 for a comparative overview on these experiences.
  57. See Kallis, “Fascist Effect,” 20–23.
  58. António Ferro, *Homens e multidões* (Lisbon, 1934), 183 (my translation).
  59. Among the wide literature on the Portuguese corporatism, for focusing its role in the long Salazarist dictatorship, see Fernando Rosas, *Salazar e o poder: A arte de saber durar* (Lisbon, 2012), 281–317.
  60. Marcelo Caetano, *O sistema corporativo* (Lisbon, 1938), 28 (my translation).
  61. See Caetano, *O sistema corporativo*, 25–30. On the ideological hybridization of the Portuguese corporatism, see also Daniele Serapiglia, *La via portoghese al corporativismo* (Rome, 2011), 174–81; Luís Reis Torgal, “Os corporativismos e as ‘Terceiras Vias,’” in *Corporativismo Fascismos Estado Novo*, ed. Fernando Rosas and Álvaro Garrido (Coimbra, 2012), 49–79.
  62. See António Costa Pinto, *Os Camisas Azuis: Ideologia, Elites e Movimentos Fascistas em Portugal, 1914–1945* (Lisbon, 1994).
  63. Like in the whole literature on transfers and entanglements in history, “hybridization” has become a key concept in the most recent studies on transnational fascism. See in particular Aristotle Kallis and António Costa Pinto, “Conclusion: Embracing Complexity and Transnational Dynamics: The Diffusion of Fascism and the Hybridization of Dictatorships in Inter-War Europe,” in *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Europe*, ed. António Costa Pinto and Aristotle Kallis (Basingstoke, 2014), 272–82.
  64. See, among others, Clavin, “Defining Transnationalism,” 423.
  65. In addition to the classic work of Timothy W. Mason, *Sozialpolitik im Dritten Reich. Arbeiterklasse und Volksgemeinschaft* (Opladen, 1977), esp. ch. 5, see Daniela Liebscher, *Freude und Arbeit: Zur internationalen Freizeit- und Sozialpolitik des faschistischen Italien und des NS-Regimes* (Cologne, 2009). On the “myth of the corporatist state” in Germany, see also Franz Neumann, *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism* (New York, 1942).
  66. See Alberto De Bernardi, *Discorso sull'antifascismo*, ed. Andrea Rapini (Milan, 2007), 119–29.

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