

Praxis, language and theory
of political delegitimization
in contemporary Europe

edited by
Fulvio Cammarano

Copyright © 2017 - Viella s.r.l.
All rights reserved
First edition: December 2017
ISBN 978-88-6728-953-0 Printed version
ISBN 978-88-6728-984-4 eBook-pdf

Il presente volume è stato realizzato nell'ambito del progetto PRIN 2010-11 *Pratiche e linguaggi della delegittimazione politica nell'Europa contemporanea* ed è stato finanziato con i fondi PRIN attivati su tale progetto dal Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca ed erogati dalla Università di Napoli "Federico II" – Dipartimento di Studi umanistici.



viella

libreria editrice

via delle Alpi, 32

I-00198 ROMA

tel. 06 84 17 758

fax 06 85 35 39 60

www.viella.it

Contents

FULVIO CAMMARANO	
Delegitimization as a historiographic issue	7
STEFANO CAVAZZA	
Processes of political delegitimization in Italy, France, Germany, UK, and USA from the 1870s to post-WW II	17
PAOLO MACRY	
Legitimization and delegitimization of States and political regimes in contemporary Europe	33
LUIGI MASELLA	
Gap-periods in history and delegitimization in contemporary Europe	49
ROBERTO PERTICI, FEDERICO MAZZEI	
Political delegitimization in the showdown between nation and anti-nation	67
RENATO CAMURRI	
Political delegitimization as experienced in exile and emigration (1848-1948)	85
GIOVANNI ORSINA, GUIDO PANVINI	
Delegitimizing political opponents in republican Italy	103
BENEDETTA BALDI	
Linguistic and pragmatic devices in political communication: delegitimization of the opponent	121
Contributors	143
Index	145

ROBERTO PERTICI, FEDERICO MAZZEI

Political delegitimization in the showdown between nation and anti-nation*

1. *A research programme*

The Bergamo research unit decided to analyse the new forms of political delegitimization that nationalism introduced to liberal Italy. We took nationalism to mean not just an organized party, but a composite universe of movements with a common denominator: their focus on the need for “national” regeneration. It was thus also seen as a diffuse mood of dissatisfaction, spurred by the urge to achieve “national primacy”. Though it is true that that movement only ever gained limited consensus in Italy (as in France), it did create a cultural background and store of myths which had an appreciable impact on broad areas of public opinion and proved decisive in Italian history from the Libyan war at least until May 1915.

Nationalism took root as a result of ramified propaganda delivered even in rural areas and small towns. So much is confirmed by our broad-ranging research into nationalist magazines circulating both nation-wide and on a smaller provincial scale, the findings of which have gone to form a computerised database on the nationalist press.¹ This last lends weight to the historical view that Italian nationalism was not a single undifferentiated phenomenon (for all its monistic vision of the nation as a superior commu-

* Bergamo research unit. The two authors are responsible for the general structure of the essay: Roberto Pertici wrote sections 1,2,5; Federico Mazzei sections 3, 4.

1. Consultable on line at <https://aisberg.unibg.it/handle/10446/91783>, the *database* classifies magazines under the following headings: title; sub-heading; rate of appearance; printer; start date; date and issue number last published; town, region and province; editorial board (chief editor, person legally liable and any sub-editors); main correspondents; bibliography (studies on magazine); where to find (place and library coordinates).

nity) but distinctly polycentric. It found expression in a range of regional cultures and power centres anchoring it in local tradition; which often enlivened a dialectical relationship between such provincial nationalism and “Rome, capital of nationalism”.

Our work started out from the historiographic premise prevailing among this area of studies, whereby Italian nationalism was an incubatory form of totalitarianism, strongly critical of the present and blended with a “revolutionary” urge to transform the citizenry, State and institutions; that it was stubbornly bent on excluding those who did not share the new view of the State and society from belonging to the national community. This is thought to explain the increasing clash of different and irreconcilable ideas about nationhood radicalizing into “friend” versus “foe”. The people were allegedly forced to share that ideology and condemn political opponents as “enemies of the fatherland”. On top of these, the most significant novelties of nationalism, one may add criticism of democracy and the liberal representative system. This monopolistic hi-jacking of the idea of nationhood and the attempt to fashion a State that was authoritarian at home and strong abroad – it is claimed – had a marked influence on the origins of fascism. Obviously, such a reading has its eyes riveted on the “inevitable” merging of nationalism into the fascist movement.

We sought to verify this theory in our work as a research unit which hinged around two meetings on *Nation and anti-Nation*, held in May 2014 and June 2015 at Bergamo University, the proceedings of which have now been published.² Beginning with the late-positivist pre-history of “Italy’s

2. *Nazione e anti-nazione, 1. Il movimento nazionalista da Adua alla guerra di Libia (1896-1911)*, ed. by F. Mazzei, Rome, Viella, 2015, which includes the following essays: A. Roccucci, “Nazionalismo ‘vario’, con molta politica estera”, pp. 11-25; F. Mazzei, “Preistoria del nazionalismo italiano: le ‘suggestioni del mondo’ nelle guerre fra i due secoli”, pp. 27-54; L. Benadusi, “Un esercito dotato di un paese: guerra e questione militare nel nazionalismo italiano (1896-1913)”, pp. 55-76; E. Papadia, “Vecchi e giovani: il caso italiano”, pp. 77-94; A. Scotto di Luzio, “Vecchi e giovani: il caso francese”, pp. 95-110; M. Carli, “Dal sindacalismo all’antisocialismo: l’Italia”, pp. 111-124; M. Gervasoni, “Distruzione della democrazia: l’abbraccio tra rivoluzione rossa e controrivoluzione nera nella Francia della Belle Époque”, pp. 125-145; I. Saz, “Problemi di storia del nazionalismo spagnolo”, pp. 147-167. Coverage of the period is completed in the second volume, *Nazione e anti-nazione, 2. Il movimento nazionalista dalla guerra di Libia al fascismo (1911-1923)*, ed. by P.S. Salvatori, Rome, Viella, 2016: B. Vigezzi, “I nazionalisti fra neutralità e intervento”, pp. 11-33; F. Mazzei, “Per una ricerca sulla stampa nazionalista (1909-1914)”, pp. 35-62; R. Pertici, “Nazionalismo francese e nazionalismo italiano: la mediazione di Francesco Coppola (1910-1916)”, pp. 63-88; M. Cuzzi, “Massoneria e nazionalismo”, pp. 89-113;

variegated nationalism” analysed by Gioacchino Volpe, we retraced the stages of politicization down to the interventionist campaign and the immediate postwar crisis. By comparing Italy and France we reconstructed the origins of patriotism as based on the need for national grandeur: militarism and imperialist geopolitics, the dichotomy between “the old” and “the young”, the transition from trade-unionism to anti-socialism. Radical protest against socialism and the liberal institutions (now seen as branded with national decadence) stemmed from that “syndrome of dwindling opportunities and comparative falling behind”³ on the international chessboard which the nationalists were bent on checking.

From a methodological angle, we ran the nationalist phenomenon against the “political delegitimization” category as defined by Fulvio Cammarano and Stefano Cavazza: an “attitude radically contesting the legitimacy of a power or aspiration to power”, albeit with a shared, not rejected, fabric of constitutional legitimacy:

The central issue is not actually the common people’s delegitimizing rejection of the system which might turn into revolt or revolution, nor contestation of a regime’s legitimacy by an opposing political faction or regional and economic interests nursing a grievance. The task is the opposite: to explore the reasons why a delegitimizing mode of symbolic discourse may become a more or less regular lever of combat within a political category that acknowledges the self-same legitimizing principles.⁴

We tried to read Italian nationalist culture and political praxis in this light, enriching the interpretation by cross-referencing it with the idealtypology of delegitimization.

But to jump momentarily forward to the outcome of our research: we found that the leaders of that movement did not actually translate pure

E. Sori, “La “patria lontana” e la questione dell’emigrazione”, pp. 115-136; E. Capuzzo, “Ebraismo e nazionalismo”, pp. 137-157; B. Bracco, “Il volto del nemico. L’iconografia del ‘tedesco’ nella propaganda della Grande guerra”, pp. 159-176; G. Scirocco, “Sette giorni a Milano: da Wilson a Bissolati (e Mussolini)”, pp. 177-206; L. Benadusi, “La strana disfatta: i nazionalisti nel primo dopoguerra”, pp. 207-230; G. Parlato, “Nazionalismo e fascismo”, pp. 231-244.

3. G. Are, *La scoperta dell’imperialismo. Il dibattito nella cultura italiana del primo Novecento*, Rome, Edizioni Lavoro, 1985, p. 109.

4. F. Cammarano, “La delegittimazione dell’avversario politico legittimo nell’Italia post-unitaria”, *Ricerche di storia politica*, 1 (2009), p. 4. Cf. F. Cammarano, S. Cavazza, “Delegittimazione: Note per un approccio storico”, *Krypton*, 2 (2013), pp. 56-64.

national ideology into revolutionary “anti-system” opposition from outside the institutional set-up; rather, they used it as a fruitful line of protest against political forces operating within the system (the Giolitti group and the socialists); theirs was nationalism in the name of values that ran radically counter to the *status quo*, above all in the field of foreign policy which they insisted should occupy pride of place.

2. *Italian and French Nationalism*

If, on the contrary, we were to take delegitimization to mean subversive rejection of legality and carrying political conflict to the extreme of “civil war”, its heuristic value would become most limited and partial not just for “miscellaneous” but also for “true” nationalism (to use Franco Gaeta’s distinction), as organized into a political movement right from the first Florence Congress in December 1910. Nationalism’s rejection of action outside the law, and its own description as a neo-conservative right-wing force emerge from the memoirs of Luigi Federzoni which – making allowance for any posthumous dissociation from Mussolini’s revolutionary tactics – reflect the positions actually adopted by the nationalist movement in Italy:

It was a right-wing political force acting on a perfectly constitutional plane to safeguard social and legal order and put patriotic spirit back into the Italian people. It aimed to continue and complete the national programme of men during the Risorgimento [...]. It never claimed any other means of winning than elections. [...] Hymning and using violence, any even covert hankering after coups d’état, any tendency to flirt with totalitarianism was completely alien to Italian nationalism.⁵

It is on this ground that we need to reaffirm the difference from the basic nationalist position of *Action Française*.⁶ The need for this goes far beyond the ideological dispute that sprang up within Italian nationalism over its own political definition of self (one thinks of the long confrontation between Francesco Coppola and Scipio Sighele), which would later turn into an endless debate among historians. Ideological dependency on

5. L. Federzoni, *Italia di ieri per la storia di domani*, Milan, Mondadori, 1967, p. 15.

6. Pertici, “Nazionalismo francese e nazionalismo italiano: la mediazione di Francesco Coppola (1910-1916)”, in *Nazione e anti-nazione*, 2, pp. 63-88.

French nationalism was mainly felt to be a *limitation*: those who wished to emphasise the impact of Italian nationalism found they had to defend the home-grown nature of its origins.⁷

Clearly, to take on board a compact ideological construct of the kind set out by Maurras inevitably meant jettisoning some of its features (even some basic ones). A certain number were totally French and could not be exported. First and foremost, the myth of the monarchy (not the pre-revolutionary absolute version, but the one tempered by intermediate bodies and by the plethora of historical regions in ancient France). To Italy, the *ancien régime* had spelt political fragmentation and dependency on a European power. Thus, while *Action Française* radically rejected the French Revolution, post-revolutionary society and the Third Republic, Italian nationalism upheld the importance of the Risorgimento as its national revolution, and the monarchical State that sprang from it.

That underlying difference gave rise to others that were no less significant: *Action Française* was a revolutionary – or if one prefers, subversive – formation in that it radically rejected the existing institutions (in 1910 Maurras is known to have theorised the *coup de force*). It stood right outside them and claimed that whatever their political line, it was wrong and not enough. In being divorced from the system, the *Action Française* nationalists were basically unconcerned about influencing or changing its politics, and even its foreign policy.

Take Charles Maurras's famous book, *Kiel et Tanger*: in it Maurras "propose à l'opinion française un doute radical sur le point de savoir si la République peut avoir une politique étrangère". The work analyses ten years of French foreign policy (1895-1905), during which two alliance systems had occurred: the brainchildren first of moderate republican Hanotaux (a Franco-Russian alliance, good neighbours with Germany, colonial hostility towards Great Britain) and then of the radical Delcassé (entente cordiale with Great Britain, cooling of relations with Germany). Both systems ended in failure: the first in the 1898 Fashoda incident, the second with Wilhelm II's Tangiers landing on 31 March 1905. In Maurras' opinion the responsibility for these repeated setbacks lay with the congenital impermanence of republican institutions: "Avec le roi, chacune de ces deux politiques eût procuré ses avantages. On eût pu choisir l'une ou l'autre et

7. F. Perfetti, *Il nazionalismo italiano dalle origini alla fusione col fascismo*, Bologna, Cappelli, 1977, pp. 29-33.

la faire aboutir”, but “faute d’un roi de France, le système Delcassé a valu le système Hanotaux”.⁸ True patriots must conclude that the republican regime was unable to conduct an appropriate foreign policy. There was nothing for it but to rally to the monarchical cause. Such alienation from the system meant that the French nationalists felt little concern to influence or alter politics or even foreign policy. Only a change of regime could ensure a proper turn-around.

The Italian nationalists always kept within the institutions, by contrast. Outspokenly critical though they were of how democracy and parliament had degenerated, their loyalty to the monarchy was never in doubt, not their link with institutional form in the post-Risorgimento State:

For us nationalists there is no institutional problem, which would paralyse any activity on our part. [...] Such a stance would be prejudicial and all-absorbing; that is, it would prevent us from any action except destroying the present political framework. Were we to deny this state any legitimate grounds for existing the way it is, we could not and should not expect it to perform acts we deem it incapable of; we could not wish to direct its ambitions and designs in the international field. For that is the attitude of the French nationalists. They are not only against the Republic, but against the Republic doing anything. In his truly thought-provoking *Kiel et Tanger* Charles Maurras argues not only that the Republic is unsuited to any truly effective or grand foreign policy, but thinks it harmful to France that the government of the republic should undertake any act of conquest. The French nationalists are really logical. They have grasped that one cannot simultaneously be a revolutionary and an imperialist party; which means, where democratic institutions exist, that one cannot be anti-democratic and imperialist.⁹

The real difference, then, was that “we [Italian nationalists] find no trace *in the history of Italy* to which we can tie our fatherland’s destiny more profitably [than to the Risorgimento]. In France the age-old tree felled in 1789 may put out new shoots, but in Italy what was felled in 1860 has vanished for ever, fortunately for us. We are therefore loyal upholders of the political *status quo*”.¹⁰ Hence their attentiveness to Italian state politics, especially its foreign policy which they were the first in Italy to rate

8. Ch. Maurras, *Kiel et Tanger 1895-1905. La République française devant l’Europe*, Paris, Nouvelle Librairie Nationale, 1916, pp. VII, 217, 219.

9. [M. Maraviglia], “Nazionalismo, democrazia e partito liberale”, *L’Idea Nazionale*, 1, 22, 27 July 1911.

10. *Ibid.*

before home policy.¹¹ “The French nationalists are anti-democratic in nature; we, if we ever opposed certain forms of democracy, did so because their programmes struck us as anti-nationally slanted”¹² wrote the nationalist periodical *L’Araldo* in 1912. Likewise the *Idea Nazionale* condemned the “mistake” of nationalists who equated anti-democracy with imperialism, subordinating national *grandeur* to setting up an authoritarian regime.

At least until 1914 the nationalists’ attitude to the legal institutions (Monarchy, Parliament and army) was deprecatory but not geared to subversion, so much as to toughening their patriotism with a view to power politics. Existence of the Italian nation; boosting economic and military power as a law of existence for any nation; historical need for “Italian imperialism”:¹³ such was the syllogism propounded by the nationalist press and propaganda. Hence their aversion to parliamentarianism seen as redistributive parasitism squandering the bases of wealth needed to conduct an expansionist policy.¹⁴

And yet, for all their aversion, the nationalists would not go back on their deference for the law; they studiously refrained from taking the path of dissociation and anti-system, confining themselves to the demand that “the parliamentary regime, born as a tool of the nation’s sovereignty, should not turn into a tool for subjecting it”.¹⁵ Their identification with the monarchy was more clear-cut and reassuring, yet even here there were argumentative undertones which Missiroli later worked up in his *Monarchia socialista*. A case in point was the *Letters to our Savoy partner* column in the Turin nationalist weekly *Il Tricolore* owned by Mario

11. At the dawn of the nationalist movement in Italy, Gualtiero Castellini recalled people’s “perfectly plain” reaction to the “famous sentence” penned by Luigi Luzzatti in a 1910 article: “Let all Italians who love the fatherland avert their thoughts from foreign policy”. Castellini deemed that “an absurd inhibition of national will” (G. Castellini, *Fasi e dottrine del Nazionalismo italiano*, Milan, Quintieri, 1915, p. 7).

12. O. Nori, “A proposito di nazionalismo”, *L’Araldo*, 1, 19, 16 June 1912.

13. V. Picardi, “Il nostro imperialismo”, *Il Carroccio*, 2, 9, 1 May 1910.

14. “To live its own life, a modern nation needs constantly to boost its own international standing, fortifying itself with all the material and moral means of implementing and flaunting the will to predominate”: M. Maraviglia, “Imperialismo e democrazia. A proposito dell’odierno conflitto parlamentare in Inghilterra”, *ibid.*, 1, 19, 1 December 1909.

15. Cf. “Un manifesto del Gruppo di Bologna contro l’oligarchia parlamentare”, *L’Idea Nazionale*, 1, 21, 20 July 1911. Cf. also E. Corradini, “Dottrina e tattica”, *ibid.*, 1, 6, 5 April 1911: “We accept the parliamentary institutions, but we cannot accept this Italian parliamentarism which is selling the nation short”.

Viana who founded the first Italian nationalist group in 1909. Its statute openly called for a “nationalist monarchy”: let it be a “*living figure* in the nation and no longer a conqueror by divine right, by class superiority”, yet nonetheless proof against any compromise with socialism. Even the anti-democrat quarrel, which caused the Italian Nationalist Association (ANI) to split at the Second Rome Congress in 1912, involved no breach or rupture with the liberal State which was girding itself to introduce universal suffrage at the 1913 elections; for that was, in fact, the ballot when the nationalists first stood, and were elected to Parliament.

3. *Delegitimization of the nation's enemies*

The tune changes if we apply the delegitimization paradigm, not to the institutional *status quo*, but to contesting one's political opponents' legitimacy. The nationalists' delegitimization policy flowered in a battle of words and symbols with forces it deemed inimical to national power. Enrico Corradini's brand of nationalism shifted the class struggle onto the plane of international politics, between “have” nations and the “have nots”; instead of the “general strike” motif, he put “victory in war”. To embrace, or not, the imperialist idea of foreign policy as dictated by the power lust: that became the ideological divide between nationalists and non-nationalists. International warfare for the survival of States, natural selection among Nations via war, the bid to conquer “living room”, discrimination between youthful and decadent races: all these acquirements of social science, and now budding geopolitics, flooded into Italian public opinion via “world suggestions” propagandized by nationalism.¹⁶

As Adriano Roccucci has shown, this attraction to foreign policy formed the sparring ground for rival movements within the nationalist “universe”. It would be one of the favourite topics on which the ANI managed to tap into a broader circuit than its own militants.¹⁷ Their ability to link foreign to home policy, and place Italy's issues in an international context, struck many contemporaries as a “modern” feature of the nationalists', and this in the end hammered home their political message. That central issue provided a pos-

16. Mazzei, “Preistoria del nazionalismo italiano: ‘le suggestioni del mondo’ nelle guerre fra i due secoli”, in *Nazione e anti-nazione*, 1, pp. 27-54.

17. Roccucci, “Nazionalismo ‘vario’, con molta politica estera”, in *ibid.*, pp. 11-25.

sible meeting ground with prominent sectors of the Italian ruling class who held it as an unquestioned principle that the Kingdom of Italy was a great power with its own complex game to play among the big boys of international politics. Antonio Salandra's words to this effect before the Chamber of Deputies in December 1914 have a memorable ring:

by land and sea, in the old continent whose political configuration may be on the turn, Italy has vital interests to uphold, fair claims to stake and secure, the status of a major Power to maintain not just intact but not relatively diminished by any encroachment on the part of other countries.¹⁸

This pride of place to foreign policy, along the lines of Georges Lippmann's *aggrandir ou mourir*, made it seem deplorable that Italy should be drawing her international horns in and nursing the delusion of "micromania". Such fighting tones had already been heard in 1889 when the pre-nationalist Pasquale Turiello attacked Stefano Jacini for presuming to criticize Crispi's "megalomania". The nationalist delegitimization mechanism thus came to equate "love of fatherland" with belligerent expansionism; whoever opposed the politics of power was branded, *ipso facto*, as an enemy of the nation. That kind of discrimination was precisely what turned the *Voce* intellectuals against nationalism, though in many cases (Prezzolini and Papini to the fore) they had been contributors to Corradini's *Regno*. In June 1910 one of their number, the youthful Germanist Giuseppe Antonio Borgese, reviewed Corradini's novel *La Patria lontana* and took issue with its claim that nationalism was "the party of those who love their country against those who don't". "If that were so", countered Borgese, "the nationalists would have to consider non-nationalists as traitors and parricides and spies and people worthy of opprobrium and the gallows".¹⁹

Clearly that was the basic divide of "integral nationalism". It was already evident in the manifesto adopted by one of its vanguard journals, Turin's *Il Tricolore*, before the ANI came into existence. Nationalist militancy was there proclaimed to be "outside parties and *looking to a new party*"

18. The 3 December 1914 speech is quoted in A. Salandra, *La neutralità italiana (1914)*, Milan, Mondadori, 1928, pp. 440-444; the passage is on p. 441 and – in the words of the Parliamentary record – aroused "Warm approval. Members rose to their feet. Prolonged reiterated heartfelt applause".

19. G.A. Borgese, "La 'Patria lontana' di Enrico Corradini", in *La vita e il libro*, vol. II, Turin, Bocca, 1911, p. 290.

based on a “programme negating, not assimilating, the opposite doctrines”, and bent on replacing the traditional constitutional forces:

We must rouse the scattered phalanxes of Monarchy, arm and lead them into the fray under new ‘duci’ and a new flag: for no party in Italy today has the force of attraction, or vital vigour, or even the robustness of programme to withstand the formidable impact of the State and Institutions’ enemies.²⁰

Admittedly, such reactionary intransigence was rejected by Corradini and accused of extremism by other spokesmen of early nationalism who were still half-way between patriotic propaganda and political militancy; in the end the *Tricolore* and its backers were cut out of the ANI constitution. But that very fact made it the benchmark opinion as nationalism put together an ideological position following 1910. The resolve to “withstand the formidable impact of the State and Institutions’ enemies” translated into a head-on assault on those who rejected the expansionist dogma of nationalist foreign policy.

The first to be cast beyond the national pale and delegitimized was socialism with its internationalist roots in the class struggle. This is not the place to go into the outcome of that opposition to socialist anti-patriotism, whereby fascism would be legitimized as the movement of “national rebirth”.²¹ We are simply concerned to make the point that pre-war nationalism anticipated the tones of rhetoric in defence of the nation. “A socialist Italy is non-existent since the adjective cancels out the noun. There are, of course, socialists living, talking and operating in Italy”, said Federzoni in his maiden speech to the Chamber on 11 December 1913.²² The new fact here is that, in nationalist parlance, the socialists were not opposed as enemies on economic grounds in the class struggle, nor on legal grounds of law and order. The delegitimization argument was that, insofar as the presence of socialism might condition Italian politics, it would breed frustration and loss of confidence in the ambition for a dynamic Italy amid other nations; hence “socialism and nationalism were pitted in the same contest, the one denying, the other affirming the vitality of the nation”; the former should be viewed “as the dreaded op-

20. “Presentazione”, in *Il Tricolore*, 1, 1, 3 April 1909.

21. Cf. R. Vivarelli, *Storia delle origini del fascismo. L'Italia dalla grande guerra alla marcia su Roma*, vol. III, Bologna, il Mulino, 2012.

22. L. Federzoni, *Presagi alla nazione. Discorsi politici*, a cura del Fascio romano di combattimento, Milan, Imperia, 1924, p. 62.

ponent to be fought tooth and nail, the other parties being no more than a historical hangover".²³

If anti-national socialism was a challenge "to the death", the nationalists' delegitimization inevitably extended to Giolitti and his attempt to incorporate socialism into the institutions of government. His "ministerialism" was accused of spawning a "socialistified democracy"²⁴ stinking of reformism, "an amalgam of individual interests" that would "mortify the nation's energy and stifle its ideas", barring "Italy from the march of European history".²⁵ Giolitti's overtures to socialism, argued the nationalist, would end by bolstering "that faction who not only militate against a strong foreign policy, but even deny Italy a right to any foreign policy at all": "nowadays the socialists are not just anti-constitutional bodies to be gradually and subtly absorbed, but anti-national bodies to expel, if we don't want to die of septicaemia".²⁶

In another quarter Giolitti's liberal opponents were proving sensitive to the broadly "nationalistic" cause. New winds of anti-socialism, anti-democracy and anti-masonry were bringing them together with organized nationalism, and not just in the capital: there were numerous provincial cases of interpenetration, the forming of groups and newspapers of "constitutional associationism".²⁷

4. *The temptation of subversion: nationalist interventionism 1914-1915*

Their first victories at the 1913 general election, with open support from the Catholics, cast nationalism centre-stage in the debate over the liberals: what fate awaited that composite archipelago that had hitherto run the country? Despite everything, the liberal-conservative leader Sonnino continued to nurse the dream of a "great liberal party" open to democrats but distinct from the nationalist Right. Such a scheme met

23. Nol, "Le risposte avversarie al nostro saluto", *L'Avanguardia*, 1, 2, 15 April 1914.

24. E. Corradini, *Nazionalismo e democrazia*, in Id., *Scritti e discorsi politici (1902-1923)*, Florence, Vallecchi, 1923, p. 155.

25. "L'azione nazionalista per Tripoli", *L'Idea Nazionale*, 1, 34, 19 October 1911.

26. "Il discorso di Torino e il patriottismo dell'onorevole Giolitti", *L'Idea Nazionale*, 1, 33, 12 October 1911.

27. Mazzei, "Per una ricerca sulla stampa nazionalista (1909-1914)", pp. 54-56.

with head-on opposition from the nationalists, who preferred Salandra's "national politics". Prime minister since April 1914, Salandra argued for liberal reunion in order to keep the socialists out while remaining "good neighbours" with nationalism. To Salandra the nationalists were merely useful travelling companions, but to the latter, subordinate status would hardly do. They accordingly took their distance from liberalism and started planning for a radical change: in their intentions it was they who would wrest the leadership from the liberals in the hierarchy of "order-loving parties". The intent was delegitimizing, but once again it did not clash with the representative monarchical institutions as such: its target was post-unitarian Italy's ruling class who had taken it upon themselves to shore up the tottering institutional legitimacy.²⁸

But the ranks of militant nationalist youth were quick to throttle that "new Right" in the making. Theirs was a different style, a different brand of political militancy.²⁹ "The Italy of Giolitti and Turati must die"³⁰ became the winning slogan. Playing the card of youth, nationalism now proclaimed itself the only vanguard able to put up a resistance as the old-guard liberals crumbled before the inroads of the subversives. Emphasis on youth marked the widening generational gap amid the "men of order"; more and more the two political cultures diverged into alternative antagonistic factions.

Things came to a head at the Third ANI Congress held in Milan in May 1914, when the leaders made it binding on members "not to belong to *any other* political association". The novel measure expressed a 'new-look' nationalism, youthful and intransigent, determined to stand apart from other parties and break with the senile liberal world. The emerging leader in this new departure was, of course, Alfredo Rocco who tried to inject some rational theory and doctrine into the nationalist alternative in the name of a "new State" and rigid disciplining of political conflict.³¹ Rocco's nationalism championed state sovereignty against parliamentary dispersal and to that extent swung the sights of delegitimization from political opponents

28. F. Cammarano, "Crisi della politica e politica della crisi: Italia e Gran Bretagna 1880-1925", in *Crisi, legittimazione, consenso*, ed. by P. Pombeni, Bologna, il Mulino, 2003, pp. 88-99.

29. Papadia, "Vecchi e giovani: il caso italiano", pp. 77-94.

30. "La vecchia Italia", *L'Idea Nazionale*, 4, 38, 17 September 1914.

31. Cf. E. Gentile, "L'architetto dello Stato nuovo: Alfredo Rocco", in Id., *Il mito dello Stato nuovo. Dal radicalismo nazionale al fascismo*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1999², pp. 171-210.

onto the liberal-democratic institutions, openly claiming that the hard-line “legalism” of the nationalists was purely a means to an end.³²

However, it remains to be proved how far Rocco’s new ideological line would be taken up by organized nationalism. The outlying journals of the movement reveal that political application of it met with clear resistance even on the morrow of the Milan Congress. Some official nationalists kept their links with the liberal-conservatives within the broad liberal background. From our survey it is clear that dual card-carrying (nationalist and liberal) was the order of the day especially in remoter parts of the country. At the June 1914 administrative elections the block formation of liberals-nationalists-Catholics on the ticket of ‘order’ was successful in the largest Italian towns. In the one-and-only issue of *Propaganda nazionalista* printed by the Florentine group in July 1914 Corradini urged the need for rallying around the liberals. In covert opposition to Rocco’s intransigence, he saw nationalism’s role as “initiating alliances of constitutional parties, especially Catholics and liberals, against socialism”.³³

Hobbled by peripheral dragging of feet, nationalism’s bid to delegitimize and rule came to grief on the issue of intervention; for although Italy did join in the Great War, the nationalists’ eagerness to break with the system proved ultimately incompatible with patriotism which the war heightened as a duty. Seen as a whole – from the anti-Triple Alliance volte-face of August 1914, to the “radiant days” of May 1915 – the nationalists’ strategy swung between conflicting goals and stances. A cleavage opened between the pro-joining nationalists and most of the moderate front who were for “conditional” neutrality. It weakened the pro-Salandra line of Corradini and the *L’Idea Nazionale* editorialists, egged on by Colonies Minister Ferdinando Martini, and greatly confused the nationalist position vis-à-vis the government, a position aptly described as “that never-ending alternation between praise and attack, admiration, support and profound lack of trust”.³⁴

Ultimately the intervention campaign was nationalism’s only option if it wanted to retain the initiative, guide public opinion and above all keep

32. A. Rocco, “Esame di coscienza. I”, *Il Dovero Nazionale*, 1/5, (6 June 1914), in Id., *Scritti e discorsi politici*, vol. I, *La lotta nazionale della vigilia e durante la guerra (1913-1918)*, preface by B. Mussolini, Milan, Giuffrè, 1938, pp. 96-100.

33. E. Corradini, “La funzione storica del nazionalismo”, *L’Idea Nazionale*, 4, 29, 17 July 1914, now in F. Gaeta, *La stampa nazionalista*, Bologna, Cappelli, 1965, pp. 7-8.

34. Vigezzi, “I nazionalisti fra neutralità e intervento”, p. 28.

up extra-parliamentary pressure on the government's and the King's foreign policy decisions. Back in the days of the 1911 Libyan campaign, the nationalists were firmly against whipping up the people to a colonial war; but in 1914-1915 they changed their tune, took to the squares and tried to cash in politically on mobilization. By October 1914 Rocco was spurring the nationalists to become "initiators of popular movements" urging the liberal rulers into the war, creating "disorder in defence of the State".³⁵ But this second line risked dragging nationalism down the road of clashing with the powers in authority; it proved hard to pursue, or to square with the previous image of the "order party"; it short-circuited with the anti-subversive legitimization they had freshly gained in June 1914 during the "red week" riots.

Another curb on the nationalists' "brushes with the law" was their need to keep a distance from left-wing interventionism (itself both democratic and revolutionary): in the campaign for joining the Entente they were on the same side. The nationalists were not prepared to sacrifice their aversion to left-wing revolutionary tactics in the name of a united interventionist front. At the February 1915 Padua gathering, a high-point of the interventionist programme, they walked out of the demonstration when the revolutionaries proposed the slogan "war or republic".³⁶

The temptation to force the law would only once be felt when Salandra resigned and in May *L'Idée nazionale* headed its page on the anti-Giolitti demonstration: *The nation rises up united in grim determination to the cry of: either war or revolution*. But the next day the daily was already clear which alternative it favoured. "Before the dilemma: war or revolution, our conscience as Italian citizens, our spirit as patriots prompts us to proclaim, we must avoid the precipice of revolution, we must go to war. Minister Salandra's immediate return will save Italy from the revolutionary movement which, as was bound to happen, has already begun".³⁷

On 18 May 1915 the *Idea nazionale* returned to the topic of 'revolution', scaling it appropriately: "It was a revolution, the revolution of national conscience against parliamentarism, and we were there. There was a vile Bastille to be stormed, Montecitorio, and we stormed it. There was a tyrant and a tyranny to overthrow, and we overthrew them".³⁸

35. A. Rocco, "I nazionalisti in piazza", *Il Dovere Nazionale*, 1, 23, 11 October 1914, now in Id., *Scritti e discorsi politici*, vol. I, pp. 187-191, under the title *Contro la politica dei dubbi, delle incertezze e della rinuncia vile*.

36. Cf. "Il convegno di Padova per la guerra", *L'Idée Nazionale*, 9 February 1915.

37. "Il nostro grido di guerra", *L'Idée Nazionale*, 15 May 1915.

38. "La Patria italiana", *L'Idée Nazionale*, 18 May 1915.

The nationalists' success seemed clear and confirmed by an extraordinary peak in *Idea nazionale* circulation,³⁹ but strictly in terms of delegitimization it appears now to have been more show than reality. Was it the nationalists who spurred and nudged Salandra's government into joining the war, as they claimed? Freed at last from Giolitti's nefarious designs, the attack on the "great liberal party" reduced to being an end in itself. Salandra's "sacred egoism" came off the victor without having to yield to the interventionist rally, and ultimately engulfing the nationalists and their anti-Giolitti-ism. The other goal of nationalist propaganda was likewise lukewarm in its influence: that is, the army, or rather the Operational Headquarters under Cadorna and his closest team. For all the *Idea nazionale*'s whole-page splash on King and Generalissimo, the opportunity to influence relations between the army and the home front, or indeed civil mobilization, would largely elude the nationalists' grasp.

After the long and active build-up, when the country did enter the war it marked the end of the line for nationalism's expansion as a political movement. Having been against resorting to subversion before May 1915, Italian nationalism could hardly then stand against the wartime prospect of the *union sacrée* and the rider to it: loyalty to the institutions. Not that it was torn in any way comparable with *Action Française*. For throughout the war and after it the French counterpart had to eat its political programme's fundamental axiom: that a parliamentary Republic was unable to make up its mind for war, or conduct it to victory. Yet in Italy, too, the war itself did something to "delegitimize" the nationalists' own delegitimization of the liberal State. Despite all, the latter ultimately managed to redeem its post-Risorgimento military failures.

5. *Reaction without subversion: postwar in Italy*

Immediately after the war the nationalists were again instigators of protest against the victory that Versailles 'mutilated'. Objectively, the situation seemed to favour their policy of delegitimization. Midway through

39. Cf. J. Bainville, *La guerre et l'Italie*, Paris, Fayard, 1916, pp. 136-138: "Dans l'été de 1913, nous trouvant à Rome, nous avons vu l'*Idea nazionale* sous la forme modeste d'un hebdomadaire. Dix-huit mois plus tard nous la retrouvions avec cent mille lecteurs, heureuse concurrente des plus grands journaux romains: la guerre avait produit ce contact électrique entre les intellectuels et la foule".

1919 certain phenomena came to light which history has now unravelled in full, though they may not have entered common historical awareness. First, there was a sudden burgeoning of radical socialist-style anti-patriotism. On all hands ‘red’ administrations and organizations played down the national symbols, and the spotlight fell on the war veterans, the common soldier, the mutilé. In the same period there was a wave of political violence that the forces of law and order did little to check: in the second half of 1919 and through 1920 this was not yet the fascists’ doing (or only occasionally), but action on the part of armed groups forming a kind of irregular army. The enormous documentation in the archives calls it the “Red Guard”. It became a nightmare for the civil authorities following the celebrated “mega-strike” of July 1919.⁴⁰ On top of this came widespread “environmental” violence as a weapon of social pressure, above all in the provinces where an agricultural battle would rage in 1920.

It is well accepted that the patriotic bourgeois lash-back of late 1920-early 1921 was not ridden by the nationalists but gave rise to a new phenomenon: fascist gang tactics (*squadrismo*). To be fair, the nationalists did mobilize quite early on, forming paramilitary corps dubbed “blueshirts”.⁴¹ These took part in the militia known as the “Ever Ready for King and Country”. But nationalist mobilization did not yet wear the brutal revolutionary face of *squadrismo*. The reverse: its aim was to defend the monarchy and institutions against attack of the kind threatened by youthful fascists. Blackshirts often clashed with blueshirts especially in the South, and in some cases mortally. Despite the rapid rise of fascism – which swelled from 20,000 to 187,000 card-carriers between 1st January and 30th May 1921 – nationalism did continue to attract the sympathy of the patriotic middle classes who were alarmed at the fascist squads’ excesses and hostile to their revolutionary face.⁴²

Nationalist enterprise was generally confined to the first phase of middle-class reaction, the first form of patriotic mobilization, manifest from spring 1919 onwards in cities like Bologna, Milan, Rome, Florence and Cremona, where a rash of anti-Bolshevik associations sprang up. These at once volunteered to support and, if necessary, replace police action and the running of

40. Cf. M. Mondini, *La politica delle armi. Il ruolo dell’esercito nell’avvento del fascismo*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2006, *passim*.

41. Cf. M. Cuzzi, “Il nazionalismo militante: gli antesignani delle ‘camicie azzurre’”, in *Da Oriani a Corradini. Bilancio critico del primo nazionalismo italiano*, ed. by R.H. Rainero, Milan, Franco Angeli, 2003, pp. 91-114.

42. Benadusi, “La strana disfatta: i nazionalisti nel primo dopoguerra”, p. 226.

public administration sabotaged by strikes. To a significant extent that support was accepted by the governing authorities. There is the well-known case of Nitti's 14 July 1919 circular: pending the "mega-strike", prefects were allowed if necessary to use these patriotic associations' services in keeping law and order. Their canvas was in the main hyper-legal: they would form squads to deputize for strikers, especially when the strikes affected public services. There are scores of witnesses: young anti-Bolshevists swept the streets of Florence, acted as waiters in Rome, drove trams in Milan.⁴³ A memorable description is to be found in Mario Piazzesi's *Diary of a Tuscan squadrista*, published by Renzo De Felice more than thirty years ago. Not quite twenty years old, son of a 'returnee' who would not go out of doors, Piazzesi lived for several months in the headquarters of monarchical and anti-Bolshevik associations, amid mounting frustration.⁴⁴ A great journalist – at the time antifascist – like Mario Missiroli expressed much the same emotion in a letter to Dino Grandi on 25 February 1921:

When I see young fascists and medal-wearing ex-servicemen standing in for waiters on strike at grand Roman hotels, and serving sharks and their mistresses, I am seized by shame and indescribable rage! Horror! These youngsters really believe they are serving the country. I bow to their good faith, their naïvety. But is that bourgeoisie not worse than the old harlots who corrupt girls and abduct them into the stews? I hope the work of fascism may bring a purge; but I won't believe it until I see a clean-cut divide between fascist youth and the ignoble trash who hang around them and exploit them; between them and this ugly, venal, craven bourgeoisie [...].⁴⁵

Naturally, when another opportunity arose – this time one of concrete armed subversion – the young Piazzesi would throw the legality of anti-

43. Cf. R. De Felice, *Mussolini il rivoluzionario*, Turin, Einaudi, 1965, p. 609; R. Vivarelli, *Storia delle origini del fascismo*, vol. II, Bologna, il Mulino, 1990, pp. 488-489, and above all E. Gentile, *Storia del Partito fascista 1919-1922. Movimento e milizia*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1989, pp. 69-78, who stresses how this first backlash by the "patriotic bourgeoisie" took place outside the fascist storm formations.

44. Cf. M. Piazzesi, *Diario di uno squadrista toscano 1919-1922*, Rome, Bonacci, 1980, above all for its pages on the Florence Citizen Defence Alliance, the episodes of "Bourgeois volunteer strike-breakers in January 1920, and the frustration such forms of anti-socialist mobilization soon caused, especially among young people (pp. 59-67).

45. "Contributo allo scandalo: le lettere di Dino a Mario", in *L'Idea Nazionale*, 18 December 1924; D. Grandi, *Il mio paese. Ricordi autobiografici*, ed. by R. De Felice, Bologna, il Mulino, 1985, pp. 125-133.

Bolshevism to the winds and join a fascist gang. One must conclude by seeking the explanation for this and many other cases of “outgrowing” Italian nationalism which were fatal to it and forced it later into a subordinate merger with fascism in February 1923. The nut-shell answer might be that in the make-or-break showdown the nationalists would not stoop to subversion as the fascists did, gaining a monopoly on the bourgeois backlash. What was at stake, once again, was the “old Right” and their basically “legalitarian” principles which would make nationalism refrain from converting delegitimization into a political move to overthrow the liberal State.