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The Rise of Italian Fascism (1919-1922): Changing Social Relations in Revolutionary Periods

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2
1. The Problem: The Italian Fascist Revolution of 1922.....	3
2. The Historical Context: From the “Red Years” (1919-20) to the “Black Years” (1921-22)	3
3. Our Theoretical Tool Kit	5
3.1. A Set of Hypotheses.....	6
4. Research Design.....	6
4.1. The Research Questions.....	6
4.2. Data and Methods.....	7
4.2.1. Limits of the Evidence: Historical Reality or Newspaper Reality?	8
5. Shift in Social Relations.....	13
5.1. A Focus on Time: Which Event(s) Triggered a Fascist Reaction?	17
5.1.1. The Factory Occupation Movement of September 1920.....	17
5.1.2. Elections and Violence	19
5.1.3. Organizational Growth: The Fascist Party.....	22
5.2. The Role of the State.....	25
5.3. A Focus on Geography: Is Fascism an Urban or Rural Phenomenon?	31
6. “Reaction by Whom and against Whom?” Winners and Losers in Theory Testing.....	34
7. Limits of an Explanation.....	38
8. Conclusions.....	40
Bibliographical References.....	42
Endnotes.....	46

Abstract

The paper looks back at one of the most turbulent periods in modern Italian history. It all ended with the “fascist revolution” of October 1922 after two years of unprecedented levels of right-wing violence (the “black years” of 1921-22). Earlier, the revolutionary winds had blown from the Left (the “red years” of 1919-1920 which came to a climax in September 1920 with the factory occupation movement). There is no lack of scholarly work from both historians and social scientists on the rise of Italian fascism, the first historic instance of this type of political regime. Yet, this paper revisits the period from the vantage point of a wealth of new historical evidence. The evidence was collected on the basis of a novel approach to narrative, Quantitative Narrative Analysis (QNA), applied to over 38,000 narratives of social and political protest and violence taken from two newspapers of the period (the socialist *Avanti!* and the fascist *Il Popolo d'Italia*). QNA systematically extracts narrative information on actors, their characteristics, their actions and the circumstances of these actions (notably time and space, but also reason, instrument, outcome), and the objects of these actions (other social actors, things, or concepts). As such, this evidence is ideally suited for mapping the changing matrix of social relations over time and across space that characterizes revolutionary and counter-revolutionary periods. The analyses clearly highlight the temporal dynamic of shifting social relations from the “red years” to the “black years”. They also show the close relationship between fascist violence and specific historical events (namely, political elections). Finally, the analyses show the role that both the police and landlords played in making possible the fascist seizure of power in October 1922.

1. The Problem: The Italian Fascist Revolution of 1922

In his endorsement of Chiurco's 5-volume *Storia della Rivoluzione Fascista (1919-1922)* (History of the Fascist Revolution (1919-1922); 1929), Mussolini wrote: "These volumes ... [narrate] the whole history of the Fascist Revolution, in its first, unforgettable combat phase from March 1919 through October 1922 ... It is the most important Revolution of the contemporary world." (1929, p. vii) A few years earlier, in February 1922, when the outcome of that revolution was anything but set, Mussolini had entertained the following question on the pages of *Gerarchia* (February 25, 1922):

Which Way Is the World Going? ... Right or Left? ... In the aftermath of the Armistice, the pendulum swung Left ... with a vertiginous speed ... There is no doubt that the end of 1920 marks in the whole of Europe the climax of the social crisis of the Left. But in the fifteen months since then, the situation has changed. The pendulum now swings to the right. After the revolutionary phase, here comes the reactionary phase: after the red period (the red hour), here is the white hour. ... The revolution is in this reaction. (Mussolini, 1934, pp. 257-66, passim)

This paper addresses that question. It addresses the question: How did the Italian fascists stop the pendulum from swinging back in 1922? What led them to twenty years of power in October 1922 (*il ventennio fascista*)? These questions are important for at least three reasons: 1. fascism in Italy was the first historical instance of this type of political regime (the very word "fascism" was in fact coined there); 2. fascism is one of the three paths to the modern world, as Barrington Moore (1966) would argue (along with democracy and communism); 3. the fascist revolution (as the fascists themselves referred to their seizure of power) came in 1922 on the heel of a near-revolution on the left in 1920; this sudden change of fortunes begs an explanation.

I address the puzzle of the Italian fascists' rise to power through a wealth of novel evidence, systematically collected via Quantitative Narrative Analysis (QNA; Franzosi, 2004, 2010) from nearly 40,000 newspaper articles taken from the socialist *Avanti!* and the fascist *Il Popolo d'Italia*. My analysis deepens our understanding of the rise of Italian fascism by attempting to adjudicate the truth of different hypotheses drawn from past scholarship on fascism – hypotheses dealing with *both* the role of the state and various social classes in bringing about a fascist outcome, from the petty bourgeoisie to the industrial bourgeoisie and landlords, alone or in alliance) *and* the force of such events as factory occupation moment of September 1920 and the administrative elections of November 1920.

2. The Historical Context: From the "Red Years" (1919-20) to the "Black Years" (1921-22)

What Mussolini called the "red hour" and the "white hour" are better known to historians of modern Italy as the "red years" (*biennio rosso*) of 1919-1920, that peaked in the vast factory occupation movement of September 1920, and the "black years" (*biennio nero*) of 1921-22, that ended with Mussolini's "March on Rome" of October 1922 and twenty years of dictatorship. The uniqueness of those years is clearly borne out by the yearly plot of Figure 1, based on government-collected, official strike statistics.

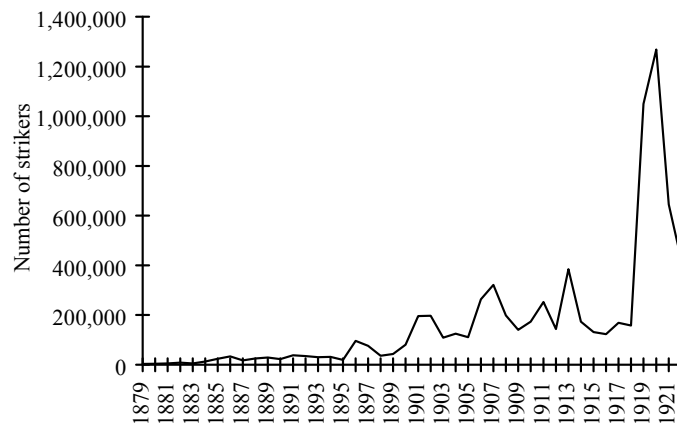


Figure 1 – Plot of yearly number of strikers (1879-1922) (MAIC data)

We would have to wait until the next strike wave of 1968 (the “hot autumn”) to see a similar surge in working-class protest as in 1919 and 1920. Yet, that surge in mobilization was not uniform throughout the 1919-1922 period, as the monthly plot of Figure 2 makes clear: The “red years” of 1919-1920 show higher levels of working-class protest than the “black years” of 1921-22.

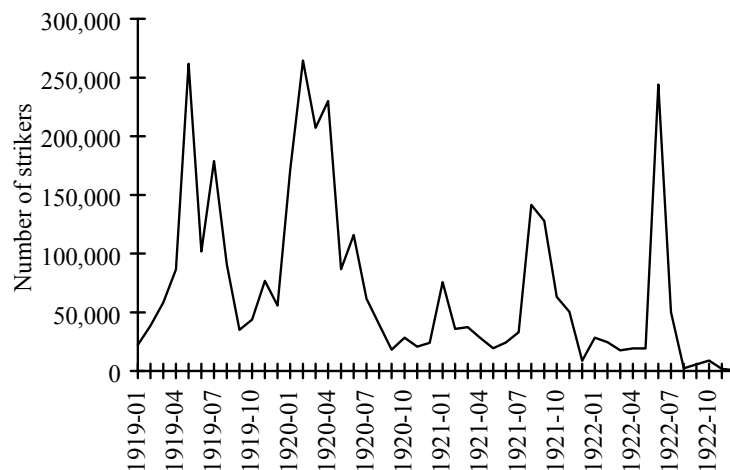


Figure 2 – Plot of quarterly number of strikers (1919-1922) (MAIC data)

The two cycles of mobilization and demobilization reveal distinct peaks of activity: during the “red years,” the cycles of June-July 1919 against *caroviveri* (cost of living) and of September 1920 with a widespread factory occupation movement, when thousands of metalworkers occupied their factories across the country and ran production, soviet style (Spriano, 1964); the cycles of March-May and October 1921 and June 1922 during the “black years.” Membership to the Socialist Party (PSI) soared from 50,000 before the war to 200,000 in 1918; 156 deputies were elected in 1919 compared to 50 in 1913 (Tilly et al. 1975: 168; Chabod 1961: 45-6). At the November 1920 administrative elections the PSI won 2,162 communes out of 8,059, and 25

provinces out of 69 (compare this to 1913, when the Socialists controlled only 300 communes and 22 provinces). The peak of workers' mobilization in the September 1920 factory occupation movement seems to represent "the watershed between the revolutionary and reactionary phases of the postwar crisis," as Lyttelton put it (Lyttelton 1973: 36). Despite the nearly revolutionary situation on the Left, Prime Minister Giolitti decided not to intervene; and four weeks after the occupations had started, they ended with a compromise – perhaps, "a notable success for the FIOM union, on the trade-union terrain," in Spriano's view (1964: 132), but certainly a failure in terms of its revolutionary aspirations. The reactionary phase of the "black years," with its brutal violence of the fascist "hit squads," started immediately thereafter, in the Fall of 1920. While labor mobilization subsided, Fascist violence kept growing throughout 1921 and 1922. Snowden put correctly what is remarkable about the period: "During the vast agrarian agitation of the 'Red Years', there was no planned or systematic use of force by the socialist movement. ... By contrast, fascist violence in 1921 and 1922 was systematic, creating a tidal wave of murder, assault, and intimidation." (Snowden, 1989: 55-56) By March 1921, the local *fasci* numbered 317 with 80,476 members (De Felice, 1965: 607). In October 1922, Mussolini organized a "March on Rome," leading to twenty years of dictatorship. How was such sudden reversal of fortunes possible?

3. Our Theoretical Tool Kit

A large body of work has accumulated about the rise of Italian fascism, from both social scientists and historians. Social scientists have produced a mixture of statistical analyses based on aggregate data and aimed at theory testing and broad, comparative historical analyses aimed at theory building.¹ Historians have produced narrative accounts of specific events or specific local situations² and broad, general histories.³ Among the interpretations of Fascism, the view of fascism as a reaction to Socialism has enjoyed wide popularity. The sustained and widespread levels of working-class protest during the "red years," their sharp decline after the failure of the factory occupation movement of September 1920 and the sudden surge in fascist violence starting in the Fall of 1920 and unabated for the next two years till the conquest of power has easily led to that interpretation. The question is: "reaction by whom and against whom?" (De Felice, 1995: 174) For Lenin and the Communist International (Third Congress of 1921), fascism is the result of the industrial bourgeoisie's need for political authoritarianism in order to maintain its position in the class struggle against the proletariat during the monopoly phase of capitalism (De Felice, 1995: 51–66). Lipset (1981: 131), echoing Salvatorelli's earlier views, shifted the blame from the industrial bourgeoisie to the petty bourgeoisie, when he wrote: "fascism is basically a middle-class movement representing a protest against both capitalism *and* socialism, big business *and* big unions." Gentile, in his history of the Fascist Party 1919–1922, significantly titles one of the core chapters of the book: "A political Party for the Petty Bourgeoisie" (1989: 60–162; see also Snowden's chapter title "The Petty Bourgeoisie and the Squads", 1989: 157–79). Poulantzas (1979: 85–8, 237–46) and Linz (1976: 15–23) also stressed the role of the petty bourgeoisie, but in alliance with big capital and, to a lesser extent, with various other social groups (landlords, peasantry etc.). Moore shares Poulantzas' view of fascism in terms of class alliances – an alliance, however, between the landed upper class, the state, and the industrial bourgeoisie (1966: 436). Rueschemeyer et al. (1992), while critical of Moore's claim that fascism is necessarily one of three "paths to the modern world," fundamentally accept the thesis that fascism is the result of an anti-democratic alliance between landlords and the state.

3.1. *A Set of Hypotheses*

A century later, and there is not a single, agreed upon theory or interpretation of fascism (Italian fascism, in particular) but several different theories, by and large premised on the behavior of different social actors that can be summarized in the following set of hypotheses:

H_{0,1}: (Moore) fascism is the result of a class alliance between the landed elite, the industrial bourgeoisie, and the state;

H_{0,2}: (Rueschemeyer, Stephens, Stephens) fascism is the result of a class alliance between the landed elite and the state;

H_{0,3}: (Poulantzas) fascism is the result of a class alliance between the industrial bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie;

H_{0,4}: (Chabod) fascism is the result of a class alliance between the industrial bourgeoisie, landlords and the petty bourgeoisie;

H_{0,5}: (Salvatorelli and Mira; Lipset) fascism results from the petty bourgeoisie's reaction to socialism;

H_{0,6}: (Lenin and Third Communist International) fascism is the political outcome of the reaction to socialism by the industrial bourgeoisie.

The emphasis of different theories of fascism on different social classes located in different geographical areas suggests another way of setting up hypotheses: whether Italian fascism during this period was an urban phenomenon (as the site of the industrial bourgeoisie and working class) or a rural one (as the site of agricultural laborers, peasantry, and landlords).

H_{0,7}: Italian fascism during the 1919-22 period is a rural phenomenon;

From available scholarship, there also emerges a different emphasis on the events that may have triggered the fascist counter-mobilization: was it the factory occupation movement (Lyttelton, 1973: 36) or the administrative elections of November 1920 whose results marked a fundamental shift in the rural balance of power (Snowden, 1972: 274)? This question leads to two further testable hypotheses about the relationship between the rise in fascist violence and the timing of specific events:

H_{0,8}: the factory occupation moment of September 1920 triggered a fascist violent reaction;

H_{0,9}: the administrative elections of November 1920 triggered a fascist violent reaction.

4. Research Design

4.1. *The Research Questions*

Theories of the origins of Italian fascism are based on the behavior of social actors and their role in bringing out a fascist outcome during the 1919-1922 period of Italian history (and, of course, social actors act in time and space). They deal with such questions as: Who were the subjects and objects of social protest and violence during the turbulent post-World War I years in Italy? Did the protagonists of conflict and violence change during the red and black years? If protagonists changed over time, did the forms of violence also change? Did the fascists have any allies in their violent actions? When the targets of fascist violence were physical objects, what did the targets symbolize: trade unions, Socialist Party, Communist Party, or others? Where did fascist violence strike, in the cities or in the countryside? And when did it strike? Was it constant over time or did it peak at specific times? Did it diffuse spatially over time or did it stay localized?

Did certain events trigger an upsurge in violence? (e.g., the factory occupation movement or elections)?

Answers to these questions require information on Who did What, pro or against Whom. Furthermore, they require detailed information on the timing (When) and location (Where) of each action (the What). This requires us to move away from traditional approaches to the study of the rise of Italian fascism, away from both historians' rich narratives of local cases and social scientists' statistical explanations of event counts: the cross-section, time-series fluctuation in the number of violent events as a function of provincial/regional demographic, political, and economic factors (e.g., level of industrialization, percentage of socialist vote). We need a design strategy that gives us social actors and their actions, the historians' narratives and the social scientists' counts, depth and breath, quality and quantity, a design strategy that is actor-centered rather than variable-centered in the study of socio-historical processes (see Franzosi et al. 2012).

4.2. *Data and Methods*

The research strategy that I have adopted tries to do just that: provide systematic, detailed information on the actors and their actions, on the characteristics of actors and actions (e.g., time and space of action), on the chrono-logical sequences of actions (indeed, both temporal and logical), but for hundreds of events. Contrary to traditional narrative historians, it takes a quantitative approach more typical of social-scientific, historical explanations. But contrary to statistical approaches, it abandons explanations based on aggregate variables (be these national unemployment rate, or provincial or regional percentage of socialist votes in national elections). Rather, it uses narratives of events, as given in newspaper accounts of strikes and other forms of collective behavior and socio-political violence.

To extract information from these newspaper narratives, I have developed an approach to content analysis that I have called Quantitative Narrative Analysis (QNA) (see, for all, Franzosi, 2004, 2010). QNA is based on a computer-assisted story grammar, where a story grammar is the simple linguistic SVO structure, Subject, Verb, Object. In narrative, Subjects are typically social actors, Verbs are social actions and Objects are either social actors or things. To the simple SVO three-element structure we can add specific attributes for each of these three elements (e.g., type, number, organization, name and last name of the Subject and Object and time, space, reason, outcome, instrument of Verb). Thus, the basic template of a story grammar broadly corresponds to the 5 Ws of journalism – Who, What, When, Where, Why – with the potential addition of several more elements (Franzosi, 2012).

Relationships between the various elements (or categories) of a story grammar can be expressed formally and rigorously through “rewrite rules.” Thus, the simple SVO structure (or semantic triplet) can be rewritten in terms of its basic components as follows:

<semantic triplet> → {<subject>} {<verb>} [{<object>}]

where the symbol → refers to a rewrite rule (or production), whereby an element to the left of the rule can be rewritten in terms of the elements to its right.⁴ Each element of the triplet can then be further rewritten, down to its “terminal” symbols (those found in the language itself):

<subject> → {<actor>} [{<characteristics>}]
<actor> → crowd | mob | posse | negro | sheriff | ...
<characteristics> → [{<type>}] [{<number>}] [{<organization>}] [{<space>}]

...	
<verb>	→ <verbal expression> [{<circumstances>}]
<verbal expression>	→ bring burn shoot kill hang ...
< circumstances >	→ [{<time>}] [{<space>}] [{<reason>}] [{<instrument>}]
	[{<outcome>}] ...
<object>	→ <subject>

The relational properties of a story grammar (with Subjects/actors related to Verbs/actions related to Objects/actors-things and where all these relationships are rigorously expressed through rewrite rules) lend themselves to the implementation of such complex linguistic schemes in a computer environment within relational database management systems (RDBMS). I have developed a specialized computer program for the analysis of narrative texts – PC-ACE⁵ and used this program to collect event data on the rise of Italian fascism from different newspapers of the time.⁶ In this paper, I analyze data from two newspapers: *Avanti!*, the official newspaper of the Socialist Party, and *Il Popolo d'Italia*, the official newspaper of the Fascist Party. I use the *Avanti!* data as baseline in all the analyses, except for the fascist party organizational data taken from the fascist *Il Popolo d'Italia*. I also use *Avanti!* and *Il Popolo d'Italia* data side-by-side for systematic evaluations of the validity of newspaper data.⁷

Newspaper name	<i>Avanti!</i>	<i>Il Popolo d'Italia</i>
Number of articles	17,894	19,871
Number of triplets	139,530	93,558

Table 1 – Number of newspaper articles and semantic triplets coded

Table 1 provides data on the size of these two databases: nearly 38,000 newspaper articles coded for a total of over 230,000 skeleton narrative sentences (or semantic triplets).⁸

4.2.1. Limits of the Evidence: Historical Reality or Newspaper Reality?

Most of the historical evidence presented in this paper comes from newspapers. Yet, the validity of newspaper information has been called into question (on newspapers as sources of socio-historical data, see Franzosi, 1987, 2004: 167-72, 180; Olzak, 1989; Earl et al., 2004; Ortiz et al., 2005). “In relying on newspapers, are social scientists studying patterns of historical events or patterns of news reporting?” (Franzosi, 2004: 171)



Figure 3 – Workers’ Conflict (1919-1922): Comparing official strike data and *Avanti!* data

The time series plots of Figure 3 provide a reassuring answer to that question: official, government-collected strike data and *Avanti!* working-class conflict data⁹ track quite similarly both the medium-term up and down of working-class mobilization of the *biennio rosso* and demobilization of the *biennio nero* and the short-term ups and downs in the series (despite some discrepancies, such as the time lag in the peaks of August and November 1921).



Figure 4 – Monthly plots of number of working-class actions of conflict and fascist actions of violence (*Avanti!* data)

The time series plots of Figure 4 of working-class actions of conflict (strikes, demonstrations, rallies, etc.) and fascist actions of violence from *Avanti!* shed further light on the issue of newspaper bias. The plot of fascist violence shows that systematic and widespread reliance on violence by the fascists did not start until the Fall of 1920 with several subsequent peaks (e.g., March-May 1921) until the “March on Rome” of October 1922 and the conquest of power. Although the Partito Nazionale Fascista (PNF, the National Fascist Party) was not founded until November 7, 1921 (by Mussolini), there had been in existence the *Fasci italiani di combattimento*, also founded by Mussolini on March 23, 1919. The *Fasci italiani di combattimento* had already adopted the symbols that would constitute the iconography of fascism: the Roman *fascio littorio*, the dagger, the skull, the *gagliardetto*, the black shirts. The plot of working-class actions of conflict¹⁰ confirms that the peak of September 1920 closed the phase of mobilization of the “red years.” Although two more peaks in mobilization would follow in November 1921 and June 1922, the average level of working-class conflict sharply declined during the “black years” as unemployment rates soared. The plot of Figure 4 of fascists’ violent actions¹¹ also confirms that fascist counter-mobilization started in earnest in the Fall of 1920 with a dramatic surge in the Spring 1921. Fascist reliance on violence continued unabated, albeit with a declining trend, until the conquest of power in October 1922.

Further reassurance on the issue of newspaper bias comes from a direct comparison of data taken from *Avanti!* and *Il Popolo d’Italia*. After all, given that the two main newspaper sources are ideologically placed at the opposite ends of the political spectrum (*Avanti!* on the left, *Il Popolo d’Italia* on the right), we may expect the two newspapers to have very different representations of reality.

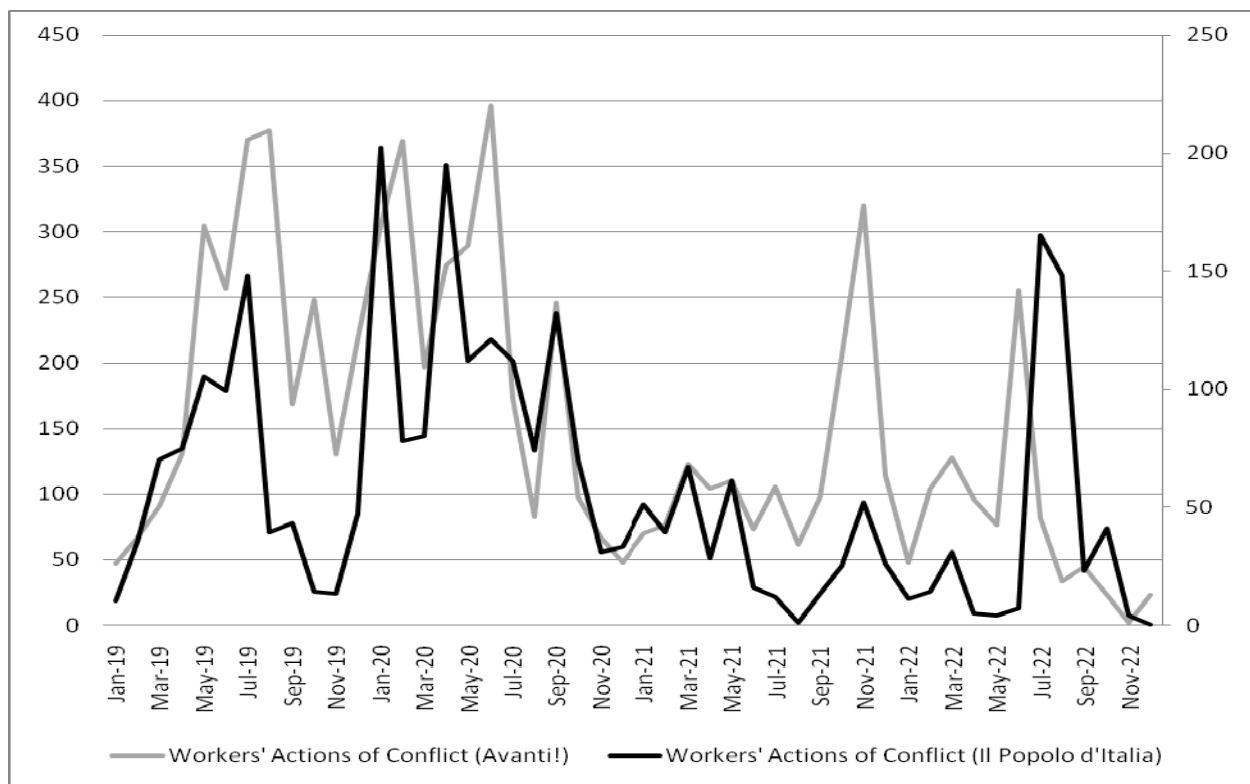


Figure 5 – Workers’ Conflict (1919-1922): Comparing *Avanti!* and *Il Popolo d’Italia* data

Yet, the time plots of Figure 5 of working-class conflict as reported by *Avanti!* and *Il Popolo d’Italia* do not seem to support the claim of different representations of reality depending upon points of view: the two series show similar temporal dynamics, with similar peaks and troughs over the four-years period and, notably, with two distinct periods of mobilization and demobilization of red and black years (1919-20 and 1921-22) (albeit with out-of-phase cycles in December 1919-February 1920 and June-August 1922 that call for further investigation).

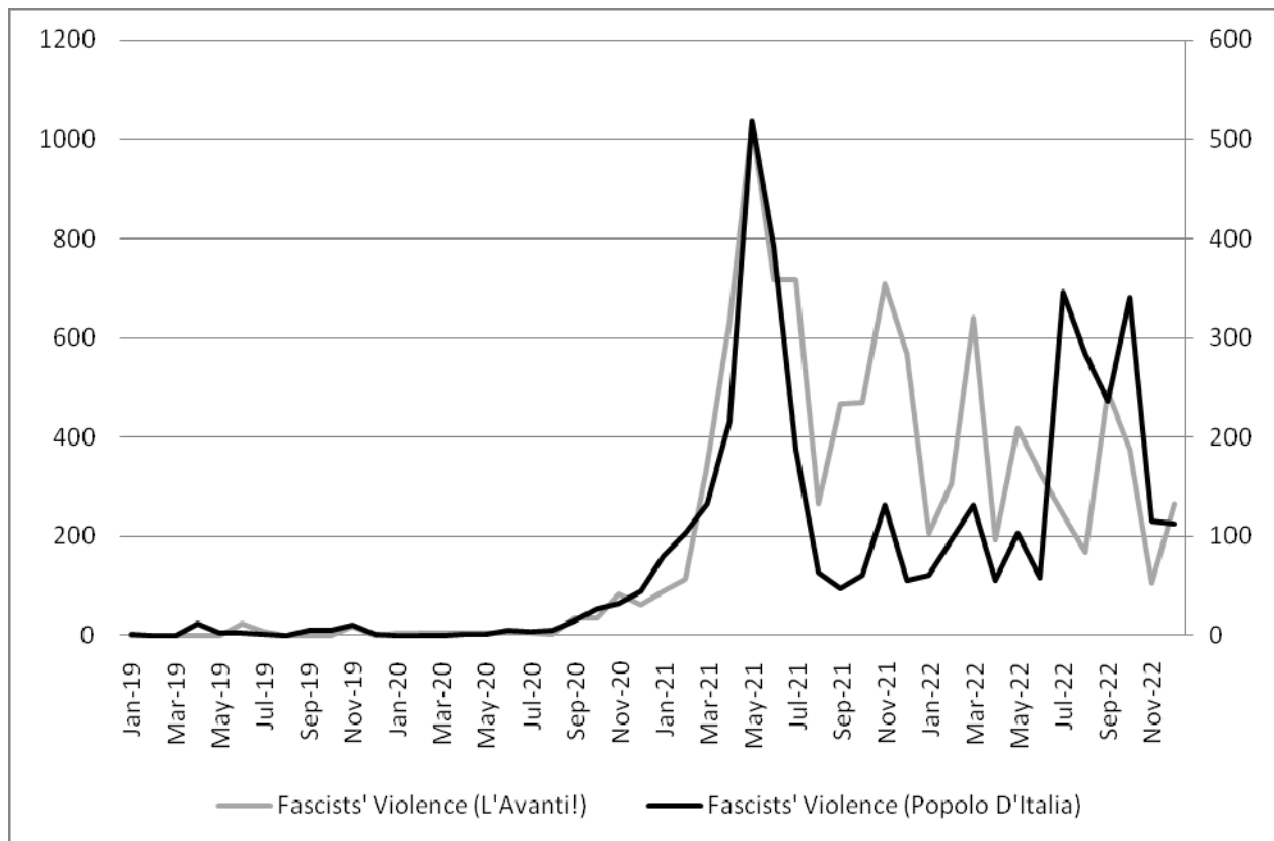


Figure 6 – Fascist violence (1919-1922): Comparing *Avanti!* and *Il Popolo d'Italia*

A similar conclusion can be reached by inspecting the plots of Figure 6 of fascist violent actions as narrated by *Avanti!* and *Il Popolo d'Italia*. Again, the two series display a very similar temporal behavior (again, a similar out-of-phase cycle of June-August 1922 calls for further investigation).

Could the similarity in behavior of the two series of Figures 5 and 6 be due to the reliance of the two newspapers on the same source? All too often, as Danzger (1975: 573) observes: “What appear to be numerous sources, is upon closer examination primarily the same source in different guise.” Unfortunately, no specific studies are available on the sources used by early twentieth-century Italian newspapers. The Agenzia Stefani, founded in 1853 by Guglielmo Stefani, was the main news agency in Italy, a news agency historically linked to current regimes, particularly the fascist regime, indeed “Mussolini’s voice” as it has been referred to (Lepri et al., 2001; Canosa, 2003). My personal inquiries on the issue with leading Italian historians of mass media and mass communication lead me to believe that *Avanti!* and *Il Popolo d'Italia* relied on their separate networks of political sympathizers and militants for local news and that *Il Popolo d'Italia* also received information from local police departments. Unlikely, then, that the similarity in behavior of the *Avanti!* and *Popolo d'Italia* time series of Figures 5 and 6 may be due to the use of the same sources.

Reassuring as the evidence of Figures 3 through 6 might be on the issue of newspaper bias and the “social construction of reality,” reliance on newspaper evidence may still lead to bias: the actions of some actors are more likely than others to make it into newspapers. When thousands of workers march on the streets it is hard to ignore them. When fascist thugs swarm

through town raking death and devastation it is hard to ignore them. When these thugs use police or military trucks it is hard to ignore them. These actions are under everybody's eyes. When industrialists give money to the fascists they will hardly leave a newspaper trace. When landowners call into their small village the close-by city fascists they will not leave a newspaper trace.

5. Shift in Social Relations

For as clear a historical picture the time plots of Figures 3 through 6 paint, it is the network graphs of Figures 7 through 10 that dramatically bring out the shift in social relations from the “red years” to the “black years”. Network graphs provide visual representations of relations between social actors (referred to as “nodes” in network jargon) around specific spheres of action (“relations” or “edges” in network jargon, e.g., violence, conflict, movement, communication). Here, I focus on relations of violence, as measured by such verbs found in the newspaper articles as kill, murder, slay, wound, kick, punch, bludgeon. I also focus on data from *Avanti!* for economy of space (the network graphs from *Il Popolo d'Italia* would portray a similar picture... with an interesting, albeit not unexpected, twist, as we will see).

How do you “read” a network graph? The thickness of the line is proportional to the number of violent actions between any two actors; the arrows in the graph measure the direction of a relation between any two nodes (who is violent to whom, e.g., between fascists and workers); and the numbers refer to the frequency of actions of violence found in the database (the numbers closer to a node/actor refer to the actions of violence against that actor by the other actor in the relation).

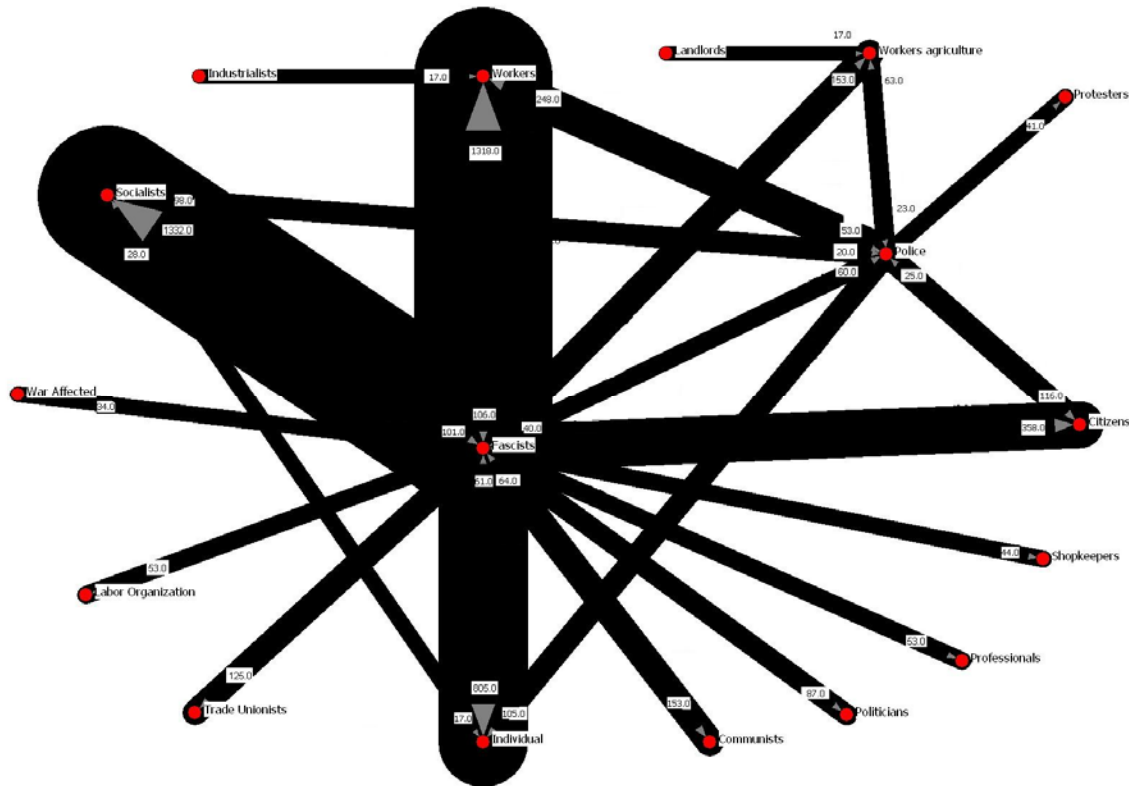


Figure 7 – Network graph of *violence* during the 1919-22 period (*Avanti!* data)

The network graph of Figure 7 (*Avanti!* data) of the social relations of violence during the years 1919-22 clearly supports Tilly, Tilly, and Tilly's claim that this period "may well have produced the highest level of involvement in collective violence ... in Italy's modern history" (Tilly et al., 1975: 126). The graph provides a snapshot of the actors involved in the violence of the period, victims and villains, at least according to the socialist newspaper *Avanti!* The working class, in its various facets (as workers, agricultural workers, protesters, socialists, communists, trade union leaders), is, by and large, at the receiving end of a great deal of violence by the fascists and the police, as shown by the far larger number of violent events against them than the other way around (e.g., 1,318 and 1,332 violent acts by the fascists against workers and socialists as opposed to 106 and 101 by workers and socialists against fascists). The police is surprisingly light-handed with the fascists, compared to workers and protesters, given the level of violence in which the fascists engaged.

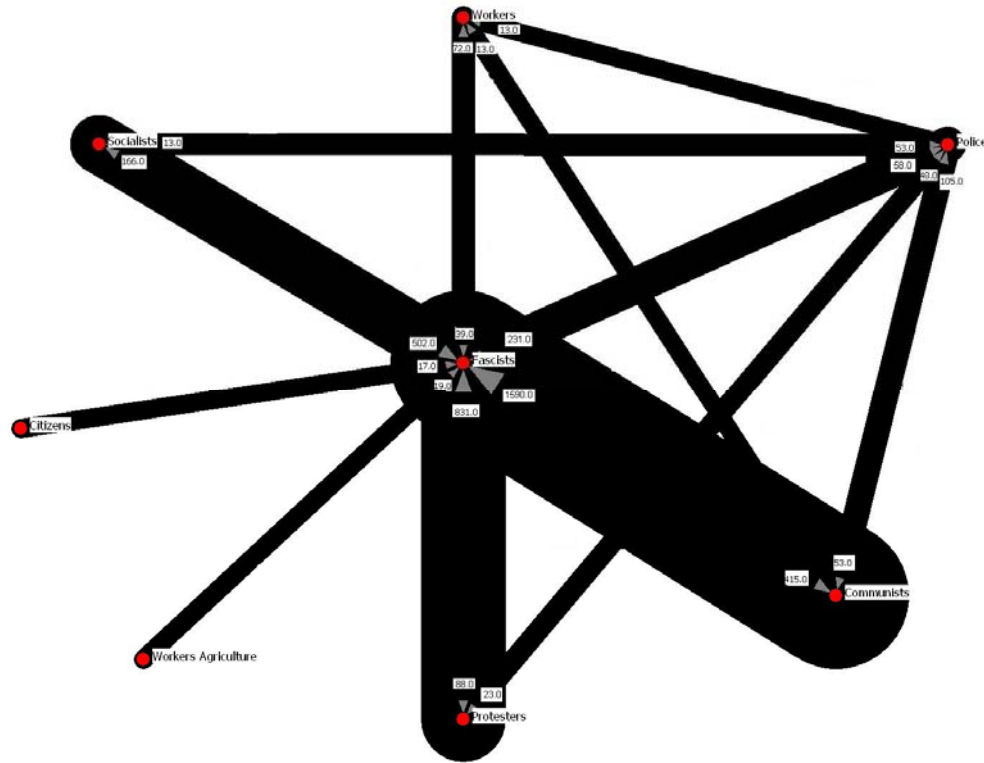


Figure 8 – Network graph of violence (1921-1922) (*Il Popolo d'Italia* data)

The network graph of Figure 8 of a network graph of violence based on *Il Popolo d'Italia* data confirm the picture of changing patterns of social relations from the red years to the black years highlighted by the *Avanti!* data. For *Il Popolo d'Italia*, however, the fascists are no longer the only villains and the socialists the only victims, as *Avanti!* would have it (Figure 7). There is more give and take in the story, as told by the fascists. Blame is apportioned differently, although the fact of violence is not in dispute. Like in children's stories "he did it", "she started it", "I didn't do it," at issue is blame rather than the event itself upon which there is agreement. In this game of blame and praise (of epideictic rhetoric), what is affected in network graphs is the direction of a line and the number of actions behind each arrow. The communists, in particular, boldly enter the scene of violence, according to the network graph of Figure 8 based on *Il Popolo d'Italia*.¹² That is not surprising. The Italian Communist Party was founded at Livorno on 21 January 1921, during the Italian Socialist Party XVIIth congress. Amedeo Bordiga and Antonio Gramsci spearheaded a secession on a radical program after the failure of the factory occupation movement. They embraced the *Arditi del Popolo*, the paramilitary organization originally founded in Rome on July 6, 1921 by the anarchist Argo Secondari, to meet the fascist hit squads of the *Arditi d'Italia* on their same terrain of violence (Del Carria, 1975: 225-8). In an article titled "Arditi del Popolo" that appeared, unsigned, as his practice, in *L'Ordine Nuovo* on July 15, 1921, Gramsci wrote (1978: 57):

Are the communists opposed to the *Arditi del Popolo* movement? On the contrary: they want the arming of the proletariat, the creation of an armed proletarian force ... The communists are also of the opinion that when one wishes to launch a struggle, one should

not wait for victory to be guaranteed by a notary's certificate. ... They do not want what happened in September 1920 to be repeated today ...

The historians' division of the period into "red years" and "black years" would lead us to expect different networks of social relations for the two sub-periods. Indeed, the network graphs confirm these very different patterns.

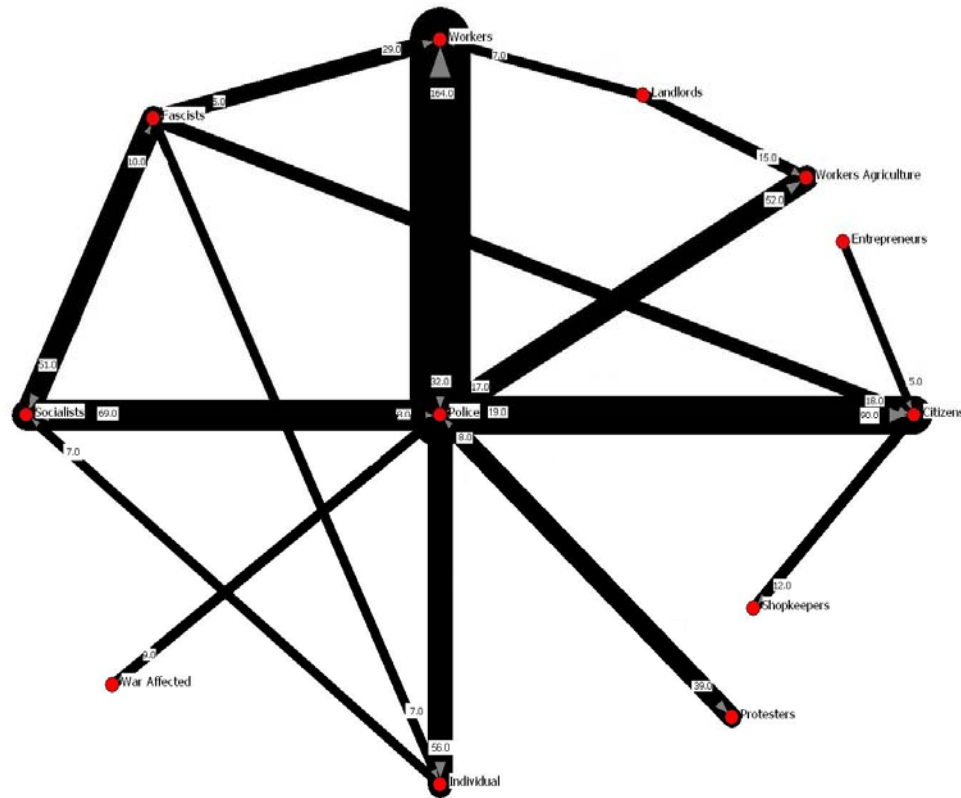


Figure 9 – Network graph of *violence* during the “red years” (1919-20) (*Avanti!* data)

During the “red years” of Figure 9 (*Avanti!* data), the police is the main agent of violence against the working class in a typical star network (with the police as the star, at the center of the network) and in line with similar findings on police (and army) behavior across a variety of settings (e.g., Tilly, 1989, 1995a).

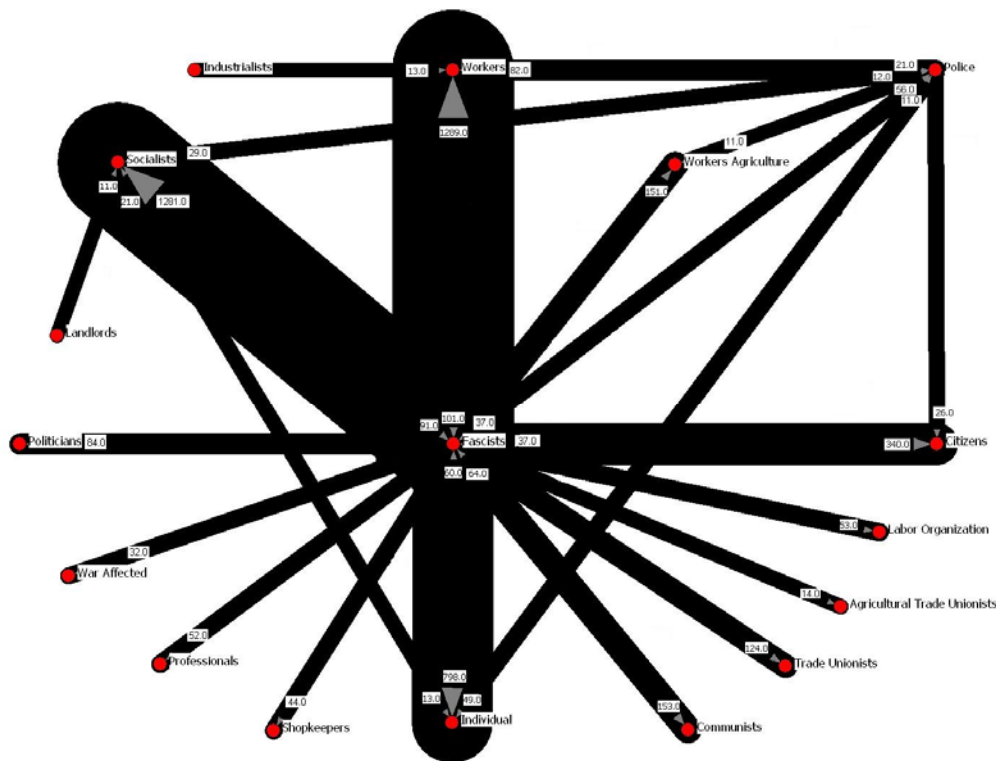


Figure 10 – Network graph of *violence* during the “black years” (1921-22) (*Avanti!* data)

The network graph of the “black years” of Figure 10 (*Avanti!* data) provides a drastically different picture. The fascists are now the main agents of violence against the working class (and at a far higher level of intensity than the police during the previous two years). The police have virtually disappeared from the scene of history, letting the fascists raise havoc undisturbed. Taken together, the network graphs leave no doubt about the temporal shift in the matrix of social relations and actors’ behavior from the “red years” to the “black years”.

5.1. *A Focus on Time: Which Event(s) Triggered a Fascist Reaction?*

What triggered the overtime shift in social relations so dramatically brought out by plots (Figures 3-6) and network graphs of violence (Figures 7-10)? Was there a specific event that changed the tide of working-class mobilization to fascist counter-mobilization, from a revolution on the left to a counter-revolution on the right? And was this event the factory occupation movement of September 1920 – “the watershed between the revolutionary and reactionary phases,” as Lyttelton (1973: 36) would have it – or, rather, the November 1920 administrative elections? To answer that question, let’s take a closer look at that pivotal month of September 1920 and its aftermath.

5.1.1. **The Factory Occupation Movement of September 1920**

Figure 11 represents a network graph of violence for the month of September 1920 (*Avanti!* data).

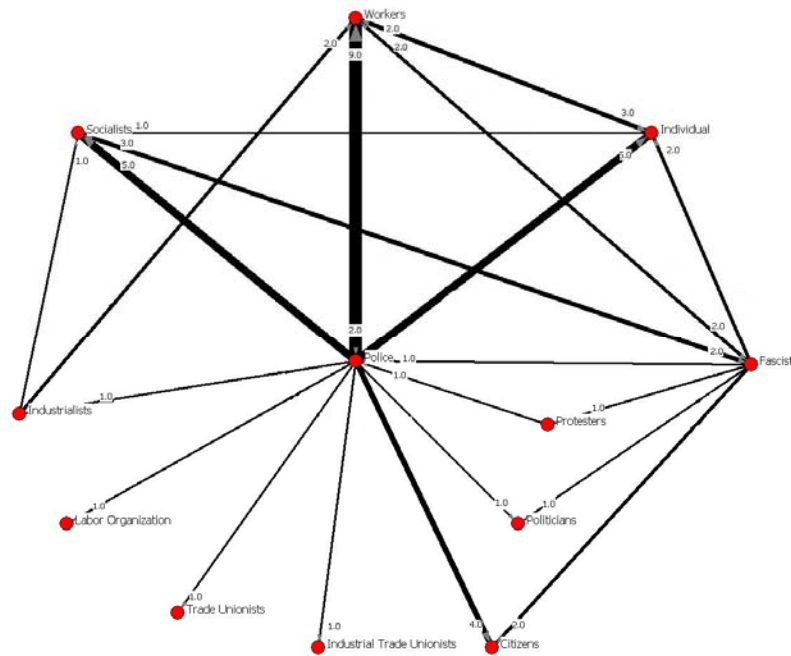


Figure 11 – Network graph of *violence* during September 1920 (factory occupation movement) (*Avanti!* data)

The graph provides clear evidence on Prime Minister Giolitti’s strategy of non intervention. Considering that the metal-industry workers across the country had occupied their factories and that Italy was in a near-revolutionary situation, the absence of the police, with only a handful of interventions, is truly remarkable. But it wasn’t for long.

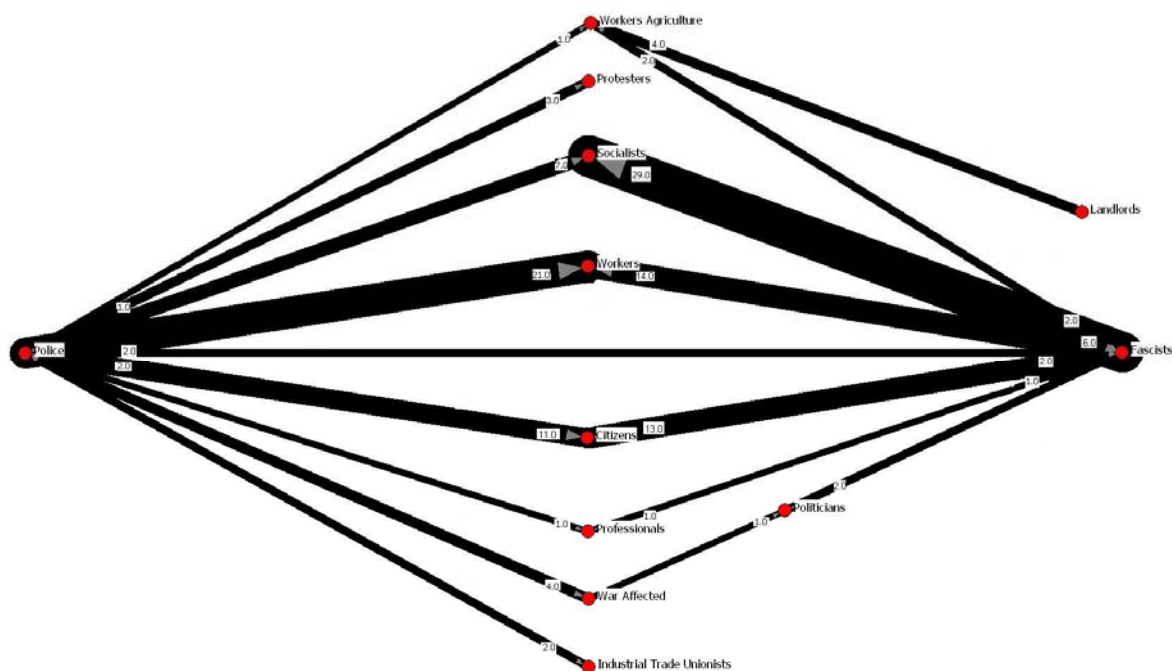


Figure 12 – Network graph of *violence* during the 4th quarter 1920 (*Avanti!* data)

No sooner had the factory occupation movement died out at the end of September 1920, that the working class (notably, socialists and workers, the most frequent victims) came under violent cross-fire from both the fascists and the police, as Figure 12 of the network graph of violence during the last quarter of 1920 dramatically shows (*Avanti!* data). From then onward, fascist violence continued unabated until the final conquest of power in October 1922. War veterans and youth made up the squads,¹³ giving early fascism the impression of youthfulness and vitality but also the know-how for violent, military-style operations against opponents.¹⁴ If the first expeditions in late 1920 involved just a handful of thugs, by mid-1921, those night-time expeditions often turned into military-style assaults on large cities involving thousands of black shirts (e.g., Salvemini, 1928: 113-4; Snowden 1986: 80). Within a few months, sometimes weeks, of systematic recourse to violence, village after village, entire provinces and regions would be “purged” (Del Carria, 1975: 183). As the fascist federation of the province of Brescia boasted in June 1922, “it had undone in the short space of two weeks what had taken the Camera del Lavoro [the Socialist trade union] ten years to build up.” (Kelikian, 1986: 151)

5.1.2. Elections and Violence

The evidence of the network graph of Figure 12 seems to support Lyttelton’s claim about the role of the factory occupation movement in galvanizing a fascist reaction. For sure, the Fascists made their debut on the stage of history in the Fall of 1920, as the plots of Figure 13 make clear (*Avanti!* and *Il Popolo d’Italia* data).

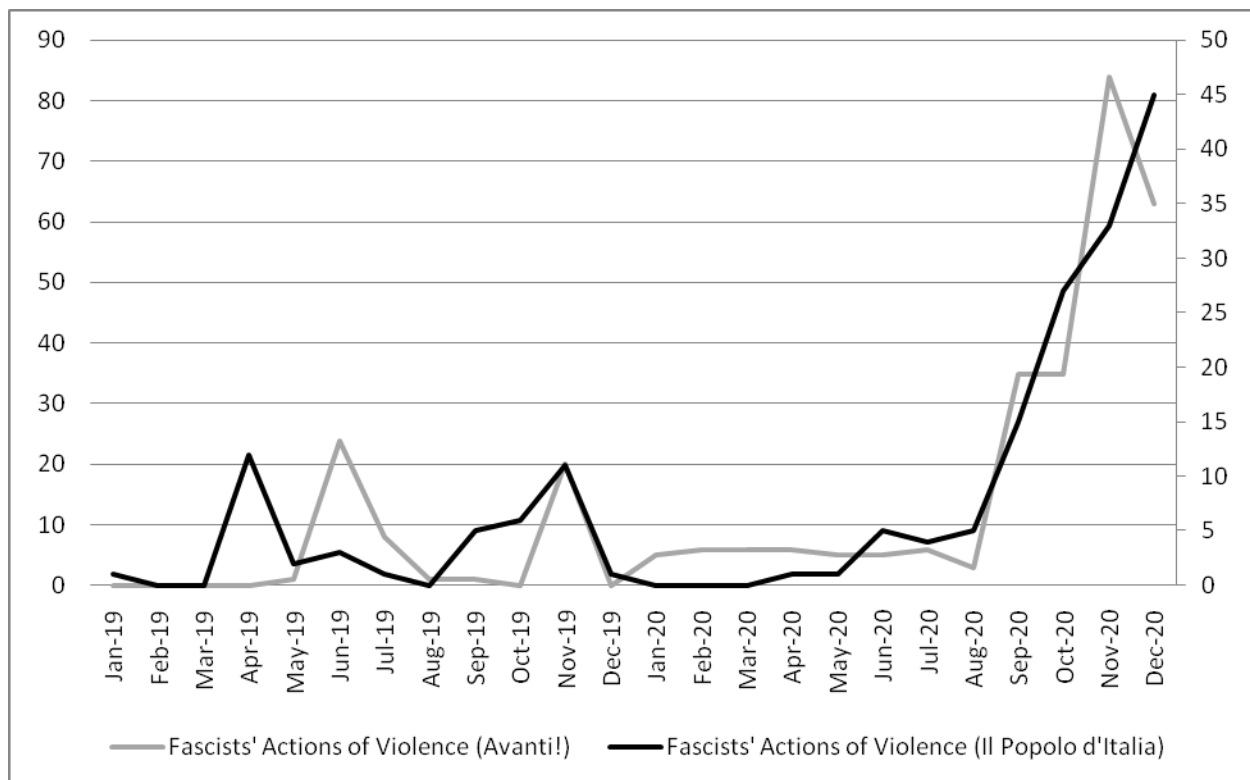


Figure 13 – Plots of fascists’ actions of *violence* during the “red years” (*Avanti!* and *Il Popolo d’Italia* data)

Yet, the network graph of Figure 12, based on quarterly aggregated data, and the continuous upward trend between August and December 1920 of the time plots of Figure 13 may hide the effect of another crucial event: the administrative elections of November 1920. The evidence provided by historians of local situations, from Colarizi to Snowden, leaves no doubt about the close relationship between elections and fascist violence. In Apulia, Fascist violence and terrorism spread “*before and especially during the [1920] electoral campaign*. ... The elections are held in Apulia in a climate of unprecedented maddening illegality and savage violence.” (Colarizi, 1977: 105; my emphasis) In Friuli, the electoral process “takes on dramatic tones,” Fabbro notes (1974: 39). In Cremona, Bologna, and Ferrara, according to Snowden, “the development of the Fascist squads began in earnest in the Autumn of 1920, *after the local elections*.” (Snowden, 1972: 275; emphasis added) As De Felice wrote: “Between the end of 1920 and the beginning of 1921 the real Fascism was born, the hit squads” (De Felice 1965: 617). Six months after the November administrative elections, the political elections of May 15, 1921 would provide the occasion for a further surge in violence. “From April 8 to May 14 [1921], during the electoral campaign, there were 105 deaths, of which 49 due to conflicts related to the elections, and 431 wounded, of which 208 for the elections.” In May 1921, many local prefects were informing Prime Minister Giolitti that they could not guarantee order (Maier, 1975: 315).¹⁵ In the second volume of his massive biography of Mussolini, De Felice reports the data one more time and writes (1966: 87, 93): “With the beginning of the electoral campaign clashes in all of Italy ... had increased in great measure ... The election day of May 15 [1921] and the

immediately following day had been plagued by a number of clashes leaving many dead and wounded.”

My newspaper data, from both *Avanti!* and *Il Popolo d'Italia*, confirm the close connection between elections and violence. Spikes in fascists’ actions of violence occur in correspondence of the political elections of November 16 1919 (although the numbers are still very small), the administrative, local elections of November 1920 (see the plots of Figure 13), and the political elections of May 15, 1921 (see the plots of Figure 14).

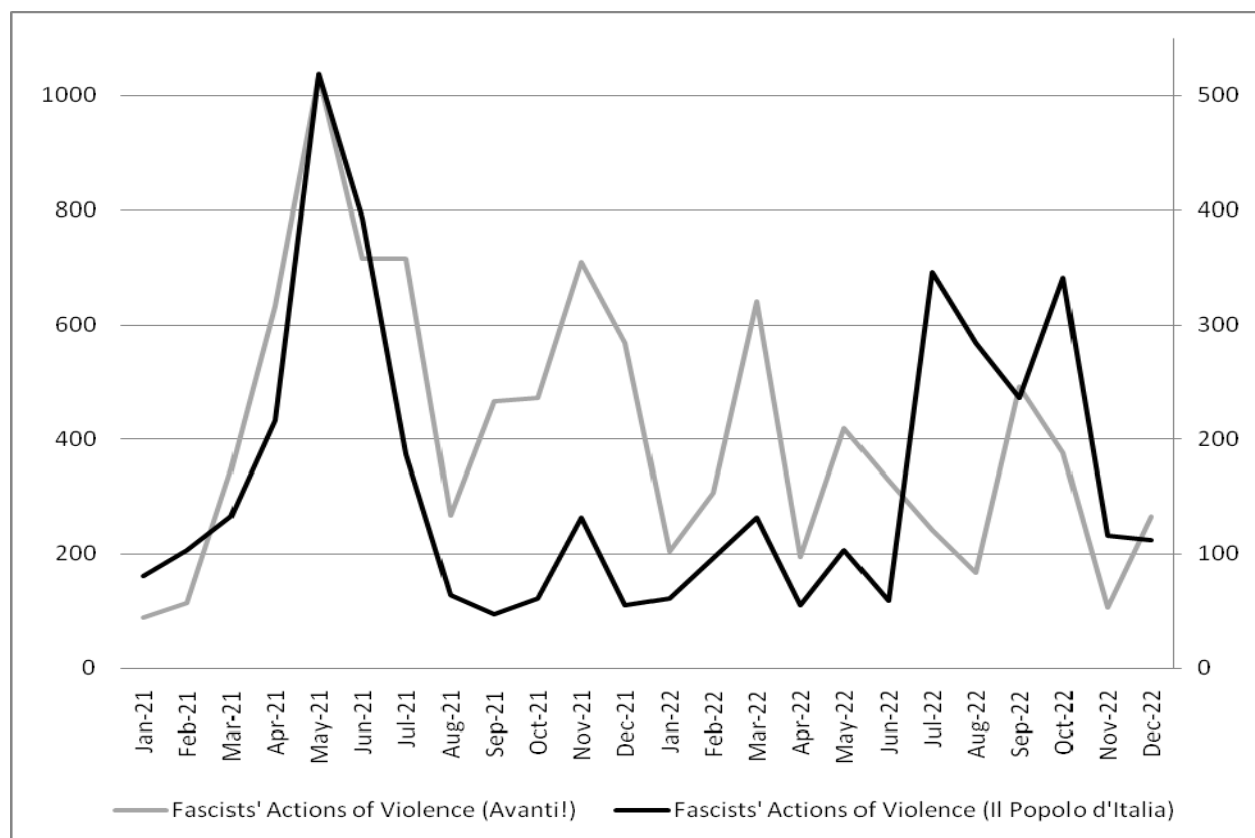


Figure 14 – Plots of fascists’ actions of *violence* during the “black years” (*Avanti!* and *Il Popolo d'Italia* data)

There is also considerable evidence in my databases on the range of actions the fascists carried out to affect the electoral results in rural socialist strongholds: locking up socialist political leaders in their homes, patrolling the streets arms in hand, harassing and intimidating voters, and ultimately even robbing and burning the ballots by the truckloads.

The relationship between elections and fascist violence has been the focus of several social science, quantitative investigations. In the first study of this kind, Szymanski (1973) found¹⁶ that the number of acts of Fascist violence between January and June 1921 was positively correlated with the number of Socialist votes in the 1919 parliamentary elections but negatively with the level of industrialization (as measured by the percentage of industrial workers). Szymanski took those results to mean that Fascism was an agricultural reaction to Socialism. Brustein (1991), in another statistical analysis of electoral data, refutes this “red menace” interpretation of fascism. For Brustein (1991), the key to the fascists’ electoral success

is their ability to satisfy the material interests of different rural social strata. In a quantitative study based on electoral results for the years 1919, 1920, and 1921, Brustein finds a positive correlation between Socialist and Fascist vote: 0.655, 0.625 and 0.309 in 1919, 1920, and 1921 respectively. He interprets the drop in the correlation in 1921, as well as the fact that the Fascists were the only major new party in the ballot that year, as evidence that the Fascists were the principal beneficiary in the decline of Socialist vote (Brustein, 1991: 660-1). Brustein further interprets these findings to mean that support for Fascism was the result of proactive rational choice, rather than reaction to Socialism dictated by fear. The Fascist agricultural program better captured the interests of the middle and upwardly aspiring lower peasantry (Brustein, 1991: 662). That may well be, but systematic resort to violence by the Fascists during the pre-electoral period (starting with the 1919 election) in many cases left voters in small peasant communities with little choice, *regardless* of the Fascist agricultural program. Which, of course, does not make voters any less rational, the real prospect of being killed or victimized providing as much or more of an incentive as a promising electoral platform. Elazar's more recent return to Szymanski's questions and data (Elazar, 1998, 2000, 2000b) comes closer to the mark when she showed the close relationship between hit squads, landlords, and the state. Focusing closely on 25 out of the 69 Italian provinces of the time, Elazar showed how the squads systematically, and almost exclusively, targeted those socialist strongholds that posed the greatest threat to the landlords' interests.

5.1.3. Organizational Growth: The Fascist Party

"The electoral competition had a great influence," De Felice notes (1965: 608; also 1966: 30), not only on the growth of Fascist violence but also on the party's organizational growth. "In the span of one year, the number of local organizations of Fasci jumped from 88 at the end of 1920 to 834 at the end of 1921, and members from 20,615 to 249,036. By March 21 1921, the Fasci were 317 with 80,476 members. "During the sole month of April [1921] the number of Fasci reached 417 with 98,399 members and soared by the end of May, i.e. right after the political elections, to 1,001 Fasci and 187,098 members." (De Felice 1965: 607) Albanese similarly shows that in Venice and the Venetian hinterland, in both 1920 and 1921 elections, "punitive expeditions and rallies, as well as the founding of new fasci occurred especially during the electoral period." (2001: 65, 112-16) This confirms Riley's observation (2005: 300) that "The decisive expansion of the [fascist] movement occurred in the first six months of 1921 as a result of its alliance with agrarian organizations."

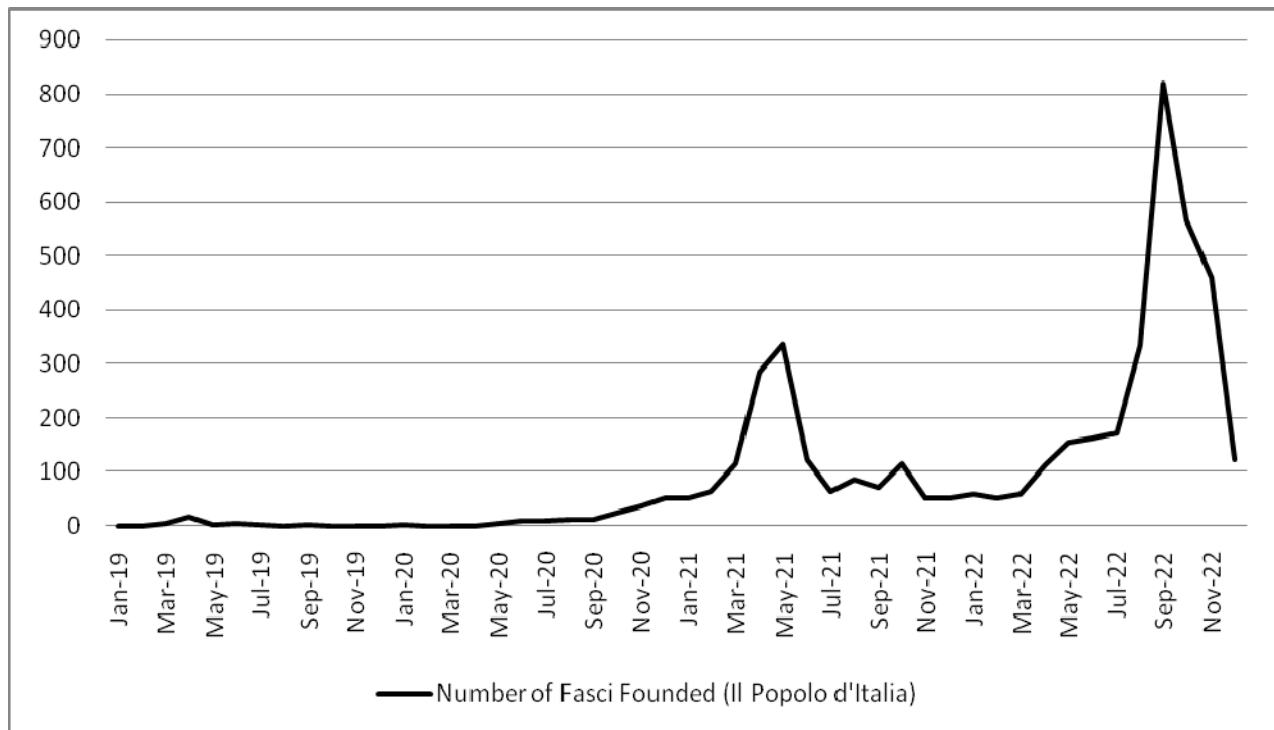


Figure 15 – Plot of number of Fasci founded (*Il Popolo d'Italia* data)

Again, data from the official newspaper of the Fascist Party, *Il Popolo d'Italia*, confirm the close connection between elections, violence, and organizational growth (needless to say, the socialist *Avanti!* does not provide data on fascist organizational growth). Figure 15 presents the time series plot of the growth of local *fasci* (local cells of the Fascist Party). Leaving aside the peak of October 1922 (not surprisingly ... everyone became fascist after the October 1922 “March on Rome”), the plot reveals a clear surge in the number of new local *fasci* around the political election of May 15, 1921.¹⁷

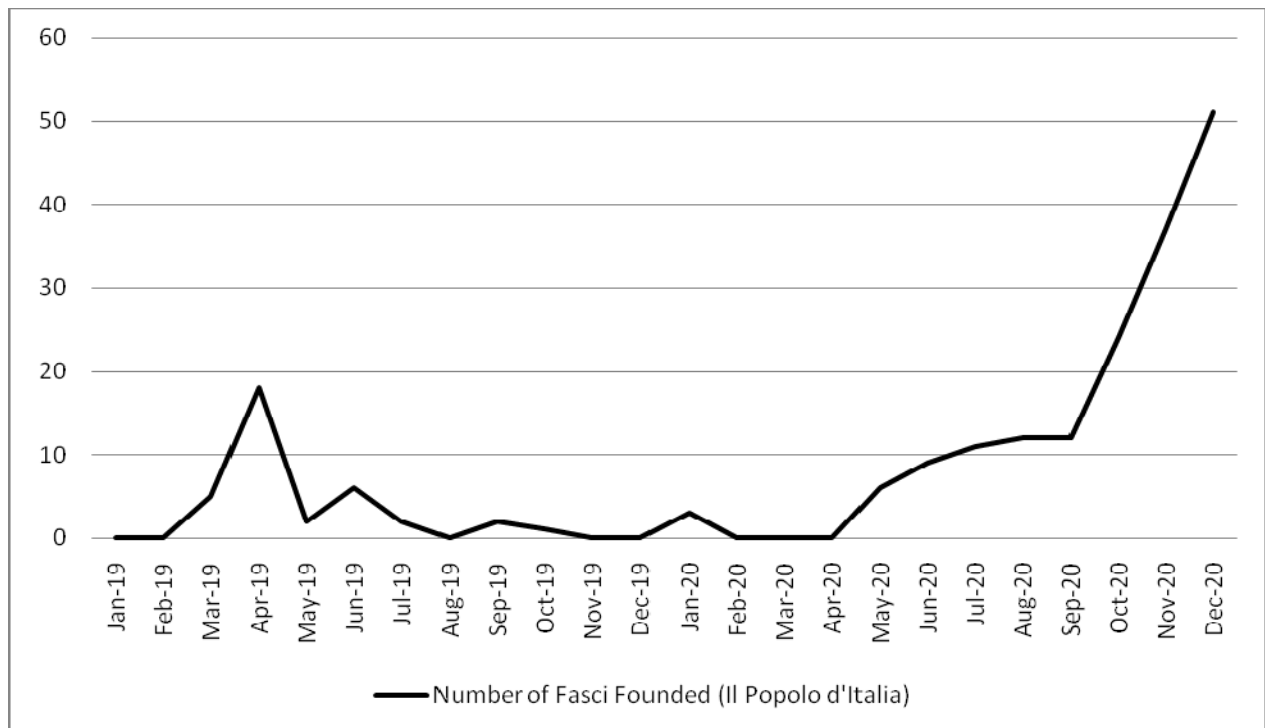


Figure 16 – Plot of number of Fasci founded during the “red years” (*Il Popolo d’Italia* data)

And yet, the time plot of Figure 15 may hide a closer connection between elections, violence, and organizational growth due to “masking”, i.e., the presence of outliers, in particular the peak of the end of 1922. The time plot of Figure 16 for the sub-period of the “red years” clearly brings out the dramatic organizational growth of the fascist party in the Fall of 1920, right after the factory occupation movement and the November administrative elections. In any case, a focus on the *fasci* exclusively hides another aspect of organizational growth: the penetration by the fascists of “the preexisting structure of working class associationism. ... The fascists did not dismantle the socialist organizations; they penetrated them and used them to build their own mass organizations.” (Riley, 2005: 300-1) For Riley (2005), it was the presence of an extensive civic associationism (even socialist) in North-Central Italy that was key to the organizational success of the nascent fascist party, as it “grafted itself on to this associational terrain.” Corner saw it differently. With reference to the province of Ferrara, Corner asked, echoing *Il Popolo d’Italia*: What are the reasons behind the transition of a “red province” par excellence, like Ferrara, to a “fascist province”? (Corner, 1975: 138) Basically, three reasons, in this order: 1. “of course – violence.” 2. the active collusion of police and carabinieri; 3. demoralization of the socialist base. And, indeed, demoralized the Italian working class, industrial and agricultural, was by mid-1921. And if at the ballot booths the socialists could still secure a large victory in the May 15, 1921 political elections, despite the intimidations and bloodsheds – 123 parliamentary seats with 1,569,559 votes for the Socialist Party against the 2 seats and 31,000 votes of the Fascist Party – it had all come at a high cost, and that cost was rising. “At the end of 1921, the Bolognese Chamber of Labor summarized the material and human costs of fascist violence. In addition to the destruction of social clubs, chambers of labor, cooperatives, and league offices, 557 laborers had been arrested, 1,936 injured by guns and clubs, and 19 killed.” (Cardoza, 1982: 377) My newspaper data and the historical record for other provinces show that this cost was

paid by the working class across Italy. All for what? To see a working-class leadership that would often negotiate under-the-table deals with employers (e.g., Snowden, 1989: 145)? All for what? To have a revolutionary party that, just as scared as employers by the prospect of revolution, would sell for economic gains the revolutionary aspirations of the factory occupations of 1920? All for what? To face mounting brutality, defenseless and alone, while the party that kept preaching not to respond to intimidations? If being a socialist union member or local politician meant harassment and violence by the fascist squads, if it meant being the first to be laid off as a trouble maker,¹⁸ if it meant being without employment, then, perhaps, it is not surprising that members of socialist unions would “pass *en masse* to the fascists ... at the point of a gun”, when all else failed (for examples, see Corner, 1975: 165; Kelikian, 1986: 151; Cardoza, 1982: 144, 378-9; Snowden, 1989: 64; Riley 2005: 300) That the fascist press would report that socialist workers joined the fascist unions “enthusiastically” was perhaps only adding insult to injury. As Corner concludes, the wholesale “transfer of the rural proletariat to fascism ... [is] the result of a combination of violence and demoralization.” (Corner, 1975: 138, 140, 142)

5.2. *The Role of the State*

Violence, no doubt, played a key role in the rise of fascism. The evidence accumulated by historians of Italian fascism and reviewed in this paper, together with the evidence from my two newspaper databases, leave no doubt about the violent nature of early fascism. Yet, is it conceivable that small rag-tag bands, however well organized, however well trained in paramilitary operations as former army officers, could ultimately take the state, even a state severely proved by the war effort? “The seizure of power by ‘force’ in a modern state – writes Lyttelton (1973: 86; see also Paxton 1998:16) – is never possible, except when the army or police carries out the coup, unless the will to resist of the Government forces has been undermined.” For Maier (1975: 321) as well, the Italian Ministry of the Interiors could have mastered the forces to beat back the Fascists, but both the police and the army were sympathetic to the patriotic, militaristic, patriarchal, “law and order” cultural ideology of Fascism. In spite of President’s Giolitti best efforts to instruct local authorities to react swiftly against Fascism¹⁹, those instructions fell mostly on deaf ears.²⁰ No doubt, the police and the army had their reasons for siding with the fascists. The anti-war and anti-patriotic Socialist propaganda had deeply offended the patriotic spirit of army officers and veterans (Chabod, 1961: 38-9). “The military look upon the Fascist movement with sympathy because of its patriotic spirit,” wrote police inspector and vice-prefect Ricci (cited in Fabbro, 1974: 56). The police had been the frequent target of Socialist demonstrators (Maier, 1975: 177, 317; Snowden, 1989: 195). As a result, the police viewed “the Fascists as an ally in defeating subversive elements who had been the negation of the patriotic idea, who until a few months ago, covered the police force with insults ... violence, and even atrocities” (De Felice, 1966: 29).

There is overwhelming evidence that much fascist violence occurred with police connivance if not outright collusion.²¹ Salvemini reports a memorandum of October 20, 1920 that came from the General Staff and that encouraged divisional commanders “to show active favour to the Fascist organizations” (Salvemini, 1928: 78). Tasca (1950: 187) reports the content of a late 1920 memorandum by the Minister of Justice Fera that “invites [judges] to stall the dossiers against Fascists’ criminal acts.” Truckloads of carabinieri driving into towns behind the Fascists were reported (Salvatorelli and Mira, 1964: 179). Courts began to treat as “extortions”

the boycotts and fines set by the workers' Leagues against employers and strike breakers (Cardoza, 1982: 356).

There are several instances of actions of both facilitation (as measured by such verbs as help, facilitate, give a hand) and non-intervention (as measured by verbs such as do not intervene, stay out of the way, do not arrest, do not stop) by the police in the *Avanti!* and *Il Popolo d'Italia* databases and the beneficiaries of their actions (see Table 2). Of course, one would expect the socialist newspaper *Avanti!* to depict police behavior as far more favorable to the fascists than to the socialists. But the fact that the fascist *Il Popolo d'Italia* also sees the fascists as being helped by the police, albeit in much smaller numbers, is a good indication of the police's sympathies.

	<i>Avanti!</i>	<i>Il Popolo d'Italia</i>
Fascists	311	15
Socialists	14	13
Workers	13	11

Table 2 – Frequency distribution of police actions of facilitation and no control by targets of their actions

The data prepared by the *Direzione Generale di Pubblica Sicurezza* (General Direction of Police) on the cases of violence that occurred in Italy up to May 8, 192 confirm these findings (data reported in De Felice, 1966: 36-9). Figure 17 reports a bar chart of the difference between the number of Socialists and Fascists arrested in all Italian cities. The positive bars in the chart show that in the majority of cities (with the notable exception of Bologna and a handful of other cities) the Socialists outnumbered the Fascists in number of arrests. Conversely, the bar chart of Figure 18 shows that the Fascists were more likely than the Socialists to be charged without arrest. These findings are further confirmed by the bar charts of Figure 19 based on the ratio between the difference in the numbers of Socialists arrested and charged without arrest and the total number of Socialists arrested and charged. The bar charts for most cities fall in the positive area of the graph. Cities with a value of one (e.g., Bergamo, Cagliari) are cities where only arrests of Socialists were made. Fourteen cities fall into that category. Compare this to two cities (Avellino and Caserta) where only arrests of Fascists were made. In any case, the number of cities where the Socialists are more likely to be arrested than charged without arrest far outweighs the number of cities where Socialists are more likely to be charged and set free than arrested (41 cities vs. 15).

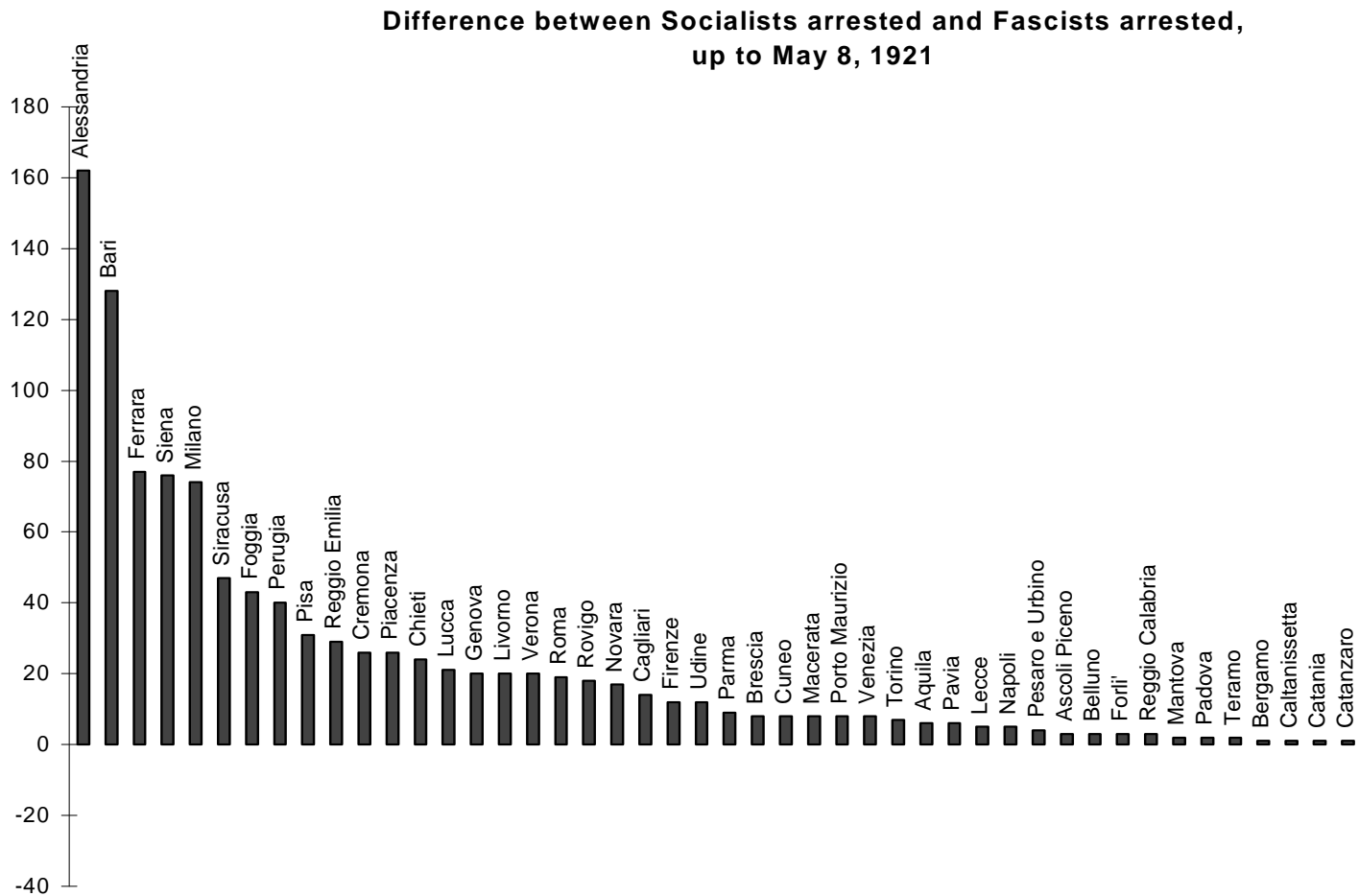


Figure 17 – Distribution by city of the difference between the numbers of Socialists and Fascists arrested

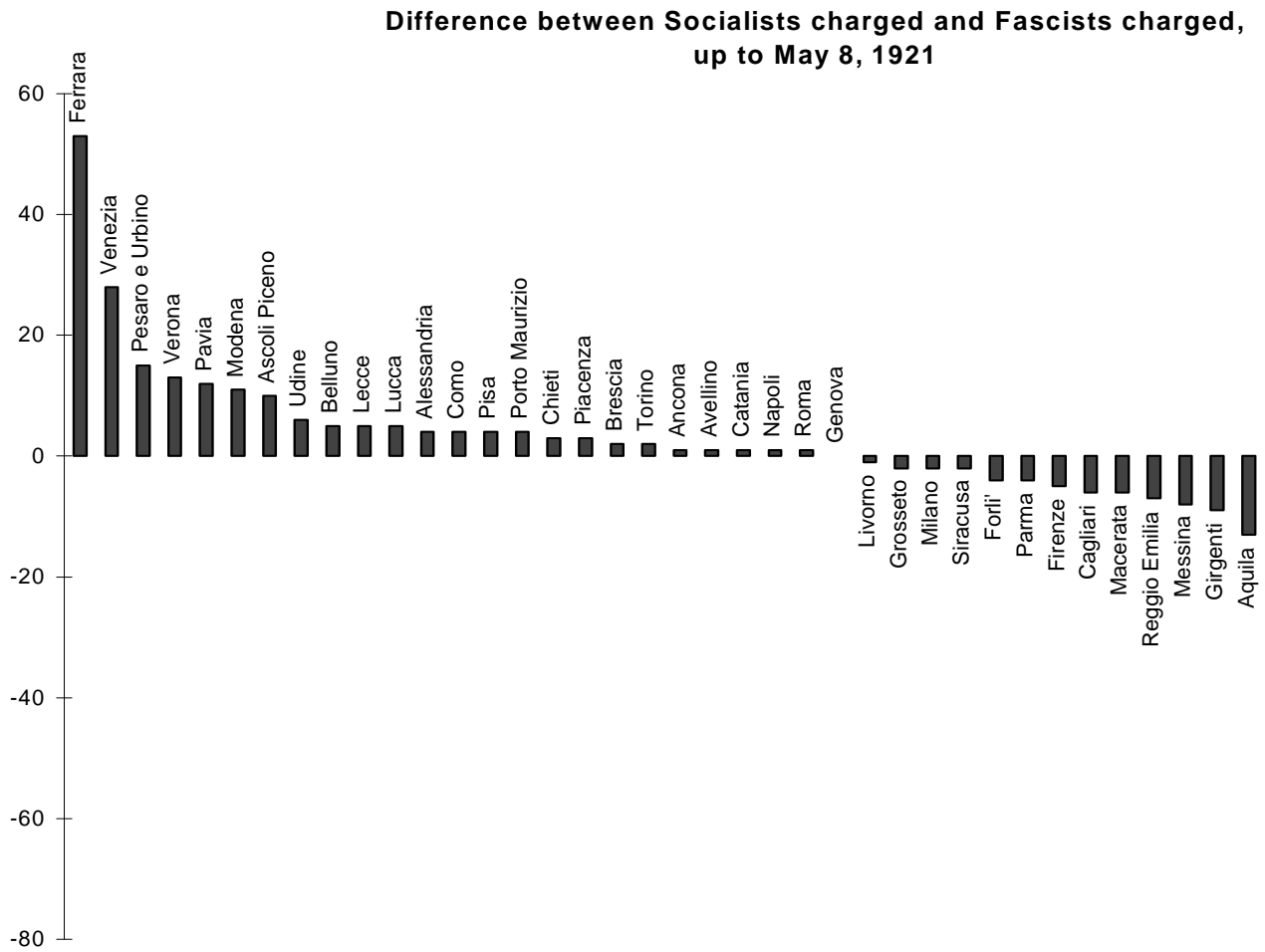


Figure 18 – Distribution by city of the difference between the numbers of Socialists and Fascists charged

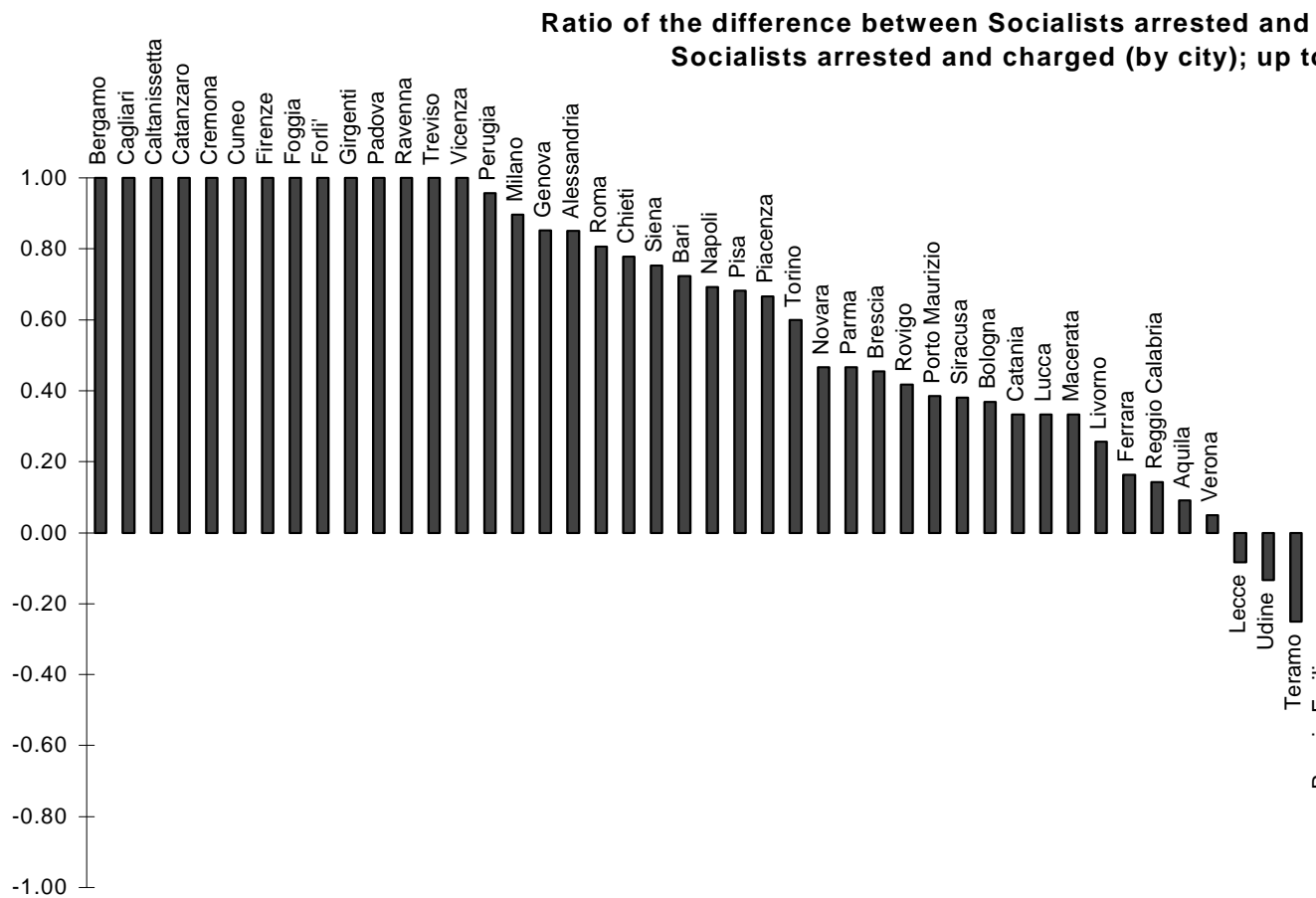


Figure 19 – Distribution by city of the ratio between the numbers of Socialists arrested and charged and the total of Socialists arrested and charged (by city, up to May 8, 1921)

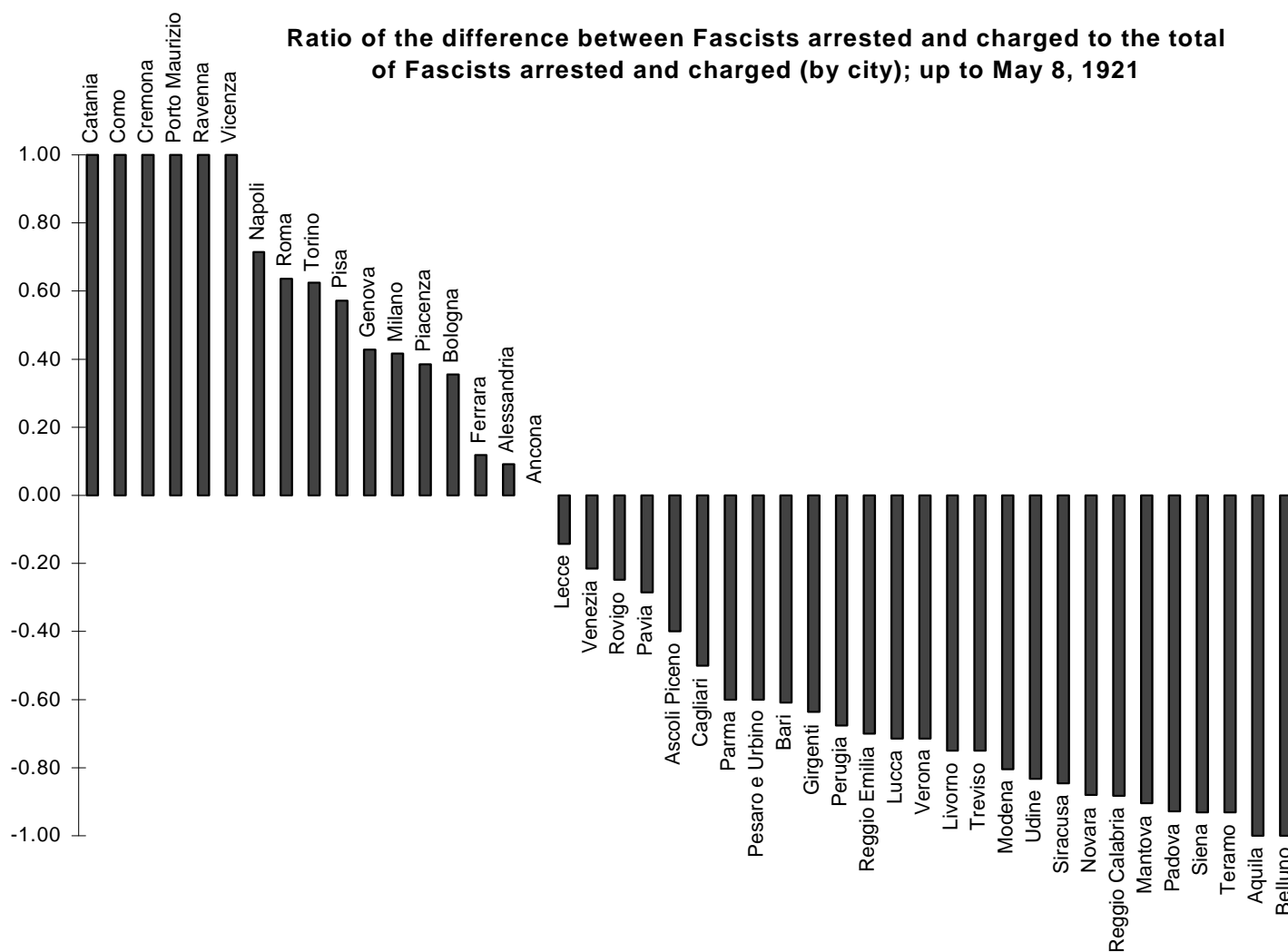


Figure 20 – Distribution by city of the ratio between the numbers of Fascists arrested and charged and the total of Fascists arrested and charged (by city, up to May 8, 1921)

Things are better for the Fascists, as one can see from the bar charts of Figure 20. They are much more likely to be charged but set free than arrested with imprisonment. The bar charts of Figures 19 and 20 show almost diametrically opposite behavior by the authorities vis-à-vis the socialists and the fascists. In sum, early fascists resorted to violence with some impunity, with the collusion of various state institutions (particularly, when compared to the socialists).

And, yet, for all its clarity, my evidence and the historians' evidence is likely to catch only the tip of the iceberg of the collusion between the Fascists and the police and military authorities. In a section titled "The Secret of the Fascist Victory" Salvemini (1928: 76) points to the role of the police and the military in making the victory possible. The title of another section of Salvemini's book is even more explicit: "The Military Conspiracy" (Salvemini, 1928: 107). De Felice (1966: 32) correctly states:

It is not hazardous to conclude that the cases of open collusion between the army and the Fascists must have been much more numerous than political authorities were ever able to document. One must wonder whether the military commands and, especially, the propaganda, security, secret services, etc. were really as innocent as they claimed.

5.3. *A Focus on Geography: Is Fascism an Urban or Rural Phenomenon?*

In an unsigned article titled "The two Fascisms", Gramsci (1966: 297-9) wrote in *Ordine Nuovo* of August 25 1921 of the existence of an urban and parliamentary wing of Fascism, represented by Mussolini, and a rural Fascism, violent, reactionary, and committed to the physical elimination of the Socialist and Communist opposition.²²



Figure 21 – Percent of *violent* actions performed by Fascists in large cities (over 100,000 inhabitants) (*Avanti!* data)

Newspaper evidence from *Avanti!* shows that these two fascisms represent distinct phases in the rise of Italian fascism. The bar charts of Figure 21 of the percentage of actions of violence carried out by the Fascists in large cities (with over 100,000 inhabitants) show a strategic shift in the locus of fascist violence from the cities in 1919 and 1920 to the countryside in 1921 and 1922. Considering that the number of violent fascist actions during the “red years” was much smaller than during the “black years,” the chart leaves no doubt that violence was mostly a rural phenomenon.

There is indeed compelling historical evidence on the reliance of rural Fascism on physical violence, starting in the Fall of 1920. From Tuscany, to Emilia Romagna, Veneto, Lombardy, and all the way down to Apulia, the fascists struck brutally wherever peasants had set up trade-union organizations, whether Socialist or Catholic.²³ The Fascists’ first targets were *economic*: they intimidated, beat up, killed trade union leaders and individual workers, attacking and destroying their houses and their organizational headquarters (Salvemini, 1928: 110; Del Carria, 1975: 183). Then, the Fascists moved on to political targets: party leaders and headquarters. One after the other, socialist city councils would be forced to resign or, seeing the signs of the time, “chose to withdraw from public life” (Cardoza, 1982: 348). Typically, outside fascists driving into the country side from the city carried out punitive expeditions with the landlords’ help (e.g., Fabbro, 1974: 38, 43; Cardoza, 1982: 317-20; Snowden, 1986: 186-7; Kelikian, 1986: 133).

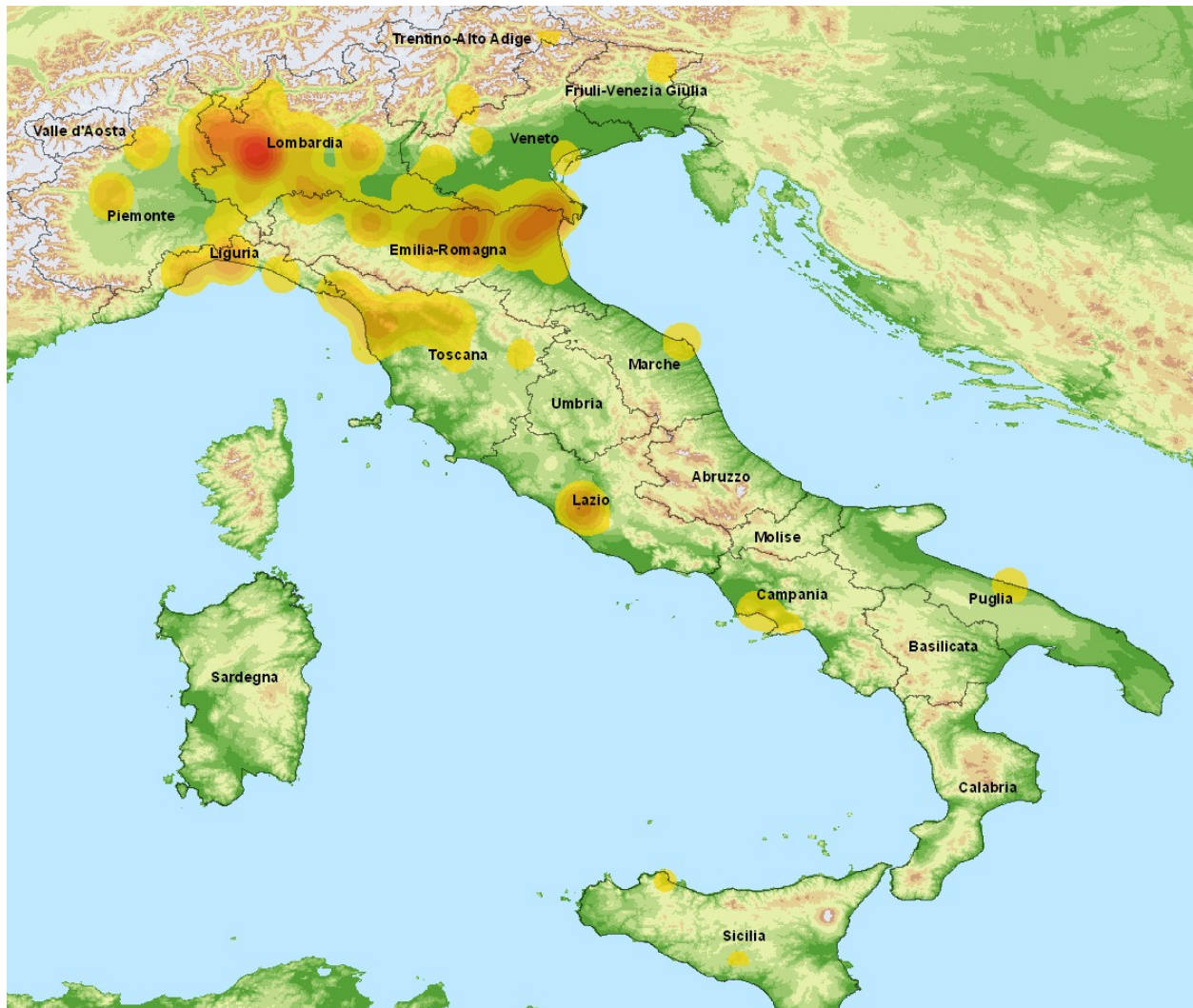


Figure 22 – Heat map of workers’ *conflict* actions in 1919-1920 and fascist *violent* actions in 1921-22 (*Avanti!* data)

The historical record would then seem to imply a close connection between socialist strongholds and fascist violence, a geographical overlap of working-class conflict during the “red years” of 1919-20 and fascist violence during the “black years” of 1921-22. Indeed, the heat map of Figure 22 makes this visually very clear. The heat map shows all the points of overlap (and only those points) between working-class conflict during the “red years” of 1919-20 and fascist violence during the “red years” of 1921-22. The hot points coincide with the locations studied by historians: from the Po river valley to Emilia Romagna (Bologna and Ferrara), Tuscany (Florence) , Lazio (Rome), Campania (Naples), and Puglia (Corner, 1975; Colarizi, 1977; Snowden, 1986, 1989; Bell, 1986). The heat map does provide support to the “red menace” interpretation of fascism.

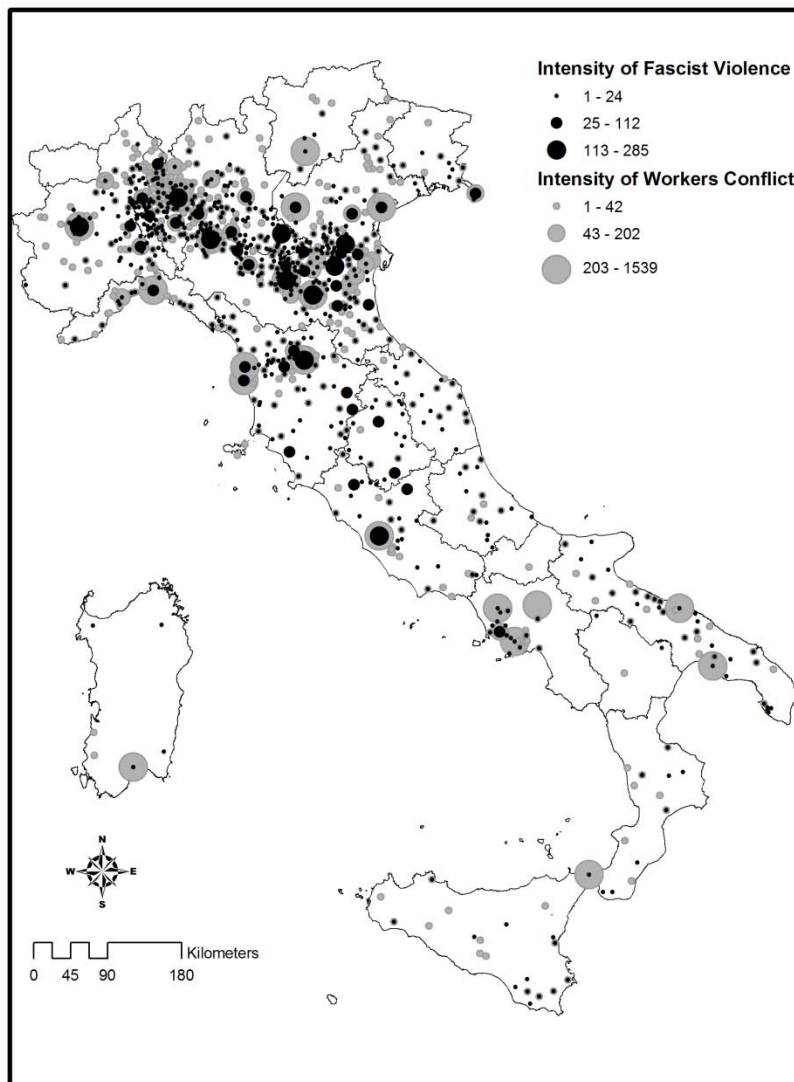


Figure 23 – Map of workers’ *conflict* actions in 1919-1920 and fascist *violent* actions in 1921-22 (*Avanti!* data)

And yet, the detailed map of Figure 23 shows that the fascists’ use of violence was much more pervasive, much more diffusive than the “red menace” warrants. Their attacks were systematic throughout Italy.

6. “Reaction by Whom and against Whom?” Winners and Losers in Theory Testing

Let’s go back to the academic question of what we know, back to De Felice’s question “reaction by whom and against whom?”, back to the set of hypotheses about the rise of Italian fascism. On

whose side does the combined historical and newspaper evidence fall? Which theory of Fascism does it corroborate? Which social actors were responsible for twenty years of dictatorship?

The timing of events seems to give face-value support for Lenin's interpretation of Fascism: it was the urban industrial bourgeoisie who reacted against the industrial proletariat. Such a dramatic event as the factory occupation movement of September 1920 that brought full page newspaper titles across the country was the last straw in two years of widespread and growing working-class protest (the "red years"). The geography of events, however, is less supportive of Lenin's view. Despite the urban origin of Fascism (Lyttelton, 1973: 51), Fascist inroads into the urban North-West world of industry were late and slow to come. Kelikian shows that agrarian terrorism in the Brescian countryside started as early as the winter of 1920 with "punitive expeditions" by imported "black shirts" (Kelikian, 1986: 133, 142-3, 151-3). But it is not until 1923 that Fascism started making incursions into Brescian industry (Kelikian, 1986: 144, 176). In the industrial town of Sesto San Giovanni, one of Italian labor's traditional strongholds, the Fascists relied less on the use of violent tactics than on cultural forms (Bell, 1986: 160, 162, 177-8).²⁴ The Bolognese bourgeoisie expressed less support for the *fasci* and other vigilante groups when it appeared that Giolitti would negotiate a settlement between workers' leagues and employers (Cardoza, 1982: 300). Even the Italian Communists of the time moved away from the cruder view of "Fascism as a reaction to Socialism" by the bourgeoisie to embrace a more nuanced view of the class struggle. The text of the message to the Italian workers approved on November 5, 1922 at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International reads: "The Fascists are, first and foremost, a weapon in the hands of the large land owners. The industrial and financial bourgeoisie follows with anxiety that experiment of vicious reaction, and considers it as black Bolshevism" (cited in De Felice, 1995: 69). Antonio Gramsci put forward that same view in a letter written in 1924 to the Communist leaders Scoccimarro and Togliatti when he stressed "the distinction between Fascism and traditional bourgeois strongholds that do not let themselves be 'occupied' [by Fascism]: *Corriere [della Sera, La] Stampa* [newspapers] – the banks – and the top brass, the Italian Confederation of Industry" (letter reported in Togliatti, 1971: 223). Gramsci, however, also points out that those same strongholds "in the period 1921-22 had assured the fortune of Fascism in order to avoid the collapse of the state." (letter reported in Togliatti, 1971: 223)

There is hardly any evidence in my newspaper databases of industrial employers' involvement in early fascist violence. In the heated context of a nearly revolutionary situation on the left, there are a handful of cases of small employers shooting workers. Other than that, and other than the layoffs carried out by employers in a general worsening of economic conditions toward the end of 1920 (and that was a general European trend), there are no examples in the databases of involvement of the industrial bourgeoisie in fascist violence, at least as reported by newspapers. This, of course, does not mean that entrepreneurs were not involved in ways that would not make newspaper headlines. Money the bourgeoisie did provide and "in large amounts" (Snowden, 1989: 148, 122; Kelikian, 1986: 156; Corner, 1975: 124-26). "The wallets of every businessman, industrialist, landowner, patriot" are the secret of fascist success, as Vico Montani, president of the Bolognese Agrarian Association, confessed (Cardoza, 1975: 124). But beyond that industrialists typically kept the fascists at arms' length.²⁵ Enraged as they may have been at the Giolitti government for failing to heed to their plea of police protection for their factories during the occupation of September 1920 (e.g., Snowden, 1989: 144), by early 1921, market mechanisms were taking care of labor militancy, in a well-known negative relationship between strikes and unemployment (Franzosi, 1989 starting to soar in 1920, in a well-known

negative relationship between state of the labor market and strike activity (see Franzosi, 1989; 1995: 30-55). They rarely became party members. Even more rarely, did they become involved in politics. Mussolini himself had no illusions about industrialists' support. As he put it in a speech he gave in 1930: "they *endure* us, but inwardly mourn for liberalism" (cited in Gentile, 1986: 190, original emphasis). For De Felice (1995: 268), "Despite the advantages that Fascism offered the large industrialists never fully accepted Fascism, for psychological and cultural reasons, but also for a question of style and taste." Furthermore, they were leery of the Fascist state's proneness to interfere in economic matters and of Fascist military expansionism.²⁶

To find an answer to De Felice's question – "reaction by whom and against whom?" – we may then have to move away from the cities, away from the industrial bourgeoisie and the working class, and to the countryside, to the landed elite and the peasantry, away from the industrial North West and down South through Emilia Romagna, Tuscany, all the way down to Apulia. That is the road travelled by Szymanski (1973) and Elazar (1998, 2000, 2000b) in their quantitative studies of electoral returns and fascist violence, where they show the close relationship between fascist violence and threatened landlords' interests. Thus, if reaction to socialism there was, it was not a reaction by industrialists to factory workers' "socialism," but by agricultural landlords to agricultural laborers' "socialism." No doubt, landlords had good reasons to react. During the "red years", agricultural workers' leagues had succeeded in getting landlords to sign a series of labor contracts (pacts) that granted labor major concessions (in particular, *imponibile di mano d'opera*, the compulsory hiring of a set number of men per hectare per crop, and *collocamento di classe*, a roster of laborers to work the fields in turn). These pacts undermined landlords' privileges in labor matters and were seen as revolutionary threats (Chabod, 1961: 36; Snowden, 1972: 274-5; Tilly et al., 1975: 176). Although Fascism was first born in the cities, and the factory occupation movement was largely an urban phenomenon, during the crucial "black years" Fascist violence struck mostly in the countryside.²⁷ "Thanks to agrarian Fascism, the Fascist movement became a national reality in all respects" wrote De Felice (1966: 5-6; see also, Chabod, 1961: 59; Del Carria, 1975: 177-8; Corner, 1975: x; Cardoza, 1982). And yet, agricultural landlords and a handful of thugs could have hardly done it alone. There is considerable evidence from both historians and from my newspaper databases of the courts' involvement and of police involvement, direct or indirect.

No doubt, as Gentile put it: "The support of the agricultural bourgeoisie turned out to be more unanimous and decisive [than the industrial bourgeoisie] in the success of fascism after 1920" (1986: 189). And, yet, this interpretation of fascism as landlords' reaction to a militant peasantry may overlook the role of rural middle classes. Different forms of land tenure – from capitalist agriculture in the Po Valley, to small tenants and sharecropping (*mezzadria*) in parts of the North and, especially in the Center, and Southern latifundia – led to a regionally varied social structure, with perhaps varied class interests (Snowden, 1972: 276; 1986; Brustein, 1991: 654-5). In the South, where latifundia prevailed, an organized peasantry never represented a threat, except in Apulia. Patronage and the mafia and the camorra were sufficient to ensure labor peace in such regions as Campania and Sicily (Bernabei, 1975; see also Castronovo, 1973: 58). And even in Apulia, where peasants had successfully organized and the socialists had a strong foothold, fascism never became a political force; it "developed no theory, no political platform, and no agrarian program. ... In Apulia, fascism was squadristism and nothing else ... professional criminals hired [by the landlords] to travel from commune to commune spreading fear" (Snowden, 1986: 182, 183). In other regions of the Center and the North, however, a middle peasantry of small tenants and sharecroppers stood in between the landed elite and a landless

peasantry (*braccianti*). And that middle peasantry had grown in size since the end of the war thanks to the government's land redistribution programs. An estimated one million hectares of land had passed into the hands of some half a million peasants (Snowden, 1972: 280-1). Many of these peasants had previously supported the Socialists while pressing their demands for land and for better work conditions. But they gradually turned away from the Socialists when it became clear that Socialist plans for land collectivization threatened the interests of even small-owning peasants. And the Socialist Party's attacks against all landlords, regardless of amount of land owned, did not make matters easier (e.g., Snowden, 1972: 277; Maier, 1975: 310-2; Szymanski, 1973: 401; Corner, 1975: 102). Brustein (1991) also views the fascists' success as the result of the fascists' agricultural program in its ability to better capture the interests of the middle and upwardly aspiring lower peasantry. Corner writes: "the fascists ... were ready to use the stick when necessary, [but] were also very skillful at offering the carrot." (Corner, 1975: 146) And that carrot consisted in slogans and concrete plans that would appeal to the aspirations of a land hungry peasantry. Contrary to the socialists' plans of land collectivization, the fascists promised to turn all peasants into land owners: "*la terra a chi la lavora*," land to those who work it (Corner, 1975: 146-68; Snowden, 1989: 81-95; Cardoza, 1982: 316; Kelikian, 1986: 147). They convinced landlords – and those landlords who could not be convinced met the same treatment reserved for socialist workers (Kelikian, 1986: 151) – to give up some of their worse land so that the fascists could hand it over to the peasants, making good on their promises (Corner, 1975: 146; Snowden, 1989: 64, 92, 115-16). At a time of hyperinflation and skyrocketing prices, they convinced shopkeepers to slash prices, however temporarily, but to great publicity effect (Kelikian, 1986: 140). At a time of worsening economic conditions and rising unemployment and falling wages, in 1921, they made agreements with employers to reserve jobs for workers organized in the fascist syndicate unions and doled out those jobs (e.g., Kelikian, 1986: 152; Snowden, 1989: 153-55; Cardoza, 1982: 364-79).

Thus, the picture of Fascism as a reaction to Socialism, whether by the industrial bourgeoisie or the landed elite, may not be entirely accurate. The rural middle classes also played an active role as they pursued their material interests through the fascist agricultural program. The rural middle strata joined forces with the traditional urban petty bourgeoisie, dissatisfied and displaced in its traditional status by the war and industrialization. Riley (2005: 300) writes: "Fascism in the first instance was a broad alliance of two main kinds of associations: Veterans' associations and agrarian associations." The social background of early Fascists party members betrays the strong petty bourgeois roots of Fascism (De Felice, 1995: 264). Chabod (1961: 63-4) fully embraces that view of Fascism as the result of an alliance among the industrial bourgeoisie and the agricultural landlords, both hurt in their material interests, and the petty bourgeoisie, deeply shaken in its moral values. In Gentile's assessment (Gentile, 1986: 194):

It appears increasingly obvious from recent studies that the success of fascism derived decisively from its ability to gather together various components of the middle classes, which it then provided with an elite experienced in mass politics, with an efficient organization, and with an ideology ... socialism bore a heavy responsibility for having ignored the existence of these social groups as an active force within politics and having abandoned them to the siren appeal of radical nationalism and fascism.

When considered together, this evidence provides support for H_{0,2} of Rueschemeyer et al.'s interpretation of fascism as the result of a class alliance between the state (particularly the police) and the landed elite, against the five alternative hypotheses: H_{0,1} (Moore; class alliance between the landed elite, the industrial bourgeoisie, and the state), H_{0,3} (Poulantzas, Linz; class alliance between the industrial bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie; H_{0,4} (Chabod; class alliance between the industrial bourgeoisie, landlords and the petty bourgeoisie; H_{0,5} (Salvatorelli and Mira; Lipset; petty bourgeoisie's reaction to socialism); H_{0,6} (Lenin and Third Communist International; industrial bourgeoisie's reaction to socialism). The evidence also privileges the elections of November 1919, November 1920, and especially May 1921 as key turning events (H_{0,9}), rather than the factory occupation movement of September 1920 (H_{0,8}). Finally, there is considerable evidence that fascism was not the same thing across all regions of Italy. There evidence points to an urban versus rural fascism and that fascist violence hit some regions harder than others, with a shift in violent activities from the cities in 1919 and 1920 to the country in 1921 and 1922 in support of H_{0,7}.

7. Limits of an Explanation

A research quest that started “in search of the actor” (Franzosi, 2004: 3), in an approach to social scientific explanation that privileges actors over variables, the actor, no doubt, it has found. Yet, for all its explanatory power, a focus on actors and actions may end up missing on ideology and culture. After all, actors do not just act. They act with intentions and motives; they act for a purpose – intentions, motives, purpose that are culturally expressed (Franzosi et al., 2012). Indeed, recent scholarship on fascism has focused on ideology and culture, rather than classes and action, following the general trend of the “cultural turn.” Both historians and social scientists have highlighted the ideological and cultural frames adopted by the fascists – Griffin’s “myths” (1993: 26–52; 1995: 3–4) – particularly after the takeover of power.²⁸ “Myth and organization were the original components of ‘fascist totalitarianism’.” (Gentile, 1986: 202) From fascism and football, to fascism and theatre, film and art, fashion, gender, and leisure, the new titles – and their relative frequency – betray this change in scholarly interest.²⁹ Politics itself became spectacle and theatre under fascism, with new symbols, gestures, rites, and festivals: the aim was nothing short of the creation of a new Italian state and self – in body and soul (see Gentile (1993, 1996b); Schnapp (1993, 1996c); Griffin (1991, 1995); Berezin (1997). While not denying the uniqueness of a fascist ideology and culture *once the fascists conquered power*, during the crucial two-year period of the conquest of power (1921–22), fascism was mostly action. As De Felice (1966: 17) wrote: “In 1921, despite its activism, despite its systematic violence, the agrarian Fascism did not have a political program. It was reaction, pure reaction only; a local and provincial reaction without perspectives. Exterminated the ‘red’ organizations, then the ‘white’ ones, then the ‘yellow’ ones, what would have Fascism done?” Mussolini himself stated in an article on Fascism that appeared on the *Enciclopedia Italiana* (1932): “there was no specific doctrinal framework in my spirit. My doctrine ... had been the doctrine of action. Fascism ... was born out of a need for action and it was action.”³⁰ (Cited in Chabod, 1961: 57)

Yet, social actors do not simply act, outside cultural frames of interpretation and motivation of their actions. Even during the days of action, of course, the fascists brought to their actions specific cultural forms. There are many signs of this in my newspaper databases. One of the most frequent types of action committed by the fascists were actions of movement. They would often arrive to villages and towns from the outside (neighboring larger cities). And when they arrived, they would often march in formation. Such movement must be interpreted within

cultural frames of modernism and speed. Several of Marinetti's bullet points of his 1909 *Futurist Manifesto* celebrated both speed and violence:

1. We want to sing the love of danger, the habit of energy and rashness.
2. The essential elements of our poetry will be courage, audacity and revolt.
3. Literature has up to now magnified pensive immobility, ecstasy and slumber. We want to exalt movements of aggression, feverish sleeplessness, the double march, the perilous leap, the slap and the blow with the fist.
4. We declare that the splendor of the world has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed. ...
7. There is no beauty outside of struggle. No work of art that does not have an aggressive character can be a masterpiece. Poetry must be a violent assault on the forces of the unknown, to force them to bow before man.
- ...
9. We want to glorify war - the only cure for the world - militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of the anarchists, the beautiful ideas which kill, and contempt for woman.
- ...
11. We will sing of the great crowds agitated by work, pleasure and revolt; the multi-colored and polyphonic surf of revolutions in modern capitals ...

In a letter to an admirer, Marinetti wrote: "We must ... adapt the movement of ideas to the frenetic movement of our acts." (Adamson, 2007: 89) Of Tommaso Filippo Marinetti, Adamson writes: "One looks in vain through the annals of nineteenth-century art for anyone quite like him." (Adamson, 2007: 77) He adds: "few would dispute the importance of Marinetti and the futurist movement for the understanding of early fascism ..." (Adamson, 2007: 81; on the futurists' exaltation of masculinity, speed, violence, see Adamson, 2007: 81, 90-91, 92, 93, 95). For sure, Marinetti, along with Mussolini, put his name on the ballot of the political elections of November 16, 1919 in the electoral college of Milan (B list of the fascist Democratic Bloc). With only 1,300 votes, he did not fare well. But neither did Mussolini, for that matter (2,420 votes, compared to the 42,652 votes of Filippo Meda who ran for the Christian Partito Popolare Italiano and the 47,229 votes that Filippo Turati received with the Partito Socialista Italiano).

Movement and speed gave the nascent fascism a sense of youthfulness. While carrying out "punitive expeditions," the fascists would perform such symbolic actions as singing nationalistic and patriotic songs (and, of course, they would wear black shirts and the little fascist dagger). They would burn socialist and later communist red flags, hoisting the Italian flag in their place. They would commit symbolic actions of violence: publicly cutting an anarchist's long beard in the middle of a village square, force-feeding foes large quantities of castor oil to cleanse their body and soul of left-wing inklings. They appealed to a petty-bourgeois ideology of private property for all and of law and order (ironically!). Baldassini's analysis of fascist diaries leaves no doubt about this mix of values and motivations in the minds of the young men who wrote these diaries (2002). Yet, the fascists did not seize power by culture (although they may have well maintained it partly by culture for the next twenty years). Violence is the key ingredient in the fascists' seizure of power, as this paper makes clear (on the role of violence, see Goodwin 2001; Kalyvas 2006, 2008; with specific reference to the relationship between elections and violence, see Wilkinson 2004).

Movement and speed may have served fascism well. Not so the historian. For Braudel, the historians "must beware of that history which still simmers with the passions of the contemporaries who felt it, described it, lived it", must beware of the event, however "exciting

and richest in human interest” but “also the most perilous”. (1980: 3) Historical explanations should be based, not on the event, even a larger event like the red years or the black years, but on broader temporal spans of several decades (conjunctures) and several centuries (structures), the only significant temporalities for historical explanation. With specific reference to the second stage of fascism, Paxton warns that “the description of fascism movements in isolation ... leads us ... to pruriency... which invites us to leer at the decadent perversity of individual fascist thugs.” (Paxton 1998: 14) The real danger of a single-minded focus on the event, on one of Paxton’s five stages, is that we may come away thinking that violence – of which I did provide overwhelming evidence – is what did it. Violence by itself would not have carried fascism beyond the second stage. “Fascist power by coup is hardly conceivable in a modern state... The only route to power available to fascists passes through cooperation with conservative elites.” (Paxton 1998:16) To continue with Paxton: “Neither Hitler nor Mussolini took the helm by force, even if they used force earlier to destabilize the liberal regime and later to transform their governments into dictatorships. Each was invited to take office as head of government by a head of state in the legitimate exercise of his official functions, on the advice of his conservative counselors, under quite precise circumstances” (Paxton 1998:16-17) Finally, if fascism is many different things, at different times and places (Paxton 1998:10, 14), this paper has dealt with one specific place only; furthermore, it has zoomed in closely on only one of Paxton’s five stages of fascism (the second stage; 1998: 12-16). Fascism was many different things not just across countries, but *within* countries, overtime. “Social composition... evolves with successive stages. Any study that proposes a single, fixed social composition inherent in fascism is flawed.” (Paxton 1998: 21) In testing theories on the rise of Italian fascism based on the behavior of different social groups, I make no presumption that we would find those same groups in those same alliances, in later fascism.

8. Conclusions

This paper has revisited an old question: what led the Italian fascists to power in October 1922? The question is important for at least three reasons: 1. fascism in Italy was the first historical instance of this type of political regime (the very word “fascism” was in fact coined there); 2. fascism is one of the three paths to the modern world, as Barrington Moore would argue (along with democracy and communism); 3. the fascist revolution (as the fascists themselves referred to their seizure of power) came in 1922 on the heel of a near-revolution on the left in 1920; this sudden change of fortunes begs an explanation.

The question “what led the Italian fascists to power in October 1922?” raises a number of other, more specific questions: which social actors were involved? Which actions did they perform? How did the matrix of social relations change over time and across space during the working-class revolutionary period of 1919-1920 and fascist counter-revolution of 1921-22? This paper has addressed these questions through the lenses of novel historical evidence. This evidence comes from the systematic cataloguing of detailed information on social actors, and their characteristics, on their actions, and the circumstances of these actions (notably, time and space, but also instrument, reason, outcome). The information was taken from narratives of social and political protest and violence from over 38,000 newspaper articles from two newspapers: the socialist *Avanti!* and the fascist *Il Popolo d’Italia*. To catalogue this textual information I relied on the technique of Quantitative Narrative Analysis (QNA; Franzosi, 2004, 2010), based on a computer-assisted story grammar. I specifically developed QNA to overcome

the limits of aggregate, variable-based approaches where agency and actors in time and space are lost behind statistical coefficients.

The empirical results based on these huge databases of some 230,000 skeleton narrative sentences analyzed via simple exploratory tools (plots, bar charts), network graphs, and GIS maps clearly highlight the nature of revolutionary junctures. “Time is of the essence” in revolutionary and counter-revolutionary situations. Patterns of social relations (or of social interaction) change swiftly at these historic junctures. They often do so not uniformly throughout a region or a country. But space as well is of the essence, with different social groups located in different geographic settings – e.g., urban or rural – manifesting different forms of behavior, different forms of social interaction. Some events (defined by specific social actions, e.g., workers’ occupation of their factories, voting at political elections) provide the turning points in the matrix of social behavior, bringing in new actors (e.g., fascists) or new forms of action (e.g., violence). In particular, the results highlight the following points:

1. The “red years” (1919-1920) and “black years” (1921-22) display distinct patterns of social relations, confirming the historians’ view of the period;
2. The police are very active during the “red years” against workers and working-class institutions but absent during the “black years”;
3. There is clear evidence on Giolitti’s strategy of non-intervention during the factory occupation movement of September 1920; with Italy at the height of a revolutionary situation on the Left, the police stay out of the way;
4. The elections of November 1920 and May 1921 (rather than the factory occupation movement of September 1920) are the catalysts of the fascist violent reaction against the Left;
5. There are many signs of landed elite involvement in the fascist violence, but no signs of involvement on the part of the industrial bourgeoisie;
6. There is evidence of spatial overlap between socialist activism and fascist violence;
7. The geography of fascist violence points mostly to rural Italy, rather than to the urban centers; in Snowden’s words “Fascism must be studied as an agrarian phenomenon” (Snowden, 1989: 105);
8. Other than the social background of the early fascists involved in the “hit squads” – urban middle- and lower middle-class, young people, former army officers dismissed after the war and university students – there is no evidence in my newspaper databases of involvement by the middle class.

Taken together, this evidence, however preliminary and tentative, based on data still undergoing cleaning and aggregating, shows support for the “red menace hypothesis” of fascism as a reaction to socialism, but where the reaction comes mostly from the country landed elite but carried out by elements of the urban petty bourgeoisie under tacit, if not even open, connivance of the police. Thus, the evidence falls in support of Rueschemeyer et al.’s interpretation of fascism as the result of class alliance between the state (particularly the police) and the landed elite. Yet, it would be fool hearted to support unconditionally this interpretation, basically ignoring the role of other social classes, strata, and institutions – social classes, strata, and institutions whose voices would not have made newspaper headlines. Fascism is a “complex phenomenon,” as De Felice put it (1995: 182), and where you look may well end up determining what you see.

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Endnotes

¹ For theory testing, see Szymanski (1973), Brustein (1991), Elazar (1998, 2000a, 2000b); for theory building, see Moore (1966), Linz (1976), Poulantzas (1979), Lipset (1981), Rueschemeyer et al. (1992), Mann (2004).

² For events, see Spriano's work on the factory occupation movement (1964); for local situations, whether cities (Corner, 1975; Bell, 1986; Kelikian, 1986; Albanese, 2001), provinces (Cardoza, 1982), or regions (Fabbro, 1974; Colarizi, 1977; Snowden, 1986, 1989).

³ Either focused on Italy (e.g., De Felice, 1965, 1966; Gentile, 1989, 1996; Lyttelton, 1973, 1977; Mack Smith, 1976, 1982; Bosworth, 1998) or on the fascist phenomenon in comparative perspective (e.g., Maier, 1975; Payne, 1980; Griffin, 1993, 1995; Mosse, 1999).

⁴ The angular brackets $\langle \rangle$ denote elements that can be further rewritten; while "terminal elements," i.e., the words or linguistic expressions found in the text, have no $\langle \rangle$. Curly brackets $\{ \}$ denote elements that can occur more than one time; while square brackets $[]$ denote optional elements. Thus, in the clause "victim screams" there is only one participant (the agent), while the clause "mob kills negro" has two participants (the agent, mob, and the goal or patient, negro). As a result, the grammar requires only the first participant; the second is optional.

⁵ Program for Computer-Assisted Coding of Events. PC-ACE is an application of Microsoft Access. The current release is available in the public domain for free download at www.pc-ace.com.

⁶ A further 15,400 newspaper articles for 17,601 semantic triplets were coded from *Il Lavoro*, a socialist paper from Genoa, and from short narratives of conflict and violence reported in Franzinelli (2003) yielding 5,597 triplets. The analyses presented here are based on the two main newspapers *Avanti!* and *Il Popolo d'Italia*.

⁷ There are two reasons for keeping the analyses separate in the present paper, one technical and the other substantive. Technically, the data from the four sources – *Il Lavoro*, *Avanti!*, *Il Popolo d'Italia* and Franzinelli – are held in separate PC-ACE databases. Although the current release of PC-ACE does have routines to merge separate databases into one, PC-ACE has no routines to check automatically for duplicate events and to deal with the same event story told differently by the different sources (not a trivial programming issue). Substantively, and perhaps more to the point, reporting the main analyses for the largest dataset (*Avanti!*) only, and using the second largest dataset from an ideologically opposing stand (*Il Popolo d'Italia*) – fascist vs. socialist – allows me not only to paint a picture of historical reality but also to evaluate the validity of that picture. In fact, well known research has been based on one source only (e.g., Tarrow's famous book, *Democracy and Disorder: Protest and Politics in Italy, 1965-1975*, 1989).

⁸ Although data collection from these newspapers is finished, data cleaning and data aggregation is still ongoing. The results presented here, although robust, are still not final and represent my first attempt at analyzing these hard-won data.

⁹ The strike data come from MAIC (Ministry of Agriculture, Industry, and Commerce). The *Avanti!* data include other forms of protest besides strikes, such as demonstrations and rallies. Contrary to other countries (e.g., United States), where official strike statistics are collected from newspaper information, in Italy, back then as today, strike data are collected by police departments (firms hit by labor conflicts are required by law to report the information to the police who then compile strike forms to be passed on to the appropriate government Labor Department).

¹⁰ Actions of conflict are characterized by verbs such as strike, occupy, demonstrate, protest, rally, as found in the newspaper articles. They do not include verbs of violence.

¹¹ Violent actions are measured by verbs such as kill, wound, bludgeon, kick, punch, as given in the newspaper articles.

¹² The *Avanti!* data are less clear on this new social actor as the socialist newspaper continued to use the same label *compagno* and tended to downplay the role of a new competitor to the left.

¹³ College students, city clerks, bailiffs of large estates, and, often, just plain criminals also joined in (Snowden, 1986: 185; Cardoza, 1982: 294, 320; Kelikian 1986: 132).

¹⁴ Snowden (1986: 80, 183–5; 1989: 157–60); Salvemini (1928: 107); Chabod (1961: 70); Linz (1976: 36–40).

¹⁵ A rise in violence went hand-in-hand with organisational growth. In the span of one year, the number of local organizations of Fasci jumped from 88 at the end of 1920 to 834 at the end of 1921, and members from 20,615 to 249,036. By March 21 1921, the Fasci were 317 with 80,476 members. "During the sole month of April [1921] the number of Fasci reached 417 with 98,399 members and soared by the end of May, i.e. right after the political elections, to 1,001 Fasci and 187,098 members." (De Felice 1965: 607)

¹⁶ Szymanski used aggregated data at the regional and provincial level.

¹⁷ The peak of October 1922 “masks” the organizational growth of the Fall 1920, after the factory occupation movement and the November administrative elections (see Figure 13).

¹⁸ See Kelikian (1986: 154), Snowden (1989: 151).

¹⁹ See the harshly worded telegrams dispatched from Rome to Tuscan prefects (Snowden, 1989: 184-5). And, yet, later in 1921, several tough Tuscan prefects were transferred in favour of more-complacent ones (Snowden, 1989: 188-9). Between 1921 and 1922, several Ministry of Interior inspectors were dispatched from Rome to investigate the climate of violent illegality in Apulia and police behaviour, with the same result on police responsibility for “partisan behaviour”, “inertia”, “unclear understanding of their responsibility”, “deficiency”, and “inaction” (Snowden, 1986: 198).

²⁰ For a strong defense of Giolitti’s role, see De Felice (1966: 25-6); see also Chabod (1961: 67). Less sympathetic is Salvemini who holds Giolitti responsible for the dictatorship (1928: 71). Yet, even Salvemini spares Giolitti the words he uses for Bonomi and Facta, two of the other prime ministers of the time. Salvemini (1928: 129) writes: “It might have seemed impossible to discover a Prime Minister more incapable than Bonomi. But one was found in Signor Facta.” And again: “Facta—one of the biggest idiots of all times and all countries.” (Salvemini, 1928: 156). Chabod (1961: 48) is kinder in words towards Facta, but no less severe in his judgement when he writes: “an honest provincial lawyer, but without the qualities necessary to be a head of state.”

²¹ Salvemini (1961: 39, fgg); De Felice (1966: 27-34); Maier (1975: 177, 316-7); Del Carria (1975: 184, 194, 200). For Ferrara, see Corner (1975: 119-20); for Brescia, see Kelikian (1986: 119-120, 142-3, 201-2); for Bologna, see Cardoza (1982: 308-9, 354-5, 361); for Tuscany, see Snowden (1989: 198); for Friuli, see Fabbro (1974: 43-4); for Apulia, see Colarizi (1977: 98-101, 108-9, 112-6) and Snowden (1986: 196-200); for Venice, see Albanese (2001: 103-7).

²² Socialist politician and journalist Lelio Basso (1951: 269-72) similarly argues that there operated two different *squadrismi* at the time, in Italy, one urban, and the other one rural. Urban *squadrismo* “was essentially a phenomenon of the urban middle classes, in particular war veterans and students.” (p. 269) “Rural *squadrismo* spreads in the Po River Valley; Leandro Arpinati (Bologna), Roberto Farinacci (Cremona), Italo Balbo (Ferrara), Cesare Forni (Pavia) are the representatives. Its aim are ... the abolition of the *imponibile di mano d’opera*, of the *uffici di collocamento*, and the revision of all agrarian labor contracts signed in the previous years” (p. 272).

²³ Salvemini (1928: 72-4), De Felice (1966: 17). For Apulia, see Colarizi (1977: 55-9, 94-116), Snowden (1989); for Tuscany, see Snowden (1986: 80, 158-60, 165, 186-7); for the provinces of Ferrara, see Corner (1975: 121, 138-43); for the province of Bologna, see Cardoza (1982: 308, 314, 317-20, 346-8); for the province of Brescia, see Kelikian (1986: 133, 142-3); for Friuli, see Fabbro (1977: 42).

²⁴ Perhaps, only in Tuscany the cities were a greater source of Fascist power than in most of Italy (Snowden, 1986: 121-3). Heavy industry supported financially the Florence fascio and Fascist newspapers, and many leading companies colluded with the Fascist unions (Snowden, 1986: 133).

²⁵ For some examples, see Kelikian (1986: 138), Snowden (1989: 122). But if that is true for large capital, it was, perhaps, a different story for small, provincial industrialists (e.g., Snowden, 1989: 104-117).

²⁶ For in-depth analyses of the relationship between the industrial bourgeoisie and fascism, see Melograni (1972) and Castronovo (1973). Castronovo, while supporting the links between bourgeoisie and fascism, acknowledges that during the 1919-1922 period, the bourgeoisie envisioned a liberal-conservative solution rather than a totalitarian one.

²⁷ For examples, see Fabbro (1974: 38, 43), Cardoza (1982: 317-20), Snowden (1986: 80, 186-7), Kelikian (1986: 133); see also Salvemini (1928: 113-4).

²⁸ For Mann (2004), ideology is one of the fundamental sources of power. Such themes as the betrayed victory, manhood and motherhood, the motherland, anti-communism, the regeneration of society became the fascists’ rallying logos (Gentile, 1993, 1996; Griffin, 1991).

²⁹ See, for examples, Martin (2004), Paulicelli (2004), De Grazia (1981, 1992), Berezin (1997), Pickering-Iazzi (1995), Whitaker (2000). See also Schnapp (1996) and his collection (1996b) in the special issue of the *Journal of Contemporary History*.

³⁰ There are also dangers in an analysis of fascism that privileges culture at the exclusion of politics and of the highly repressive and violent nature of the fascist state, such as the brutality against workers and socialists, the near genocide in Libya, the racial laws against the Jews (see Bosworth’s summary, 1998: 3-5; also Mack Smith, 1976: 73, 78-80, 108-9).