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Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Europe and Latin America

Crossing Borders

**Edited by
António Costa Pinto and Federico
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'Esecutivo e legislativo nell'attuale fase del diritto costituzionale italiano', *Annali della Regia Università di Macerata*, vol. XIV (1940), pp. 45–47.

64 Ranalletti, *Istituzioni di diritto pubblico*.

65 'Although all these theories, as well as presenting varying degrees of compatibility, were destined to fail when faced with the worsening of social conflict and the incipient crisis of the Liberal state, Fascist corporatist discourse – which had developed long before the global financial crisis of 1929 – seems deeply rooted in the spirit of the age.' M. Pasetti, 'Alle origini del corporativismo fascista: sulla circolazione di idee corporative nel primo dopoguerra', in M. Pasetti, ed., *Progetti corporativi tra le due guerre mondiali*, Rome, Carocci, 2006, p. 16.

66 Stolzi, *L'ordine corporativo*, p. 49.

67 Gagliardi, *Il corporativismo fascista* (Kindle edition, location 978 of 4077).

3 Intellectuals in the mirror of fascist corporatism at the turning point of the mid-thirties

Laura Cerasi

The corporatist state-building opened a new institutional channel for the participation in the political sphere of intellectuals from different political and cultural backgrounds. It attracted to its fascist framework various representatives – such as syndicalists, reformist socialists, and Catholics of different tendencies – put together by the common intent of transforming the liberal order by enhancing the representation of interests and of the social bodies.

I intend to examine this issue by focusing first on the third Congress of corporatist studies in Rome (1935), a rather peculiar Italian–French conference which showcased the corporatist topic's potential in disseminating the fascist self-representation across the international field, but also shed a light on the gap between the European scope of the corporatist debate, and its internal dynamics in the context of fascist state building. Subsequently, I intend to give consideration to the role of Giuseppe Bottai as a politician and intellectual. With his associates and collaborators, he had been consistently advocating a 'constitutional' idea of the corporatist state as the fundamental ingredient for an integral reshaping of the relationship between state, society and economy, for a new and totalitarian overcoming of either liberal individualism and socialist collectivism. This 'constitutional' conception raised high expectations for the establishment of the corporatist state in 1934, and thereafter caused a subsequent disillusion. Finally, I mean to point out the importance of the year 1935 as a turning point in the 'consensus' to fascist corporatism. The aggression to Ethiopia entailed a massive re-orientation of Italian intellectuals towards the imperial experience, but it also led to a dramatic decrease in the sympathy gained by fascist corporatism among European intellectuals of the left (also of the Catholic left, who participated in the Italian–French conference). In this perspective, I assume that the 'constitutional' value assigned to the corporatist topic by the most original fascists like Bottai and his assistants, was somehow inherited by the concept of labour, as a sort of metaphysic of the society and a prime source of legitimation for the state. As a conclusion, I argue that although the topic of labour emerged in a distinctly fascist context during the late 1930s, it was not entirely connected with the fascist self-representation, and therefore was able to undergo the transition to republican democracy.

Through the looking-glass

Even though it was inspired by Giuseppe Bottai's intellectual circle like the two previous and much more influential corporatist meetings, the 1935 Italian-French conference had a minor institutional standing. Held respectively in Rome, 1930, and in Ferrara, 1932, the former two conferences had been largely attended by the most prominent politicians and intellectuals, widely discussed and apt to originate a steady debate in Italy and abroad, while the third one had a lesser resonance in the public discourse; nevertheless, it disclosed some interesting features which are worth noticing.¹

Organized under the aegis of the Fascist Institute of Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by Giuseppe Bottai's young associate Agostino Nasti, the 1935 conference followed a low-key restart of Italian-French cultural relations, and was set up, on the French side, by 'neo-socialist' and fascist sympathizer Georges Roditi, founder of the journal *'Homme Nouveau'*.² The French delegation was varied. It ranged from Catholic corporatist Georges Viance, member of the *Fédération nationale Catholique*, to syndicalist, planist and humanist Pierre Ganivet of the journal *L'Homme Réel*; from Louis Emile Galey, member of Gaston Bergery's pro-fascist *Front Social*, to reactionary Catholic Robert Aron, director of the *Jeune Droite* journal *Ordre Nouveau*, and to personalist philosopher Emmanuel Mounier, founder of the *'Esprit'* movement.³ A remarkable discrepancy among the Italian and the French selections of participants was apparent: while the French delegation was formed mainly by young and eager intellectuals, the Italian one displayed an interesting combination of a few prominent politicians and members of the fascist cultural élites such as Giuseppe Bottai, Edmondo Rossoni and Ugo Spirito, alongside a more substantial group of intellectual and corporate executives including Nasti, Luigi Fontanelli, Riccardo Del Giudice, Arnaldo Fioretti, Ernesto Lama and Tullio Cianetti, and some young fascist students like Antonio Amendola (later a member of the Communist Party), plus a sprinkling of representatives of different leaning among the fascist currents, such as the right-wing traditionalist G. A. Fanelli. Notably, it was a deployment of the more 'syndicalist' and 'rossoniani' among the corporate executives, such as Fioretti, M.P., or Fontanelli, director of the newspaper *Il lavoro fascista* and a champion of a technocratic vision of the corporatist 'logic' (his book *Logica della corporazione* had been published the previous year), which gives the impression to have been carefully selected to persuade the French syndicalists of the virtues of fascist corporatism, by stressing an 'anti-capitalist' and revolutionary image of it.

In this perspective, the goal pursued by the conference organizers was manifold. The great slump which severely affected European and American capitalist societies in the early thirties had fostered a wide and politically multicoloured debate on the corporatist perspective. Fascist corporatism was still regarded in the European cultural and political discourse as the forerunner of the development of new political systems based on an integrated relationship between state and society, and on a new method of political

representation.⁴ In the mid-thirties, corporatism still featured in the regime's agenda as a main asset to support foreign cultural policy. The 1935 conference had therefore an institutional standing, as it was backed by the Fascist Institute of Culture (still under the direction of the prominent philosopher Giovanni Gentile) and by Giuseppe Bottai in his capacity as Governor of Rome, in order to promote the fascist self-representation as the pivotal 'third way' between capitalism and socialism across the international field.

The composition of the French delegation hinted at a careful selection of correspondents, to accomplish at least two purposes: on the one hand, to dispel the aura of medieval, organic society still lingering around the corporatist discourse, which appealed mainly to the traditionalist, Catholic, authoritarian side, – hence Viance and Aron – and on the fascist side the presence of G. A. Fanelli. On the other hand – as we will presently see – it meant to counteract the powerful and penetrating criticism voiced from the left by Luis Rosenstock-Franck. It consequently intended to corroborate a 'modern' and totalitarian view of the corporatist state, which could appeal to a non-Marxist and syndicalist side of the French left: hence the presence of Ganivet, Roditi and Paul Marion.

But how was this particular brand of fascist self-representation received among the French intellectuals? A 'constitutional' conception of the corporatist state as the fundamental ingredient for an integral reshaping of the relationship between state, society and economy, for a new and totalitarian overcoming of either liberal individualism and socialist collectivism was put forward by Bottai himself in the first session's opening lecture. He very cleverly suggested a Durkheimian vision of the fascist corporatist state by recalling that 'there are two basic aspects of the modern society's great change: the social division of labor, that is to say the partition of functions, and the association of homogeneous entities, that is to say, the coalition of those appointed to the same function', and that the fascist corporatist state 'awards the citizens their economical personality and their social function legally and politically'.⁵ Then, after commenting on the Labour charter,⁶ he intended to dispel the radical view, due to Ugo Spirito, of the 'proprietary corporation' by pointing out that the corporatist state 'supervises and controls the economy, but does not undertake the economic, business and financial initiative'. Bottai settled the matter by stating

The corporatist state assumes in the sphere of his ethical and political life of the society, that is to say, it assumes the whole social and economic forces, expressed and created by the citizens. This is how the corporatist state solves the crisis which affects the modern State.⁷

His totalitarian and 'constitutional' view was shared and echoed by other participants, such as Ernesto Lama ('The new concept of the corporatist state is not based upon the consideration of the individual, it is based upon the consideration of the social system [...]; it arises as an entity which has to

encompass, to grant and to limit the individual's purposes. The corporatist state is the juridical, economical, political organization of the society itself, thus it is a totalitarian state, an immanent state; it is the self-government of the social ranks, and it is their disciplined harmony within the nation⁸) and Agostino Nasti ('Corporatism is not only the actual realization of the revolutionary syndicalism; it is also inspired by another idea, the idea of the powerful state; thus, it is the synthesis of the ideal experience of syndicalism and of the conception of the powerful state'⁹).

On the whole, this perspective did not obtain the French delegation's full approval. Despite its rational and logical appeal, the argument of the necessary integration between the corporatist structure and the state, bound to produce a new totalitarian dimension altogether, was not perceived as likely to take shape shortly, or even to be entirely desirable ('It is the form of your state that cannot convince me'¹⁰).

The objections to the totalitarian view could be summarized, on the one hand, in Ganivet's rejection of the fascist primacy of the party, on the grounds of a syndicalist perspective: 'At the basis of syndicalism there is the notion of class; at the foundations of fascism the notion of the party'; 'Instead of seeking the social, juridical and economical rules which could bring about a society without classes and without State, a society of freely associate producers, a society of real men – like syndicalism does – fascism, because it rests on the idea of the party, results in adding weight to the artificial machine of the State pressing upon the collective society'.¹¹ On the other hand, there was Emmanuel Mounier's anti-enlightenment-inspired rejection of the primacy of the state. Mounier maintained that the alleged 'primacy of the State' in actual facts was the 'tyranny of the majority', which in his opinion would identify with Rousseau's democratic 'general will'.¹²

The above-mentioned objections suggested that a society-driven corporatist perspective was apt to be better received, on the ground that it provided a view about the organized labour and its role in the re-shaping of a post-crisis society. Indeed, Edmondo Rossoni gained Roditi's approval¹³ by very cleverly putting forward a passionate argument in favour of a 'humanist' corporatism:

Corporatism is an ethical matter, that doesn't leave unquestioned any aspect of human life. It is necessary to arrive to Man, singular, and to Men, plural. But then I will tell you that the fascist revolution, which addresses, after the economic struggle, the concept of solidarity, the concept of the production unity within the corporations (because after all what is the corporation if not the idea of the unity of production); I will tell you that the fascist movement, which refers to everything that concerns humanity across the centuries, is really a synthesis of revolutions: not only of historical revolutions, but of revolutions still to come.¹⁴

On the whole, most remarks showed an interest in understanding how the corporations actually functioned,¹⁵ which was the workers' actual way of

living in the corporatist framework,¹⁶ and whether the corporations were able to exercise authority over the capitalists' decision-making, or were just 'a mere bureaucratic framework with no actual connection to the masses, allowing capitalism to have complete autonomy'.¹⁷ The remark somehow echoed Louis Rosenstock-Franck's argument of the corporatist state's essential subordination to the capitalists' power. It is an aspect worthy of consideration, because it recalls the enduring fortune of a simplified interpretation of the corporatist state, which reached an audience wider than its socialist and anti-fascist background. The doctoral thesis of the prestigious École polytechnique alumnus, published in 1934 by Gamber, Paris, under the title *L'économie corporative fasciste en doctrine et en fait. Ses origines historiques et son évolution*, was based on an extensive survey made on site. In a short memoir written for a later Italian edition of his book,¹⁸ he recalled how his interest for the corporatist economy was kindled, while in Italy in the early thirties, by the reading of Gino Arias's commentary of the Labour Charter. His survey took shape after he had visited the celebrated anti-fascist exile Gaetano Salvemini in France; following his advice he visited Carlo Rosselli and Angelo Tasca, then went to Italy to collect documents and research material and to interview champions of fascist corporatism such as Alfredo Rocco, Giuseppe Bottai, Ugo Spirito. During the research, he participated to one of the *Décade de Pontigny* meetings, reporting his findings among an international intellectual audience.¹⁹

The book, published in February 1934, had been immediately well received, both in socialist and liberal environments. It was often reissued, was translated into Spanish, his author was asked to contribute on the topic in various journals²⁰ and his arguments were discussed by accredited experts as Gaetan Pirou.²¹ The prestigious journal *Economica* issued by the London School of Economics published an essay entitled 'Fascist economics' where Rosenstock-Franck was hailed as an 'island [...] amidst the majestic ocean of confusion' created by fascist propaganda about the corporatist state: 'The propaganda made around this magic word has been so intensive that almost the whole world takes it for granted that it is not only a word, but a real thing of the utmost importance, which might be imitated by any other country seeking a way out of the present economic crisis', if works like Rosenstock-Franck's had not helped to dispel the haze lingering about it.²² His approach, developed in plain but factual language, was based on the comparison between the corporatist theoretical production and its actual implementation, showing how they diverged. This approach originated the 'failure paradigm', which until recently dominated the postwar interpretations of fascist corporatism,²³ particularly after being revisited by Gaetano Salvemini, which rephrased it in a more politically effective fashion in his very influential *Under the Axe of Fascism*, published two years later in the USA.

Rosenstock-Franck's work contributed to polarizing the attitude towards fascist corporatism, which in intellectual and political milieux debating planist projects and influenced by De Man was generally favourable.²⁴ In itself a long

confutation of the very existence of a fascist corporatist state, iconically defined *The Great Humbug*, Salvemini's pamphlet was largely based on arguments and findings by the French scholar, to whom he made reference throughout the book.²⁵ The polarization increased the divide between fascist and non-fascist orientated opinions at the precise moment when, after the failed 9 February coup, the French left was re-assembling together in view of the anti-fascist Popular Front, thus contributing to alienate several 'leftist' sympathies to fascist corporatism.²⁶ There was indeed, in that time frame, a clear effort to disseminate the fascist version of corporatism in the French debate through translations of main works such as Mussolini's *Fascismo* and Bottai's *Esperienza corporativa*, or essays specifically conceived for an international audience, such as *La Corporazione dans le Monde* by Giuseppe De Michelis.²⁷

Indeed, a change of atmosphere was due to the aggression to Ethiopia. Among the French left, it caused a steep decrease in the sympathies gained by fascist corporatism. The debates in Emmanuel's Mounier journal, 'Esprit', which since its first issues had been committed to understanding corporatism, framed in the general issue of syndicalism, socialism, and reform of the state, also hosting a contribution by Ugo Spirito,²⁸ are exemplary. A report on the Italian-French conference drawn in the immediate aftermath of the meeting expressed a clear appreciation of the conference's outcomes, with particular reference to the earnest commitment of the Italians in discussing the merits as well as the shortcomings of their current corporatist experience. A special approval of Rossoni's speech was proclaimed, in an anti-capitalistic perspective. While restating the rejection of the totalitarian state, the corporatist intellectual and syndical environment was regarded as worthy of further consideration.²⁹ Just a few months later, in his firm rejection of the Ethiopian colonial war, Mounier encompassed also those fascist politicians who were enrolling in it or supporting it, as Rossoni himself and Bottai almost regretting to have ever engaged in a political discussion with them,³⁰ thus expressing a dismissal of the fascist perspective, which so far had not been unequivocal. The interest for the corporatist perspective shifted towards the traditional Social Catholic doctrine, as was testified by the attention elicited by the 'Semaine Sociale' held in July 1935 in Angers, entirely devoted to Catholic corporatism.³¹ Although the interest in Catholic corporatism was to be clarified as subject to restrictions, it was nevertheless a remarkable change worthy of note.³²

Great expectations

The international appeal of fascist corporatism, therefore, did not entirely pass the 1935 turning point unscathed. In a transnational perspective, the leading role in the international corporatist movement transferred from Italy to other countries, particularly to Salazar's Portugal with its *Estado Novo* achievements.³³

Nevertheless, a fleeting fulfilment of the Italian-French conference goals was claimed by its organizer, Agostino Nasti. The intent to gain credit from the 'young left' seemed to have succeeded, up to a point:

The Conference can be said to have been very useful, because among many [participants] it rectified an attitude of mistrust and dislike towards us, in an attitude of trust and sympathy. And that is very important, because it's predictable that the future, even in France, will belong to the young, to those young. [...] If we believe in the universality of Fascism-Corporatism, we are bound to strive to assert our ideals among the parties and movements which look to the future, and not among those which are building the past.³⁴

Nasti's emphasis on the future is worth noticing. He was one of Giuseppe Bottai's close assistants, at the time *Critica fascista's* – Bottai's leading political journal – deputy director.³⁵ If not a famous and prominently outstanding figure, as a member of Bottai's inner circle he was part of the fascist cultural elite, and privy to Bottai's cultural strategies and political goals. The re-launch of the corporatist perspective, in a 'leftist' variation, hinted at the intention to turn the page after the somehow disappointing establishment of the corporatist state the previous year. Indeed, in a perspective from within, the 1935 conference might be seen to have been set up to counteract a standstill in the Italian corporatist drive, which by the mid-thirties had overtaken its initial stages and was confronted with its actual functioning in the fascist regime.

Bottai, in fact, by 1932 was no longer Minister of Corporations, nor had any voice in the taking shape of the corporatist framework after his dismissal from the steering role he had been able to retain since the issue of the Labour Charter (1927), by advocating a view of corporatism as an integral reshaping of the relationship among state, society and economy, for a new and totalitarian overcoming of either liberal individualism and socialist collectivism. His dismissal had been read as signal of defeat for his 'constitutional' conception of the corporatist state. The 'corporate State-building' was settled in 1934, by putting into effect the twenty-two corporations, each for a particular field of economic activity, and each responsible not only for the administration of labour contracts, but also for the promotion of the interests of its field in general, framed in the envisioned transformation of the whole national economy. Far from being an utter and unavoidable 'failure', as proved by the most comprehensive and updated researches,³⁶ the actual corporatist system implemented by the fascist regime did not meet the expectations of a thorough transformation of the whole national economy harboured by the 'totalitarian' sector of fascist politicians and intellectuals.

Whether Bottai's defeat was due to Mussolini's habit of appropriating the most successful among the initiatives carried on by his assistants in order to curb their authority, or was caused by the preponderance ultimately secured by the industrial-financial leadership determined to hinder attempts to implement the corporatist framework as a 'planist' tool to put under governmental control the private enterprises and their profits,³⁷ it marked a sort of stalemate in Bottai's influence. In fact, the ascent of Cesare Maria De Vecchi as Minister of National Education in 1935 severely thwarted Bottai's School

of Corporatist Studies in Pisa, disbanding its members.³⁸ However, given that the organization of culture played a primary role as a tool of political struggle in the interwoven conglomeration of powers which constituted the Italian fascist regime,³⁹ Giuseppe Bottai, like Giovanni Gentile, never gave up his most established strong points, using them as a leverage to return to the forefront when the occasion presented itself. So, Gentile did not relinquish his position as director of the prestigious *Enciclopedia Italiana* even when his influence as principal fascist intellectual was declining; and likewise, Bottai, alongside his young associates, continued to foster intellectual debates about the main current issues such as education, the making of the ruling class, the Empire, and corporatism in his journals, particularly in *Critica fascista*.⁴⁰

In this perspective, the somehow peculiar Italian-French conference was part of a precise political strategy put into effect by Bottai and his collaborators; their aim was to outflank the actual – and unsatisfactory – outcome of the corporatist state-building, and to put forward a renewed 'leftist' outlook of a true, 'integral' and fascist corporatism, somehow anti-capitalist and revolutionary.

This strategy entailed linking up with the 'syndicalist' wing of the fascist left, whose influence had been severely scaled down since the so-called 'unblocking' ['sbloccamento'] of the fascist trade unions, which in 1928 had been divided into several sectors and thus put under political control,⁴¹ and to put forward a 'modernizing' version of corporatism. Throughout the conference, the shortcomings of the corporatist system, which were still enduring despite the establishment of its legal structure, were generally acknowledged, but were also excused with the inferiority of the Italian economy, compared with the French:

We are not in the situation of France, which pays off its balance of payments with its overseas investments, nor in the situation of England, which thrives in its colonies and great trades. We are a country whose scarcity of resource compels to 'create' its own economic life and its future. [...] We are the proletarians of the world, and must solve our problems counting on our modest means.⁴²

This claimed under-development suggests the unspoken purpose assigned to the corporatist system: to be a form of modernization, particularly suited to backward countries. This feature, often connected to a technocratic perspective,⁴³ partly explained the force of impact effected by fascist corporatism, both in the interior and in the international perspective.

After a few months, the 'consensus' about the modernizing virtues of fascist corporatism would be overshadowed by the massive investment made by leading fascist intellectuals in the Ethiopian war. It was Bottai himself, as Luisa Mangoni explained more than forty years ago in her seminal *L'interventismo della cultura*, that envisioned the 'March from Rome', meaning the imperial drive, as the new frontier to achieve the quintessential fascist goal of

building a modern totalitarian state. The autonomy and strength of the state were an important feature of fascism's self-representation and of its legal culture, and in this light the possession of an empire came to be seen as an essential aspect of statehood and power.⁴⁴

After all, that fascist intellectuals deserted the engagement in the corporatist project was a thesis advanced by fascists themselves. In 1940 Ugo Spirito maintained that 'After 1935, no one wrote about corporatism in an authentically scientific mind, and the whole movement of ideas is confined, even now, to what has been achieved at Pisa School'⁴⁵; Bottai, in his autobiography *Vent'anni e un giorno*, draws attention to the lack of political decision in order to make the fascist institution work, and particularly the corporatist structure;⁴⁶ in *ABC*, Bottai's political journal published since 1953, his former assistant Francesco Maria Paces argued that the twenty-two corporations established in 1934 were 'born dead' because they were no more than committees of the Ministry of Corporations;⁴⁷ and Camillo Pellizzi, in *A Missed Revolution*,⁴⁸ a rethinking of the whole corporatist experience, was convinced that the inability to achieve the corporatist goal had been worse than the devastating military defeat: 'Fascism's true failure was not to lose a war, but to miss a revolution.'⁴⁹

The civilization of labour

After the estrangement of (part of) the international public opinion, and, in a national perspective, after the massive re-orientation of Italian intellectuals towards the imperial adventure, what was left behind of the corporatist project, as a major political and cultural investment? It must be noted that, despite its undeniable weakening, corporatism did not disappear from the Italian cultural horizon. Even in the aftermath of the Ethiopian war there had been several attempts, in *Critica fascista* as well, to revive the topic in the intellectual debate. But this permanence was due to a change in the nature of the corporatist discourse: it became, on the one hand, a matter of eager discussion among young fascist students – see for instance Padua University's goliardic journal, *Il Bo* or Pisa University's *Il Campano*.⁵⁰ On the other hand, it was enclosed in the institutional framework. Classes in corporatist economy and in corporatist law became the backbone of academic courses in political science, which spread during the whole 1930s decade,⁵¹ not only in special university schools, like those created in Pisa (*Scuola superiore di scienze corporative*) and Perugia, but also in the ordinary curricula in economics or law, as in Bari or Venice, where in 1940 Amintore Fanfani taught corporatist economy, and former syndicalist Agostino Lanzillo was *rettore*. Hence the steady outcome in terms of publications in corporatist literature.⁵² Some research on case studies, like Pisa,⁵³ has been carried out, but a thorough and comprehensive survey of courses distribution, their teachers, their subjects, their students and the dissertations they defended would be invaluable to better understand the mode of operation of one principal instrument to form

the ruling classes, that would come into power after the fall of the fascist regime.

Alongside this displacement to a more 'institutional' level in the second half of the 1930s, the corporatist topic became more suitable, as a strategic cultural investment, to a conservative or even authoritarian brand of Catholic thought. After the historic agreement between the Catholic Church and the fascist regime (*Patti Lateranensi* 1929), complemented by Pope Pius XI's encyclical *Quadragesimo anno* (1931), corporatism became a meeting point, or better still, a tool to facilitate the political integration of Catholics. The disinvestment in corporatism of the most innovative and original fascist intellectuals, such as Spirito and Bottai, was replaced by more conservative and authoritarian fascists and Catholics, providing an important detail be taken into account: the controversial nature of the question of the state, which by Catholics couldn't be fully accepted even in an authoritarian perspective. So, the stress had to be put on the organic and hierarchical society.⁵⁴ It has been appropriately argued that in the second half of the thirties the decline of corporatism had opened new chances for the fascist trade unions.⁵⁵ It may be also remarked that the 'constitutional' significance assigned to the corporatist topic by the most original fascist intellectuals as Spirito e Bottai – to be the main tool for building the 'totalitarian' society – had been inherited by the concept of labour, which acquired a wider scope.⁵⁵ Some suggestions, in this perspective, were already in the Italo-French conference: Luigi Fontanelli envisaged that

Mussolini conquered the State; the old State was grasped by the firm hands of a minority who according to our capacity is gradually transforming it, relentlessly and smoothly, in order to make it the State of all the Italians, the new State, the modern State which will grant higher social justice, and will achieve the great principle of Labour as the main subject of the economy.⁵⁷

The 'labour' topic, to which fascist intellectuals devoted increasing attention in the late 1930s and early 1940s, was intended as a sort of metaphysics of the entire society. It was something different from the early fascist syndicalism, which emphasized the sorelian 'producer', and also from the 1927 Labour Charter, that declared labour to be 'a social duty' and 'as such, and only as such, protected by the State, aiming at the unity of production and at the development of the national strength' (*titolo II*).

In fact, it can be said that adopting the 'labour' topic provided a way out from the standstill caused by the resolution of the opposition between corporatism and syndicalism.⁵⁸ With the result that corporatism was so identified with the fascist regime, that it was virtually indiscernible from fascism itself, and so it was of no use for the transition to democracy, as former fascist Federico Maria Paces observed at that time.⁵⁹ While in the late thirties, labour became a prime source of legitimation for the state, and acquired a

constitutional dimension. The phrase 'civilization of labour' was used on different occasions: to name *Palazzo della civiltà del lavoro* the new iconic building in the EUR area, west of Rome, as well as to dedicate to it the 1942 planned Rome Universal Exposition.⁶⁰ A sign of the increasing importance of labour as a fundamental part of the late fascist civilization can be traced also in the *School charter*, issued in 1939 by Bottai, in his capacity as Ministry of National Education. In its first article, it declares that

The fascist school, through study, conceived as an assertion of maturity, realizes the principle of people's culture, inspired by the eternal values of the Italian race and its civilization; and it inserts it, by virtue of labour, in the actual activity of trade, arts, professions, sciences, and military.⁶¹

The entry *Labour* in the *Dictionary of Politics* published by the PNF (1941) states that 'The fascist revolution, first in history, fully achieves with the corporatist state the solution to the problem of labour, either in the political, ethical, social and economic dimension, establishing the true civilization of labour'.⁶² A monumental project of a *History of Labour* was conceived in 1939/40 by Bottai's closest assistant, Riccardo Del Giudice, in order to effect a reinterpretation of the whole history, even though only two volumes were issued, by Amintore Fanfani and Luigi Dal Pane.⁶³ Del Giudice on that topic had published in 1937 *The Problems of Labour*, a collection of articles on mainly corporatist subjects.⁶⁴ And a corporatist like Bruno Biagi stated that the profound innovation brought about by the 'Fascist civilization of labour' was the new relationship among the social categories and the state 'inspired to the new conception of labour as *social duty and subject of the economy*'.⁶⁵

The corporatist structure was so closely associated with the fascist experience that in the aftermath of the war it has been studiously rejected by the early anti-fascist governments: they carefully avoided reproducing the corporations in the new constitution,⁶⁶ and their economic politics refused to make use of the state apparatus to control the economy until the early 1950s.⁶⁷ On the other hand, labour as a topic – and the trade unions at an institutional level – was less closely connected with the fascist self-representation, and by providing a common ground between the left and the democratic Catholics was able to undergo the transition to republican democracy.⁶⁸

Notes

- 1 See G. Parlato, *Il convegno Italo Francese di studi corporativi. Con il testo integrale degli Atti*, Rome, Fondazione Ugo Spirito, 1990.
- 2 See A. Vittoria, *Introduzione. Il convegno di studi corporativi*, in 'Dimensioni. Documenti Politica Cultura', special issue *Il convegno Italo-Francese di Studi Corporativi – Roma 1935*, guest editors M. Nacci and A. Vittoria, no. 40–41, September to December 1986, pp. 1–6.
- 3 M. Nacci, 'Intelletuali francesi e corporativismo fascista', in *Il convegno di studi corporativi*, pp. 7–29; see also Z. Sternhell, 'Emmanuel Mounier et la contestation

- de la démocratie libérale dans la France des années trente', *Revue Française de science politique*, no. 6, 1984, pp. 1141–1180, particularly pp. 1148–1154; M. Simard, 'Intellectuels, fascisme et antimodernité dans la France des années trente', *Vingtième Siècle, revue d'histoire*, no. 18, 1988. Dossier: *Sur la France des années trente*, pp. 55–76; O. Dard, 'Le corporatisme entre traditionalistes et modernisateurs; des groupements au cercles du pouvoir', in D. Musiełlak, ed., *Les expériences corporatives dans l'aire latine*, Berne, Peter Lang, 2010, pp. 67–102; O. Dard, 'Existe-t-il une Jeune Droite dans l'Europe des années trente?', in O. Dard and É. Deschamps, eds, *Les relèves en Europe d'un après-guerre à l'autre. Racines, projets et posterities*, Bruxelles, Peter Lang, 2005, pp. 21–52.
- 4 See M. Pasetti, *L'Europa corporativa. Una storia transnazionale*, Bologna, Bononia University Press, 2016.
 - 5 *Il Convegno Italo-Francese di studi corporativi*, cit., p. 90. The translations from the original Italian and French are mine. I wish to thank my friend and colleague Professor Laura Tosi for her help.
 - 6 See M. Pasetti, 'The Fascist Labour Charter and its transnational spread', A. Costa Pinto, ed., *Corporatism and Fascism. The Corporatist Wave in Europe*, London, New York, Routledge, 2017, pp. 60–77.
 - 7 *Il Convegno Italo-Francese di studi corporativi*, p. 95.
 - 8 Ibid., *Il convegno Italo-Francese di studi corporativi*, speech by E. Lama, p. 122.
 - 9 Ibid., *Il convegno Italo-Francese di studi corporativi*, speech by A. Nasti, p. 123.
 - 10 Ibid., *Il convegno Italo-Francese di studi corporativi*, speech by R. Aron, p. 115.
 - 11 Ibid., *Il convegno Italo-Francese di studi corporativi*, speech by P. Ganivet, pp. 112–113.
 - 12 Ibid., *Il convegno Italo-Francese di studi corporative*, speech by E. Mounier, p. 143.
 - 13 Ibid., *Il convegno Italo-Francese di studi corporativi*, speech by G. Roditi, p. 198.
 - 14 Ibid., *Il convegno Italo-Francese di studi corporative*, speech by E. Rossoni, p. 192.
 - 15 Ibid., *Il convegno Italo-Francese di studi corporative*, speech by G. Viance, p. 100.
 - 16 Ibid., *Il convegno Italo-Francese di studi corporative*, speech by P. Ganivet, p. 148.
 - 17 Ibid., *Il convegno Italo-Francese di studi corporative*, speech by P. Marion, p. 139.
 - 18 Louis Rosenstock-Franck, 'Evocations' (typescript, 1979), published as 'Ricordi', in Louis Franck, *Il corporativismo e l'economia dell'Italia fascista*, edited by N. Tranfaglia, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino, 1990, pp. 1–30.
 - 19 Ibid., pp. 9–17. See also F. Chaubet, *Paul Desjardins et les Décades de Pontigny*, Villeneuve-d'Ascq, Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2009.
 - 20 L. Rosenstock-Franck, 'Le Corporatisme Fasciste', *Esprit*, no. 9, 1934, pp. 745–775.
 - 21 See G. Pirou, *Le corporatisme*, Paris, Librairie du Recueil Sirey, 1935.
 - 22 W. Röpke, 'Fascist economics', in *Economica*, New Series, 2 (5), 1935, pp. 85–100, quotations at pp. 95–96.
 - 23 A. Gagliardi, 'The corporatism of fascist Italy between myth and reality', *Estudos Ibero-Americanos*, Porto Alegre, 42 (5), 2016, pp. 409–429.
 - 24 See Alain Chatriot, 'Les nouvelles relèves et le corporatisme. Visions françaises et expériences européennes', in O. Dard and É. Deschamps, eds, *Les relèves en Europe d'un après guerre à l'autre. Racines, projets et posterities*, Bruxelles, Peter Lang, 2005, pp. 173–196.
 - 25 See G. Salvemini, *Under the Axe of Fascism*, London, Vistor Gallancz, 1936, pp. 35, 75, 90, 121, 147, 158.
 - 26 D. Luyten, 'La réception des corporatismes étrangers et le débat sur le corporatisme en Belgique dans les années Trente à l'aube des transferts politiques', O. Dard, ed., *Le corporatisme dans l'aire francophone au XXème siècle*, Peter Lang, Bruxelles, 2011, pp. 139–148; see also Zeev Sternhell, *Neither Right nor Left. Fascist Ideology in France*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1986.
 - 27 G. De Michelis, *La corporation dans le monde. L'économie dirigée internationale*, Denoël et Steele, Paris, 1935. Mussolini's *Fascisme* was published in 1933 by Denoël et Steele; Bottai's *Expérience corporative* in 1932 by Nouvelles éditions

- latines. See for a short summary of literature on Italian corporatism published at the time in France, G. Pirou, *Le corporatisme*, pp. 14–15. For a critical appraisal see Chatriot, 'Les nouvelles relèves et le corporatisme'.
- 28 See G. Izard, 'Le syndicalisme et la transformation du régime', *Esprit*, no. 8, 1933, pp. 188–198; A. Dami, *Révisions des valeurs: la crise de la démocratie et la réforme de l'état*, part I, ibid., no. 22, 1934, pp. 529–562; 'Dossier: Le Plan de Man et la révision du socialisme', ibid., no. 17, 1934, pp. 782–818.
 - 29 'Esprit au Congrès franco-italien sur la corporation', *Esprit*, no. 6, 1935, pp. 474–480.
 - 30 E. Mounier, G. De Santillana, 'Dialogue sur l'Etat fasciste', *Esprit*, no. 35, 1935, pp. 725–751.
 - 31 *L'Organisation Corporative, Sommaire des leçons de la XXVII sessions des Semaines Sociales de France tenue à Angers du 22 au 28 juillet 1935*, Lyon, 1935. For a very sympathetic reflection see *Esprit*, no. 10, 1935, pp. 169–170.
 - 32 See E. Hambresin, 'L'Impasse corporative', *Esprit*, no. 7, 1936, pp. 614–621. Of course, it is the subsequent advent of corporatism as ideological cornerstone for the Vichy regime that lends relevance to those shifts.
 - 33 See Pasetti *L'Europa corporativa*, pp. 230 ss.
 - 34 A. Nasti, *Relazione*, 12 giugno 1935, in Parlato, *Il Convegno Italo-Francese di studi corporative*, pp. 83–85.
 - 35 Since its early days, he contributed to Bottai's political journal *Critica fascista*, where he took part in the well-known debate on the role of the 'young' generations in the fascist regime; in 1933, he replaced Gherardo Casini as *Critica fascista*'s deputy director. See A. J. De Grand, *Bottai e la cultura fascista*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 1978, p. 112. Also, on various occasions he replaced Bottai, for instance for teaching at the School of Corporatist Sciences at Pisa University. See F. Amore Bianco, *Il cantiere di Bottai. La scuola corporativa pisana e la formazione della classe dirigente fascista*, Siena, Cantagalli, 2012, p. 85.
 - 36 See A. Gagliardi, *Il corporativismo fascista*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2010.
 - 37 For a wisely balanced account see M. Galfré, *Giuseppe Bottai. Un intellettuale fascista*, Giunti, Firenze, 2000, pp. 21–30.
 - 38 The School of Corporatist Sciences was founded in 1929 by a joint agreement among the Dean, Armando Carlini, the Scuola Normale's Royal Commissioner, Giovanni Gentile, and Giuseppe Bottai as Under-secretary for the corporations. See Amore Bianco, *Il cantiere di Bottai*, p. 18.
 - 39 See A. Vittoria, *Gli intellettuali e l'organizzazione della cultura*, Rome, Carocci, 2018.
 - 40 Indeed, Bottai would succeed in regaining a primary role, being appointed Minister of National Education in November 1936 to replace De Vecchi, thus managing to be the only fascist hierarch – the other being Dino Grandi – to be given a second occasion to returning in Mussolini's favour. See Galfré, *Giuseppe Bottai*, p. 30.
 - 41 See F. Perfetti, *Il sindacalismo fascista. I. Dalle origini alla vigilia dello Stato corporativo (1919–1930)*, Rome, Bonacci, 1988, p. 155 ss.
 - 42 A. Fioretti, in *Il Convegno Italo-Francese di studi corporativi*, pp. 171–172.
 - 43 See, in this perspective, L. Fontanelli, *Logica della corporazione*, Rome, Edizioni di Novissima, 1932.
 - 44 I have tried to argue this point, seeking to demonstrate that even the ideology of *Romanità*, claimed to boost the colonial expansion, was a way to achieve 'modern' power in 'Empires ancient and modern: Strength, modernity and power in imperial ideology from the liberal period to fascism', *Modern Italy*, no. 4, 2014, pp. 1–18.
 - 45 U. Spirito, in Parlato, *Il convegno Italo Francese di studi corporativi*, p. 7.
 - 46 G. Bottai, *Vent'anni e un giorno* (1949), Milan, Rizzoli, 2008, pp. 79–86.
 - 47 F. M. Paccès, '22 corporazioni nate morte', in *ABC*, 18 October 1953, pp. 9–11, quotation at p. 10.
 - 48 C. Pellizzi, *Una rivoluzione mancata*, 1948, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2009.

- 49 Ibid., p. 50.
- 50 See L. Mangoni, *L'interventismo della cultura*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1974. Also P. Nello, *I miti del littorio e i giovani fascisti della rivista pisana 'Il Campano'*, Pisa, Pacini, 1982.
- 51 O. Bianchi, 'Dalla Scuola di studi corporativi alla Facoltà di Scienze politiche. Alle origini delle Facoltà di Scienze politiche in Italia', in *Annali di storia delle università italiane*, no. 17, 2013, pp. 212–218. See also G. Simone, *Fascismo in cattedra. La facoltà di Scienze Politiche di Padova dalle origini alla Liberazione (1924–1945)*, Padua, Padua University Press, 2015.
- 52 See *Informazioni Corporative*, published by the Ministry of Corporations from 1927 to 1943.
- 53 Amore Bianco, *Il cantiere di Bottai*. Also A. Mariuzzo, 'Il collegio "Mussolini" di scienze corporative', in B. Henry, D. Menozzi and P. Pezzino, eds, *Le vie della libertà. Maestri e discepoli nel 'laboratorio pismo' tra il 1938 e il 1943*, Rome, Carocci, 2008, pp. 79–93.
- 54 Jesuit father Angelo Brucculeri was a strong advocate of a corporatist, organic, fascist society. See A. Brucculeri, *Intorno al Corporativismo*, Roma, La Civiltà Cattolica, 1934. See J. Pollard, 'Corporatism and political Catholicism: The impact of Catholic corporatism in inter-war Europe', in Pinto, ed., *Corporatism and Fascism*, pp. 42–59.
- 55 G. Parlato, *Il sindacalismo fascista. II. Dalla 'Grande crisi' alla caduta del regime*, Bonacci, Roma, 1989, pp. 51 ss. Also S. Musco, *Lavoro e sindacato nell'economia fascista*, in S. Neri Serneri, ed., *1914–1945. L'Italia nella guerra europea dei trent'anni*, Rome, Viella, 2016, pp. 272–285.
- 56 G. Parlato, *La sinistra fascista. Storia di un progetto mancato*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2000, p. 177. Also M. Salvati, 'Le culture del lavoro tra due dopoguerra: dal gildismo alle relazioni umane', Neri Serneri, ed., *1914–1945. L'Italia nella guerra europea dei trent'anni*, pp. 257–272.
- 57 L. Fontanelli, in *Il convegno Italo Francese di studi corporativi*, p. 127.
- 58 See De Grand, *Bottai e la cultura fascista*, p. 224.
- 59 F. M. Paces, 'La carta nel cestino', *ABC*, 15 March 1953, pp. 6–7.
- 60 See M. Carli, 'Il fascismo in cerca della modernità', in Neri Serneri, ed., *1914–1945. L'Italia nella guerra europea dei trent'anni*, 2016, pp. 315–324.
- 61 'La Scuola fascista per virtù dello studio, concepito come formazione di maturità, attua il principio d'una cultura del popolo, ispirata agli eterni valori della razza italiana e dalla sua civiltà; e lo innesta, per virtù del lavoro, nella concreta attività dei mestieri, delle arti, delle professioni, delle scienze, delle armi.'
- 62 'La rivoluzione fascista per la prima nella Storia realizza con lo Stato corporativo pienamente la soluzione del problema del lavoro sia sul piano etico, sia sul piano politico, sia sul piano sociale ed economico', realizzando la vera 'civiltà del lavoro', W. Prosperetti, *Lavoro. I. Aspetto etico e politico*, in PNF, ed., *Dizionario di Politica*, vol. II, Rome, Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 1940, pp. 725–730.
- 63 R. Del Giudice, 'Per una storia del lavoro in Italia', *Rivista internazionale di Scienze sociali*, November 1940, p. 753 ss. An early review is by Carlo M. Cipolla, 'Per una storia del lavoro in Italia', *Bollettino Storico Pavese*, 1944, pp. 3–16.
- 64 R. Del Giudice, *Problemi del lavoro*, Rome, Unione editoriale d'Italia, 1937.
- 65 B. Biagi, *Civiltà fascista del lavoro*, in *La politica del lavoro nel diritto fascista*, Florence, Le Monnier, 1939, pp. 24–27. The italics are in the original.
- 66 G. Cazzetta, 'L'autonomia del diritto del lavoro nel dibattito giuridico tra fascismo e repubblica', in Id., *Scienza giuridica e trasformazioni sociali. Diritto e lavoro in Italia tra Otto e Novecento*, Milan, Giuffrè, 2007, pp. 171–290.

- 67 R. Faucci, 'Dall' "economia programmatica" corporativa alla programmazione economica: il dibattito fra gli economisti', *Quaderni fiorentini per la storia del pensiero giuridico moderno*, no. 28, 1999, pp. 9–58.
- 68 See J.-W. Mueller, *Contesting Democracy. Political Ideas in Twentieth-Century Europe*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2011 (Chapter 4); T. Buchanan, M. Conway, eds, *Political Catholicism in Europe, 1918–1965*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996; and J. F. Pollard, *Catholicism in Modern Italy. Religion, Society and Politics Since 1961*, London, New York, Routledge, 2008.