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Ethnogenesis in Italian America: The View From the Homeland

by

Christian Daniel Meehan

Under the Direction of Allen Fromherz, PhD

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2022

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines changing perceptions of the Italian community in the United States from the perspective of the Italian homeland. This work bases its research primarily on historical representations of the Italian American community as appeared in the widely read Italian newspaper the *Corriere della Sera*. The chronological scope of the work begins soon after the onset of the mass migration of Italians to the United States, starting with the year 1890, and follows the community and its evolution up to 1945. This thesis proposes that Italians in Europe changed their perceptions of Italian Americans in accordance with significant events such as World War II, and that two discursive themes emerged, portraying Italian Americans as both proud of their heritage and subject to assimilation. This thesis argues that such patterns in media representations shed light on the process of ethnogenesis that resulted in the emergence of an Italian American identity.

INDEX WORDS: Italian Americans, Italy, United States, Ethnicity, Ethnogenesis, Nationalism

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2022

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1 INTRODUCTION

I am very glad to be able to express my friendly feelings towards the American nation. Friendship with which Italy looks at millions of citizens, who from Alaska to Florida, from the Pacific to the Atlantic, live in the United States, is very deeply rooted in our hearts. This feeling, created by mutual interests, so contributed to preparation of an even brighter era in the lives of both nations. I greet, with wonderful energy, the American people, and I see and recognize among you the salt of your land as well as ours, my fellow citizens, who are working to make America great. I salute the great American people. I salute the Italians of America, who unite in a single love of two nations.¹

To the vast majority of twenty-first observers, this quote on the part of the Italian fascist dictator Benito Mussolini might come as a surprise. The first peculiarity was the fact that the message was delivered by way of a filmed video message, in which Mussolini spoke in the English language. And although the dictator's use of the foreign tongue was not perfect, an American observer of the time would have clearly been able to understand the content. The amicable message certainly dispels the notion that fascist Italy and the United States were enemies around the time of its production, in the year 1929. But for the purposes of the present work our attention is better directed at what the message tells us about the position of the Italians in the United States.

Mussolini's message perfectly encapsulates the unique situation of the Italian Americans of the early twentieth century. Most of the older generations would have been born in Italy in the late nineteenth century, having immigrated to the U.S. during the time of the great Italian exodus, beginning around the year 1880 and lasting into the third decade of the twentieth century. Some would have naturalized as American citizens by this point, though many would not yet have accomplished this, remaining Italian expatriates in the foreign land. But by the year

¹ British Movietone, "Mussolini Speaking – 1929," July 21, 2015, *YouTube* video, 1:33, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kAtAMs614Jk>.

1929 Italians who had crossed the Atlantic in previous decades were already fully in the process of raising the second generation of Italian Americans: born on American soil, but raised in ethnic enclaves in which Italian language and culture predominated, these children represented a culture between two worlds, in which the Old and New Worlds met. This was the Italian-American community that Mussolini had addressed in his video message, and these were the peoples who were said to “unite in a single love of two nations.”²

To the historian, or to any observer in fact interested in the history of Italian Americans, Mussolini’s words beg many questions. For instance, to what extent was it possible for Italian Americans to remain loyal to two separate nations? Was there a boundary at which point Italians ceased to be Italian and started to become American? And if not, how might this culture in between two worlds, this people of two nations, best be described? What differentiated the Italians in the U.S. from Italians in the homeland, and how did notions of such a distinction evolve over time? In order to begin to answer these questions, the present investigation will first outline the scope of the research problem and the relevant historiography, before moving on to a discussion of the sources, method, and theory of research. An outline of the work will then be presented before moving into the body of research itself.

² Ibid.

1.1 Statement of the Research Problem

During the final decades of the nineteenth century the world saw the commencement of one of the greatest migrations in human history. The newly unified nation-state of Italy witnessed the departure of millions of its own citizens as the more impoverished segments of the population sought opportunities overseas in countries such as the United States, Brazil, and Argentina. This mass migration would have a lasting impact not only on the countries of arrival, but also on the homeland itself. But the migration process was not originally viewed as a one-way street; in fact, the Italian government, aware of the utility of having far-reaching migrant colonies spread across the world to advance the interests of the home country, sought to use migration in pursuit of the creation of a global network of Italians, one that ultimately saw the return of many migrants despite long stays abroad.³

What then, was the fate of the millions who never returned? In what ways did the country of origin conceptualize its citizenry abroad, as well as their descendants? How might the century-long process of transformation from “Italian” to “Italian-American” best be described? These are the questions this research project seeks to illuminate, but in order to do so a more focused approach must be taken. Specifically, this project aims to consider the changing identity of Italians in the United States from the perspective of Italy itself.

This investigation into changing perceptions of the Italian American nation will be of relevance not only to those scholars of both modern Italy as well as Italian America who are seeking to incorporate transnational approaches into their research, but also to historians of diaspora who are interested in discovering more about the ways in which expatriate communities

³ For an introduction to Italian emigration from the late-nineteenth to early-twentieth century see Mark I. Choate, *Emigrant Nation: The Making of Italy Abroad* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 1-20.

are socially constructed and conceived in the national consciousness of the homeland. The changing nature of this process reveals the identity of migrant communities to be constantly in flux as varying degrees of integration, or the lack thereof, into the host society affect both the ways in which immigrants deal with their new socio-political environment as well as the way in which the community is conceptualized by the country of origin and its citizenry at home. The appeal of such an approach thus extends beyond the field of history and into the matrix of scholarly interdisciplinarity, beyond the walls of the university and into the chambers of political life, as it allows public policymakers and governmental representatives to gain insight into the best possible ways to take what has been learned from the research and work to apply potential solutions in the real world, solutions that will benefit countless expatriate communities across the globe in their respective challenges navigating an increasingly transnational world.

1.2 Historiography

This project seeks to build upon transnational approaches to Italian history pioneered by scholars such as Donna Gabaccia and Mark Choate. In her work *Italy's Many Diasporas*, Gabaccia points to the importance of transnational networks formed across the globe that connected people of Italian descent. Seeking to move beyond the constraining methodological framework centered on the nation-state, Gabaccia presents Italy as a “nation of emigrants” which produced diverse diasporas abroad, loosely connected to a sense of Italian nationhood due to the lack of a strong national identity during the early phases of mass migration. Ideological and class divisions also took root during these early phases of nationhood and mass migration, further diversifying the political makeup of Italian residents abroad. Nevertheless, despite the diversity of its many diasporas, in the context of nation-building at home, the political elite of

Italy recognized the potential of its expatriate citizens abroad and worked to foster a continuing sense of *italianità* (“italianness”) that would theoretically unite them all under the common national banner in favor of the interests of the homeland.⁴

Following a similarly transnational framework in *Emigrant Nation: The Making of Italy Abroad*, Mark Choate stresses a phenomenon he describes as “emigrant colonialism,” in reference to the Italian state’s active policies directed towards the mobilization of migrant colonies in supporting the metropole while abroad. In this context, backed up by state policy, “Italians became pioneers in establishing a ‘global nation,’ beyond imperial control and territorial jurisdiction, held together by ties of culture, communications, ethnicity, and nationality.”⁵ Choate’s work is more limited in scope, focused as it is on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Most importantly, he diverges from Gabaccia’s approach in the attention he pays to the role of the state in the context of the New Imperialism, stating, for example, that “to forge a ‘Greater Italy,’ the Liberal Italian state deliberately treated emigration and colonial expansion as one and the same.”⁶ Choate’s main contribution is therefore to stress the role of the Italian government in the processes of migration, and in this way he takes as his starting point the view of the homeland in relation to its expatriate nation abroad.

Both Gabaccia and Choate play an important role in opening up the conversation on Italian nationhood to encompass a transnational framework, but in order to better situate the historiography of this topic, that of transnational Italian identity, it is useful also to consider ideological frameworks within the Italian context, detailed most eloquently in the work of historians of modern Italy such as Emilio Gentile, Rosario Forlenza, and Bjørn Thomassen.

⁴ See introduction in Donna R. Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2000), 1-13.

⁵ Choate, *Emigrant Nation*, 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

Gentile, for instance, in his highly influential book *La Grande Italia: The Myth of the Nation in the Twentieth Century*, charts the rise and fall of the national mythos in the last century. Central to his narrative is the formulation of the concept of “multiple Italies,” which refers to the existence of varied ideological trends that have defined and divided the nation in competition with each other. These “multiple Italies” range from the Catholic to the liberal, and from the communist to the fascist.⁷ Rosario Forlenza and Bjørn Thomassen take this approach to another level in their book *Italian Modernities: Competing Narratives of Nationhood*. Stretching the notion of an ideologically divided country to encompass discourse on modernity, Forlenza and Thomassen provide further detail that sheds light on the complicated contestation of national identity that has plagued the Italian nation-state since its founding.⁸

Finally, regarding later Italian conceptions of the descendants of its expatriate nation abroad in the United States, it is useful to consider the contributions of Richard Alba, who in his work has spoken of the “twilight of ethnicity” for Italian Americans. This phenomenon refers to the consequences of a century-long process of integration into American society that has left many Italian Americans with a hyphenated identity that carries with it less practical vitality in the arena of daily life as the years go by and as the gap between immigrants and their youngest descendants widens. Though Alba’s work largely concerns the Italian American context in more recent decades, the theoretical framework of the “twilight of ethnicity” has important lessons for both sides of the Atlantic as the gradual loss of *italianità* in the U.S. was reflected in discourse in

⁷ For an introduction to Gentile’s “multiple Italies” framework see Preface to Emilio Gentile, *La Grande Italia: The Myth of the Nation in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Suzanne Dingee and Jennifer Pudney (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), vii-xii.

⁸ For an introduction to Forlenza and Thomassen’s notion of an Italy divided by competing political visions of modernity see Rosario Forlenza and Bjørn Thomassen, *Italian Modernities: Competing Narratives of Nationhood* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 2.

Italy, to such an extent that many people in Italy no longer considered people of Italian descent in America to be Italian at all.⁹

Combining the transnational framework of Italian identity, as expressed in the work of Gabaccia and Choate, with the theories of contested nationhood as presented by Gentile, Forlenza, and Thomassen, and the insight into the “twilight of ethnicity” as expressed by Richard Alba, this project will proceed towards an investigation of changing perceptions of the Italian expatriate nation in the U.S. with certain historiographical and theoretical considerations in mind. Engaging in a comprehensive analysis of the way in which the political elite in Italy conceived of the Italian community in the U.S. will benefit greatly from the context provided by Choate, and I will employ his analytical concepts of “emigrant colonialism” and Italy as an “emigrant nation” in my interpretation. Emphasis will be placed on the transnational dimension of national discourse and the intersection between changing state policy viewpoints and expatriate characterization. Likewise, I will utilize Gentile’s framework of “multiple Italies” as a way of understanding the role that ideological diversity has played in affecting the Italian elite’s changing perceptions of its citizens abroad, both in consideration of the ideological proclivities of those governing elites themselves as well as those of their governed expatriates. Finally, regarding conceptions of the Italian American nation from the second generation onward, I will consider Alba’s framework of the “twilight of ethnicity” and explore the way in which it sheds light on the continually changing conceptions of Italians in the U.S. on the part of those who remained in the homeland.

⁹ For an introduction to Alba’s concept of the “twilight of ethnicity” see Chapter 7, “Into the Twilight of Ethnicity” in Richard D. Alba, *Italian Americans: Into the Twilight of Ethnicity*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1985), 159-174.

1.3 Sources

The main primary source to be consulted in order to achieve an understanding of the ways in which the Italian nation conceptualized its citizens and their descendants abroad will be the nation's most influential newspaper, active from the year 1876, the *Corriere della Sera*. An analysis of multiple media sources would be too broad of a scope for the present project and so this widely read news source will be investigated in depth.

The *Corriere* started off as a modest newspaper but during the first two decades of the twentieth century, under the direction of editor Luigi Albertini, it became the premier news source of its time.¹⁰ Italian scholar Enrica Bricchetto in 2002 summed up the prestige of the *Corriere* under Albertini as follows: “Il ‘Corriere’ in questo momento può essere considerato un giornale di massa. Lo leggono tutti: i soldati, la gente comune, gli intellettuali e gli industriali, certamente consapevoli della parzialità della sua posizione, ma anche convinti che, comunque, costituisse se non l'unico, certo un buon osservatorio sulla realtà del paese” (The *Corriere* in this moment can be considered a mass newspaper. Everybody read it: soldiers, common people, intellectuals, industrialists, certainly aware of the partiality of its position, but also convinced that, in any case, it constituted if not the only, surely a good observatory on the reality of the country).¹¹

Bricchetto's quote eloquently communicates the idea that, although the editorial stance of the *Corriere* did not necessarily reflect public opinion, it certainly had the most influence and

¹⁰ For a brief history of the *Corriere della Sera* see Dino Messina, “La Storia Del Corriere: 140 Anni in Punta Di Penna,” *Corriere della Sera*, *Corriere della Sera*, accessed March 28, 2022, <https://archivio.corriere.it/Archivio/i-percorsi/i-140-anni-del-corriere-della-sera-032016.shtml>.

¹¹ Enrica Bricchetto, “Aldo Borelli e la Fascistizzazione del ‘Corriere della Sera’ (1929-1933)” [Aldo Borelli and the Fascistization of the *Corriere della Sera* (1929-1933)], *Studi Storici* [Historical studies] 43, no. 2 (2002): 547.

was relied upon by Italians across the political spectrum as a trustworthy source of information. For this main reason, that of the central importance of the newspaper to Italian social, political, and cultural life, this inquiry into the Italian conceptualization of its expat community abroad will best be served by a comprehensive analysis aimed at the printed source most likely to imprint upon individual Italians certain conceptions of their fellow citizens abroad. In this context the present investigation will build upon the work of Benedict Anderson, whose contributions in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* have informed this research as regards the way in which newspapers have played a role in shaping collective conceptions of identity and national consciousness.¹²

Added to the benefit of using the most influential media source of the time is the fact that the *Corriere* generally adopted a liberal, centrist editorial stance throughout its history, the exception being that of the fascist period, during which time the paper's point of view fell under the influence of Mussolini's regime.¹³ Thus, using the *Corriere* will allow for the opportunity to investigate changing perceptions of the Italian American expat community and its descendants through the lens of an incredibly influential newspaper whose course of development and political ideology has generally reflected that of the governing institutions of the time. The main shortcoming of this approach is that more obscure, less influential, and more ideologically polarized editorial standpoints will be neglected, but as long as the ideological orientation of the

¹² See Anderson's theory of print-capitalism in Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

¹³ Again, for a history of the *Corriere* and its changing editorial stance see Dino Messina, "La Storia Del Corriere: 140 Anni in Punta Di Penna," *Corriere della Sera*, *Corriere della Sera*, accessed March 28, 2022, <https://archivio.corriere.it/Archivio/i-percorsi/i-140-anni-del-corriere-della-sera-032016.shtml>.

newspaper is continually contextualized within the framework of Gentile's "multiple Italies" theory, errors in interpretation will be less likely to occur and affect the wider investigation.

1.4 Methodology and Structure of the Work

Regarding the methodology of this research project, it must first be restated that the aim of the research is to discover how the Italian media portrayal of the nation's expatriates and their descendants in the U.S. has changed over time, from the onset of mass migration around the 1890s to the end of World War II in 1945. In order to work towards this aim, we will take as the main source of investigation the Italian newspaper, the *Corriere della Sera*. The study will proceed towards an analysis of the *Corriere's* changing perceptions of the Italian immigrant nation abroad over the course of the aforementioned time period.

The body of the work is broken into three main parts. Chapter 1 focuses roughly on the period of mass migration, from 1890 to 1920. Chapter 2 considers the interwar period and the rise of fascist Italy, from the years 1920 to 1935. Finally, Chapter 3 takes a look at the period from the Italian invasion of Ethiopia to the end of the Second World War, from 1935 to 1945.

My analysis aims to encompass three main components: one, the ways in which the political establishment, as represented by the writers at the *Corriere*, conceptualized the status and identity of Italian expatriates who settled in the U.S., as well as their descendants; two, the way in which these notions changed over time; and three, what this process of change and these trends in identification can tell us within the wider context of Italian and Italian American history, as pertains to questions of empire, diaspora, and what many in Italy today would consider to be the transformation of a community from Italians to Americans. The scope of the research will necessarily stick mostly to the first two components of the investigation, leaving

the last for consideration in the conclusion. The research investigation is not meant to dive deeply into broader questions of migration, identity, and assimilation, but only seeks to analyze perceptions that scratch the surface of these phenomena insofar as they shed light on the formulation and evolution of Italian American identity in the United States. The focus will be on broad trends and the scope will be kept tight, focusing on news coverage from each period that reflects the dominant views at the time of the nation's overseas citizens and their descendants.

By considering the way in which representations of Italian Americans changed over time in the pages of the *Corriere della Sera*, we will be able to better understand the process by which Italians in the U.S. underwent a process of ethnogenesis that would see the emergence of a new, uniquely *American* variant of the wider Italian ethnic/national grouping. Taking the view of Italy and Italians themselves, we will see how the expatriate community evolved into an American ethnic group of Italian heritage in the minds of those who remained in the country of origin. My analysis of discourse in the pages of the *Corriere* reveals how key historical developments shaped the way Italians in the homeland viewed the emerging Italian American community. Two factors, namely assimilation and the ethnic group's continued pride in an Italian cultural heritage, came to characterize discussions of the Italian Americans and thus contributed to Italian perceptions of the community as both integral to the United States and deeply attached to their heritage. This investigation into Italian American ethnogenesis ultimately reveals the ever changing nature of identity, and the way in which chronological historical change affects social perceptions, thereby contributing to conceptual transformations of the ethnic and cultural identities of those who occupy the transnational space between imagined nations.

2 CHAPTER 1 – COLONIES: 1890-1920

2.1 Intro

By the opening decades of the twentieth century, the Italian state was finally making progress in its efforts toward state-building. Economic modernization had allowed many Italians to reach standards of living comparable to those in Western Europe, imperial conquests in the Mediterranean had brought Italy to the negotiating table of the Great Powers some years after the defeat at Adwa, and the cultural drive to “make Italians” out of the remnants of the divided, peninsular states of the nineteenth century seemed to be progressing. Such relative success in all corners of society would have been a pipe dream for nationalists of the past century longing even just for an independent nation-state. Things seemed to be looking up, and all this was taking place only 50 years after the unification of the Italian peninsula.¹⁴

At the same time, however, a darker reality brewed beneath the surface of economic and imperial progress. Lack of opportunities and overpopulation in portions of the Italian south had contributed to the onset of a period of mass migration. Millions of Italians, mostly from this impoverished south, would leave their homeland for countries such as Brazil, Argentina, and the United States.¹⁵ Many of these migrants did not have a strong national consciousness and an

¹⁴ For greater context on this positive interpretation of Italy fifty years after unification see the Prologue on “The Fatherland’s Jubilee” in Gentile, *La Grande Italia*, 3-15.

¹⁵ For detailed insight into the southern Italian exodus to the U.S. in particular see Part Three, “Emigration Fever,” in Jerre Mangione and Ben Morreale, *La Storia: Five Centuries of the Italian American Experience* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992), 65-125.

accompanying sense of allegiance to the Italian fatherland. Most continued to strongly identify with local identities, whether regional, municipal, or familial.¹⁶

From the perspective of the Italian political elite though, these migrants figured significantly in the national consciousness as a symbol of colonial expansion in the context of “greater Italy” spreading itself out to the world. Italy’s imperial conquests remained limited to the Mediterranean but many saw that a peaceful expansion could be achieved through migration elsewhere and subsequent development of ties between the metropole and expatriate outposts.¹⁷

It is within this imperialist context that the *Corriere della Sera*, under the direction of editor Luigi Albertini, became the dominant source of news of the time. The newspaper experienced steady growth under the leadership of its founder, Eugenio Torelli Viollier, from the year 1876, but by the second decade of the twentieth century the *Corriere* had expanded to become the most widely read news source of the time. Therefore, when looking at the *Corriere* in this first portion of the present investigation, dedicated to the period of mass migration from roughly 1890 to 1920, one must consider the newspaper in light of its steady, continuous expansion and ever-expanding influence within Italian society.¹⁸

This first chapter seeks to uncover trends in editorial discourse unfolding within the pages of the *Corriere* during this period of mass migration. The main question under consideration in this first chapter can be summed up as follows: how were Italians expatriates in America portrayed by the *Corriere* from the onset of mass migration to the United States up to

¹⁶ For greater discussion on the evolution of national consciousness among Italian immigrants see Stefano Luconi, "Becoming Italian in the US: Through the Lens of Life Narratives," *MELUS* 29, no. 3/4 (2004): 151-64.

¹⁷ See Choate’s concept of “emigrant colonialism” in Choate, *Emigrant Nation*, 2.

¹⁸ For influence of Albertini see opening pages of Enrica Bricchetto, “Aldo Borelli e la Fascistizzazione del ‘Corriere della Sera’ (1929-1933)” [Aldo Borelli and the Fascistization of the *Corriere della Sera* (1929-1933)], *Studi Storici* [Historical studies] 43, no. 2 (2002): 545-547.

roughly the end of World War I? This roughly thirty-year period is useful as well in the sense that the ending of the mass exodus from Italy to the U.S. due to the enactment of immigration quotas in the 1920s largely coincides with the rise of fascism and the institution of the Mussolinian dictatorship. The period from 1890 to 1920 is thus a relatively neatly-bound era ripe for investigation, allowing a view from the perspective of Italy of expatriate citizens from the early arrivals during the 1890s to the birth of the second generations towards the 1910s-1920s as integration into American society became more profound. My analysis of this period shows that Italians in the U.S. continued to be conceived as forming part of “greater Italy,” but also that signs had begun to show that a transformation on the part of the expatriate community was taking place.

2.2 Colonies, Conationals, and Emigrant Political Consciousness

The first concept one must grasp in order to begin to understand the way in which Italians conceptualized their fellow citizens abroad is that of the *colonie*, or colonies. Mark Choate’s insights in *Emigrant Nation* are helpful in shedding light upon this concept. As stated in the introduction, Italians engaged in what Choate has termed “emigrant colonialism,” a process by which “Italians became pioneers in establishing a ‘global nation,’ beyond imperial control and territorial jurisdiction, held together by ties of culture, communications, ethnicity, and nationality.” Choate makes a distinction between two colonial models in Italian history that the young nation-state could look back on for inspiration: the ancient Roman style of conquest and settlement based on force and coercion, or the medieval Italian maritime republican model based on free exchange and economic expansion. While most of the European empires of the time engaged the world according to the former approach, Italy, largely left out of the Scramble for

Africa, attempted to expand imperially through peaceful settlement in nations abroad. Whether expatriate Italians were establishing themselves in Africa, Europe, or America, and whether they were doing so peacefully or by force, they were taking part in the same process of “emigrant colonialism,” forming colonies that Italy sought to benefit from.¹⁹

During this period of mass migration the pages of the *Corriere della Sera* continually referred to their nation’s colonies abroad. Whether discussing “la colonia italiana di Nuova-York” (the Italian colony of New York) or “la colonia italiana di New-Orleans” (the Italian colony of New Orleans), the *Corriere* portrayed settlements of fellow Italian citizens abroad in similar terms.²⁰ In many cases the Italian settlements are referred to in the plural; for example, one short article on the work of the Dante Alighieri Society referred to a proposed action “nelle nostre numerose colonie d’America” (in our numerous colonies in America).²¹ This terminology of colonies, in reference to settlements of immigrants in countries abroad, was common to Italian political parlance of the time and is best understood according to Choate’s notion of “emigrant colonialism.” Going forward, one must understand the *Corriere*’s use of the phrase “colonia italiana,” or Italian colony, as being inseparably linked to the broader national push towards expansion and imperialism, whether through force or by consent.

A second point to consider is the way in which writers at the *Corriere* referred to fellow citizens abroad as “connazionali,” or conationals. This might appear at first glance to be of little significance; after all, the phase of mass migration had only just started, many if not most had expected to return to Italy anyway, and the full extent of settlement abroad had hardly begun to reveal itself. All of this would seem to indicate that it is of little importance to us that journalists

¹⁹ Choate, *Emigrant Nation*, 2, 7-8, 12-14.

²⁰ “Gli italiani a Nuova York,” *Corriere della Sera*, July 7, 1890; “Le Due Campane sui Fatti di New-Orleans,” *Corriere della Sera*, April 3, 1891.

²¹ “Società Dante Alighieri,” *Corriere della Sera*, January 20, 1898.

referred to Italians abroad as conationals. But in order to understand the emergence of the Italian Americans, and their perceived transformation from Italians to Italian Americans, or simply Americans, one must realize that from the start, these Italian colonies abroad were seen as literal extensions of the fatherland. The inhabitants of those colonies were Italian citizens, and their lives were conceptualized in the national consciousness as belonging to the mission of “greater Italy.” The *Corriere* referred endlessly to Italians in America as conationals, and this speaks to the way in which the Italian political and intellectual elite viewed its fellow citizenry abroad.

The terminology of colonies and conationals reflected the Italian elite’s view of citizens abroad as extensions of the fatherland but Italian emigrant political identities complicated the way in which the expatriate nation was conceived. Varying degrees of Italian national sentiment and political affiliations at home crossed over into the New World along with the immigrants who held them. Stefano Luconi points to fact that most Italian immigrants coming to the United States during the great migration did not have a strong attachment to an Italian national identity, relating more to local affiliations such as the province or the city.²² This phenomenon of *campanilismo*, referring to the fact that identities in many cases extended no further than the local *campanile*, or bell tower, has been well documented by both Italian and Italian American historians such as Luconi. But taking the perspective of Italy itself, and that of a national news source such as the *Corriere*, simplified representations of patriotic or rebellious Italians took precedence over nuanced understandings of emigrant political consciousness.

From the onset of the great exodus around the year 1890, one can find countless examples within the pages of the *Corriere della Sera* of patriotic sentiment expressed by Italian expatriates abroad. In a previously cited article on “Gli italiani a Nuova York” (The Italians in

²² Stefano Luconi, "Becoming Italian in the US: Through the Lens of Life Narratives," *MELUS* 29, no. 3/4 (2004): 151-64.

New York), the Italian consul general in the city referred to the local colony as “buona, patriottica” (good, patriotic).²³ A report on Italian emigration the following year even devoted a whole section to “L’Amore degli Emigrati Italiani pel Loro Paese” (The love of the Italian emigrants for their country). The article noted the following: “Vi è un fattore nell’emigrazione italiana che è più intenso ed importante forse che in qualunque emigrazione di altri paesi europei. Io alludo all’amore del proprio paese. L’irlandese ama l’Irlanda, l’inglese l’Inghilterra, il Tedesco la Germania; ma più intenso è l’amore dell’italiano per la sua Italia...” (There is a factor in the Italian emigration that is more intense and important maybe than in any other emigration of the other European countries. I allude to the love of their country. The Irish love Ireland, the English England, the German Germany; but more intense is the love of the Italian for his Italy).²⁴

In addition to these broad observations of Italian emigrant patriotic sentiment were several instances of literal flag waving, episodes revealing in themselves for the tensions that could arise between newly arrived immigrants proud of their homeland and the natives whom they encountered, usually less enthusiastic about such expressions. In September 1901, a short article appeared in the *Corriere* speculating that Monsignor Giovanni Battista Scalabrini would replace Monsignor Martinelli as the Holy See’s apostolic delegate to the United States. Scalabrini was known for his work in America and for his commitment to helping Italian emigrants in the U.S. In discussing one of Scalabrini’s trips to New York, the *Corriere* mentioned that the Italians were very happy to see the Italian flag waving from the balcony of a church where he was staying. The Irish clergy, referred to as fanatical and ignorant, were not pleased with what the *Corriere* called “questo schietto tributo di patriottica lealtà” (this blunt

²³ “Gli italiani a Nuova York,” *Corriere della Sera*, July 7, 1890.

²⁴ “Notizie sull’emigrazione degli italiani agli Stati Uniti,” *Corriere della Sera*, April 9, 1891.

tribute of patriotic loyalty), but in any case the Italian colony appreciated Scalabrini and the symbolism of the flag.²⁵

Another case of controversial flag waving was described in the *Corriere* a few years later. Quoting from a story in *Il Progresso Italo-Americano*, an Italian language newspaper based in New York, the *Corriere* informed its readers of an incident in which Italian workers in Pennsylvania raised an Italian flag “con nessuna intenzione però di voler offendere la terra che ci ospita, e la sua bandiera” (with no intention however to offend the land that hosted them, and its flag). Some local American farmers did not appreciate the gesture though and ordered the Italians to either lower the flag or fly it below the American one. The police were called and eventually forced the Italians to take the flag down, but “mentre i tre colori venivano tolti, essi li salutarono a più riprese entusiasticamente” (as the three colors were taken down, those there enthusiastically saluted it many times).²⁶

These episodes are enlightening in and of themselves, but taking the perspective of Italy, its political elite, and the media they produced for national consumption, it should be said that highlighting examples of patriotic sentiment on the part of expatriate Italians served a valuable purpose within the context of the continual process of nation building. The Italian historian Emilio Gentile in his work *La Grande Italia: The Myth of the Nation in the Twentieth Century* in fact points to the existence of “multiple Italies,” of which the liberal interpretation formed only a part. This liberal, monarchic perspective had as its representatives the House of Savoy and the King of Italy, and the national press, the *Corriere* included, acted in accordance with the vision of liberal Italy as laid out by the governing elites. This was an idealized Italy in which all were

²⁵ “Monsignor Scalabrini succederebbe a Martinelli,” *Corriere della Sera*, September 11, 1901.

²⁶ “Vicende d’una bandiera italiana negli Stati Uniti d’America,” *Corriere della Sera*, October 24, 1903.

united behind the heroes of the Risorgimento and their heirs who had carried the torch forward and inspired in Italians a collective sense of duty to the fatherland.²⁷

What this liberal interpretation of Italian history left unacknowledged was the existence of alternative, competing political ideologies, at least until certain events transpired in which the radical rebellions against the status quo could not be ignored. Those who diverged from the official liberal narrative of the nation ranged from leftist socialists advocating for the proletariat, to republicans opposed to the monarchy, to Catholics still told by their Pope to withdraw from the political life of an illegitimate, occupying state.²⁸ In addition to the ideologues were also the rural southerners, many disillusioned with the state that ignored or even oppressed them, who flocked to the shores of America at the same time as “progress” was celebrated by the northern liberal elite.²⁹ The editors at the *Corriere della Sera* could for the most part ignore these groups who deviated from the liberal status quo, but a tragic assassination in the year 1900 finally forced the liberal elite to come to terms with a particular growing threat: anarchy.

On July 29, 1900, the King of Italy, Umberto I, was assassinated by an Italian American anarchist named Gaetano Bresci.³⁰ In its endless coverage of the assassination, the *Corriere della Sera* continued to point to Bresci’s American connection and to the existence of an Italian American anarchist community and its possible role in the plot. Two days after the assassination, the *Corriere* printed a response from the American embassy that stated “I periodici vengono pubblicati liberamente da gruppi di anarchici di ogni nazione, in gran parte italiani”

²⁷ Gentile, *La Grande Italia*, 51-53.

²⁸ For more on those ideologically opposed to the official liberal narrative see the section titled “The Lie about the Nation” in Gentile, *La Grande Italia*, 55-58.

²⁹ For more on the case of the southern Italian peasantry see Chapter 6, “To Leave or Not to Leave” in Mangione and Morreale, *La Storia*, 67-85.

³⁰ Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy Since 1796* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), 349.

(The periodicals are published freely by groups of anarchists from every nation, many of them Italians) and that Bresci must have been a leader among them.³¹ The *Corriere* didn't stop at Bresci however and days later cast its eye upon the prominent anarchist Enrico Malatesta, who had also been active among circles in New York and North America. In the same article, the writer brought the conversation back to the topic of Bresci who had been known in other countries as a dangerous anarchist but remained completely unknown in Italy. The article concluded with an expression of regret that Italy strangely did not have a political police force abroad to monitor such people. The dialogue thus came around to focus on the larger issue, that of international anarchists and what Italy could do to be proactive in suppressing future plots.³²

Writers at the *Corriere* made sure to point out that the anarchist element was a minor contingent within the Italian colonies in the United States. For example, also in the August 2 edition of the *Corriere della Sera*, it was said that “Sulle prime gli anarchici italiani... manifestavano l'aperta approvazione del misfatto del Bresci; ma incontrarono poi tanta indigazione che se ne spaventarono, ed ora e' impossibile farli parlare” (At first, the Italian anarchists manifested their open approval of Bresci's crime; but they encountered then much indignation that they were scared, and now it is impossible to make them talk).³³ This quote spoke to the fact that, while there might have been a moderate degree of sympathy in Italian American circles for certain socialist and anarchist ideals, those who approved of violence and terrorism in pursuit of such aims were themselves marginal to the social and political life of the community. This was further confirmed in a future article in the *Corriere* from August 25, 1900 that is worth quoting at length on the subject of Italians in America commemorating the

³¹ “Gli anarchici italiani in America,” *Corriere della Sera*, July 30, 1900.

³² “L'anarchico Malatesta e l'organizzazione degli anarchici a New York,” *Corriere della Sera*, August 2, 1900.

³³ “Altre notizie sul complotto di Patterson,” *Corriere della Sera*, August 2, 1900.

assassinated King Umberto: “I giornali italiani d’America ci giungono con la relazione di innumerevoli commemorazioni e funzioni funebri celebratesi cola in ogni più piccolo centro d’italiani. Una manifestazione più ampia di cordoglio non sarebbe facile immaginarla. Anche a Paterson la colonia italiana ripete le sue manifestazioni di lutto” (The Italian newspapers of America reach us with the report of innumerable commemorations and funerary functions celebrated in every small center of Italians. A larger manifestation of condolences wouldn’t be easy to imagine. Also in Paterson the Italian colony repeats its manifestations of mourning).³⁴ If even the Italians of Paterson, the supposed center of Italian anarchist activity in the U.S.,³⁵ mourned the loss of the king, then certainly the *Corriere* was hoping to get the point across that the anarchists were outcasts to be shunned by the unified nation.

One final point on the Italian-American anarchist connection has to do with the transnational nature of such networks, particularly in light of the assassination of the two world leaders at opposite ends of the international relationship. As early as August 18, 1900 there was talk in the pages of the *Corriere* of a plot to assassinate the U.S. President William McKinley. News from London reported that two Italian anarchists had been arrested in New York and had sought to kill the U.S. President during this time of worry in the aftermath of the assassination of King Umberto.³⁶ In the end it was not an Italian who took the life of President McKinley, but the writers at the *Corriere* communicated the notion of shared pain between the two affected nations: “perchè nell’animo nostro l’immagine della distrutta persona di MacKinley non può dissociarsi dal cocente ricordo della uguale sventura, che colpì l’Italia nell’infausto anno passato;

³⁴ “Per la memoria di Re Umberto,” *Corriere della Sera*, August 25, 1900.

³⁵ For an introduction to anarchist activity in Paterson see Mangione and Morreale, *La Storia*, 294.

³⁶ “Da Londra: Arresto di anarchici italiani designate ad uccidere MacKinley,” *Corriere della Sera*, August 18, 1900.

e nel lutto degli Stati Uniti d'America risentiamo il nostro lutto. Non c'è Stato che non debba essere inquieto, ma l'Italia ha anche maggiori motivi d'inquietudine" (because in our soul the image of MacKinley's destroyed person cannot be dissociated from the burning memory of the same misfortune that struck Italy in the inauspicious last year; and in the mourning of the United States of America we feel again our own mourning. There isn't a state that shouldn't be uneasy, but Italy has even greater reasons for concern). In the same article it was mentioned that "la colonia italiana partecipò sinceramente alla sventura del paese ospitale" (The Italian colony sincerely participated in the misfortune of the host country), staying up until late in the night in an "ansiosissima" (very anxious) state. It is within this transnational, shared sense of mourning in the context of the international threat arising from anarchist networking that one can begin to understand a people who, a year after having mourned the death of their king, now mourned the death of the President of the country they would eventually call home.³⁷

After looking at Italian American colonies, conationals, and emigrant political consciousness from the perspective of the *Corriere della Sera* during the early stages of the great migration, a picture begins to emerge of the expatriate community that is based in the reality of migrant life to a certain extent, but which in fact tells us more about the efforts of the Italian liberal political elite and its priorities. The Italians in America at this time were viewed as patriotic expatriates dedicated to the homeland and while the newspaper admitted that a few bad apples existed, these were the outcasts that all would have done well to denounce. The emigrant community was thus portrayed according to the liberal vision of the Italian political elite and counter narratives were brushed under the rug as much as possible.

³⁷ "La morte di MacKinley president della Repubblica degli Stati Uniti," *Corriere della Sera*, September 15, 1901.

2.3 Hate, Inferiority, and the Paternalistic Patria

From the onset of mass migration to the United States, one issue the *Corriere* continually dealt with was the poor treatment of Italians abroad. One of the first major incidents of ethnic violence perpetrated in the U.S. against Italian citizens took place on March 14, 1891 in New Orleans. The city had seen the growth of a largely Sicilian immigrant community in preceding years and with this growth naturally came more sinister elements, referred to by many using such names as “Mafia.” The community of Sicilians was perceived to harbor such criminal elements and tensions within the city came to a turning point when some in the Sicilian community were accused of murdering the local police chief. After the acquittal of the accused due to a lack of evidence, a mob stormed the jail where some were being kept and killed 11 Italian Americans in what would become known as one of the largest mass lynchings in U.S. history.³⁸

The day after the incident, a brief report of the mass lynching appeared in the *Corriere*, but full impact of the events would only be felt in the coming months. The next day, on March 16, the lynchings made the front page of the *Corriere*. After a brief synopsis of the events leading up to the lynching, the article stated that “in ogni modo il Governo italiano farà certamente sentire a Washington la sua voce contro questa nuova suprema violazione di tutte le garanzie che la civiltà accorda e che della civiltà costituiscono l’essenza (in every way the Italian government will certainly make its voice heard to Washington against this new supreme violation of all the guarantees that civilization accords and which constitute the essence of civilization).³⁹ This moderate tone though would sharpen as the weeks went by as the American

³⁸ The New Orleans lynchings are the subject of countless academic works but for a detailed and concise narration of events see Chapter 13, “New Orleans – Wops, Crime, and Lynchings” in Mangione and Morreale, *La Storia*, 200-213.

³⁹ “Undici prigionieri italiani assassinati a New Orleans,” *Corriere della Sera*, March 16, 1891.

failure to take action to bring the perpetrators to justice forced the Italian government and national media to harshen their rhetoric. One example of this is found in the April 21 edition of the *Corriere* in which the article stated the following: “non sarebbe quindi male che una corazzata italiana fosse mandata alla foce del Mississippi per proteggere, in caso di bisogno, i nostri connazionali” (it therefore wouldn’t be bad for an Italian battleship to be sent to the mouth of the Mississippi to protect, in case of need, our conationals).⁴⁰

Behind this kind of bluster was a genuine desire on the part of the Italian media elite to communicate the need for better ways of protecting their citizens abroad. After another high-profile lynching of Italians in Louisiana five years later, this time in Hahnville,⁴¹ the writers at the *Corriere* expressed frustration with the American judicial system that seemed to abandon any pretense to upholding law and order. One section in particular is worth quoting at length:

Noi abbiamo più volte deplorato e ammesso che una parte dei nostri emigranti sono la feccia dei bassi fondi, gli avanzi della mafia e della camorra, senza istruzione, senza educazione, facili a maneggiare il maledetto coltello. Quando vediamo però la popolazione di un paese che si vanta di trovarsi alla testa della civiltà, sostituirsi alla legge e senza processo far giustizia sommaria di qualche disgraziato che inerme e carcerato aspetta il suo giudizio, in verità c’è da domandarsi chi sono i meno civili, se noi coi nostri analfabeti operai accoltellatori o la folla dei delinquenti che li massacra.

We have repeatedly deplored and admitted that a part of our emigrants are the scum of low worth, the remains of the mafia and of the camorra, without education, without manners, easily knowing how to handle the bloody knife. When we see however the population of a country that boasts of being at the head of civilization, replace the law and without trial make summary justice of some unfortunate man who, helpless and imprisoned, awaits his judgment, in truth one must ask who are the least civilized, we with our illiterate, stabbing workers, or the crowd of delinquents that massacres them.⁴²

⁴⁰ “Ravvivamento della vertenza italo-americana,” *Corriere della Sera*, April 21, 1891.

⁴¹ Mangione and Morreale, *La Storia*, 212.

⁴² “Tre italiani linciati dalla folla nell’America del nord,” *Corriere della Sera*, August 11, 1896.

Here, the writers admitted that there were some criminal elements among Italian migrants, but stated that this did not excuse the lawlessness of a country that permitted equally criminal elements to punish through a form of mob justice.

Just a few weeks later, an article on the same lynching appeared in the pages of the *Corriere* that noted these occasional acts of violence did seem to be a regional phenomenon. The *Corriere* quoted heavily from an article in the Italian American newspaper *Il Progresso Italo-Americano*, contextualizing the lynching of Italians by saying that the perpetrators for such actions do not target just Italian immigrants, but also fellow American citizens, mostly African Americans. The article alluded to the locals' refusal to work with federal authorities in identifying those responsible for the crimes, and referred "allo spirito di suprema intolleranza e agli scatti di irreparabile violenza, che sono caratteristica della gente del Sud – così diversa da quella del Nord e dell'Est" (to the spirit of supreme intolerance and to the spurts of irreparable violence, that are characteristic of the people of the South – so different from those of the North and East). The article continued: "Il fatto che i linciaggi degli italiani – come quelli degli altri di diversi nazionalità – avvennero o avvengono solo nel Sud e nel Far West è prova che si tratta d'una 'barbarie' tutta locale" (The fact that the lynchings of the Italians – as those of the others of different nationalities – happened or do happen only in the South and in the Far West is proof that it is a completely local barbarism). To their Italian audience, the *Corriere's* publication of these statements from an Italian American newspaper communicated the notion that Italians were more at risk in certain parts of the country, and from certain types of people.⁴³

But while the situation the situation of Italians in the southern United States, particularly in Louisiana and Mississippi, was one characterized by a more violent form of hostility, the

⁴³ "Un giudizio americano sugli ultimi linciaggi," *Corriere della Sera*, August 30, 1896.

pages of the *Corriere* were filled throughout the years of observations of the discrimination Italians suffered all over the country. One article titled “L’emigrazione italiana negli Stati Uniti” (The Italian emigration to the United States), which appeared just one day after the Hahnville lynching, was very revealing as to common perceptions of Italians held by Americans abroad. The article quoted from remarks made by Giuseppe Giacosa at a conference on Italian emigration to the U.S. held 3 years prior in the Italian city of Biella:

Nell’estimazione del popolo americano... la nostra emigrazione tiene il terz’ultimo posto, perchè dopo gl’italiani non vi sono che i cinesi e i negri. E la ragione di questo disprezzo si spiega col fatto che gl’italiani vivono laggiù sordidamente, compiendo atti inauditi di avarizia, rinunciando, non dico ai comodi, ma alle prime necessità della vita, sparagnando, sparagnando sempre.

In the estimation of the American people... our emigration takes the third to last place, because after the Italians there are only the Chinese and the blacks. And the reason for this contempt is explained with the fact that the Italians live there sordidly, carrying out unheard of acts of avarice, renouncing, I do not say comforts, but the first necessities of life, saving, always saving.⁴⁴

Giacosa explained that the Italians lived this way in order to send the majority of money earned back to family in Italy, but appearances still mattered, and to him, “è per questo che gli Americani considerano la maggior parte degli italiani come uomini appartenenti ad una razza degenerata od inferiore” (it is for this that the Americans consider the major part of Italians to be men belonging to a degenerate or inferior race). The *Corriere* usually made sure to stress the poverty and good nature of its fellow citizens abroad, but it also clearly demonstrated to readers that perceptions of emigrant Italians abroad, at least in the U.S., were many times negative.⁴⁵

At a more basic level, the poor perception of the Italians in the U.S. among Americans was explained also simply in terms of cultural difference and incompatibility. On September 8, 1896, an article titled “Gl’Italiani all’estero” (The Italians abroad) appeared on the front page of

⁴⁴ “L’emigrazione italiana negli Stati Uniti,” *Corriere della Sera*, August 12, 1896.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

the *Corriere*. After introducing the topic of Italians abroad, the article moved on to discuss reasons why Italian emigrants were seen as inferior to other groups. One reason had to do with language: Not only were much higher proportions of Italian immigrants illiterate in comparison to other emigrant groups such as those coming from Great Britain, Germany, and Austria-Hungary, but because the two most widely spoken languages in the U.S. at the time were English and German, these other groups had an advantage over the Italians.⁴⁶

These factors that favored other European ethnic groups, among others such as “affinità di razza” (affinity of race) and the benefit of large numbers of resident compatriots, allowed such migrant groups a smoother process towards full integration as compared to the Italians: “Gli emigranti di queste nazioni lottano da pari a pari cogli americani nativi, sul mercato del lavoro. Possono mescolarsi immediatamente alla grande massa, e subito partecipare alla vita comune, a condizioni eguali” (The emigrants of these nations contend as equals with the native Americans, in the job market. They can mix immediately with the large mass, and at once participate in common life, on equal terms). The situation of the Italians was very different: “Di razza assolutamente diversa, diversi di lingua, di religione, di tendenze, riesce loro, per ciò solo, già difficile il penetrare nella corrente vivida della vita americana” (Of absolutely different race, with differences of language, of religion, of tendencies, it is already difficult, for this alone, to penetrate the vivid current of American life). Though with hindsight one can see that such racialized barriers to integration were not ultimately insurmountable, in the early stages of mass

⁴⁶ For more information on Italian literacy rates during this period of mass migration see section 2.5, “Education and Literacy” in Martin Clark, *Modern Italy, 1871 to the Present*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 42-49; “Gl’Italiani all’estero,” *Corriere della Sera*, September 8, 1896.

migration such differences affected the way Italians were viewed by others, and the ways in which they, at home and abroad, conceived of themselves in an increasingly transient world.⁴⁷

It is within this context of hate, discrimination, and outsiders' perceptions of Italian inferiority and difference that the *Corriere* made innumerable appeals for greater protection of migrants abroad. After yet another incident in Louisiana, this time in Tallulah, of a lynching of Sicilians,⁴⁸ in what the *Corriere* now referred to as an American custom, the writers discussed the need for the Italian government to react appropriately; the task was not to respond too strongly so as to put other Italians in the U.S. at risk, but also not too lightly so as to signal that further acts of violence would be tolerated. The article concluded: "Ma soprattutto... importa che non si dica che l'Italia è una nazione che non sa proteggere le sue colonie, e alla quale tutti possono recar offesa impunemente" (But above all... it matters that it is not said that Italy is a nation that doesn't know how to protect its colonies, and to which all can cause offense with impunity). Such reports of violence against Italians in the U.S. appeared relatively frequently in the pages of the *Corriere* and the lack of accountability on the part of those responsible surely contributed to the widespread perception among citizens back home that the Italian government was incapable of protecting its citizens abroad.⁴⁹

It was an unfortunate fact, however, that in many cases the emigrants needed just as much protection from the more predatory elements of fellow Italians.⁵⁰ The Italian journalist Ugo Ojetto, writing for the *Corriere* on November 8, 1899 gave readers of the newspaper greater context on the exploitation of Italian migrants to the U.S. The front-page article, appropriately

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ See Mangione and Morreale, *La Storia*, 212.

⁴⁹ "Il linciaggio di Tallulah," *Corriere della Sera*, July 29, 1899.

⁵⁰ For a brief introduction to exploitation of Italian migrants by the more established segments of Italian American society see Mangione and Morreale, *La Storia*, 140-142.

titled “I ladri degli emigrati italiani a New York” (The thieves of the emigrant Italians in New York), began by telling of three Italian bankers in New York who had fled with other people’s money. Ojetti noted that they were simply part of a system of abusive bankers who took advantage of ordinary Italian migrant workers, many times illiterate both in terms of their native language and that of the host country, as they attempted to navigate American society and send their hard-earned money back home to family in Italy. These bankers engaged in dishonest practices, robbing the ignorant workers of much of their earnings. Describing the “ghetto italiano” of New York as “un’isola di torpore e di paura e di miseria” (an island of torpor, fear, and misery), Ojetti identified several causes that resulted in abuse, but he stressed above all the ignorance of the language and the lack of local social and professional organizations. In this context, “Il sedicente banchiere, il padrone dalla parola pronta, l’agente sagace a promettere e a non mantenere appare a costoro come un salvatore, fatalmente” (the self-styled banker, the master of the ready word, the shrewd agent to promise but not to keep appears to them as a savior, fatally).⁵¹

One month later, an article on the same subject, titled “La protezione dei nostri emigrati nel Nord America” (The protection of our emigrants in North America), outlined some of the steps necessary to fixing this issue surrounding abusive bankers. The article discussed the future role of the Banco di Napoli in acting as an official institution dedicated to the handling of emigrant remittances sent back to Italy.⁵² Towards the end of the article there was a list of Italian bankers who had fled New York, along with the amount of cash they had gotten away with, and the writer lamented the way in which such criminals caused those in the Italian

⁵¹ “I ladri degli emigrati italiani a New York,” *Corriere della Sera*, November 8, 1899.

⁵² For a detailed yet concise introduction to emigrant remittances and the protective role of the Banco di Napoli see section titled “Remittances in the Italian Economy” in Choate, *Emigrant Nation*, 76-81.

community to lose faith in their fellow countrymen, sometimes even preferring to use local American banks.⁵³

The new role taken on by the Banco di Napoli, aimed as it was at protecting emigrant remittances, would be a step in the right direction but later the following year another article in the *Corriere* spoke of continuing problems in this regard. The article once again expressed the need to protect Italian emigrants and their savings from predatory elements, but focused this time on a different dimension of the issue. The article spoke of the way in which Italians were only tolerated by the Americans, seen as temporary residents who came simply to make money to send back home; spending little in the U.S., they were seen to contribute little to the host country and much to Italy.⁵⁴

The writer of the article disagreed with this assessment, noting that the Italians were very useful to the Americans, contributing plenty through their work but receiving relatively little in return through their earnings. But important to note are the potential steps outlined afterwards that could have been taken to facilitate an improvement in circumstances for the Italians in the U.S. The following excerpt is worth quoting at length:

Còmposito degli Italiani verso gli emigranti... è quello di insegnare loro a foggare la loro condotta così che i contatti continui e forzati ch'essi hanno coll'elemento americano rescano più facili, più armonici e gli attriti ed i contrasti meno stridenti. I Comitati debbono insinuare loro il sentimento della necessità di imparare la lingua del paese, di mescolarsi agli abitanti di quello per imparare e conoscerne il temperamento, gli usi, i giudizî e i pregiudizî. Una migliore percezione delle condizioni politiche del paese in cui vivono, gioverà agli emigrati, impedendo ad essi errori ed anche colpe politiche, di cui essi oggi, pur commettendole, sono incoscienti... soltanto dopo un lungo lavoro di redenzione in ogni senso, intellettuale e spirituale, l'emigrazione italiana cesserà di essere l'ultima, e la meno considerata fra quelle degli Stati civili.

The task of the Italians towards the emigrants... is to teach them to shape their conduct so that the continuous and forced contacts that they have with the American element are

⁵³ “La protezione dei nostri emigrati nel Nord America,” *Corriere della Sera*, December 4, 1899.

⁵⁴ “Bisogna redimere gli emigranti,” *Corriere della Sera*, June 22, 1900.

made easier, more harmonious and the frictions and contrasts less strident. The Committees must instill in them the sentiment of the necessity to learn the language of the country, to mix with the inhabitants of that country to learn and understand its temperament, customs, opinions and prejudices. A better perception of the political conditions of the country in which they live, will benefit the emigrants, preventing them from errors and even political faults, of which today, even if committing them, they are unconscious ... only after a long work of redemption in every sense, intellectual and spiritual, will the Italian emigration cease to be the last, and the least considered among those of the civilized states.⁵⁵

This quote speaks to the way in which during this early period of mass migration to the United States, issues of abuse affecting Italians abroad could in fact be solved by an approach grounded in a form of protection by the Italian state, but that was aimed ultimately at a model of assimilation that would allow the immigrants themselves to navigate the host society in a safe and secure manner. In this sense the strategy of protecting the expatriate citizenry indirectly formed the philosophical basis of the Italian community's eventual assimilation into American society, which would in later years lead to the loss of their *italianità*. At the time, however, the mass of Italians in the U.S. was far from such a state of integration and such protective initiatives aimed at the community's greater incorporation into American society clearly had the potential to assist in the process. Various paternalistic measures would be adopted by the Italian state to protect its emigrants but the continuing theme of abuse in news coverage was in itself indicative of the need for greater action. In sum, by reading of the challenges Italian emigrants faced in the U.S., and of potential ideas about resolving such issues, Italians in the homeland were conditioned by discourse to think of their expatriate citizenry in a paternalistic fashion, and in bits and pieces they could find evidence that perhaps foreshadowed the assimilation to come.⁵⁶

This section has focused on discrimination, violence, negative perceptions of Italians, the complex social dynamics at play surrounding abusive elements among Italian emigrants and the

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

desire of the Italian government to protect its citizens abroad. What emerges in the pages of the *Corriere della Sera* is a portrait of a marginalized expatriate community of Italians in the U.S. oppressed not only by some Americans but by criminal Italians as well, and an Italian state struggling to deal with the causes and effects arising from the growth of its North American colonies. The result is a complicated web of social dynamics at play, and the clash of uniquely Italian phenomena with the peculiarities of the American context would go on to shape the Italian American experience for generations to come. It is in this sense that the expatriate community abroad began to take on a life of its own, particularly in the consciousness of those Italians back home that they left behind.

2.4 Transnational Italians Between Two Worlds: Success, Crime, Labor, War

Italian emigration had originally been perceived as a temporary phenomenon, primarily as a “safety valve” for the southern Italian masses whose increasing numbers on limited land necessitated the departure of a large portion of citizens.⁵⁷ But a few decades into the onset of mass migration, around the turn of the twentieth century, Italians and their political leaders began to see signs that the expat nation was developing stronger ties to the adoptive country than many had anticipated. News from across the Atlantic reached Italian shores with a slight delay, but even as early as December 1901 an Italian citizen reading the *Corriere della Sera* could find within its pages various articles describing young Italian Americans being taught by elders to love “la nuova patria americana” (the new American fatherland).⁵⁸ An immigrant being taught to appreciate an adoptive country and the opportunities it offered might not seem noteworthy, but

⁵⁷ Clark, *Modern Italy*, 198-200.

⁵⁸ “Ciò che narra mons. Scalabrini del suo recente viaggio agli Stati Uniti,” *Corriere della Sera*, December 2, 1901.

here one must consider the significance of the word “patria” (fatherland). During these early stages of mass migration most ordinary Italians would have considered Italian emigrants abroad as fellow citizens of a single, common Italian “patria,” but to read of such migrants learning to identify with a new fatherland would have signaled at least the beginning of a transformation.

Certainly, despite discrimination and even some occasional bouts of violence directed towards them, there was reason for Italians in the United States to feel increasingly comfortable in the country of arrival, and news coverage in the *Corriere* brought stories of emigrant success to the households of Italians back home. One article in July 1902 spoke of formerly impoverished farmers from the Italian south finding work all across the United States, earning decent wages, saving for the future, and growing in numbers throughout the country. The article stated that for many, “la permanenza si fa sempre più lunga, fino a mutarsi in agiata e quindi lieta dimora” (the stay always becomes longer, until it mutates into a comfortable and therefore happy residence).⁵⁹ Another article published a couple of years later in May 1904 described the evolution of the Italian community in New York: “Nella colonia italiana, che un tempo era composta solo di braccianti, sono oggi degnamente rappresentate tutte le arti e le professioni” (In the Italian colony, which was once composed only of laborers, today all the arts and professions are worthily represented).⁶⁰ It was this gradual expansion of the Italians in America from day labor to more lucrative professions that signaled to those back home that opportunities were available in America. Such stories of success told in news stories such as these and in personal anecdotes from friends and relatives had a huge impact on those in Italy, and in this way, contributed to the perpetuation of the seemingly never-ending cycle of migration.⁶¹

⁵⁹ “Da Napoli a New York: L’emigrazione,” *Corriere della Sera*, July 22, 1902.

⁶⁰ “Lettere dall’America del Nord,” *Corriere della Sera*, May 5, 1904.

⁶¹ Clark, *Modern Italy*, 199.

Italians in the United States still remained in a kind of in-between situation, and rates of return migration made sure the Atlantic exchange did not proceed in only one direction.⁶² But strong social forces exerted upon ordinary migrants led many to choose to stay in the new country for good. The Italian socialist Enrico Ferri, quoted in a *Corriere* article from 1910, hinted at some of these forces that pushed Italians not only to find work in America, but to stay once there. Speaking about the disparities in success between Italians in the U.S. and those in the homeland, Ferri was quoted as saying that in America, “non solo i settentrionali, ma anche i meridionali, che qui giacciono nella miseria, far miracoli di energia e di iniziative sulla strada del progresso e della civiltà” (not only the north Italians, but also the southerners, who here [in Italy] lie in misery, work miracles of energy and of initiative on the road of progress and civilization). Ferri attributed the difference in results between American and Italian contexts to the better working conditions and pay in the U.S. and he placed blame on the ineffective administration of Italian Prime Minister Giovanni Giolitti, but underneath the surface of this politically partisan attack was the reality of truth which was that more opportunities for upward mobility existed in the United States than in the Kingdom of Italy.⁶³

So it was not only their success in America that led so many Italian immigrants to remain in the United States, but also the fact that the new heights of prosperity in the new land were in many cases staggering in comparison to the fate of those who remained in Italy, particularly the impoverished south. For this reason there were several mentions in the pages of the *Corriere* of those who refused to return. In a *Corriere* article on emigration statistics from 1903, the author noted that rates of return for one of the poorest regions in the country, Basilicata, were nearly

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ “Un altro discorso politico di Enrico Ferri per l’avvento dei socialisti al potere,” *Corriere della Sera*, January 1, 1910.

zero; it was said that “da questa terra sconsolata si emigra senza speranza di ritorno!” (from this dejected land one emigrates without the hope of return!).⁶⁴ The impoverished region of Basilicata may be an extreme example, but conditions in the southern portion of the Italian peninsula were so bad that people from the mountains of Abruzzo to the hills of Sicily would follow suit in even higher numbers.⁶⁵

More permanent stays in the United States led in the long run to the consolidation of an Italian-American identity within the adoptive country. A necessary precondition of such a process however was the beginning of a reconceptualization of the Italian community in the U.S. as forming an actual part of the American national experiment. Signs of progress in this regard gradually appeared throughout the pages of the *Corriere*, and would only increase in frequency as the years went on. For example, if an Italian had read the *Corriere della Sera* on February 5, 1910, he or she would have discovered that the former vice president of the United States himself, Charles Fairbanks, was quoted as remarking that, “per la maggior parte gli emigranti italiani... divengono buoni figli adottivi degli Stati Uniti” (for the most part the Italian emigrants... become good adopted children of the United States).⁶⁶

The transition of Italian emigrants and their descendents towards becoming “good adopted children” of the U.S. did tend to result in a decoupling of the relationship with the Italian fatherland. A *Corriere* article also from the year 1910 even mentioned that “la maggior parte della seconda generazione degli italiani residenti in America finisce per dimenticare più o meno

⁶⁴ “Le correnti dell’emigrazione italiana,” *Corriere della Sera*, July 13, 1903.

⁶⁵ For detailed statistics on transatlantic Italian emigration and return migration, including a breakdown of emigration rates by Italian region, see “Appendix: Maps and Figures” in Choate, *Emigrant Nation*, 235-241, as well as tables 6.3, 6.5-6.7, and 7.1 in William J. Connell and Stanislao G. Pugliese, eds., *The Routledge History of Italian Americans* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), 123-124, 128, 133.

⁶⁶ “Le condizioni economiche degli Stati Uniti esposte dall’ex-vicepresidente Fairbanks,” *Corriere della Sera*, February 5, 1910.

la madre patria” (the major part of the second generation of the Italians resident in America ends up forgetting more or less the mother country).⁶⁷

In spite of this apparent loss, the expatriate nation retained a strong connection to Italian culture and through a shared, collective experience in the United States the Italians began to conceive of themselves as some kind of Italian nation within the American nation. While many subjects of the Kingdom of Italy immigrated to the U.S. with little sense of belonging to, or identification with, the greater Italian nation, experiences abroad would teach them that in America and in the eyes of Americans there was hardly such a thing as a Sicilian or a Neapolitan or a Calabrese, let alone a Palermitano or a Messinese; to the native residents of the new land, they were all Italians.⁶⁸

In a letter published by the *Corriere* on the pros and cons of emigration the Italian professor Francesco Coletti spoke of this heightening of national sentiment among emigrants as a positive byproduct of mass migration: “L’emigrazione è il fenomeno che da maggiore coscienza di se al popolo nostro a causa della energia di lavoro e d’intraprendenza che esso rivela: è il fenomeno che, facendo penetrare l’idea e il sentimento di patria fra tante anime ignare, ha come allargato i confini stessi della patria nostra” (emigration is the phenomenon that gives greater self-awareness to our people because of the energy of work and of resourcefulness that it reveals: it is the phenomenon that, by making felt the idea and the sentiment of fatherland among many unsuspecting souls, has enlarged the confines of our fatherland).⁶⁹

⁶⁷ “Il bilancio degli Esteri al Senato,” *Corriere della Sera*, December 15, 1910.

⁶⁸ Stefano Luconi’s insights on the evolution of national consciousness among Italian Americans are again insightful here, see Stefano Luconi, “Becoming Italian in the US: Through the Lens of Life Narratives,” *MELUS* 29, no. 3/4 (2004): 151-64.

⁶⁹ “L’emigrazione è un male?,” *Corriere della Sera*, March 26, 1911.

The sense of collective Italian identity brought on by experience abroad did not always come about in a positive way as described above, through common labor and self-sacrifice for the greater good, and sometimes it was more often the result of common struggles against discrimination and oppression; the fact still remained though that those who left Italy as impoverished, rural folk without a strong sense of national identity would soon become grouped into the wider Italian-American community as members of an expatriate nation with a common past confronting a new culture and an unknown future. And so, this expat nation of what would be come to known as the Italian-American community found itself decades after the onset of mass migration in a sort of in-between area: not fully Italian nor fully American, or arguably fully both at the same time, this community of people that numbered in the millions occupied a unique transatlantic, transnational space between Italian and American nation states. It was during this period of the early twentieth century, when Italian-born men and women gave birth to American children, that the transnational Italian-American network was perhaps at its greatest strength, and it was at this time that the joys as well as tensions of an expanding global expatriate nation made themselves known to the Italians who remained at home.

There are two subjects that have been frequently remarked upon by historians regarding the tensions arising from the transnationalism of Italian emigrants in the United States: crime and labor. We have already gone over the dishonest and abusive elements within the Italian-American expatriate community, those who had preyed upon the financial insecurities of their fellow countrymen since the onset of the mass migration. A more specific phenomenon within this broader topic was that of the so-called “Black Hand.” As the Italian immigrant community in the U.S. grew in numbers over the years, and as once-impoverished farmers accumulated capital and inched towards success and entry into the American middle class, criminal tactics

such as those of the “Black Hand” expanded their reach.⁷⁰ Italians back home would sometimes find themselves picking up a newspaper such as the *Corriere* only to discover an article such as that which appeared in the January 23 edition of the paper from the year 1908: titled “Bombe italiane contro italiani, Una vendetta della ‘Mano nera,’” (Italians bombs against Italians, a vendetta of the ‘Black hand’), the article spoke of criminals setting off bombs to frighten wealthier members of the Italian community into paying ransoms to the perpetrators.⁷¹

But while the writers at the *Corriere* went to great lengths to let their readers know that “Black Hand” was simply a criminal tactic, that of extortion, and not an actual organization, and that other immigrant groups were supposedly just as likely to engage in it, reverberations of transnational Italian criminality were felt in the homeland as well. The assassination in Palermo, Sicily of the Italian-born American NYPD officer Giuseppe Petrosino proved just how strong links between Italian criminals from both sides of the Atlantic had become. Petrosino had arrived in Italy with the goal of investigating Italian-American criminal activity but his presence in the homeland ended up making him an easy target.⁷² The articles published in the *Corriere* on the subject of the assassination went out of their way to point out that the few bad apples within Italian-American society should not be seen as representative of the vast majority of ordinary

⁷⁰ For an introduction to the “Black Hand” see the sections of Antonio Nicaso’s essay “Organized Crime and Italian Americans” dedicated to the subject in William J. Connell and Stanislao G. Pugliese, eds., *The Routledge History of Italian Americans*, 481-486.

⁷¹ “Bombe italiane contro italiani, Una vendetta della ‘Mano nera,’” *Corriere della Sera*, January 23, 1908.

⁷² For a brief synopsis of the assassination of Petrosino see the section titled “Petrosino Murder and Pellaro Massacre” in William J. Connell and Stanislao G. Pugliese, eds., *The Routledge History of Italian Americans*, 482-484.

Italians but the extensive coverage of the event was enough to warn those in the homeland of the transnational dimension of their compatriots' criminality.⁷³

Labor struggles as well demonstrated the capacity of transnational Italian social networks to exert pressure on both sides of the Atlantic.⁷⁴ An Italian reader of the *Corriere* would likely not have failed to notice the role their expat conationals played in fighting for better living and working conditions in the United States. Many acts of mass protest took place in New York, whether the strikers were demanding lower rents⁷⁵ or better pay and working conditions.⁷⁶ But the common denominator, particularly in urban areas, was that “tra gli scioperanti sono molti stranieri, specialmente italiani” (among the strikers, there are many foreigners, especially Italians).⁷⁷

In worst-case scenarios of conflict between labor and capital violence could erupt as it did in Ludlow, Colorado in the year 1914;⁷⁸ reporting on the events, the Italian writers at the *Corriere* spoke of the carnage and the need to protect Italians abroad.⁷⁹ But a more revealing case was that of the Lawrence, Massachusetts textile strike of 1912,⁸⁰ in which the writers at the

⁷³ See for example the distinction made between the vast majority of ordinary, honest Italians in the U.S. and the minority among them who engage in criminal tactics in “La vendetta della Mano Nera a Palermo,” *Corriere della Sera*, March 14, 1909.

⁷⁴ For an introduction to the Italian American dimension of labor struggles see Marcella Bencivenni's essay “From Margins to Vanguard to Mainstream: Italian Americans and the Labor Movement” in William J. Connell and Stanislao G. Pugliese, eds., *The Routledge History of Italian Americans*, 268-282.

⁷⁵ “Minaccia di un grande sciopero di inquilini,” *Corriere della Sera*, December 27, 1907.

⁷⁶ “150.000 sarti e sartine in isciopero a New York,” *Corriere della Sera*, January 16, 1913.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ For an in-depth look at the Ludlow Massacre see Thomas G. Andrews, *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

⁷⁹ “Sanguinose battaglie al Colorado fra minatori e guardiani,” *Corriere della Sera*, April 30, 1914.

⁸⁰ For more on the Lawrence strike see Michael Topp, “The Transnationalism of the Italian-American Left: The Lawrence Strike of 1912 and the Italian Chamber of Labor of New York City,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 17, no. 1 (1997): 39-63.

Corriere spoke up on several occasions in defense of two Italians, Joseph Ettor and Arturo Giovannitti, who had been accused of causing the death of a woman involved. Ettor and Giovannitti would be cleared of wrongdoing, but the significance lay in the fact that their struggle, while taking place in an American context, was of enough relevance to have been considered in the December 31, 1912 edition of the *Corriere* one of the most important court cases of the year. Hostile both to what could have been an unjust punishment of Italian labor leaders, but also to the threatening protests of socialist agitators, the *Corriere* was able to outline and occupy a transnational space in which the rights of Italians across the globe could be protected at the same time as the existing status quo of global capital and its national allies was upheld.⁸¹

Social issues surrounding crime and labor affected Italians throughout the world regardless of individual background and have been studied in depth; but a lesser-known source of tension in the Italian-American world of the early 1900s arose in that century's second decade as two wars, Italian nationalist aspirations, and questions of dual-nationality collided to produce a period of enormous consequence for the Italian-American community. As Italy began to reach higher levels of success and prosperity in economic terms just 50 years after the official foundation of the nation, more voices at home and throughout the Italian diaspora began to speak of the need of imperial conquests in order to rival other great powers such as Britain and France in the field of global geopolitics. One group within Italy that argued most vociferously in favor of a nationalist-imperialist foreign policy that would be able to achieve the dream of a "greater Italy," to encompass not only those Italians remaining in unredeemed territories such as Trento

⁸¹ "1912," *Corriere della Sera*, December 31, 1912.

and Trieste, but new colonial possessions in the wider Mediterranean as well, was the Italian Nationalist Association.⁸²

Those Italians who kept up to date with politics by way of articles in newspapers such as the *Corriere della Sera* would have become increasingly familiar with the actions of the nationalists in the early 1910s, but for our purposes it was the transnational dimension of nationalist political aspirations that demands our attention. For example, during the first congress of the Italian nationalists, which took place in Florence in December 1910 and is considered as the official foundation of the Italian Nationalist Association, it was not only the peninsular citizenry that attended but also Italians living abroad as well. An article appearing in the *Corriere* announcing the opening of the congress noted the following: “Vi intervengono anche rappresentanti di Trento, di Zara, di Trieste, di Tunisi, di Tripoli e delle colonie italiane d’America” (Representatives from Trento, Zara, Trieste, Tunisi, Tripoli and from the Italian colonies of America will also participate).⁸³ The transnational dimension of Italian nationalism during this time becomes apparent in an announcement such as this because of the way in which it demonstrated to the ordinary Italian reader the fact that the Italian nation transcended borders and included proponents of nationalist-imperialism living not only within the Kingdom of Italy itself but also in the unredeemed bordering regions not yet liberated from Austrian domination, as well as in colonies abroad in places like Africa and the Americas.

⁸² For an introduction to the Italian Nationalists see the opening pages of Chapter 19 “Nationalism” in Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 374-380 and section 7.4 “The Nationalists” in Clark, *Modern Italy*, 181-184; for the Nationalist turn to imperialism see Chapter 6 “Italian Imperialists” in Gentile, *La Grande Italia*, 94-104.

⁸³ “Il convegno nazionalista di Firenze,” *Corriere della Sera*, November 18, 1910.

In fact, the connection between emigration and nationalist-imperialism⁸⁴ figured prominently in the thought of the INA's leader, Enrico Corradini, who on the opening day of the congress was cited in the *Corriere* as speaking of emigration as the central condition of the Italian nation of the day, that which influenced national politics more than any other factor. In Corradini's view it was only war and expansion that could redeem Italy, restore national glory, and act as the motor that would invigorate the nation and permit would-be migrants to remain within a "greater Italy" that could finally provide opportunity for all of its citizens.⁸⁵

In the year 1911 the nationalists got their wish and Italy was finally presented with the opportunity to act on its expansionist vision by engaging in war with the Ottoman Empire for control over Libya.⁸⁶ The details of the war are not what should concern us at the present moment, though it is important to understand that Italy won the war and expanded its geopolitical reach through the addition of territories in North Africa and the Mediterranean. What is important to consider here is the role that Italians resident in the United States played as direct and indirect participants in the war of their homeland.

Practically from the beginning, one could find within the pages of the *Corriere* talk of enthusiasm in the Italian diaspora for the war effort. One article, appearing just over a week after the outbreak of war, was titled "L'entusiasmo patriottico degli italiani negli Stati Uniti" (The patriotic enthusiasm of the Italians in the United States) and spoke of over 15,000 Italian workers repatriating to the homeland. The article attributed the enthusiasm among Italians in the

⁸⁴ For a comprehensive look at this connection see Chapter 6 "Emigration and the New Nationalism" in Choate, *Emigrant Nation*, 147-188.

⁸⁵ "La 1^a giornata del Congresso Nazionalista a Firenze," *Corriere della Sera*, December 4, 1910.

⁸⁶ For a detailed yet concise narration of events surrounding the conflict see Denis Mack Smith, *Modern Italy: A Political History* (Ann Arbor, MI: The Univ. of Michigan Press, 1997), 241-249.

U.S. to their patriotism for the homeland, but also to the widespread idea that an eventual annexation of Libyan territory would give Italian workers lucrative opportunities arising from colonization.⁸⁷ The significance of this article lies in the fact that to the ordinary Italian reader of the *Corriere*, it was seen to be a combination of patriotic fervor as well the potential for personal advancement that motivated Italian expats to support the war effort.

Descriptions of patriotic enthusiasm as well as financial contributions towards the war effort among Italians in the U.S. would continue to appear in the *Corriere* throughout the duration of the war but somewhat more fruitful to explore are the ways in which news coverage revealed complex intercultural dynamics at play with the Italians expatriates in the U.S. taking center stage. For example, one article spoke of negative American press coverage of the Italo-Turkish war and reminded readers that an Italian resident abroad would do well to instead await news from Italian sources.⁸⁸

What is revealing though is the way in which the *Corriere* article connected negative American press coverage of the war to broader anti-Italian sentiment within society at large:

Non bisogna però dimenticare che negli Stati Uniti vivono tra due e tre milioni di italiani, che i sentimenti della popolazione verso gli immigrati italiani sono molto diversi e generalmente molto sfavorevoli e che una massa simile di popolazione, sebbene piuttosto povera, ha necessariamente un peso economico non piccolo: ecco dunque un cumulo sufficiente di ragioni perchè i giudizi della stampa americana sull'affare di Tripoli, e il servizio di informazioni che a questi giudizi si ispira, non sia completamente sereno.

But one must not forget that between two to three million Italians live in the United States, that the feelings of the population towards the Italian immigrants are very different and generally very unfavorable and that a similar mass of population, although rather poor, necessarily has a not small economic weight: here therefore is a sufficient quantity of reasons why the opinions of the American press on the Tripoli affair, and the information service inspired by these judgments, is not completely serene.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ “L’entusiasmo patriottico degli italiani negli Stati Uniti,” *Corriere della Sera*, October 9, 1911.

⁸⁸ “La guerra a distanza,” *Corriere della Sera*, December 19, 1911.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

This quote demonstrates the way in which collective American bias against Italians in the U.S. had an impact on press coverage and the way geopolitical events were interpreted. Likewise, Italian readers would have learned not only that Americans were critical of Italy's war actions, but that American prejudice against the Italian immigrants negatively influenced the collective view of the entire Italian nation and its role in the world.

One final word on the Italian-American experience as relates to the Italo-Turkish war should be said regarding cultural aspects of the expat soldiers who repatriated to Italy. Two articles in particular, one appearing the day after the other in early January 1912, shed light on the nature of that culturally fluid space occupied by Italians in the U.S. The first, appearing in the January 2 edition of the *Corriere*, contained a brief section towards the end on a news correspondent's coverage of Italian soldiers in Libya who had come from America. The correspondent was said to have spoken of how Italy should have taken pride in the fact that its citizens who had found success in America had left the land of opportunity to come home to serve the homeland as soldiers. But perhaps more relevant to us is the observation appearing in print just a few lines down: the article noted that "Il corrispondente dice di aver trovato un soldato italiano, nato in America, il quale fino a vent'anni non aveva pronunciato una sola parola d'italiano" (the correspondent speaks of having found an Italian soldier, born in America, who until twenty years old had not spoken a single word of Italian). The unique case of this soldier demonstrates clearly the blurred cultural midpoint that Italians in the U.S. increasingly came to occupy as births of newer generations to immigrant parents took place on American shores.⁹⁰

Another article covering the correspondent's discussions with Italian American soldiers appeared in the *Corriere* the following day. The correspondent had spoken with a large number

⁹⁰ "Come si riforniscono i turchi dalla frontiera tunisina," *Corriere della Sera*, January 2, 1912.

of soldiers who had come from the U.S. to complete military service for Italy and was quoted as follows: “Una gran parte di essi... sono effettivamente cittadini americani e dopo il servizio militare ritorneranno in America. Nondimeno tutti questi uomini sono venuti di loro spontanea volontà a compiere il loro dovere verso il loro paese di nascita” (A great part of them... are actually American citizens and after military service they will return to America. Nevertheless, all these men came of their own free will to fulfill their duty to their country of birth).⁹¹ To an Italian reader of these *Corriere* articles, the Italian American soldiers were seen as part of the broader nation, but they were also clearly something else; it was in articles such as these that one can begin to trace the emergence of the Italian Americans as a distinct category of people.

The ultimate opportunity for the nationalists came with the outbreak of the First World War. It was this conflict that presented the Italian people with the opportunity to fight the Austrians for unredeemed Italian territories in order to complete the unification of Italy. The Italian government had initially chosen to remain neutral in the conflict that engulfed Europe in 1914 but the voices of nationalists as well as moderates increasingly called for the nation to enter the war on the side of the Allies so that a victory against the Central Powers, and in particular Austria, would guarantee the redemption of Italian-speaking regions such as Trento and Trieste. The Italian theater of war is a subject worthy of study on its own, but for our purpose it is the role of Italians in the U.S. as transnational actors in a context of global war that presents us with a unique opportunity to consider tensions arising from dual-nationality in a globalizing world.⁹²

Even before Italy's entry into war in May 1915 one could find within the pages of the *Corriere* articles such as that of February 22, 1915, which described meetings and rallies taking

⁹¹ “I cittadini americani fra i combattenti di Tripoli,” *Corriere della Sera*, January 3, 1912.

⁹² Martin Clark provides excellent context to Italian involvement in the First World War in Chapter 9 “Italy and the Great War” in Clark, *Modern Italy*, 217-241.

place within the Italian communities of New York, Chicago, and Boston, all in favor of persuading the Italian government to join the war against Austria in order to “iniziare quell’azione che possa attuare le giuste aspirazioni nazionali ed assicurare alla patria i suoi confini naturali” (begin that action that can realize the right national aspirations and secure for the fatherland its natural borders).⁹³ And when Italy finally did enter the conflict the *Corriere* soon spoke of the enthusiasm of the Italians in the United States for the war with Austria. One article spoke of 100,000 Italians resident in the U.S. ready to depart New York for Italy to fight: “Specialmente degli operai che... sono splendidi esempi di forza fisica e di resistenza sono impazienti di andare a combattere contro il tradizionale nemico del loro paese” (Especially the workers who... are splendid examples of physical strength and endurance are impatient to go to fight against the traditional enemy of their country).⁹⁴

Such was the enthusiasm for the Italian war effort that readers of the *Corriere* would have found articles speaking of Italian expatriates in the U.S. recalled to military service singing patriotic anthems as they passed through Paris on the way to the fatherland⁹⁵ or of more personal stories of individuals such as that of Alfonso De Gregorio, a decorated veteran of the Italo-Turkish war whose decision to return to Italy to volunteer as a soldier upon Italian entry into the war demonstrated his continued commitment to his ancestral homeland.⁹⁶

In spite of these reports, the fact remained that not all Italians were prepared to leave life abroad in order to serve the “fatherland,” and the case of those who refused to return was

⁹³ “Comizi di italiani in America,” *Corriere della Sera*, February 22, 1915.

⁹⁴ “100.000 italiani verranno a combattere dall’America,” *Corriere della Sera*, May 24, 1915.

⁹⁵ “Il passaggio da Parigi dei richiamati italiani dell’America,” *Corriere della Sera*, June 11, 1915.

⁹⁶ “Riformato perchè ferito in Libia torna dall’America e si arruola volontario,” *Corriere della Sera*, June 21, 1915.

frequently dealt with in the pages of the *Corriere*.⁹⁷ The so-called “renitenti italiani” (reluctant Italians) were those who did not heed the call to arms as Italian citizens when Italy went to war. Despite what one might expect, the writers at the *Corriere* were generally sympathetic to the “reluctant” Italians. On several occasions articles appeared speaking of a potential amnesty for the “renitenti.” An article from April 18, 1917 for example discussed the possibility of exoneration for reluctant Italians working in the United States whose labor might be deemed necessary towards the Allied war effort.⁹⁸ Even the Italian Prime Minister Vittorio Orlando was quoted in the *Corriere* as having supported an amnesty for the reluctant Italians in America.⁹⁹

The portrayal of the reluctant Italians in America was thus one of general sympathy and forgiveness, and one *Corriere* article in particular went into detail as to the challenges faced by the immigrants in America that acted as barriers towards fulfilling their military duty to the homeland. The context of the article was that the author had received letters from emigrant Italians expressing their thoughts as to the burdens faced by Italian expats recalled to Italy for service. The author then proceeded to list these challenges that the Italian expat faced which the Italians living in the homeland did not have to deal with.¹⁰⁰

The obvious burdens were listed, such as those having to do with travel expenses, but one larger point stood out: “Il sussidio accordato alla famiglia è, per l’americano, più che insufficiente. Non pochi italiani d’America... non sono accorsi alla chiamata perchè, posti fra due

⁹⁷ Mark Choate notes that many Italian Americans returned to fight for Italy and that the Italian state was relatively successful in promotion of a “transnational nationalism” in this context but he points also to factors in the Italian American context such as increased job opportunities and family obligations that ultimately convinced many to stay, Choate, *Emigrant Nation*, 210, 212.

⁹⁸ “Una sanatoria giuridica per i renitenti italiani agli Stati Uniti,” *Corriere della Sera*, April 18, 1917.

⁹⁹ “L’on. Orlando annunzia un’amnestia per i renitenti in America,” *Corriere della Sera*, November 30, 1917.

¹⁰⁰ “E i renitenti d’America?” *Corriere della Sera*, March 4, 1918.

doveri, hanno preferito quello che avevano verso la famiglia” (The subsidy granted to the family is, for the American, more than insufficient. Not a few Italians in America have not rushed to the call because, placed between two duties, they have preferred that which they had towards the family).¹⁰¹ Ordinary Italian readers of this article understood the situation of the emigrants and while many may have disapproved of fellow citizens avoiding military service they could at least understand that duties relating to providing for one’s family were equally pressing.

Issues surrounding military service became especially complicated when those involved were not only Italian, but also American citizens. Bahar Gürsel examined wartime issues arising from Italian-American dual-nationality in the article “Citizenship and Military Service in Italian-American Relations, 1901-1918.” The main tension arose from the fact that Italy and the United States based citizenship on differing legal principles. Because Italy granted citizenship according to the principle of *jus sanguinis*, or right of blood, and the United States law was (and remains) based primarily on *jus soli*, or right according to place of birth, many Italian Americans were born with dual citizenship; the tensions arising from such a dual allegiance in the context of military conscription were thus complex and in the case of each individual decisions had to be made whether to abide by the commands of the homeland’s call to arms, or to exercise one’s right to remain a working civilian in the new homeland, the (until 1917) neutral U.S.¹⁰²

Dual Italian-American nationality was therefore the source of tension between national governments, even though later on in the war, after the United States joined the Allies, an agreement was reached so that Italians resident in the U.S. could perform military service in the American army to fulfill their requirement to Italy and vice-versa for Americans resident in Italy.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Bahar Gürsel, “Citizenship and Military Service in Italian-American Relations, 1901-1918,” *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 7, no. 3 (2008): 353-376.

But dual nationality also gave freedom and agency to Italian Americans to chart their own destinies in accordance with their own individual values and beliefs. Gürsel noted that ultimately, especially after the U.S. joined the war on the side of Italy and the Allies, many Italian Americans “felt patriotism and ethnic pride simultaneously,” perceiving “the war both as an opportunity for their homeland and a chance to prove their loyalty to their adoptive country.” In practice, this dual-nationalism, or even the lack thereof, found subjective expression in the lives of each individual, granting a conceptual space within which conflicting notions of nationhood arising in a transnational Italian-American context could inspire diverse actions in the mind of each individual. While the writers at the *Corriere* were quick to highlight the Italian component of this dual-nationalism, the fact remained that the expatriate nation was forming deep ties to the United States that in some cases called into question their allegiance to Italy.¹⁰³

One final dimension of the Italian American experience during the First World War that should be considered pertains to changing discourse from the time of the American entry into the war until the conflict’s end. Articles appearing in the *Corriere* following America’s entry into the war took on a new character, and shared ideals between Italy and the U.S. became the common theme. One event the *Corriere* reported on that demonstrated the shared commitment was a breakfast at Hotel Excelsior on Via Veneto in Rome in April 1917, where the American ambassador to Italy, Nelson Page, spoke of the historic nature of Italian-American relations, as exemplified through the lives of Italians in America such as Columbus and Garibaldi. Also in attendance was the Italian Prime Minister, Paolo Boselli, who praised U.S. President Wilson and the two countries’ common aspirations related to democracy and the liberty of nations.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ “I legami ideali dell’Italia con gli Stati Uniti,” *Corriere della Sera*, April 15, 1917.

Examples in a North American context could be found while travelling alongside the Italian diplomatic mission in the U.S. headed by the Prince of Udine, Ferdinando of Savoy, cousin of the King of Italy Vittorio Emanuele III, which visited places such as Mount Vernon, the home of George Washington, referred to in the pages of the *Corriere* as the “Caprera americana” (American Caprera, alluding to Caprera, the island where Italian general Giuseppe Garibaldi spent his later years),¹⁰⁵ as well as the Garibaldi-Meucci home, the residence on Staten Island in New York where Garibaldi lived while in the U.S., in order to speak about the shared heritage of liberty that connected the great American and Italian generals and thus the nations they helped found. There were numerous occasions on both sides of the Atlantic in which the shared Italian-American commitment to democracy and freedom was stressed by political leaders in the context of the global conflict.¹⁰⁶

Even an Italian journalist named Benito Mussolini praised the United States for its action in the war.¹⁰⁷ The *Corriere* covered in its April 8, 1918 edition a large manifestation in Milan commemorating the anniversary of the U.S. entry into the war and a young Mussolini’s speech at the rally appeared in print. The speech is worth quoting at length:

Il popolo milanese ha voluto riunirsi per esprimere la sua profonda simpatia verso la democrazia americana. E non è solo per l’aiuto che l’America da e potrà dare in materiale di guerra ed in uomini, ma è perchè essa ha sposato la nostra causa, riconoscendone la giustizia, che più ardente è la gratitudine e l’omaggio dei milanesi... nessun uomo... può ancora credere in buona fede alla menzogna della Germania, la sola responsabile della guerra. Possono, sì, volgere ancora delle ore tristi, ma come gli uomini che seguirono Cristoforo Colombo per la scoperta dell’America, raggiunsero la terra, quando ormai apparivano sfiduciati, così noi raggiungeremo, se resisteremo,

¹⁰⁵ “Nobilissime parole del Principe di Udine sulla tomba di Giorgio Washington,” *Corriere della Sera*, May 29, 1917.

¹⁰⁶ “La missione italiana in America,” *Corriere della Sera*, June 25, 1917.

¹⁰⁷ For greater context on Mussolini’s praise of the U.S. during this period see the brief section on “Italian Wilsonians” in Peter R. D’Agostino, *Rome in America: Transnational Catholic Ideology from the Risorgimento to Fascism* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 127.

indubbiamente la vittoria, ottenendo quella giusta pace per tutti i popoli che costituirà un vasto respiro della civiltà mondiale.

The Milanese people wanted to come together to express their profound sympathy towards the American democracy. And it is not only for the help that America gives and will be able to give in war material and in men, but it is because it has espoused our cause, recognizing its justice, of which the gratitude and homage of the Milanese people is most ardent... no man ... can still believe in good faith in the lies of Germany, the only one responsible for the war. It may, yes, still take some sad hours, but as the men who followed Christopher Columbus for the discovery of America, reached the earth, when by then they seemed disheartened, so we will undoubtedly achieve victory, if we resist, obtaining that just peace for all peoples that will constitute a vast breath of world civilization.¹⁰⁸

The twenty-first century observer might be surprised to hear such words from the future Italian dictator, but the speech allows one to see the way in which Italians utilized the language of democracy and liberty to find common cause with their American allies.

The shared commitment to victory ushered in a new era for Italian-American relations and one side effect of this was that the social perception of Italians within the U.S. appeared to improve.¹⁰⁹ Italian readers of the *Corriere della Sera* certainly would have received this impression from the May 25, 1918 edition; reporting on celebrations in the U.S. commemorating the anniversary of Italy's entry into the war, the article noted how the Italian emigrants, who until around that point had felt despised by the American people, could now take pride in their heritage which was being celebrated for its history, its flag, and its noble cause in the present struggle.¹¹⁰ In a September 1918 edition of the *Corriere* an article covering an American congressional mission to Rome spoke of the Louisiana politician J. B. Aswell as having said how "la guerra abbia insegnato agli americani ad amare ancor più gl'italiani che si trovano fra loro"

¹⁰⁸ "La grande dimostrazione agli Stati Uniti," *Corriere della Sera*, April 8, 1918.

¹⁰⁹ Bahar Gürsel, "Citizenship and Military Service in Italian-American Relations, 1901-1918," *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 7, no. 3 (2008): 364.

¹¹⁰ "Italy's Day," *Corriere della Sera*, May 25, 1918.

(the war has taught the Americans to love still more the Italians that are found among them).¹¹¹

And with Italian victories in war came yet more respect: a June 1918 article in the *Corriere* described the way in which the recent Italian victory at the Piave river had deepened American admiration of Italy and spoke of the positive effect this would have on the Italians resident in the U.S.¹¹²

To conclude on the subject of the Italian American experience of World War I, it will be useful to quote from a May 1918 edition of the *Corriere*; speaking of the American enthusiasm for Italy on the anniversary of the latter's entry into the war, the article cited a foreign newspaper as having declared that "l'unione italo-americana è cementata dai soldati italiani che vissero in America e dai soldati americani di sangue italiano" (the Italian-American union is cemented by the Italian soldiers who have lived in America and by the American soldiers of Italian blood).¹¹³ This quote goes straight to the heart of the transnational nature of the Italian American experience and helps shed light on how global Italians forged ties across national boundaries that had lasting impacts on both nations as well as upon the arena of international geopolitics.

But while the experience of war ushered in a new era of Italian-American unity, extended residence in the U.S. was having a cultural impact on the community: the Italian Americans were slowly becoming Americanized, to the point that one American soldier of Italian origin referred not to Italy, but to the U.S. as his "patria" (fatherland).¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, the Italian American community still maintained its Italian roots, to the extent that, while in one article the *Corriere* noted that the Italian districts in American cities were among the most enthusiastic upon hearing of Allied victory in November 1918, the flags they were waving were in many if not most cases

¹¹¹ "La missione parlamentare americana a Roma," *Corriere della Sera*, September 6, 1918.

¹¹² "America e Italia," *Corriere della Sera*, June 28, 1918.

¹¹³ "Il significato delle dimostrazioni per l'Italia in America," *Corriere della Sera*, May 27, 1918.

¹¹⁴ "Una legione italiana in America," *Corriere della Sera*, May 23, 1918.

those of the home country itself, Italy.¹¹⁵ To the Italian reader of the *Corriere della Sera* during the period of the First World War, the Italian American people remained part of the global Italian nation, but it was clear that their social identity was in a period of transformation.

2.5 Conclusion

The three decades between the years 1890 and 1920 witnessed the mass migration of millions of Italians to the shores of the United States. Some would return home, but many chose to stay, forging a new life in a new land. As the years went on, these Italians in America began to develop a new identity of their own, occupying a newly created ethnic space between two worlds. The lived experience of these immigrants revealed itself within the stories told by word of mouth from those who had taken part, but also by way of news media, communicated through daily journals such as the *Corriere della Sera*.

To the ordinary Italian reading such a newspaper, fellow citizens abroad in the United States formed an extension of the global nation. Forming colonies abroad that remained nominally loyal to the homeland, these Italians worked long hours for low wages, experienced hate and discrimination because of their foreign culture and background, and did their best to adapt to the new society. As Italians back home read of the expatriates' struggles, their politicians spoke publicly of the need to protect the nation's citizens abroad, whether from violence at the hands of a native Anglo-Saxon population or from financial abuse stemming from fellow Italian citizens.

All along the way, however, as the Italian immigrants and their second generation children established deeper roots in the New World, tensions arose that began to point to an

¹¹⁵ "L'eco della vittoria in America," *Corriere della Sera*, November 7, 1918.

evolving distinction between the Italian community in the U.S. and the citizenry back home. The Italian-American community found itself caught between two worlds, and while most still largely identified with their Old World roots, the more time they spent in America the more their experience came to be shaped not solely by European and peninsular trends, but by global, transnational, and American developments. It was this tension between two worlds that revealed a people on the verge of a transformation, and an astute early-twentieth century reader of Italian-American news as appeared in the *Corriere* would be well aware of these rising distinctions.

By exploring the Italian nation's most influential newspaper during the period of mass migration to the United States, and by analyzing the ways in which the expatriate community was portrayed in its pages to Italians back home, one is able to see the emergence of a unique cultural tension between the continuities of culture translated abroad and the exigencies of adaption necessitated by contact with a New World. It is within this transnational and ethnically fluid space between Italy and the United States that a new people was being forged through a process of ethnogenesis. This group of people was still viewed by those back home as part of the greater Italian nation as World War I drew to a close, but the previous three decades of mass migration had fundamentally changed the way Italians conceptualized the citizenry abroad. As the Italian state took on an increasingly imperial role that globalized its citizens' collective consciousness, the early stages of Italian American ethnogenesis, illuminated as they were in the discourse of major national newspapers like the *Corriere*, made known to all that the social identities of those abroad were subject to change in varied processes of individual and collective (re)conceptualization.

3 CHAPTER 2 – FASCIST REDEMPTION: 1920-1935

3.1 Intro

Allied victory in the First World War had originally ignited high hopes for the Italian nation. Italy gained more territory in ethnic Italian regions such as Trento and Trieste and the country received a huge boost in international prestige, entitled as it was to sit at the victor's table after the war.¹¹⁶ But harsher realities settled in to cast doubt on such early optimism. Italy was denied many of the lands it was promised,¹¹⁷ and soon after the country reached a breaking point as socialist and communist agitation nearly pushed the country to revolution. Many feared that social upheaval resembling the revolution in Russia would repeat itself in Italy; the high hopes of the postwar period thus seemed destined to be buried under the ruins of civil conflict.¹¹⁸

However, this period of left-wing agitation, known in Italy as the “Biennio Rosso” (The Two Red Years) produced a nationalist, right-wing reaction. This response on the part of the rising fascist movement restored the upper and middle classes' faith in the future of the nation, eventually bringing Benito Mussolini to power in the March on Rome.¹¹⁹ From the outset, Mussolini governed as an ordinary Prime Minister of Italy, though he certainly did stress principles of order and discipline above all else. But after a few years in power he gradually began to integrate his fascist political philosophy into the machinery of the state, obtaining near-absolute control as dictator in the following years.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Denis Mack Smith, *Modern Italy*, 276-282.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 420-422.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 423-432.

¹²⁰ For greater context on the early years of Mussolini's rule see Chapter 22 “The Establishment of a Dictatorship, 1922-5” in Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 433-448.

Mussolini pushed the Italian nation to war in an alliance with Hitler's Germany and Europe and the world paid the price of utter devastation. But for the current investigation, the fascist period of Italian history demands particular attention. It forms a sort of middle, transitional period between the Italian Americans' arrival in the U.S. and their near-total integration. In order to better understand the process by which Italians went from an oppressed, sometimes despised, and struggling minority ethnic group to a more respected, integrated, and self-confident branch of the wider American community, it is important to analyze some of the historical dynamics at play during this crucial period in history in which fascism exerted its influence on Italians at home and abroad.

As opposed to the previous period under consideration, the writers at the *Corriere della Sera* conceptualized the Italian American community abroad in new ways during the early years of the interwar period and the rise of fascism. By uncovering discursive trends in the *Corriere* on the topic of Italian Americans during the fascist period, we will learn about the ways in which the Italians and Italian Americans reacted and responded to fascism, as well the consequences that such actions had on the ways those in the homeland perceived the Italian expatriate community abroad. Ultimately, Italian Americans were quite enthusiastic about fascism, but it will be shown that Italian perceptions of the expat community's renewed faith in the homeland coexisted alongside a growing recognition that the Italian Americans were simultaneously undergoing an ethnic transformation that would call into question their *italianità*. This exercise in tracing the emergence of such trends is crucially important, for it is through achieving a better understanding of these evolving conceptions that the historian will be able to judge in what ways these varying perceptions affected historical actors, their modes of thought, and perhaps most importantly, the decisions they made that impacted the world and events around them.

3.2 Postwar Problems and the Fascist Solution

When Italy entered World War I on the side of the allies, it did so in accordance with an agreement made with the British and French that promised territorial acquisitions at the expense of Italy's neighbors, should the allied side be victorious. Italians were thus disheartened to learn after the victory that the U.S. President Woodrow Wilson had other plans. Wilson believed in solving territorial disputes according to the principle of ethnic self-determination; in other words, borders were to reflect ethnic and national realities, as the age of imperial authority over foreign peoples was to come to an end. The news was not all bad for Italy: Italians had claimed for decades that Italians in Trento and Istria living under Austrian sovereignty deserved to become part of the Italian state, and these Italian majority lands did in fact go to Italy after the war. But much of the territory promised to Italy was inhabited not only by Italians but other ethnic groups (such as Slavs) as well; in such cases it was anything but clear to which state such regions should belong.¹²¹

The city at the heart of this dispute was Fiume, located in modern-day Croatia, a city that was largely Italian-speaking, but home to many other ethnic groups as well. Italian nationalists in the political establishment demanded the restoration of this "Italian" city to the nation but U.S. President Wilson was opposed.¹²² This stance frustrated Italians and not only those in the homeland but also those living in the U.S.¹²³ An Italian reader of the May 1, 1919 edition of the

¹²¹ Denis Mack Smith, *Modern Italy*, 276-282.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 278-279.

¹²³ Italian frustration with Wilsonian policy on Fiume is documented in many sources, such as D'Agostino, *Rome in America*, 127; the Italian American response to Wilson's policy is detailed by Stefano Luconi who speaks of the way in which Italian American frustration with Wilson led many to desert the Democratic party and vote Republican in the 1920 presidential election, see Stefano Luconi, "Fascism and Italian-American Identity Politics," *Italian Americana* 33, no. 1 (2015): 7.

Corriere della Sera for instance would have discovered that “I giornali americani si preoccupano sopra tutto del pericolo che la condotta di Wilson possa alienare la simpatia dell’Italia dall’America, che ha una vasta e politicamente influente popolazione italiana” (The American newspapers worry above all about the danger that the conduct of Wilson could alienate Italian sympathy for America, which has a vast and politically influential Italian population).¹²⁴ The Italian reader of the *Corriere* article would also have learned that “il voto italiano fu uno dei fattori che determinarono la vittoria del Presidente” (the Italian vote was one of the factors that determined the victory of the President) and that “È perciò che... lo stesso partito di Wilson avrebbe preferito una politica molto più prudente e riguardosa verso l’Italia” (It is for this reason that the same party of Wilson would have preferred a much more prudent and considerate policy towards Italy).¹²⁵ Thus during the Fiume debacle Italian readers of the *Corriere* would have read about how support for Italian territorial acquisition could be expressed in the form of political pressure put on the U.S. president by their patriotic fellow countrymen on the other side of the Atlantic.

More instances of Italian American support for Italian territorial aspirations were cited in the following weeks. For example, on May 9, the *Corriere* cited from the *Chicago Tribune* in speaking of a “Federazione irredentista italo-americana” (Italian American Irredentist Federation), which “ha telegrafato al Presidente Wilson che il suo persistente rifiuto a riconoscere le aspirazioni italiane di Fiume ferisce i cittadini italo-americani, il trionfo della democrazia e la Lega delle Nazioni” (has telegraphed to President Wilson that his persistent refusal to recognize the Italian aspirations of Fiume hurts Italian American citizens, the triumph

¹²⁴ “Opposizioni americane a Wilson,” *Corriere della Sera*, May 1, 1919.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

of democracy, and the League of Nations).¹²⁶ Another *Corriere* article titled “Simpatie americane per le aspirazioni nazionali dell’Italia” (American sympathies for the national aspirations of Italy) also spoke of ordinary Italians in the U.S. voicing their approval to American politicians for their support of Italy’s interests in the United States Congress and at the Paris Peace Conference.¹²⁷ Highlighting such actions on the part of Italian Americans demonstrated to those back home that the transnational Italian nation supported the homeland even from halfway across the world; in this sense, it would have been clear to most Italians living in Italy that the expatriate nation abroad was simply an extension of “greater Italy.”

The Fiume Question would be resolved in the years to come, but during the same time a more serious problem emerged, this time within the borders of Italy proper. The two years following World War I brought Italy to the brink, as strikes and demonstrations, many times of a violent nature, suffocated the Italian economy and put pressure on the Italian ruling elite.¹²⁸ But although these social tensions were very real, Italians resident in the U.S. were depicted within the pages of the *Corriere* as pushing back against the American press and what they sometimes considered to be its unfair treatment of such issues.

One article appearing in the *Corriere* in November 1919 for example discussed American news stories that spoke of the possibility of “una crisi di bolscevismo in Italia” (a crisis of Bolshevism in Italy).¹²⁹ Quoting from the Italian journal *Il Messaggero*, the article stated the following:

¹²⁶ “La ripartizione coloniale e la pace con l’Austria,” *Corriere della Sera*, May 9, 1919.

¹²⁷ “Simpatie americane per le aspirazioni nazionali dell’Italia,” *Corriere della Sera*, June 17, 1919.

¹²⁸ Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 420-422.

¹²⁹ “La dannosa campagna di denigrazione in America contro l’Italia,” *Corriere della Sera*, November 27, 1919.

I connazionali unanimi...deplorano l'invio di notizie alarmistiche, alle quali gli ignoranti delle cose italiane danno una immeritata ed eccessiva importanza. In generale, si lamenta, poi, la unilateralità delle notizie, che rivelano gli aspetti peggiori della vita italiana, mentre tacciono il buono che c'è, e dimenticano che l'Italia è un paese di lavoro e di produzione, intento ad una fervida opera di ricostruzione.

The unanimous conationals...deplore the sending of alarmist news, to which those ignorant of Italian affairs give an undeserved and excessive importance. In general, they lament the one-sidedness of the news, which reveals the worst aspects of Italian life, while they are silent on the good that there is, and they forget that Italy is a country of work and of production, intent on a fervent work of reconstruction.¹³⁰

Historian Denis Mack Smith did note that leftist agitation was not as serious a threat to political stability as many believed,¹³¹ but this *Corriere* article still probably hid as much as it revealed, for the situation in Italy certainly was not ideal. For our purposes one learns from reading this that Italians in the U.S. were perceived by their fellow countrymen in Italy as eager to defend the image and prestige of their country from exaggerated claims of alarm and peril. Still attached to their homeland and understandably skeptical of news perceived to be overly critical of Italy, Italian expats were seen to be protective of the image of the nation from which they had come.

At the same time, the transnational dimension of Italian socialist/anarchist agitation made itself known across the Atlantic. For example, the Wall Street bombing of September 1920,¹³² believed to have been committed by an Italian anarchist, made news in the *Corriere*, and Italians in the homeland would have read soon after about the arrest of “rivoluzionari russi e italiani” (Russian and Italian revolutionaries) under suspicion.¹³³ This bombing also took place around the same time as the arrest and indictment of Italian American anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti,

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Denis Mack Smith, *Modern Italy*, 286-288.

¹³² For more on this incident and the American reaction to Italian American radicalism during the postwar period see William J. Connell and Stanislao G. Pugliese, eds., *The Routledge History of Italian Americans*, 219.

¹³³ “Lo scoppio della bomba a New-York,” *Corriere della Sera*, September 21, 1920.

who would be put to death after a controversial trial 7 years later.¹³⁴ And as was typical of this time period, events taking place within one community of the global Italian diaspora reverberated across the ocean. One day in October 1921 in Bologna, an anarchist demonstration in favor of Sacco and Vanzetti drew the attention of young Italian nationalists; the *Corriere*'s description of the tense encounter that followed spoke not just to the transnational dimension of Italian socio-political struggles but also to what in that moment represented a growing civil struggle between violent extremists of the left and right.¹³⁵

In fact, towards the end of the year 1920, young fascist *squadristi* began taking matters into their own hands to end the disruptions of the socialists and communists. This cycle of violence and suppression ultimately ended with the victory of the fascists, when the March on Rome of Benito Mussolini signaled the dawn of the fascist political victory. But in 1921 it was not yet clear what the result of this near-civil war would be.¹³⁶ A *Corriere* article from October 18 titled "Violenta ripresa della lotta fra partiti" (Violent resumption of the struggle between parties) was terrifyingly typical in its coverage of the conflicts; within the article were 13 subsections, each detailing bouts of political violence that had occurred mostly in the northern and central regions of the country. The Sacco and Vanzetti case again loomed large in the section titled "Due feriti dopo un corteo comunista" (Two injured after a communist procession). The section spoke of a communist protest in Genoa against the U.S. court's decision to sentence Sacco and Vanzetti to death. After the rally the communists marched to the Consulate General

¹³⁴ The case of Sacco and Vanzetti is the subject of countless historical works; for a detailed synopsis see Michael Topp's essay "The Sacco and Vanzetti Case and the Psychology of Political Violence" in William J. Connell and Stanislao G. Pugliese, eds., *The Routledge History of Italian Americans*, 286-302.

¹³⁵ "Due feriti gravi a Bologna," *Corriere della Sera*, October 3, 1921.

¹³⁶ For more on the cycle of violence between socialists/communists and fascists/nationalists that culminated in the victory of the latter with Mussolini's March on Rome see Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 423-432

of the U.S. and were met by state police. What is interesting though is that the article spoke of violent struggle soon after between communists and fascists, which resulted in injuries to at least one fascist and one communist. Such confrontations speak once again to the transnational nature of political developments among Italians around the world during this period, and an Italian reading such an article would have been made immediately aware of the extent to which the events concerning expatriates abroad affected society in the homeland.¹³⁷

Before moving on to the fascist triumph of Mussolini, it will be useful first to highlight some articles from this period that shed light on Italian integration into American life during this time, in order to better situate the perspective from Italian America at the dawn of fascism's rise. Just as Italians in the homeland were exposed to news concerning their fellow countrymen resident in the U.S., the immigrants themselves navigated through their new world, challenged by everyday questions of whether to preserve their past or adapt to the new. These issues surrounding the question of assimilation presented themselves mostly in realms of cultural expression; language was the most obvious battleground in which the tension between the old and new found expression.¹³⁸

Italian readers of the *Corriere* probably assumed that even among the Italians born and raised in the U.S., the old language was kept alive; at least that was the hope of many, such as the President of the Italian Senate, Tommaso Tittoni, who was quoted in the *Corriere* as stating during a speech to Italians in New York that “Gli italiani debbono però parlare l’italiano ai loro figli perchè, se un’eredità di ricchezze può non essere pura, l’eredità della lingua italiana è pura come diamante” (The Italians however must speak Italian to their children because, if an

¹³⁷ “Violenta ripresa della lotta fra partiti,” *Corriere della Sera*, October 18, 1921.

¹³⁸ For detailed analysis on the subject of language in Italian America see Nancy Carnevale's essay “The Languages of Italian Americans” in William J. Connell and Stanislao G. Pugliese, eds., *The Routledge History of Italian Americans*, 239-249.

inheritance of riches may not be pure, the inheritance of the Italian language is pure like a diamond).¹³⁹ There were also articles such as that of August 20, 1921, titled “Il viaggio di 40 studenti italo-americani” (The trip of 40 Italian American students), which spoke of children of Italians resident in the U.S. who had demonstrated a high proficiency in the Italian language and so were rewarded with a trip to the homeland.¹⁴⁰ Articles such as these reinforced the idea among Italians back home that the younger generations were retaining their Italian identity, at least in terms of language.

However, these articles perhaps hid as much as they revealed, for by stressing the extent to which the Italian language was being preserved by some, the writers avoided the issue of language loss which began to appear in other articles starting around the same time. In fact, when Tittoni returned to Rome, he sounded much more pessimistic on the subject. Speaking about the difficulty of following Italian news while on the American side of the Atlantic, the *Corriere* quoted him as having said the following: “un’altra ragione dell’ignoranza americana delle cose italiane sta nel fatto che molti italiani non conoscono colà l’italiano. Perciò il Governo dovrebbe pensare ad un’organizzazione salda e razionale di scuole italiane in America... Ciò per salvare la lingua italiana fra gli italiani d’oltre Oceano” (another reason for American ignorance of Italian affairs lies in the fact that many Italians there do not know Italian. For this reason the government should think about a solid and rational organization of Italian schools in America... to save the Italian language among the Italians overseas).¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ “L’on. Tittoni si congeda dall’America auspicando alla cooperazione fra i popoli,” *Corriere della Sera*, September 12, 1921.

¹⁴⁰ “Il viaggio di 40 studenti italo-americani,” *Corriere della Sera*, August 20, 1921.

¹⁴¹ “I nostri rapporti con l’America,” *Corriere della Sera*, September 24, 1921.

The same sentiments were echoed in an article appearing in the *Corriere* less than a week later. Reprinting a segment of an article from the Italian newspaper *La Tribuna* on the subject of Italian schools overseas, the passage is worth quoting at length:

Noi abbiamo oltre Oceano, agli Stati Uniti, al Brasile, nell'Argentina, colonie di italiani ricche, fiorenti, rispettatissime nelle città che le ospitano. Questi italiani non chiedono che di cooperare col Governo della madre Patria alla maggiore conoscenza e coscienza di essa nel mondo. Sono pronti a dar danaro, a trovare locali, a fornire aiuti di ogni genere al Governo che voglia seriamente impiantare utili scuole fra loro. Quanti in questi anni sono stati oltre Oceano sono tornati affermando la calda, la commossa italianità dei nostri connazionali laggiù, ed al tempo stesso il pericolo grande della snazionalizzazione completa dei figli di italiani nati in America. Naturalmente noi non dobbiamo pensare che i nostri abbiano, nelle terre che li ospitano, a diventare un elemento separatista o appartarsi dalla vita del paese che diventa la loro seconda patria; ma dobbiamo far sì che essi non ignorino o non dimentichino la lingua dei loro padri, la storia della loro patria di origine, le tradizioni della terra dalla quale sono oriundi.

We have, overseas, in the United States, Brazil, Argentina, colonies of Italians that are rich, thriving, and highly respected in the cities that host them. These Italians ask only to cooperate with the government of the mother country for the greater knowledge and awareness of it in the world. They are ready to give money, to find premises, to provide help of any kind to the government that seriously wants to set up useful schools among them. Those who have been overseas in these years have returned affirming the warm, the moving Italian character of our conationals there, and at the same time the great danger of the complete denationalization of the children of Italians born in America. Naturally we must not think that our people have, in the lands that host them, to become a separatist element or to withdraw from the life of the country that becomes their second fatherland; but we must ensure that they don't ignore or forget the language of their fathers, the history of their fatherland of origin, the traditions of the land from which they come.¹⁴²

The significance of this article lies in the fact that it demonstrated the tension between the old and the new. For example, it referred to the Italians abroad still as conationals, but at the same time spoke of the potential for the complete denationalization of the younger generations. The article also expressed an apparent paradox that would characterize the situation of the Italian Americans for years and generations to come: that is, the Italians in the U.S. were portrayed as proudly Italian, wanting to maintain the connection with the homeland, but at the same time their

¹⁴² “Le scuole italiane oltre Oceano,” *Corriere della Sera*, September 30, 1921.

extended presence in a foreign country meant that they and their descendants were subjected to assimilationist pressures that threatened to transform their Italian identity. In this moment the Italians in America were thus portrayed as occupying a sort of culturally fluid transnational space between two worlds in which the tension between Old and New Worlds played an important role in influencing collective development during the early stages of Italian American ethnogenesis.

Even as this tension found expression within and among Italian families throughout the U.S., there were signs that progress at attaining a balance between the two cultures was still possible. One key example of this can be found in the *Corriere* article from December 1921 that reported on Italian General Armando Diaz's trip to the United States. Diaz was Chief of Staff of the Italian army during World War I and so had achieved a great reputation among Italians and Americans on both sides of the Atlantic. In the article, it was stressed that the General's trip "ha seminato nell'opinione pubblica degli Stati Uniti un senso di rivelazione della grandezza italiana in guerra e in pace" (has sown in the public opinion of the United States a sense of revelation of Italian greatness in war and in peace).¹⁴³

But beyond the increase in Italian political prestige was the effect the visit had on the Italian Americans themselves. The article stated the following:

Il beneficio della visita di Diaz sulle immense colonie italiane da un capo all'altro dell'America è incalcolabile. Le malaugurate scissioni che disgregano le masse dei nostri connazionali all'estero coi riflessi delle lotte dei partiti in patria si sono sanate come per miracolo intorno al generale. Essi formano una fronte unica di italianità magnifica, un affratellamento massimo. Gli umili fra gli umili della nostra emigrazione hanno sentito l'orgoglio della loro origine e mostrato con fierezza il distintivo nazionale. La passione comune per la Patria lontana è in essi risvegliata in forme grandiose. Le accoglienze che Diaz ebbe a Roma e a Napoli tornando dalla fronte sono state superate da quelle di New York e di Chicago.

The benefit of Diaz's visit to the immense Italian colonies from one end of America to the other is incalculable. The unfortunate divisions that disrupt the masses of our

¹⁴³ "L'opera di Diaz in America," *Corriere della Sera*, December 11, 1921.

conationals abroad with the reflections of the party struggles in the fatherland have been healed as if by a miracle around the general. They form a single front of magnificent Italianness, a maximum brotherhood. The humble among the humble of our emigration have felt the pride of their origin and displayed with pride the national badge. The common passion for the distant fatherland is in them reawakened in grandiose forms. The welcomes that Diaz had in Rome and Naples returning from the front were surpassed by those of New York and Chicago.¹⁴⁴

Even more important from an ethnological point of view was the phenomenon that the *Corriere* writer described as “la fusione tra gli italiani e gli americani” (the fusion between the Italians and the Americans):

Ogni italiano agitava due bandiere: quella della Patria di origine e quella della Patria di adozione. Sopra miriadi di bimbi italiani delle scuole era uno sventolio di tricolori e di bandiere stellate. In questa circostanza si è confermato come l’italianità sia elemento non di contrasto ma di consolidazione nella società americana. Gli omaggi resi dalla popolazione americana a Diaz hanno avuto enorme influenza nell’anima della colonia italiana stringendo sempre più i vincoli sentimentali tra le due razze.

Every Italian waved two flags, that of the fatherland of origin and that of the fatherland of adoption. Above myriads of Italian schoolchildren was a waving of tricolors and starred banners. In this circumstance it was confirmed that Italianness is an element not of contrast but of consolidation in American society. The tributes paid by the American population to Diaz had enormous influence in the soul of the Italian colony, tightening always more the sentimental bonds between the two races.¹⁴⁵

One final noteworthy aspect of this article is its portrayal of the event as representing broader American acceptance of the Italian immigrant population. The article is again worth quoting at length:

Molti malintesi si sono dissipati, come quello che manteneva gli irlandesi ostili agli italiani in America. Dopo il discorso del vescovo irlandese di New York magnificante l’azione dell’Italia pronunciato alla cerimonia per il Soldato Ignoto italiano nella chiesa cattolica, gli irlandesi si sono voltati verso gli italiani con amicizia senza precedenti. I giornali che erano stati sempre ostili oppure non curanti per l’Italia scrivono articoli pieni di simpatia.

Many misunderstandings have dissipated, like that which kept the Irish hostile to the Italians in America. After the speech of the Irish bishop of New York magnifying the

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

action of Italy pronounced at the ceremony for the Italian unknown soldier in the Catholic Church, the Irish turned towards the Italians with unprecedented friendship. The newspapers that had always been hostile or not caring for Italy now write articles full of sympathy.¹⁴⁶

When one considers the article on Diaz's visit in its totality, a clearer picture emerges of the Italian American community on the eve of Mussolini's rise to power. The article demonstrated the way in which Italians in the U.S. could be reimagined as Italian *Americans* in the eyes of the American public: once a despised ethnic group, now they were candidates worthy of consideration to be added to the American ethnic mosaic. In this way the article shed light on the reconceptualization of Italians in the U.S. and the process of ethnogenesis by which the Italian Americans emerged as an ethnic group. Within this context the Italians in America did not need to choose between an Italian or American identity. In fact, pride in the homeland could exist alongside a newfound patriotism for the United States. To Italians reading back home, this *Corriere* article presented a hopeful picture of the Italians in the U.S. as both faithful Italians and dutiful, respected Americans.¹⁴⁷

During this time immediately before the rise of Mussolini a tension existed within the Italian community in the U.S., a tension between the immigrant parents and the American-born children, between Old World values and New World realities, between the weathered, sage-like peasant generation of southern Italy and a newly emerging, properly *Italian American* ethnic grouping, aware of its people's difficult past but eager to overcome challenges and prove itself worthy of forming a newly integral part of the wider American community. This was the situation in Italian America when Benito Mussolini came to power; claiming to be the savior of

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

Italy, he was the leader who, in the eyes of many, would bring a sense of pride to Italian Americans just at the time in which they had finally begun to find a place in American society.

The March on Rome that brought Mussolini to power took place in late October 1922 and the new Italian leader reached out to the expatriate nation abroad several days later. A *Corriere* article from November 5 reprinted Mussolini's messages both to the Italians of North America and of the Levant. Such an initiative on Mussolini's part proved the extent to which he viewed Italians across the globe as part of his nation and its imperial project, but the words of the message also pointed clearly to the then novel idea of dual nationality, and to the middle ground in which the Italians in America found themselves. The message is worth quoting at length:

Nel quarto anniversario della vittoria, mi è caro inviarvi un messaggio augurale, o italiani che vivete nell'America del Nord. Come la giovinezza uscita vittoriosa dalle trincee si è stretta in fascio ed è riuscita a dare alla Nazione un ritmo di vita degno della vittoria, così voi dovete stringervi, nel nome d'Italia, in un fascio ideale, che esprima tutta la vostra forza e faccia sentire con adeguata energia la virtù della gente italiana anche fuori dei confini della Patria. Così riuniti voi coopererete con maggiore alacrità alla prosperità, non solo vostra, ma di codesta nobile Nazione che vi ospita e di cui voi siete un elemento fattivo non trascurabile. Più grande ed augusta è uscita l'Italia da Vittorio Veneto, e questa rinnovata coscienza deve darvi la fierezza di sentirvi italiani e di portare alto dovunque il nome d'Italia. Viva l'Italia! Viva l'America!

On the fourth anniversary of the victory, it is dear to me to send you a message of good wishes, O Italians who live in North America. Just as the youth emerged victorious from the trenches has tightened itself in a collective and has managed to give to the nation a pace of life worthy of the victory, so you must tighten yourselves, in the name of Italy, in an ideal collective, which expresses all your strength and makes felt with adequate energy the virtue of the Italian people also outside the borders of the fatherland. Thus gathered you will cooperate with greater alacrity towards prosperity, not only yours, but of this noble nation that hosts you and of which you are an active element, not negligible. Italy came out of Vittorio Veneto greater and more august, and this renewed awareness must give you all the pride to feel Italian and to carry high everywhere the name of Italy. Long live Italy! Long live America!¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ "Messaggi dell'on. Mussolini agli italiani dell'America del Nord e del Levante," *Corriere della Sera*, November 5, 1922.

In this message Mussolini utilized the vocabulary of war to articulate Italy's renewed greatness in the wake of the recent victory. According to Mussolini, just as the Italian nation had (supposedly) united itself behind fascism, so too must the Italians abroad have united in order to express the strength of the global nation abroad. In addition to these themes of renewal and pride Mussolini stressed the role that Italians were to play as dutiful subjects of the United States. In this way, it was made clear both to Italians in America and in the homeland that it was up to the expatriate nation to represent Italy abroad while also forming an integral part of the host nation in which it found itself; such words spoke both to the manipulative impulse of Mussolini in seeking to take advantage of his citizens abroad, but also to the transnational space the Italians in America occupied during the advent of fascism in Italy.¹⁴⁹

During this early period of Italian fascism the American political and economic elite largely applauded the leadership of the new Italian leader. Because so many abroad saw Mussolini as the strong man of discipline and order needed to set things straight in an Italy ravaged by social conflict after the war, his leadership was the subject of widespread praise.¹⁵⁰ The *Corriere* reported for instance that the U.S. Steel founder Elbert Henry Gary referred to Mussolini as an “‘uomo forte ed onesto, campione della restaurazione e della disciplina non solo dell’Italia, ma di tutto il mondo’” (strong and honest man, champion of the restoration and of the discipline not only of Italy but of the whole world) and that when meeting with the Italian leader Gary focused especially on the economic angle, telling Mussolini “‘che sotto la sua guida l’Italia troverà quell’assestamento e quell’ordine che sono sicure garanzie di benessere economico (that

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Positive opinions of Mussolini among Americans of various backgrounds during this early period of fascism are well documented in countless sources but for an extensive background to Mussolini's popularity in America see Chapters 2-4 in John P. Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism: The View from America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), 22-73.

under his leadership Italy will find that settlement and order that are sure guarantees of economic well-being).¹⁵¹

Mussolini also impressed then-President of the New York State Chamber of Commerce, Irving T. Bush, who, before asking personally for an autographed photo of the Italian leader, was quoted by the *Corriere* as having stated “che gli ambienti commerciali e finanziari americani seguono con simpatia e con piena fiducia l’opera coraggiosa di rinnovazione e di risanamento del Governo fascista” (that American commercial and financial circles follow with sympathy and full confidence the courageous work of renewal and reorganization of the fascist government).¹⁵² Even the U.S. Secretary of Labor, James Davis, was quoted in the *Corriere* saying that, with a leader such as Mussolini, “che... ha per programma ordine, disciplina e lavoro, [l’Italia] non può non arridere un brillantissimo futuro” (who... has as his program order, discipline, and work, [Italy] cannot fail to have a very brilliant future).¹⁵³

Opinions such as these provided a boost to Italian national prestige, and the widespread belief that Mussolini had revitalized Italy gave “a new sense of pride and self-respect” to the Italians in the U.S., but it is important to realize that during this early period of fascism not everyone was so enthusiastic about the new Italian political order.¹⁵⁴ It is true that Mussolini was successful early on in promoting groups of Italian *fasci* abroad to support the work of

¹⁵¹ “I ricevimenti al ‘re dell’acciaio’ a Roma,” *Corriere della Sera*, March 26, 1923; “Il ‘re dell’acciaio’ ricevuto dal Re da Mussolini e dal Papa,” *Corriere della Sera*, March 25, 1923.

¹⁵² “Personalità americane a Roma ricevute dall’on. Mussolini,” *Corriere della Sera*, May 20, 1923.

¹⁵³ “La simpatia per l’emigrante italiano del ministro americano Davis,” *Corriere della Sera*, July 26, 1923.

¹⁵⁴ Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 79; for more on early Italian American anti-fascism see Chapter 6 “The Italian-American Anti-Fascist Resistance” in Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 111-143.

fascism;¹⁵⁵ one *Corriere* article in particular spoke of a meeting between the U.S. ambassador to Italy, Richard Washburn Child, himself a supporter of the Mussolini regime, and a fascist official involved with the *fasci* abroad, in which the latter spoke of the groups of *fasci* as an element not of civil discord but of stability in the face of Italian American communist threats to both the U.S. and Italy.¹⁵⁶ But the very fact that there were Italian American communists to be combatted by the *fasci* signified that there were pockets of opposition to Mussolini within the Italian American community.

In such a heated political climate tensions sometimes erupted, such as they did in mid-September 1924 in New York City. As a *Corriere* article reported, the fascist politician and aviator Antonio Locatelli was in the U.S. at the time and as he was exiting a theatre in New York, a crowd of Italian antifascists had gathered, surrounding him. Locatelli himself was surrounded by guards and police but that did not stop a would-be assassin from attempting to stab the politician; a policeman instead suffered three stabbings from the incident. The act of violence itself was revealing, but looking at the bigger picture it was the very demonstration of protest that testified to the existence of an anti-fascist sentiment.¹⁵⁷

The *Corriere* did make clear that this attack should not have taken away from the welcome that the vast majority of Italian Americans had given to Locatelli, and the writers stated the following regarding the attack:

Siamo certi che la colonia italiana di New York ha già dimostrato col suo contegno una profonda indignazione per il tentativo criminoso emesso da un gruppo il quale è venuto

¹⁵⁵ See more on the Fascist League of North America in Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 88-94 and Gaetano Salvemini, *Italian Fascist Activities in the United States*, ed. Philip V. Cannistraro (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1977), 11-21.

¹⁵⁶ "La questione dei beni ex-tedeschi, I fasci nel Nord-America," *Corriere della Sera*, March 29, 1923.

¹⁵⁷ "Fallito attentato a New York contro l'on. Locatelli," *Corriere della Sera*, September 18, 1924; "I particolari dell'aggressione," *Corriere della Sera*, September 18, 1924.

meno anche al suo dovere verso la città che lo ospita e, facendo vittima del suo bieco furore un agente della pubblica sicurezza, accresce il risentimento del pubblico americano. Questa indignazione è certamente sentita in Italia senza distinzione di partito.

We are sure that the Italian colony of New York has already demonstrated with its demeanor a profound indignation for the criminal attempt made by a group which has also failed in its duty towards the city that hosts it and, making a victim of its sinister fury an agent of public security, it increases the resentment of the American public. This indignation is certainly felt in Italy without any distinction of party.

It is credible that most Italian Americans disapproved of the violent actions of the minority, but the very fact that some had gathered to protest the presence of a fascist representative shows that not all approved of Mussolini's political project.¹⁵⁸

The *Corriere* also reported on an instance one year later in Newark, New Jersey in which a conflict between Italian fascists and socialists ended with an injury to Count Thaon de Revel, the head of the Fascist League of North America.¹⁵⁹ This scuffle had international implications as well for the *Corriere* noted that an Italian socialist politician, Vincenzo Vacirca, was implicated and arrested in the aftermath of the conflict. Such an incident spoke to the way in which ideological struggles in the homeland were reflected within immigrant communities abroad. But, despite these instances of protest on the part of some in the Italian American community, the fact remained that most accepted the new prime minister of their homeland.¹⁶⁰ Although Italians back home read about some occasional instances of protest and disapproval, their image of the Italians in the U.S. was much more influenced by the voices of approval

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ For more on the Piedmontese nobleman see Salvemini, *Italian Fascist Activities in the United States*, 16, 36.

¹⁶⁰ Mangione and Morreale, *La Storia*, 318.

emanating from the expatriate citizenry, and this tendency would only increase in the years to come.¹⁶¹

3.3 Mussolini as Redeemer of the Italian Americans

For centuries the peoples of the Italian peninsula dealt with a sort of inferiority complex, brought on by various factors such as foreign domination, division and rivalry between the Italian states, and economic and political stagnation, at least compared with the rising empires of northwestern Europe. As Silvana Patriarca noted in her book *Italian Vices: Nation and Character from the Risorgimento to the Republic*, these feelings of collective inferiority did not necessarily dissipate upon the foundation of the Italian national state; in fact, these discursive trends regarding the conceptualization of the Italian people continued on, even up until the present day, and have affected both how the Italians were perceived by others and how they perceived themselves. She discussed too however the way in which Benito Mussolini sought to remake Italians according to his own vision; what was before known to be an individualistic, indolent, and backward nation would be regenerated through the remaking of a new Italian man, focused on work, militarism, and sacrifice for the nation. Of course Mussolini would eventually fail in this mission, but early successes of fascist governance, combined with skillful use of propaganda, communicated to the Italian people and others throughout the world the idea that Italy in fact was being remade according to fascist ideals. And it was not only Italians in the homeland who would be affected by this, but the expatriate citizenry abroad as well.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ “L’on. Vacirca arrestato a New York per il conflitto fra italiani a Newark,” *Corriere della Sera*, September 4, 1925.

¹⁶² For greater context on this “inferiority complex” and Mussolini’s aim of regenerating the Italians see the opening pages of Chapter 5 “A difficult substance to modify” in Silvana Patriarca, *Italian Vices: Nation and Character from the Risorgimento to the Republic*

One phenomenon that demonstrated the apparent shift by which the Italian nation experienced a transformation from a sense of collective shame to pride was that of emigration. For decades emigration, its causes and consequences were debated by Italians. Some viewed emigration as a source of national shame to be combatted, while others considered it to be a necessary safety valve to relieve pressure on overpopulated regions experiencing hunger; in spite of these differences in opinion, most Italians recognized that emigration was a symptom of deeper social issues and so could only be interpreted in terms of political failure and hence some form of national shame.¹⁶³ But few Italian politicians were ready to challenge the status quo and even those theoretically opposed to emigration accepted the phenomenon. Thus, as the U.S. passed legislation in the 1920s that nearly shut down Italian immigration completely, even Mussolini himself was caught off guard and “scrambled to reopen the flows of migration.”¹⁶⁴

One *Corriere* article from May 1924 covering Mussolini’s meeting with an American journalist gives us an idea of what the fascist leader thought about the newly restrictive U.S. immigration. Mussolini admitted that Italy “non ha sufficienti risorse naturali per alimentare i suoi figli” (doesn’t have sufficient natural resources to feed its own children), which in itself was a brutally honest and humbling statement, at least coming from a nationalist, fascist leader. And he also recognized the Americans’ concerns regarding immigration, granting that it would be unjust to ask the U.S. to accept diseased, crazy, or dangerous Italians.¹⁶⁵

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 133-136; for more on this “inferiority complex” among Italian Americans and its relation to the community’s receptivity to fascism see Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 79.

¹⁶³ For a brief introduction to differing views on emigration see Clark, *Modern Italy*, 199-200.

¹⁶⁴ Choate, *Emigrant Nation*, 216-217.

¹⁶⁵ “I problemi vitali dell’Italia,” *Corriere della Sera*, May 25, 1924.

But even more important for us is the way in which Mussolini's disapproval of the immigration restriction found expression in light of his views on the history and significance of the Italian presence in the U.S.:

Un gran numero di italiani si sono recati in America, sono dichiarati leali cittadini americani, hanno combattuto per l'America e tuttavia riconoscono e amano l'Italia. Questi italo-americani, come noi li consideriamo, costituiscono un prezioso anello di congiunzione fra le nostre civiltà e una forza di integrazione per il mondo. Questi nostri cittadini che vanno in America e ritornano a noi influiscono grandemente sulla conoscenza reciproca italo-americana, e tutto ciò che serve a promuovere questa conoscenza è un beneficio per ambedue i paesi.

A large number of Italians have gone to America, have been declared loyal American citizens, have fought for America and still recognize and love Italy. These Italian Americans, as we consider them, constitute a precious link between our civilizations and a force of integration for the world. These citizens of ours who go to America and return to us influence greatly the reciprocal Italian-American knowledge, and all that is needed to promote this knowledge is a benefit for both countries.¹⁶⁶

To readers of this *Corriere* article, Mussolini appeared as a calm, rational statesman, eager to protect the interests of his citizens and the nation, while understanding of the harsh realities of emigration and immigration. The Italian audience would also have understood how open flows of migration had allowed for the creation of a transnational network of global Italians that their fascist leader viewed as bringing benefits to Italians and Americans alike; Italian Americans therefore were seen to have played a crucial role as cultural mediators and it was thus desirable to maintain open links across the Atlantic so that this people of two nations could continue in such an important position.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ One such Italian-American cultural mediator opposed to U.S. immigration restrictions was the future Mayor of New York, Fiorello La Guardia; although fascist propaganda would later portray him in a negative light due to his antifascist stance during WWII, his image in fascist Italy at the time of his election as mayor in 1933 was such that the Turin-based, fascist-leaning newspaper *La Stampa* praised how previously “si battè strenuamente in difesa della nostra razza” (he fought strenuously in defense of our race) against such discriminatory restrictions, see “Fiorello La Guardia eletto Sindaco di New York,” *La Stampa*, November 7, 1933.

However, Mussolini shifted his tone on migration when it became clear the gates to the U.S. had indeed been closed, and fascist rhetoric increasingly turned against Italian emigration; the Mussolini of grand visions accepted this turn of events and in proper fascist fashion focused on eliminating the causes behind emigration in pursuit of the remaking of the Italian nation.¹⁶⁸ The following year, an article appeared in the *Corriere* reflecting this tendency. Titled “Produce di più ed emigrare meno!” (Produce more and emigrate less!), the writer spoke of immigration restrictions around the world, and the possibility of creating work at home to avoid the necessity of emigration: “Se si riesca... a bonificare le secolari paludi Pontine e dell’Agro Romano, quelle del Mezzodi... se si riesca a intensificare le colture incominciando... da quella del grano, i nostri agricoltori sentiranno meno acere il bisogno di abbandonare la Patria affrontando le avventure del suolo straniero e di popoli non amici” (If it is managed... to reclaim the centuries-old Pontine marshes and those of the Agro Romano, those of the South... if it is managed to intensify the crops starting... with that of grain, our farmers will feel less acrid the need to abandon the fatherland facing the adventures of foreign soil and of unfriendly peoples).¹⁶⁹

In fact, in subsequent years, the fascist government would have successes in this regard, reclaiming, for example, the Pontine Marshes and creating work for Italians at home. Eliminating the need for emigration meant finding solutions such as these to problems at home, and while the extent to which Mussolini succeeded in such endeavors is debated by historians, the effect of propaganda certainly contributed to the notion that Italy was remaking itself and improving for the better. Whether it was the draining of the marshes, the battle for grain, the stabilization of the lira, or the diplomatic achievement of the Lateran Pacts, the fascist regime

¹⁶⁸ For more on this turn against emigration see Choate, *Emigrant Nation*, 217 and Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 101.

¹⁶⁹ “Produce di più ed emigrare meno!” *Corriere della Sera*, July 29, 1925.

pointed to countless achievements as signs of Italian renewal and progress. In this way, the combined factors of actual achievement and government propaganda worked together to create an image of a renewed and remade Italy.¹⁷⁰

The image of a revived, strengthened Italy contributed to a change in perception and prestige of the Italian expatriate nation abroad. One *Corriere* article from 1929 spoke clearly to this connection between events in the homeland and their impact on the Italian American community. The article reported on a breakfast in honor of Luigi Barzini, former writer at the *Corriere della Sera*, who some years prior had moved to the U.S. to found his own newspaper, the *Corriere d’America*. Barzini referred to the Italian Americans in the following way: “Le comunità italiane all’estero sono come degli specchi che riflettono la luce che viene da Roma. Quando Roma irradia splendore, lo spirito degli Italiani lontani si accende. L’anima loro rimane spenta se Roma è buia” (The Italian communities abroad are like mirrors that reflect the light that comes from Rome. When Rome radiates splendor, the spirit of the distant Italians lights up. Their souls remain extinguished when Rome is dark). He continued on, noting that his mission in America would have failed terribly if he had been working there twenty years ago, for then Italy was looked on with contempt, as a humiliated nation. Now, he continued, some looked at Italy as a threat to world peace, as a belligerent and aggressive state, but this was not something

¹⁷⁰ American perceptions of fascist success, influenced by propaganda as they were, appear in Diggins’ work, *Mussolini and Fascism*; As for the question of Mussolini’s achievements in his early years, Martin Clark noted that his policies “were geared to political propaganda rather than to real achievement,” and that what few successes he did have were geared ultimately towards militarist national expansion. His assessment is ultimately negative but shared by others such as Christopher Duggan and Denis Mack Smith. For an overview see Chapter 13 “The economy and society under the Fascists” in Clark, *Modern Italy*, 315-334.

to worry about as it only spoke to the respect that a newly strong and disciplined Italy demanded.¹⁷¹

Similar sentiments were expressed in a *Corriere* article from a month later by a New York banker, named “Giorgio MacDonald,” who was accompanying Catholic Archbishop of New York Patrick Hayes on a European trip that included a stay in Rome. MacDonald described at length the way in which the transformation of Italy under Mussolini had worked wonders on Italian society, but the way he related this renewal to the experience of the Italian Americans is particularly important:

Specialmente gli Italiani che vivono negli Stati Uniti d’America rilevano la differenza. Il loro orgoglio nazionale è stato risollevato. Non vi sono più i ‘waps’ o i ‘degos,’ come un tempo l’ingiustizia dei preferiti dal destino usava segnalare il povero emigrante italiano abbandonato dal proprio Paese e perseguitato dall’indifferenza della Nazione che l’ospitava. Ora l’Italiano d’America è fiero della sua origine, e anche se decide d’assumere la cittadinanza americana rimane sempre attaccato alla sua Patria.

Especially the Italians that live in the United States of America notice the difference. Their national pride has been revived. They are no longer the ‘wops’ or the ‘dagos,’ as once the injustice of those preferred by destiny used to indicate the poor Italian emigrant abandoned by his own country and persecuted by the indifference of the nation that hosted him. Now the Italian of America is proud of his origin, and even if he decides to take American citizenship he remains always attached to his fatherland.

In this quote MacDonald spoke to the way in which the increase in Italian national prestige due to the work of Mussolini had rubbed off on the Italian expat community abroad; once humiliated and seen as inferior, Mussolini’s image among Americans as a respected statesman was portrayed as having helped improve Italian Americans’ own prestige in the United States, strengthening their collective self-perception as citizens of a great nation.¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ “Luigi Barzini festeggiato a Roma,” *Corriere della Sera*, October 11, 1929.

¹⁷² “La viva ammirazione per l’Italia del card. Hayes e di un banchiere,” *Corriere della Sera*, November 21, 1929.

One last dimension to highlight regarding this boost in prestige of the Italian Americans in the eyes of the *Corriere* has to do with the provenance of the immigrants and their ancestors. The vast majority of Italians who immigrated to the United States came from southern Italy¹⁷³ and as a result the historiographical discourse on Italian emigration has been intimately intertwined with that of the “Southern Question,” which itself refers to the debate on why certain social, political, and economic problems persisted (and continue to persist) in the Italian south.¹⁷⁴ In the age of social Darwinism and scientific racism, many of those who had contributed to the discourse on Italian inferiority took advantage of the apparent backwardness of south Italy to claim that this more Mediterranean, less European region was in fact racially inferior; complex social phenomena were thus easily explained away in terms of genetics.¹⁷⁵ Such views were relatively common among the American political elite during a time when masses of southern Italians migrated to a largely Anglo-Saxon and Germanic United States starting in the late-nineteenth century.¹⁷⁶

The increase in Italian American prestige during the fascist period demands deeper attention in the context of the “Southern Question,” for Mussolini’s work was perceived to have instilled a sense of pride not only in the bourgeois middle classes but also in poor southern

¹⁷³ Alba, *Italian Americans: Into the Twilight of Ethnicity*, 22.

¹⁷⁴ For an introduction to the “Southern Question” in the context of Italian emigration see Choate, *Emigrant Nation*, 154-157.

¹⁷⁵ For more on the “racialization” of the Southern Question see Chapter 3 “Science and the Codification of Race: Physiognomy and the Politics of Southern Identity” in Aliza S. Wong, *Race and the Nation in Liberal Italy, 1861-1911: Meridionalism, Empire, and Diaspora* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 47-77.

¹⁷⁶ Choate noted “that the United States Immigration Commission labeled northern and southern Italians as separate races, the one ‘desirable’ and the other ‘undesirable,’” as well as the fact that “the Americans cited northern Italian scientists, such as Cesare Lombroso, to prove that southern Italians were biologically inferior,” see Choate, *Emigrant Nation*, 156.

migrants and their descendants in America.¹⁷⁷ Take, for example, an article of the *Corriere* from April 1930, which covered Mussolini's meeting with Italians from North America who were of southern Italian, specifically Pugliese, heritage. Two hundred and sixty Pugliesi of North America were on a trip throughout Italy and the president of the Pugliese Association of North America was particularly impressed by the work and progress carried out for the betterment of his native Puglia and its capital Bari. But it was his idealistic message of renewal and pride in the new Italy under Mussolini that stood out: "La riconoscenza più viva di tutti noi... va al Duce che ha dato la nuova coscienza e il nuovo orgoglio a tutti gli Italiani, e che con la sua politica forte e leale fa rispettare il nome d'Italia in ogni Paese del mondo" (The deepest gratitude of all of us... goes to the leader who has given new consciousness and new pride to all the Italians, and who with his strong and loyal policy makes the name of Italy respected in every country of the world). The *Corriere* article continued, noting how Mussolini replied to the Pugliesi, reminding them to never forget their fatherland and to speak of Italian progress to those in the United States, remaining always obedient to the laws of that country. These Italian Americans of southern Italian heritage did not necessarily speak for the whole community, but they did communicate a popular belief among southern Italians of the time: Italy was in the process of renewal and even the south was benefitting both materially and spiritually from such progress.¹⁷⁸

Outside observers too noted the progress Mussolini had made in remaking the southern Italian people. Ex-Romanian Minister of Justice, Stelian Popescu, for example, was quoted in the *Corriere* on this topic of renewal:

¹⁷⁷ For more on Mussolini's popularity as related to the southern-Italian background of most Italian Americans, see Stanislao Pugliese's notion of fascism as an "ideology of compensation" in William J. Connell and Stanislao G. Pugliese, eds., *The Routledge History of Italian Americans*, 350-353.

¹⁷⁸ "I pugliesi del Nord America ricevuti dal Capo del Governo," *Corriere della Sera*, April 15, 1930.

Mussolini ha distrutto l'indolenza caratteristica degli uomini del Sud, ha suscitato negli Italiani il desiderio, il piacere del lavoro intenso e il lavoro infatti si è diffuso in Italia come d'incanto... L'emigrazione è cessata; gli Italiani che avevano emigrato in America, in Francia, Germania e Belgio ritornano ai loro focolari, dove lavorano con amore, non lasciando un palmo di terreno improduttivo.

Mussolini has destroyed the indolence typical of of the men of the South, he has aroused in the Italians the desire, the pleasure of intense work and the work has in fact spread throughout Italy as if by magic... Emigration has ceased; the Italians who had emigrated to America, France, Germany, and Belgium return to their homes, where they work with love, not leaving a handful of unproductive soil.¹⁷⁹

Of course, such comments revealed deep prejudices and stereotypes about southern Italians. But for this investigation these thoughts are important for the way in which they revealed an emergent discursive trend by which southern Italians were interpreted as having been remade according to the Mussolinian image. Of concern for our purposes should not be the veracity of such claims; our focus is on the *perception* of renewal that gained acceptance throughout the world, and that in this way they had a strong impact on the way Italian Americans of southern Italian heritage were perceived during the age of fascism.

As the fascist regime began to consolidate its control over Italian society, it helped contribute to the formation of a broad consensus among Italians at home and abroad that Italy was making progress; pockets of dissent nonetheless presented Mussolini's Italy with a unique challenge. Emilio Gentile spoke of the way in which Mussolini and the fascist party attempted to monopolize the myth of the nation: this strategy entailed the conflation of fascism with the Italian nation, to the extent that even citizenship itself was dependent on one's acceptance of fascism. Anti-fascists thus experienced a "denationalization" and many were stripped of full

¹⁷⁹ "L'infaticabile opera del Duce esaltata da un ex-ministro romeno," *Corriere della Sera*, February 12, 1933.

citizenship and sent into exile as *fuorusciti* for taking a stance that was seen as diametrically opposed to the nation.¹⁸⁰

A *Corriere* article from 1925 shed greater light on this strategy; it covered official legislation that aimed to grant the fascist government the ability to strip Italian dissidents abroad, the *fuorusciti*, of their citizenship. Coverage of then-Minister of Justice Alfredo Rocco's speech during the legislative sessions is particularly revealing: "Concludendo, dichiara che si tratta di una legge non di persecuzione, ma di difesa. Essa deve distinguere tra l'immensa maggioranza degli italiani che onorano col loro lavoro l'Italia all'estero e la piccola minoranza di fuorusciti avventurieri che, non più italiani nell'anima, non debbono esserlo nemmeno nella legge" (In conclusion, he declares that it is not a law of persecution, but of defense. It must distinguish between the immense majority of Italians who honor Italy abroad with their work and the small minority of exiled adventurers who, no longer Italian in the soul, must not be so neither in the law).¹⁸¹ Not only did this article depict in vivid terms the discursive deconstruction of Italian anti-fascists' *italianità*, but its portrayal of the Italian dissidents abroad as a tiny, disruptive, anti-Italian minority was characteristic of discourse for years to come.¹⁸²

Newspaper coverage in the *Corriere* of violent actions on the part of dissidents likewise reinforced the notion that the Italian American anti-Mussolini radicals were a small, dangerous

¹⁸⁰ Gentile, *La Grande Italia*, 143-146, 165; for more on *fuorusciti* in the Italian American context see section titled "Fascists and Anti-fascists" in Mangione and Morreale, *La Storia*, 315-322.

¹⁸¹ "L'approvazione delle nuove leggi fasciste alla Camera," *Corriere della Sera*, November 29, 1925.

¹⁸² Diggins points to the fact that Italian American anti-fascists were a small minority who, because of the conflation of fascism and the Italian nation, "could never successfully attack Mussolini without incurring the stigma of being 'un-Italian,'" see Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 116-117.

minority that was unrepresentative of the larger community.¹⁸³ For example, in the aftermath of an assassination attempt on Mussolini's life, tensions between Italian American fascists and anti-fascists led in one instance to a car bombing that killed one and gravely injured two others. The *Corriere* article reporting on this did not have enough information to state who was responsible but by noting that the victims were fascist sympathizers, and by naming the article "Lo scoppio dell'automobile a New-York provocato da antifascisti per vendetta?" (The explosion of the car in New York caused by antifascists for revenge?), they clearly sought to place blame for such social unrest on what they deemed to be the violent anti-Mussolini segment of the population.¹⁸⁴

Another one of the examples of antifascist violence seized upon by the writers at the *Corriere* during this time appeared in the January 1, 1932 edition of the paper. Titled "L'orrenda serie di attentati dinamitardi organizzati dai senza-patria in America" (The horrendous series of bomb attacks organized by those without a homeland in America), the lengthy article detailed a series of bomb plots throughout the U.S. purportedly organized by antifascists, and these were all discovered just hours after a deadly explosion had taken place at an Easton, Pennsylvania post office; the packages rigged for explosion that went off prematurely were intended for prominent members of the Italian American community who supported the Mussolinian regime. Towards the end of the article the writers drew a connection between antifascism and criminality that spoke to the strategy of fascists in portraying dissidents and criminals as one and the same: "L'orrore per la tragedia di Easton è vivissimo in tutta la Nazione. I giornali riportano i commenti italiani di indignazione, mentre constatano che l'antifascismo si è associato alla

¹⁸³ Diggins stressed that Italian American fascists and anti-fascists alike used violence but it should go without saying that the fascist *Corriere* was bound to overemphasize anti-fascist violence; for Italian American fascist/anti-fascist violence see Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 127-134.

¹⁸⁴ "Lo scoppio dell'automobile a New-York provocato da antifascisti per vendetta?" *Corriere della Sera*, September 14, 1926.

criminalità, contro la pace e l'ordine dei Paesi dove si nasconde” (The horror for the tragedy of Easton is very much alive in the whole nation. The newspapers report Italian comments of indignation, while they note that antifascism is associated with criminality, against the peace and order of the countries in which it hides). It was obviously true that not all Italian American opponents of Mussolini engaged in such violent acts, but it was equally true that those who did only made it easier for Mussolini to portray himself and his whole ideology as prioritizing law, order, and discipline, guaranteeing the protection of ordinary Italians at home and abroad.¹⁸⁵

During the mid 1920s and early 1930s the *Corriere* continually referred to the supposedly tiny, dangerous, antifascist minority that was miniscule in comparison to the Italian American expatriate conationals who were proud of the new Italy. In a February 1926 issue, Giovanni Di Silvestro, then-leader of the Order Sons of Italy in America, was quoted as having stated that, “fatta eccezione per il piccolo sconsigliato gruppo radicale, gli italiani sono cordiali sostenitori dell'on. Mussolini. Per essi... simboleggia lo spirito di una nuova, rinata Italia... Gl'italiani d'America sono orgogliosi dell'on. Mussolini” (With the exception of the small, unrecommended, radical group, the Italians are cordial supporters of the Hon. Mussolini. For them... he symbolizes the spirit of a new, reborn Italy... The Italians of America are proud of the Hon. Mussolini).¹⁸⁶

In a March 1928 *Corriere* article, Italian actor Angelo Musco, upon his return from the U.S., was quoted as follows: “Malgrado tutto... gli Italiani residenti in America sentono la nostalgia della patria e molti già naturalizzati riassumono la cittadinanza per poter venire alcuni mesi all'anno in patria” (Despite everything... Italians resident in America feel the nostalgia of

¹⁸⁵ “L'orrenda serie di attentati dinamitardi organizzati dai senza-patria in America,” *Corriere della Sera*, January 1, 1932.

¹⁸⁶ “Gli italiani d'America al Senato di Washington per la ratifica dell'accordo sul debito,” *Corriere della Sera*, February 25, 1926.

the fatherland and many who were already naturalized reassume their citizenship to be able to spend some months of the year in the fatherland). Musco even visited a factory in the Sicilian quarter of New Orleans, where he said 100 shoemakers work every day there with a portrait of Mussolini kept on display. Regarding dissidents, Musco stated the following:

Se...vi sono degli antinazionali in America, l'antifascismo è costretto a reclutare i suoi gregari nelle più basse sfere della delinquenza, e la parte sana è per fortuna preponderante nella nostra colonia, la quale è volta con sentimento e passione verso la madre patria e ne segue con amore inestinguibile il progresso.

If...there are some antinationals in America, antifascism is forced to recruit its followers in the lowest spheres of delinquency, and the healthy part is fortunately preponderant in our colony, which is turned with feeling and passion towards the mother country and follows with inextinguishable love its progress.

The conflation of antifascism and antinationalism again signified the extent to which fascist rhetoric had integrated the concepts of fascism and nation.¹⁸⁷

Italo Balbo, fascist politician and famed Italian aviator, continued on this theme when he arrived in Naples, Italy after a trip to the United States. In a *Corriere* article from 1929 Balbo was quoted as having stated that his trip was preceded by a threatening campaign against him carried out by the local antifascist newspapers, but that this did not deter him and his compatriots:

L'antifascismo agli Stati Uniti è una nota assolutamente trascurabile. A Nuova York, nella città che mi era stata dipinta come il covo del più acceso antifascismo, ho avuto accoglienze cordialissime. Qualche grido ostile, detto fra l'altro con pronunzia non italiana, quando mi sono recato a far visita al sindaco della città, fu subito represso e soffocato dalle acclamazioni al Duce e al Fascismo.

Antifascism in the United States is an absolutely negligible note. In New York, in the city that had been portrayed to me as the lair of the most heated antifascism, I received a very cordial welcome. Some hostile screams, said among other things with a non-Italian pronunciation, when I went to visit the mayor of the city, were immediately repressed and suffocated by the cheers to the Duce and to Fascism.

¹⁸⁷ “Le impressione americane di Musco,” *Corriere della Sera*, March 20, 1928.

It is worth noting the way in which Balbo described how the few hostile interruptions by antifascists were pronounced in a non-Italian accent; this implied that the only ones who could have disapproved of fascism were foreign, and that it would be unthinkable to hear an antifascist protest coming from an Italian.¹⁸⁸

Balbo continued on, describing how everywhere he went there were Italians ready to express admiration, and a most enthusiastic patriotism for Mussolini and fascism. He noted for example how at just about every station he arrived at there were Italians singing the fascist anthem “Giovinezza” to salute him. But it was his comments on the impact fascism had had on the Italian Americans that are most worthy of note:

Gli Italiani sono dovunque stimati e apprezzati. La loro sobrietà, la loro volontà di lavoro li fanno elementi di primissimo ordine e desiderabilissimi. Moltissimi con il lavoro e l'intelligenza hanno raggiunto alte posizioni economiche e sociali. Essi sentono che il Fascismo ha rinnovato il volto della Patria, che l'Italia per volontà di Mussolini è una grande Potenza che si impone al rispetto del mondo, e trovano in questo loro orgoglio di nazionalità maggiore fiducia per affermarsi in terra straniera. Essi sono sparpagliati dappertutto; non c'è paese senza la piccola colonia italiana, e dappertutto ho visto il tricolore e il ritratto di Mussolini. Negli Stati Uniti, ripeto, non vi è antifascismo.

The Italians are esteemed and appreciated everywhere. Their sobriety, their willingness to work make them elements of the very first order and the most desirable. Many with work and intelligence have reached high economic and social positions. They feel that Fascism has renewed the face of the fatherland, that Italy by the will of Mussolini is a great power that demands the respect of the world, and they find in their pride of nationality greater confidence to assert themselves in a foreign land. They are scattered everywhere; there is no town without a little Italian colony, and everywhere I saw the tricolor and the portrait of Mussolini. In the United States, I repeat, there is no antifascism.¹⁸⁹

Balbo concluded by stating that just about all Italians in the U.S. live in “un’atmosfera ideale, esclusivamente fascista e patriottica” (an ideal atmosphere, exclusively fascist and

¹⁸⁸ “Le calorose accoglienze di Napoli all’on. Balbo reduce dagli Stati Uniti,” *Corriere della Sera*, January 16, 1929.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

patriotic). Balbo clearly exaggerated in his statements¹⁹⁰ but the fact remained that Mussolini and his regime had made a strong impression on Italians at home and abroad. And whether or not this transformation was exaggerated is not the point; what mattered was that fascist propaganda had helped shape public opinion in such a way that reality mattered not nearly as much as appearance and perception, and it was in this sense that the remaking of Italians along fascist lines became the dominant theme of discourse regarding the Italian Americans.¹⁹¹

There is one interesting case in which Mussolini actually attempted to portray himself as coming to the aid of Italian American dissidents abroad. One might find it puzzling to discover that the fascist dictator did actually attempt to act on behalf of the defense of Italian American anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti, especially in light of the fact that the fascist regime was known to crack down on Italian anarchism. But Philip Cannistraro pointed to various factors that help explain why the fascist dictator took actions in favor of their cause. Cannistraro for instance stressed Mussolini's radical left-wing roots as having continued to influence the dictator, allowing him to view Sacco and Vanzetti in a sympathetic light. Perhaps more importantly, there was the nationalist interpretation of the Sacco and Vanzetti case, which ignored the political ideology of the accused and instead stressed their identity as Italian victims of foreign oppression; it was this kind of view that allowed Italian American immigrants to both "rally behind Sacco and Vanzetti while simultaneously exalting Mussolini." By providing such context

¹⁹⁰ Antifascism was not widespread among Italians in the U.S. but it undoubtedly existed, and while Italian Americans were generally supportive of Mussolini Diggins noted most were not ideologically fascist, see Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 106-110.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

Cannistraro allows one to move beyond the apparent paradox of Mussolini's verified attempts to save the lives of two Italian American anarchists.¹⁹²

Of course, many antifascists thought Mussolini had not done enough; one *Corriere* article appearing in print just two weeks prior to the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti opened by attempting to deflect accusations from American antifascist newspapers that the Italian government had not sufficiently worked towards the defense of Sacco and Vanzetti. The writers at the *Corriere* stated that the Italian government had done all it could in such a delicate situation and that, in fact, even if they could have convinced U.S. President Coolidge that the sentencing was unjust, he would not have had the power to alter it. Further down, the article quoted as well from a message sent from Sacco's father to Mussolini himself, in which the father argued for his son's innocence, begging Mussolini to intervene. Mussolini sent his response to the Prefect of Foggia: "Ricevo un telegramma a firma di Michele Sacco, da Torremaggiore, col quale sollecita il mio intervento per salvare il figlio. Voglia comunicare che da molto tempo e assiduamente mi sono occupato della posizione di Sacco e Vanzetti e che ho fatto tutto il possibile, compatibilmente con le regole internazionali, per salvarli dall'esecuzione" (I receive a telegram signed by Michele Sacco, from Torremaggiore, with which he solicits my intervention to save his son. Please communicate that for a long time and assiduously I have dealt with the situation of Sacco and Vanzetti and that I have done everything possible, that is compatible with international rules, to save them from execution).¹⁹³

While Mussolini's response does not necessarily reveal a strong passion to work towards justice for the accused, the fact remained that through such a message he communicated,

¹⁹² Philip V. Cannistraro, "Mussolini, Sacco-Vanzetti, and the Anarchists: The Transatlantic Context," *The Journal of Modern History* 68, no. 1 (1996): 31-62.

¹⁹³ "L'interessamento di Mussolini," *Corriere della Sera*, August 10, 1927.

however calmly, the idea that he did all he could to resolve the issue. Whether Mussolini really did act in favor of justice for Sacco and Vanzetti, and Cannistraro argues that he did, is not as much of a concern to us as the fact that the dictator at least made it appear to be the case that he worked towards this end. As Cannistrato notes, after coming to power Mussolini “believed that support for Sacco and Vanzetti would help to bind Italian-American loyalties to the Fascist regime, which claimed to act as the protector of Italian emigrants abroad.” Because there was widespread sympathy for Sacco and Vanzetti among those in the Italian American community, because they had been so clearly deprived of justice in a foreign land, arguably due in part to their Italian heritage, and because Mussolini had lingering sympathy for radicals who struggled against bourgeois oppression, he had decided that it was a worthy cause to advocate for the Italian American anarchists, though ultimately his actions were to no avail.¹⁹⁴

3.4 Italian American Fascism: Culture and Lived Experience

Before moving on to the later years of the fascist period it will be useful to speak a little more about the situation of the Italian Americans during this middle period of fascism. As stated previously, the consensus in the U.S. was that Mussolini was the leader Italy needed to move the nation forward. Whether it was the Mayor of New York, James Lindsay, saying in 1926 that “l’on. Mussolini è uno dei più grandi statisti che il mondo abbia mai prodotto”¹⁹⁵ (the Hon. Mussolini is one of the greatest statesmen the world has ever produced), or Thomas Edison the following year saying how he admired the Italian leader, referring to him as “l’uomo dinamico che ha dato nuovo impulso alle energie nazionali... un uomo che dorme poco e lavora molto...

¹⁹⁴ Philip V. Cannistraro, “Mussolini, Sacco-Vanzetti, and the Anarchists: The Transatlantic Context,” *The Journal of Modern History* 68, no. 1 (1996): 31-62.

¹⁹⁵ “La consegna di un messaggio di Roma al sindaco di New York,” *Corriere della Sera*, October 13, 1926.

Condottiero provvidenziale”¹⁹⁶ (the dynamic man who has given new impetus to the national energies... a man who sleeps little and works a lot... providential leader), Mussolini was widely acclaimed by those who made up the political, economic, and social elite of America.¹⁹⁷

And the ties between Italy and the United States were to find much deeper expression than through mere expressions of praise. Even in August 1929, the outgoing American ambassador to Italy, Henry Fletcher, was quoted in a *Corriere* article as having stated that Italy-U.S. relations at that time had never been better.¹⁹⁸ But what the Italian historian Manfredi Martelli referred to in his work *Mussolini e L’America: Le Relazioni Italo-Statunitense dal 1922 al 1941* (“Mussolini and America: Italian-U.S. Relations from 1922 to 1941”) as “L’apogeo delle relazioni italo-statunitense” (the apogee of Italian-U.S. relations) was to come a few years later with the election of Franklin Roosevelt to the U.S. presidency. In the words of Martelli, “Quando Roosevelt prese possesso della Casa Bianca nel marzo del 1933 le relazioni fra Italia e Stati Uniti non potevano essere migliori” (When Roosevelt took control of the White House in March 1933 the relations between Italy and the United States could not have been better). At least for the first couple of years of the Roosevelt presidency, Mussolini continued to be looked upon as a moderate, progressive statesman, and a man of peace.¹⁹⁹

This close relationship also had consequences for American domestic political affairs, as the *Corriere* pointed out in several instances. For example, in an article titled “Il vecchio liberalismo economico crolla anche negli Stati Uniti” (The old liberalism collapses also in the

¹⁹⁶ “Un colloquio con Edison nel suo ottantesimo compleanno,” *Corriere della Sera*, February 12, 1927.

¹⁹⁷ For more on American public opinion on Mussolini see Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 59.

¹⁹⁸ “Fletcher ‘ambasciatore onorario’ dell’amicizia italo americana,” *Corriere della Sera*, August 2, 1929.

¹⁹⁹ Manfredi Martelli, *Mussolini e l’America: Le relazioni italo-statunitensi dal 1922 al 1941* [Mussolini and America: Italian-American relations from 1922 to 1941] (Milan: Ugo Mursia Editore, 2006), 114, 149.

United States), Roosevelt's agenda to have the federal government take on a bigger role in society in the aftermath of the market crash was interpreted by the *Corriere* in the following way, worth quoting at length:

Ora tutto ciò che, in politica e in economia, sta vittoriosamente attuando il Presidente Roosevelt rientra nello spirito, nella pratica, nella dottrina fascista. Ed è stato già attuato con successo in Italia, ove il Fascismo ha creato una situazione storica che è centro di propulsione per tutta la vita del nostro secolo... In politica egli [Roosevelt] ha accentrato l'importanza della competenza tecnica, svalutando quella puramente parlamentare. È la dottrina fascista applicata nella sua concezione fondamentale, quella cioè corporativa... Democrazia, parlamentarismo, politicantismo intrigante e imbecille sono invece battuti in pieno da Roosevelt. L'idea fascista giunge dappertutto. Che cosa fa Roosevelt nel campo economico? Il piano che egli ha predisposto prevede pieni poteri presidenziali per accordi tariffari e un grandioso programma di lavori pubblici, combinato con l'unificazione delle principali industrie e il controllo governativo sui prezzi, sui salari, sugli orari di lavoro. È lo Stato insomma che regola, controlla e guida la vita economica nazionale, per poter assicurare nell'interesse generale l'unità d'azione e il coordinamento della produzione e della distribuzione. Per gli Italiani queste non sono idee nuove, perché essi hanno l'orgoglio di vederle già attuate e collaudate con pieno successo da un decennio.

Now all that President Roosevelt is victoriously implementing in politics and economics falls within the spirit, the practice, the fascist doctrine. And it has already been implemented with success in Italy, where Fascism has created a historical situation that is the center of propulsion for the whole life of our century... In politics he [Roosevelt] has centralized the importance of technical competence, devaluing the purely parliamentary one. It is the fascist doctrine applied in its fundamental conception, that is, the corporative one... Democracy, parliamentarianism, intriguing and cowardly opportunism are instead beaten totally by Roosevelt. The fascist idea reaches everywhere. What is Roosevelt doing in the field of economics? The plan that he has prepared foresees full presidential powers for tariff agreements and a grandiose public works program, combined with the unification of the major industries and government control over prices, wages, and working hours. In short, it is the state that regulates, controls, and guides the national economic life, in order to ensure unity of action and coordination of production and distribution in the general interest. For the Italians these are not new ideas, because they have the pride to see them already implemented and tested with full success for a decade.²⁰⁰

The belief that the world was going in the direction of fascist corporativism and collectivism was one expressed throughout the pages of the *Corriere* during this time and whether this notion

²⁰⁰ “Il vecchio liberalismo economico crolla anche negli Stati Uniti,” *Corriere della Sera*, April 16, 1933.

reflected reality or not, the perception was that strong, authoritative states like Mussolini's Italy and Roosevelt's America were leading the way.²⁰¹

This climate of a strong Italian-U.S. political relationship allows one to better contextualize the situation of the Italian Americans during this time; adding to it the role of propaganda that stressed the similarities between the U.S. and Italy, one can begin to see how Italians in the U.S. were able to identify with Italian fascism while continuing their integration into American society.²⁰² As then-Italian Minister of Finance, Count Giuseppe Volpi, noted in December 1925, Italians in the U.S. had already made huge progress in the economic life of the new country, emerging from the lowest social strata towards, in some cases, the highest.²⁰³ And some years later the Italian American Fiorello La Guardia would even be elected to the prestigious office of Mayor of New York.²⁰⁴ But in many if not most cases, this rise in the prestige of the Italian American ethnic group took place alongside an increase in their participation in the global Italian fascist project.

Examples of such participation flood the pages of the *Corriere della Sera* during this middle period of Italian fascism. There were openly fascist organizations in the U.S., such as the Fascist League of North America,²⁰⁵ but there were also mainstream organizations such as the Order Sons of Italy in America, which was itself sympathetic to fascism,²⁰⁶ as a *Corriere* article from September 1929 explained, the latter organization had been openly on the side of the fascist

²⁰¹ See also "Universalità del Fascismo," *Corriere della Sera*, October 4, 1933.

²⁰² Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 98-99.

²⁰³ "Gli italiani in America, Impressioni del ministro Volpi," *Corriere della Sera*, December 4, 1925.

²⁰⁴ Mangione and Morreale, *La Storia*, 402.

²⁰⁵ See more on the Fascist League of North America in Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 88-94.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 94-95.

movement for years.²⁰⁷ But also outside of official Italian-American institutions, there was no shortage of open support for Italian fascism. Take, for instance, the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the March on Rome that brought Mussolini and fascism to power; one *Corriere* article described celebrations among Italian Americans taking place in New York, where the Order Sons of Italy organized a large gathering, as well as in Philadelphia, during which prominent Italian American figures spoke in between tunes of fascist songs and cheers of admiration and enthusiasm for Mussolini.²⁰⁸ Even a commemoration of Giuseppe Garibaldi at Columbia University in New York turned into a rally of support for Mussolini; the *Corriere* spoke of a ceremony dedicated to the Italian general, organized by the Dante Alighieri Society, during which more than 1500 Italian Americans heard the Italian ambassador to the U.S. speak of the historical continuity of *italianità* represented by the figures of Dante, Garibaldi, and, of course, Mussolini, who was said to have completed the work of the Risorgimento that had been championed by the Italian general.²⁰⁹ Instances such as these were seized upon by the writers at the *Corriere* to impress upon Italians back home the notion that the expatriate nation abroad was playing an important role in sustaining fascist, Italian culture abroad.

In the homeland Italian Americans were likewise connecting with fascist Italy in significant ways. The transnational dimension of Italian American support for fascism became especially clear when the Italians resident in the U.S. traveled to Italy in order to witness firsthand the transformations wrought by the Mussolini regime. For example, at Palazzo Chigi Mussolini received the head of the press office of the Fascist League of North America; a *Corriere* article spoke of Mussolini's great interest in the work of the group, as well his gift of a

²⁰⁷ "I 'Figli d'Italia' a Milano," *Corriere della Sera*, September 12, 1929.

²⁰⁸ "Una grande adunata a Nuova York," *Corriere della Sera*, October 31, 1932.

²⁰⁹ "Garibaldi commemorato a Nuova York," *Corriere della Sera*, June 13, 1932.

photo dedicated “‘Alle Camicie nere di Nuova York’” (To the blackshirts of New York).²¹⁰ Also some articles in the *Corriere* from 1929 announced that over 1,000 Italian Americans were to arrive that summer to reconnect with the fatherland, pay homage to Mussolini, and witness the progress being made under fascism. Organized by the Order Sons of Italy, the trip would provide Italian Americans with the opportunity to visit the main Italian cities, historically significant battlefields, as well as the birthplace of the Duce himself in the town of Predappio.²¹¹

Towards the end of this trip, the leadership of the Order Sons of Italy met with Mussolini as well as the Vice-governor of Rome. As usual there were friendly exchanges of praise for the work that was being done on both sides for the betterment of the global Italian nation. But particularly significant was the speech of Giovanni Di Silvestro, the head of the Order Sons of Italy:

Tornando in America potremo sentirci più fieri del nostro passato, del lavoro che il popolo italiano compie sotto la guida del Duce, dei propositi arditi per il futuro. Nel congedarmi vi faccio una promessa che sento di poter fare anche a nome delle centinaia di migliaia di Figli d'Italia: e cioè che tornando in America ci faremo ambasciatori di questa nuova Italia che dà a noi nuovi motivi di orgoglio.

Returning to America we will be able to feel more proud of our past, of the work that the Italian people accomplish under the leadership of the Duce, of the bold intentions for the future. In taking my leave I make you all a promise that I feel I can also make on behalf of hundreds of thousands of children of Italy: and that is that returning to America we will make ourselves ambassadors of this new Italy that gives us new reasons for pride.²¹²

Through such words Di Silvestro communicated to conationals back home his determination to spread the good news regarding progress in fascist Italy; though this Italian American figure was

²¹⁰ “I rapporti fra Sindacati e Partito,” *Corriere della Sera*, May 6, 1927.

²¹¹ “Mille fascisti del Nord-America visiteranno quest'estate l'Italia,” *Corriere della Sera*, April 9, 1929; “La prossima visita all'Italia di 1500 Italiani del Nord America,” *Corriere della Sera*, June 23, 1929.

²¹² “I ‘Figli d'Italia’ ricevuti dal Duce e dal vicegovernatore di Roma,” *Corriere della Sera*, September 24, 1929.

not necessarily representative of the whole community, people like him helped push public opinion in the U.S. towards a positive image of Italy under Mussolini.²¹³

Also worthy of note is the role that young Italian Americans played in representing ideals of fascist youth abroad. Even though these children were in most cases born and raised in the U.S., their participation in the global fascist project made them appear to Italians back home to be just another branch of the new generation of the transnational fatherland. This process of indoctrination started at home, that is, in Italian colonies in the U.S.²¹⁴ One *Corriere* article for example stressed the role of the teachers at Italian schools abroad; it was they who would “diffondano all'estero la nuova civiltà di Mussolini e facciano dei figli dei nostri emigrati dei sani Italiani e dei fedeli fascisti” (spread overseas the new civilization of Mussolini and make the children of our emigrants healthy Italians and faithful fascists).²¹⁵ Perhaps it spoke to the success of such a policy that in at least one case a 15-year-old Italian American from New York apparently had been instilled with such passion for fascist Italy that, according to a *Corriere* article, he had fled home, stowing away in a ship bound for Naples, “poichè era suo desiderio vedere l'Italia e il Duce” (as it was his desire to see Italy and the Duce).²¹⁶ Regardless of the veracity of such a story, it speaks to the cultural milieu of this moment in Italian and Italian American history, in which such strong passions that were daily aroused by the social discourse very well could have had such an impact on a teenaged Italian American of the time.

Some Italian American youth were lucky enough to spend time vacationing in the land of their ancestors, as was the case for 164 Italian American children travelling with members of the

²¹³ For more on Di Silvestro see Salvemini, *Italian Fascist Activities in the United States*, 11-14.

²¹⁴ See Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 99-100.

²¹⁵ “Le scuole italiane all'estero,” *Corriere della Sera*, September 7, 1929.

²¹⁶ “Fugge dall'America a Napoli per vedere l'Italia e il Duce,” *Corriere della Sera*, May 24, 1932.

Fascist League of North America during the Summer of 1929; one can imagine the joy of such children playing on the beaches of Napoli and Palermo, of course after having already paid homage to Mussolini and the American ambassador in Rome.²¹⁷ Sponsored trips for young Italian Americans to visit the land of their ancestors were nothing new,²¹⁸ but during the fascist period they took on greater significance, functioning as opportunities for the regime to propagate fascist ideology and bind Italian American youth to the renewed homeland.²¹⁹

Others were resigned only to dream of such opportunities, as in the case of young Italian Americans quoted in the *Corriere* for their responses to the following question: “Perchè vi piacerebbe andare in Italia?” (Why would you like to go to Italy?). Some students, like Arthur Roldo of De Witt Clinton High School, cited the usual reasons: “L’Italia, come mia madre l’ha descritta, è un vero paradiso. È una terra dove il sole risplende sempre e dove tutti stanno bene” (Italy, as my mother has described it, is a true paradise. It is a land where the sun always shines and where everyone is well).²²⁰

Others spoke eloquently about their feeling of belonging to a homeland, as did Inez Labate of Washington Irving High School:

Prima di tutto, siccome i miei genitori sono italiani di nascita, io mi sento vero italiano, nonostante sia nato in America. Mi sento tanto orgoglioso di essere italiano che quando mi domandano: ‘Di che nazione è lei?’ io rispondo sempre: italiano. Io ho molto amore per l’Italia ed è questo sentimento che rende piacevole il desiderio di andare (posso dire) nella mia patria.

First of all, since my parents are Italian by birth, I feel truly Italian, despite being born in America. I feel so proud to be Italian that when people ask me: ‘What country are you

²¹⁷ “164 fanciulli italo-americani in viaggio per le spiagge di Napoli e di Palermo,” *Corriere della Sera*, July 6, 1929.

²¹⁸ See for instance “Studenti italo-americani visitano l’Italia,” *La Stampa*, July 17, 1922.

²¹⁹ Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 100; see also section titled “Summer Vacation and Tours in Italy” in Salvemini, *Italian Fascist Activities in the United States*, 132-134.

²²⁰ “Perchè i piccoli italo-americani vogliono vedere l’Italia,” *Corriere della Sera*, September 16, 1932.

from?’ I always respond: Italian. I have much love for Italy and it is this feeling that makes pleasurable my desire to go (I can say) to my fatherland.²²¹

Finally, some spoke of their interest in Italy as being related to their interest in the Duce and his role as leader of the nation. “Ho sempre desiderato di andare in Italia perchè è la terra dove nacquero Dante, Cristoforo Colombo, Leonardo da Vinci, dove morirono Byron e Shelley e perchè è la terra di Mussolini” (I have always desired to go to Italy because it is the land where Dante, Christopher Columbus, and Leonardo da Vinci were born, where Byron and Shelley died, and because it is the land of Mussolini), said Madeline Calise of Immacolata High School.²²²

Lucy Robbindo of Washington Irving High School stated that she would like to visit Italy because it was the country of her parents, and because she wanted to see the beautiful cities and the way children learned in schools, but the way she concluded was revealing: “Poi vorrei che mi spiegassero come funziona il Governo di Mussolini che tanto mi interessa” (Then I would like for them to explain to me how Mussolini’s government functions, as it interests me so much).²²³

Raymond di Prima of New Utrecht High School spoke of how it would be a dream for him to visit Italy; his first idea would be to study and admire the life of the peasant farmers. But his greatest interest lay elsewhere: “L’unica cosa che mi interessa è di fare la conoscenza di Mussolini: è un uomo che ha fatto tanto per la nostra nazione” (The only thing that interests me is to get to know Mussolini: he is a man who has done so much for our nation). The fact that Raymond mentioned his interest in meeting the King of Italy and the Pope *after* having mentioned Mussolini, and in a much less enthusiastic way, was telling in itself; but perhaps it was equally important that he referred to Italy as *his* nation, for this implied that he saw Mussolini as *his* leader. While these thoughts of Italian American youth were handpicked for

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid.

publication by *Corriere* writers sympathetic to fascism, they do shed light on social dynamics at play in Italian expatriate communities in the U.S. and the way that indoctrination had an impact on youth starting from a very young age.²²⁴

On a cultural level, symbolic acts representing Italian American pride worked to reinforce the bond that tied this ethnic group to both nations. For example, the *Corriere* highlighted several instances of Italian Americans taking part in celebrating the birth of Rome on April 21st; because the ancient city of imperial might played a recurring, symbolic role in Italian fascist mythology, these were in fact occasions to celebrate Mussolini's "new Rome" as the reincarnation of Italian power and prestige.²²⁵

Many *Corriere* articles also discussed the friendly exchange of monuments across the Atlantic. There was the proposal on the part of the American ambassador to Italy to erect a monument in Rome dedicated to fallen Italian American soldiers of the First World War, an offer on the part of Italians in the U.S. to build a monumental altar to Mussolini that would be located on the Janiculum Hill, as well as the donation on the part of Mussolini to the city of Chicago of an ancient Roman column found in excavations at Ostia, a symbol that would serve as a reminder to Italian Americans of the glory of ancient, imperial Rome.²²⁶

The 1932 Los Angeles Summer Olympics provided another opportunity for Italians in the U.S. to reconnect with their renewed fatherland: one *Corriere* article noted how the entire Italian colony of Los Angeles came out to greet the Italian athletes, with many described as being

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ "Il Natale di Roma festeggiato a Nuova York," *Corriere della Sera*, April 23, 1927; "Il Natale di Roma a Pittsburg," *Corriere della Sera*, April 25, 1928; "La celebrazione del Natale di Roma all'Asmara e fra gli Italiani all'estero," *Corriere della Sera*, April 23, 1933.

²²⁶ "Un banchetto ai legionari americani," *Corriere della Sera*, September 30, 1927; "Un'ara monumentale dedicata al Duce," *Corriere della Sera*, March 27, 1928; "La colonna donata dal Duce a Chicago verrà inaugurata il 15 luglio," *Corriere della Sera*, June 30, 1934.

dressed in blackshirts and shouting cheers for Italy and Mussolini, and another article stated that when the Italian olympians departed from New York and Boston they were saluted by crowds of enthusiastic Italian Americans, to the tunes of the Italian and American national anthems, as well as the main anthem of fascism, “Giovinezza.”²²⁷

Perhaps the most prominent of symbolic figures however was the man who united the two hemispheres hundreds of years prior, the original Italian American and the man who commanded the respect of both Italians and Americans of the early-twentieth century: Christopher Columbus. Italians in the U.S. had celebrated the achievements of Columbus for years and had attempted to utilize his legacy as Italian pioneer of the Americas to gain acceptance and respect among Anglo-Saxon Americans during a time when Italians were oppressed and seen as inferior. Columbus to the Italian Americans was not just a historical figure representing Italian culture and progress, but symbolically came to be seen as a guarantor of *italianità* abroad who had legitimized Italian presence in the land he had discovered.²²⁸

During the age of fascism celebrations of Columbus took on added significance.²²⁹ For instance, a *Corriere* article covering Columbus Day celebrations in New York in October 1931 noted that, while the Italian and American national anthems were played during the ceremony, the crowd at the end began to sing the fascist anthem “Giovinezza,” with enthusiastic Italians

²²⁷ “Gli azzurri sono a Los Angeles, Applausi, musiche, bandiere,” *Corriere della Sera*, July 18, 1932; “Gli azzurri partiti dall’America, L’ultimo saluto dei connazionali,” *Corriere della Sera*, August 22, 1932.

²²⁸ For a summary of the role of Columbus in this context see William J. Connell and Stanislao G. Pugliese, eds., *The Routledge History of Italian Americans*, 35-37.

²²⁹ The fascistization of Columbus Day in Italian America was bound to happen with the prominent Italian American admirer of Mussolini Generoso Pope playing a key role in celebrations in New York, noted by Stanislao Pugliese in William J. Connell and Stanislao G. Pugliese, eds., *The Routledge History of Italian Americans*, 351.

applauding and cheering.²³⁰ The inauguration in Chicago of a monument to Columbus, sculpted by Carlo Brioschi, provided another opportunity for the fascistization of celebrations; the *Corriere* article covering the inauguration noted that messages from Mussolini and Roosevelt were read during the ceremony to cheering crowds.²³¹

Coverage in the *Corriere* of the October 1935 Columbus Day celebrations in New York presented a typical portrayal of such festivities during the middle years of Italian fascism:

Una grande manifestazione di fedeltà al Duce si è svolta stamane a Nuova York in occasione della cerimonia per commemorare Colombo. Dopo la cerimonia ufficiale... una numerosa massa di Italiani ha lasciato il Central Park e si è diretta in corteo verso la sede del Consolato italiano. Ben presto la colonna è diventata fiumana e, tra continue invocazioni al Duce, al canto di *Giovinezza*, ha attraversato la quinta Avenue e i quartieri centrali della città, addensandosi infine dinanzi al Consolato.

A great demonstration of loyalty to the Duce took place this morning in New York on the occasion of the ceremony to commemorate Columbus. After the official ceremony... a large mass of Italians left Central Park and went in procession towards the seat of the Italian consulate. Soon after the column became a stream and, between continuous invocations to the Duce, to the tune of *Giovinezza*, it crossed Fifth Avenue and the central quarters of the city, gathering finally in front of the consulate.²³²

This article showed how during the fascist period Christopher Columbus had retained his symbolic role as protector of the Italian Americans, and how he had become intertwined with fascist mythology as well.

It is clear that the work of fascist Italy sufficiently inspired many Italian Americans to connect with the homeland as they continued their rise in American society, but important questions remained: What did the longer term future hold for this expatriate nation? Would it always be able to maintain dual Italian-American loyalty, with one foot in the fatherland of

²³⁰ “Manifestazione italo-americana per la festa colombiana a Nuova York,” *Corriere della Sera*, October 14, 1931.

²³¹ “Il monumento di Colombo a Chicago, Messaggi del Duce e di Roosevelt,” *Corriere della Sera*, August 4, 1933.

²³² “Dichiarazioni della Casa Bianca,” *Corriere della Sera*, October 13, 1935.

origin, and one in fatherland of adoption? Would the Italians in the U.S. ever have to choose between the two? World War II and the destruction of Italian fascism at the hands of the American military would act as contingent factors in the gradual transformation of Italian Americans' *italianità*, but it is important to remember that on the eve of the disruption in Italy-U.S. political relations, "dual identification with both Italy and America" was maintained.²³³

3.5 Conclusion

By the early 1930s Italians in the U.S. had come a long way. No longer singled out for the worst forms of discrimination that characterized life in the early stages of the great migration, many had settled into relatively comfortable lives that had improved upon the past. They had given birth to American children, begun to move outside the restricted confines of urban Italian settlements, and they began to reconceptualize themselves as both Italian and American, with many of the first generation, not having had the luxury to be born on American soil as American citizens, naturalizing as Americans, thereby giving up their Italian citizenship.

But, alongside these steps towards integration into American society, Italians in the U.S. had been influenced by the meteoric rise of Mussolini and his fascist government. Though individual Italian Americans would have experienced the waves of fascist national sentiment symbolically crashing upon the shores of the Atlantic in varying ways and to varying extents, historians have shown that the impact of fascism and the revival of Italian nationalism which it inspired had a significant impact on the Italian American community, with many enthusiastically endorsing the new spirit of Mussolini's Italy. This raises important questions: What implications did the rise of fascism have for the Italian American community? How did dual loyalty to the

²³³ Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 99.

fascist homeland and the United States influence Italian American collective self-conceptions? And how did Italians in the homeland perceive the expatriate community during this time, when it had seemed, perhaps somewhat paradoxically, to have become more American and more Italian at the same time?

This chapter has sought to answer these questions by showing how news coverage of the Italian Americans in the *Corriere della Sera* highlighted both Italian American commitment to Italy and fascism, as well as the challenges the community faced regarding American pressures of assimilation. The community was portrayed as both an integral element of the global fascist fatherland, but also as on the verge of a transformation that threatened to eradicate their *italianità*. Within this apparent contradiction one can begin to understand the dilemma confronting Italian American identity during this time, which in the years to follow would devolve to a point of crisis as relations between the U.S. and Italy broke amidst global catastrophe.

4 CHAPTER 3 – PEAK OF ITALIAN AMERICAN FASCISM AND THE ETHNOLOGICAL EARTHQUAKE OF WWII: 1935-1945

4.1 Intro

The decade that spanned from 1935 to 1945 would bear witness to a radical shift of political allegiance on the part of the Italian American community. More than a decade of fascist government in Italy had restored Italian American faith in the political fate of the country they had left behind. While not always deeply attached to the ideology of the regime, Italian Americans appreciated the restoration of Italian pride and prestige that Mussolini seemed to have worked towards, and the community benefitted from its own improved perception in the United States that allowed it to take further steps towards integration and acceptance in American society. In addition, Roosevelt's victory in the 1932 presidential elections signalled the arrival of a brief "golden age" in relations between fascist Italy and the American government, as the two countries' respective leaders shared positive opinions of each other as well as certain opinions regarding the best way to govern a state and its economy in the midst of a global depression. Thus, on the eve of Italy's invasion of Ethiopia, things seemed bright for the Italian Americans, and dual-loyalty to Italy and the U.S. seemed to indicate a safe path forward towards both finding belonging in America while still retaining a connection to the homeland.²³⁴

In less than 10 years, however, Mussolini's Italy would ally itself with its German neighbor in ushering in a new global conflict, the U.S. and Italy would find themselves at war with each other, and an American invasion of the Italian peninsula would see the capitulation of fascist Italy and its dictator. As a people between these two worlds, how did the Italian

²³⁴ For a brief summary of this positive Italian American atmosphere before the Ethiopian invasion see Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 340-341.

Americans react as witnesses to this dramatic path of tragedy and destruction? How did global events shape their understanding of themselves as Italian immigrants in American society? And how did Italians back home perceive this expatriate community as it confronted such challenges?

This final section seeks to answer such questions and to thereby shed light on the crucial role that the decade from 1935 to 1945 played on the process of Italian American ethnogenesis. With the birth of the second generation of Italian Americans that had preceded this period an important step had been made towards the formation of the new American ethnic group of Italian origin. As will be shown in the unfolding pages, the political transformations of this consequential decade bound the Italian American community to their new American homeland in significant ways, reshaping their understanding of themselves as citizens of two worlds.

4.2 Imperialism in Ethiopia

Stefano Luconi noted that “Italian Americans’ pro-Fascist political mobilization came to a climax at the time of the Italo-Ethiopian War between 1935 and 1936.”²³⁵ Even months before the invasion, as tensions between Italy and Ethiopia rose, the *Corriere della Sera* noted how Italian organizations in America were ready to go on the counterattack against anti-war initiatives on the part of “gruppi estremisti... organizzazioni pacifiste e... circoli ebraici internazionalisti, che annunziano la loro intenzione di condurre una intensa campagna a favore ‘dell’indipendenza del più antico Stato cristiano del mondo’” (extremist groups... pacifist organizations and... Jewish internationalist circles, that announce their intention to conduct an intense campaign in favor “of the independence of the most ancient Christian state of the world”). The antisemitic nature of such comments, which especially in the years leading up to

²³⁵ Stefano Luconi, “Fascism and Italian-American Identity Politics,” *Italian Americana* 33, no. 1 (2015): 12.

World War II would become only more fierce in the pages of the *Corriere*, is worthy of note; the writers a few lines down further mentioned that “lo zelo cristiano di noti agitatori antifascisti ebrei è particolarmente sospetto” (the Christian zeal of known Jewish, antifascist agitators is particularly suspect). But the article was equally significant for its portrayal of the situation as one to which the American public was largely indifferent. In this context Italian American supporters of Mussolini’s regime focused on lobbying for a policy of U.S. neutrality so as to allow Italy freedom of action.²³⁶

Another phenomenon important to understand regarding perceptions of Italian Americans prior to the invasion was the racial dimension that apparently pitted African Americans against Italians.²³⁷ As early as June 1935, an article in the *Corriere* spoke of plans for U.S. neutrality and the way in which “antitalian” circles opposed to such a policy warned of possible resentment on the part of black Americans; the article made clear though that any “antitalian” political actions would lead to a strong counterreaction on the part of the patriotic community of Italian conationals.²³⁸

Although this kind of rhetoric was speculative at the time, there were certain occasions in which racial tensions over Ethiopia erupted in the streets.²³⁹ Take for instance a *Corriere* article reporting on Italian American reactions to the outbreak of conflict in early October. For the most part the article focused on the prideful jubilation of the Italian Americans who followed the events, but an interesting scene was described towards the end:

²³⁶ Ibid., 12-13; “Gli Italiani d’America pronti a rintuzzare oscure iniziative d’estremisti,” *Corriere della Sera*, July 10, 1935.

²³⁷ For more on this topic see Fiorello Ventresco, “Italian-Americans and the Ethiopian Crisis,” *Italian Americana* 6, no. 1 (1980): 8-10.

²³⁸ “L’atteggiamento di Washington,” *Corriere della Sera*, June 19, 1935.

²³⁹ Again see Fiorello Ventresco, “Italian-Americans and the Ethiopian Crisis,” *Italian Americana* 6, no. 1 (1980): 8-10.

Ogni notizia suscita un indicibile entusiasmo tra gli emigrati, anche bambini. Un gruppo di piccoli Italiani ha improvvisato spontaneamente una dimostrazione alla Scuola pubblica di Brooklyn al grido di ‘Viva il Duce!’, determinando il risentimento di un gruppo di bambini negri. È stato necessario l’intervento della polizia. Anche ad Harlem l’entusiasmo degli Italiani ha dato luogo a lievi incidenti.

Every report elicits an unspeakable enthusiasm among the emigrants, even children. A group of young Italians had spontaneously improvised a demonstration at the Brooklyn public school to the cry of ‘Long live the Duce!’, causing the resentment of a group of black children. The intervention of the police was necessary. Also in Harlem the enthusiasm of the Italians gave rise to minor incidents.

To Italians back home reading such articles the patriotism of their expatriate conationals was made apparent, but such microcosmic disputes of international issues being played out on the multiethnic streets of New York City was a phenomenon foreign to most in Italy, and surely spoke to the unique situation of the Italian *Americans*.²⁴⁰

Once the invasion had begun *Corriere* articles on the Italian Americans stressed their devotion to the war effort, which in at least some instances found expression in the form of volunteering for the homeland.²⁴¹ The Italian Americans’ desire to volunteer was the subject of a longer-length front-page article in the *Corriere* from October 14. The article reprinted several letters sent by Italian Americans to Italian organizations and although the authors had different life stories and reasons for wishing to fight for the homeland, the common thread that united them was a love of Italy and willingness to sacrifice for their country of origin. The article stated that no other form of documentation could better express to the Italians back home the extent to which the Italian Americans felt connected to the Italian fatherland. And many Italian Americans did indeed take up the call to arms, such as the hundred or so volunteers who left

²⁴⁰ “Commoventi episodi di giubilo tra gli Italiani degli Stati Uniti,” *Corriere della Sera*, October 5, 1935.

²⁴¹ Sources note that significantly fewer Italian Americans returned to fight for Italy during the Ethiopian War than during WWI; nevertheless, hundreds did return, as documented in Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 303, and Fiorello Ventresco, “Italian-Americans and the Ethiopian Crisis,” *Italian Americana* 6, no. 1 (1980): 13-16.

New York on board the *Rex* on November 16; the fact that this was described as the fourth group of volunteers, only one month into the war, suggested a certain degree of participation.²⁴²

But actions of solidarity with the fatherland carried out among Italian Americans during the Ethiopian campaign came mostly in the form of moral and material support on the part of ordinary members of the expatriate community. Moral support was expressed, for example, during Italian rallies in the United States.²⁴³ A December 1935 *Corriere* article spoke for instance of how hundreds of Italian American rallies against sanctions imposed by the League of Nations continued to take place in all of the large and small cities of the United States.²⁴⁴

Material support on the part of Italian Americans towards the war effort also expressed the extent to which ordinary members of the global Italian nation were willing to sacrifice personal comfort for the distant fatherland, and such rallies as those previously mentioned doubled as opportunities to collect money, gold, and precious metals to donate to the homeland.²⁴⁵ The previous article stated further that each day hundreds of donations arrived in Italian consulates, even from formerly antifascist Italian Americans who apparently had a change of heart and decided to contribute to the effort in an act of patriotism.²⁴⁶

A fundraising rally for the Italian Red Cross that took place in Madison Square Garden in mid-December exemplified the way that pro-war propaganda skillfully balanced a politicized form of patriotism with ostensible humanitarian concerns.²⁴⁷ The *Corriere* covered the event, describing a packed space with over 22,000 in attendance, with many more flooding the streets

²⁴² “Quando la Patria Chiama, Volontari del Duce,” *Corriere della Sera*, October 14, 1935; “Altri volontari dall’America,” *Corriere della Sera*, November 17, 1935.

²⁴³ Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 302.

²⁴⁴ “Primi commenti americani,” *Corriere della Sera*, December 8, 1935.

²⁴⁵ Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 302.

²⁴⁶ “Primi commenti americani,” *Corriere della Sera*, December 8, 1935.

²⁴⁷ For more on this rally and others organized by the Italian Red Cross see Fiorello Ventresco, “Italian-Americans and the Ethiopian Crisis,” *Italian Americana* 6, no. 1 (1980): 16-17, 20.

outside. There were Italian and American flags and many figures of importance in the fields of politics, art, and finance were in attendance, such as Mayor of New York La Guardia and New York Senator Robert Wagner.²⁴⁸

The event was a success in terms of fundraising but of particular significance was the way in which Italian fascism was pictured as having permeated the environment:

Dopo il saluto a Roosevelt, al Re d'Italia e al Duce sono stati suonati l'Inno americano, la Marcia Reale e 'Giovinezza' tra vivi applausi ed acclamazioni. Ha preso poi la parola il presidente della festa Generoso Pope seguito dai due giudici della Suprema Corte Cotillo e Pecora e dal membro del Congresso Sirovich. I discorsi hanno sollevato grande entusiasmo...Calorose acclamazioni all'Italia, al Re e al Duce hanno echeggiato continuamente specie quando Pope e Cotillo si sono scagliati contro le sanzioni...Insistentemente invitato dalla folla ha parlato infine applauditissimo anche il sindaco La Guardia esaltando le benemerienze dell'Italia.

After the salute to Roosevelt, the King of Italy, and the Duce the American national anthem, the Royal March, and 'Giovinezza' were played amid lively applause and cheers. Then the president of the event Generoso Pope took the floor followed by the two judges of the Supreme Court, Cotillo and Pecora, and by the congressman Sirovich. The speeches aroused great enthusiasm...Warm cheers to Italy, the King, and the Duce echoed continuously especially when Pope and Cotillo lashed out against the sanctions...Insistently invited by the crowd, the mayor La Guardia finally spoke with great applause extolling the merits of Italy.

Such an event therefore showcased the extent to which fascism held sway over the Italian American community during the Ethiopian conflict.²⁴⁹

Perhaps though the most important opportunity for the average Italian to prove his or her loyalty to the fatherland came with the "Giornata della fede" (Day of faith) on December 18, 1935. The "Giornata della fede" was organized as part of the campaign to donate money and precious metals to the fatherland in order to combat the negative financial implications of the League of Nations-imposed sanctions; on that particular day, Italians were asked to donate their

²⁴⁸ "Gli Italiani d'Ameica raccolgono altri 155 mila dollari," *Corriere della Sera*, December 16, 1935.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

wedding rings and in return they would receive an iron replacement ring. And the campaign took place not just within the confines of the Italian state, but among emigrant communities worldwide.²⁵⁰

A *Corriere* article from the day after the “Giornata della fede” described the success of the campaign in Italy and all throughout the world, and the section on the Italian American community was particularly revealing:

Le collettività italiane degli *Stati Uniti* hanno celebrato col più fervido slancio la ‘Giornata della fede’ recando alle sedi delle Associazioni, dei Consolati e dei Fasci offerte d’oro e di danaro e partecipando così fattivamente alla resistenza nazionale contro le sanzioni. Si calcola che le migliaia di anelli, con tutti gli altri innumerevoli oggetti donati nella giornata, rappresentino un valore complessivo di circa un milione di dollari. È stata una commovente gara, soprattutto tra i modestissimi lavoratori appartenenti alle categorie meno fortunate della nostra emigrazione, che hanno tutti voluto manifestare la loro gratitudine al Duce e al Regime per l’accresciuto prestigio italiano nel mondo.

The Italian communities of the *United States* celebrated with the most fervent enthusiasm the ‘Day of faith,’ bringing to the offices of the Associations, Consulates and the Fasci offerings of gold and money and participating actively in this way to the national resistance against the sanctions. It is estimated that the thousands of rings, with all the other countless objects donated during the day, represent a total value of around one million dollars. It was a moving event, above all among the very modest workers belonging to the less fortunate categories of our emigration, who all wanted to express their gratitude to the Duce and to the regime for the increased Italian prestige in the world.

Such days as these were representative of the spirit of the age, in which Italians from across the world felt strongly the call to sacrifice for the fatherland.²⁵¹

Although Ethiopian rebels would continue in their struggle against Italian occupation in the following years, by early May 1936 the Italian government had seized the capital of Addis

²⁵⁰ For more on the “Giornata della fede” in the Italian context see Christopher Duggan, *Fascist Voices: An Intimate History of Mussolini’s Italy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 258-260; for more on the Italian American context see Fiorello Ventresco, “Italian-Americans and the Ethiopian Crisis,” *Italian Americana* 6, no. 1 (1980): 18-20.

²⁵¹ “Grandiosa gara di patriottismo tra le nostre comunità all’estero,” *Corriere della Sera*, December 19, 1935.

Ababa and King Vittorio Emanuele III was proclaimed Emperor.²⁵² On an official level, diplomats on both sides of the Atlantic exchanged pleasant words in the aftermath of the conflict: one *Corriere* article from May 9 cited the words of the U.S. ambassador to Italy, who believed that his own country's neutrality in the conflict had helped strengthen the long-standing Italian-U.S. friendship, and another, from a few months later, spoke of the Italian ambassador to the U.S., who "ha espresso la gratitudine dell'Italia per l'entusiastico compatto contributo degli Italiani d'America e per la loro solidarietà durante le epiche giornate della campagna etiopica" (expressed Italy's gratitude for the enthusiastic, solid contribution of the Italians of America and for their solidarity during the epic days of the Ethiopian campaign).²⁵³

After the war Italian Americans as well continued to demonstrate their support for the new colonial empire ushered in by Mussolini. Generoso Pope held a final fundraising rally in June at Madison Square Garden, with 20,000 Italians in attendance and a final sum of money raised towards for Italy;²⁵⁴ as expected there were Italian anthems played in between cheers for the fatherland, the King, and the Duce.²⁵⁵ Another *Corriere* article spoke of 10,000 conationals participating in a gathering in Morristown, New Jersey to celebrate the founding of the empire; one could imagine that, between the cheers and speeches in the Italian language dedicated to Mussolini and fascism, the presence of blackshirts and Italian American children dressed in fascist uniforms, the Italian flags, and the Catholic Mass that was celebrated, it was a scene that

²⁵² Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 504-505.

²⁵³ "L'amicizia italo-americana, Dichiarazioni dell'ambasciatore Long," *Corriere della Sera*, May 9, 1936; "L'ambasciatore Rosso si congeda dagli Italiani di Nuova York," *Corriere della Sera*, August 13, 1936.

²⁵⁴ For more on this event and other celebrations of Italian victory in Ethiopia see Fiorello Ventresco, "Italian-Americans and the Ethiopian Crisis," *Italian Americana* 6, no. 1 (1980): 20.

²⁵⁵ "Il trionfale esito in America della sottoscrizione tra Italiani," *Corriere della Sera*, June 15, 1936.

would have fooled someone into thinking they had stepped foot in fascist Italy.²⁵⁶ Some Italian Americans even decided to offer a throne to the newly appointed Viceré of Ethiopia.²⁵⁷

One longer article from the *Corriere*, appearing in August 1936, summarized the significance of the Italian victory in Ethiopia for Italian Americans. One section in particular is worth quoting at length, for it spoke so powerfully to the way in which the revival of Italian imperial might across the globe was intertwined with the renewed pride of the Italian American emigrants abroad:

Gli Italiani d'America hanno infatti compreso che in Africa si combatteva soprattutto per affermare in modo definitivo il diritto dell'Italia alla vita e che dall'esito della lotta dipendevano le sorti di tutti gli Italiani sparsi nel mondo e specialmente di quelle masse di lavoratori che, emigrate in America, hanno finora lottato invano per conquistare, nel quadro della vita americana, il posto che a loro compete. Ora, come è facile intendere, questa battaglia ideale non potrà essere conclusa vittoriosamente se il prestigio di queste nostre collettività d'America non troverà nuovo alimento nell'accresciuto splendore della Patria d'origine. Roma deve continuare a risplendere, perchè i suoi figli stabiliti al di qua dell'Oceano possano continuare a coltivare l'orgoglio... del buon nome italiano, della tradizione italiana, della lingua e della cultura italiane. Roma deve vincere e trionfare, in Abissinia e nel mondo, perchè anche gli Italiani d'America possano trionfare nella loro pacifica battaglia di valorizzazione, reagendo a quel senso di inferiorità che afflisse la passata generazione, ribellandosi all'assurda storpiatura del loro italianissimi nomi in forme adattate alla fonetica inglese, e cessando di fare da comodo sgabello ad altri aggruppamenti etnici meglio organizzati ed agguerriti.

The Italians of America have in fact understood that in Africa one fought above all to definitively affirm the right of Italy to life, and that upon the outcome of the fight depended the fate of all the Italians around the world and especially those masses of workers in America who, having emigrated to America, have until this point fought in vain to conquer, in the context of American life, the place that belongs to them. Now, as it is easy to understand, this ideal battle will not be able to conclude victoriously if the prestige of our American collectivities doesn't find new nourishment in the increased splendor of the fatherland of origin. Rome must continue to shine, so that her children established on this side of the ocean can continue to cultivate the pride... of the good Italian name, of the Italian tradition, of the Italian culture and language. Rome must win

²⁵⁶ “Gli Italiani della Nuova Jersey celebrano la fondazione dell’Impero,” *Corriere della Sera*, August 18, 1936; for more on this event see section titled “Morristown Demonstration: August 1936” in Salvemini, *Italian Fascist Activities in the United States*, 209-214.

²⁵⁷ “Un trono per il Viceré di Etiopia offerto dagli Italiani d’America,” *Corriere della Sera*, May 31, 1936.

and triumph, in Abyssinia and in the world, so that also the Italians of America can triumph in their peaceful battle of valorization, reacting against that sense of inferiority that afflicted the past generation, rebelling against the absurd distortion of their very Italian names in forms adapted to English phonetics, and ceasing to serve as a comfortable footstool for other better organized and aggressive ethnic groupings.²⁵⁸

This passage spoke in detailed terms to the way in which the revival of Italian pride through national imperialist expansion affected the lives and social perception of Italian Americans; the global role such expats played in the project of national reawakening thus reverberated back in the homeland, and any notion of a loss of the community's *italianità* was overshadowed in the flood of purported patriotism.

The Italian victory in Ethiopia marked the high tide of Italian American support for the fascist national project. Just five years later, however, the Italian Americans' homeland of origin would declare war on the American homeland of adoption, and Italian capitulation to the Allies from 1943 to 1945 would mark a defining moment for the expatriate nation that would see its future in America practically enshrined in stone, with the children of the second and third generations in America serving as the proof. How did Italian Americans react during this later period that started with them as fervent supporters of the Mussolinian project? What impact did Italian fascist capitulation have on this expatriate nation during the later stages of Italian American ethnogenesis? And how did Italians in the homeland perceive these developments?

4.3 Dual Loyalty Tested

If we start by considering the years between the victory in Ethiopia and the declaration of war on the U.S. by Italy, a blurry picture emerges. Much of this has to do with the fact that the

²⁵⁸ "Italiani d'America," *Corriere della Sera*, August 19, 1936; similar sentiments were expressed in a *La Stampa* article appearing in print during the Ethiopian conflict, see "Come erano e come sono gli italiani d'America," *La Stampa*, November 26, 1935.

Italian-German alliance that served as the cause of the conflict was itself a complicated marriage of convenience. Though in retrospect the political affinity between Italian fascism and German Nazism seems naturally apparent, in the year 1935 the situation was anything but clear. In fact, just a year prior, a Nazi assassination of the Austrian dictator Engelbert Dollfuss, a key ally of Benito Mussolini, soured relations between fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.²⁵⁹ Tensions between Hitler and Mussolini over Austria even found expression in the form of Nazi military aid to Ethiopia in its struggle against Italian imperialist expansion.²⁶⁰

Ideologically as well there appeared to be irreconcilable differences. Fascist Italy did not specifically base its ideology on biological race, while the Nazi state placed German racial superiority and anti-semitism at its foundation. Not only did this issue of race originally separate Hitler and Mussolini, but the Nazis' ideal conception of a racial hierarchy placed the Italians within the fold of the "inferior" Mediterranean race. Mussolini had been known to ridicule this racial ideology coming from Germany and as regards anti-semitism, Italian Jews had occupied high-ranking roles in fascist institutions for years.²⁶¹

Despite these differences and ideological disagreements between Hitler and Mussolini, fascist Italy's increasing international isolation in the wake of its Ethiopian campaign led the Italian dictator to seek closer relations with his rising German neighbor. Fascism and Nazism were not necessarily a perfect match for each other, but their shared nationalist ideology and rejection of the capitalist West and communist East, combined with the realities of geopolitics, led to the infamous alliance, in which Mussolini would be the weaker partner and adopt certain policies that shadowed Germany. Thus, fascist Italy from 1938 onwards would become

²⁵⁹ For more on tensions over Austria see Denis Mack Smith, *Modern Italy*, 384-386.

²⁶⁰ Robert Leckie, *Delivered from Evil: The Saga of World War II* (New York: NY: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1987), 64.

²⁶¹ For differing views on race see Denis Mack Smith, *Modern Italy*, 396.

increasingly attached to Germany, and more at odds with the United States. The effects this new reality would have on the Italian American community would be complicated to say the least.²⁶²

Towards the beginning of the Italian-German alliance, and before more serious tensions arose between Hitler and Western Europe, there seemed to be an air of normalcy in the pages of the *Corriere*, and Italian and German Americans could for example be described as they were in a September 1937 article of the newspaper, listening to speeches of their respective leaders.

While the fascist perspective of the *Corriere*, which stressed that the speeches were well received and seen as symbolic of the peace that the two great leaders were to bring to Europe, must be scrutinized, the fact remained that prior to and even after the initial outbreak of war in Europe, most Italian Americans remained firmly behind Mussolini and even many Americans viewed the fascist dictator as a stabilizing figure in comparison to his German counterpart.²⁶³

Emblematic of this social mood were the words of the Italian-American Mayor of New York, Fiorello La Guardia. Speaking just months before the outbreak of war, at the inauguration of the Italian pavilion during the opening days of the 1939 New York World's Fair, La Guardia was quoted in a *Corriere* article as follows: "Sappiamo quale sforzo l'Italia stia facendo in questo momento per la pace mondiale e le siamo grati" (We know what effort Italy is making in this moment for world peace and we are grateful to her).²⁶⁴ And even just weeks after war began the common view in the U.S., helped by the fact that Italy officially remained neutral in the conflict until the following year, could find expression in the words of the Governor of Connecticut, Raymond Baldwin; a *Corriere* article noted that in a speech in front of thousands of

²⁶² For a brief overview of the Nazi-Fascist alliance see the section titled "The Brutal Friendship" in Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 506-514.

²⁶³ "Italiani e Tedeschi d'America ascoltano la parola dei due Capi," *Corriere della Sera*, September 29, 1937; Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 324-325, 349.

²⁶⁴ "Il Padiglione italiano inaugurato dall'ambasciatore Colonna," *Corriere della Sera*, May 10, 1939.

Italian Americans, Baldwin spoke first of the important contributions of Italians to the United States, and then of the way in which “la politica della pace con giustizia, perseguita da Mussolini, ha accresciuto fra gli Americani il rispetto e la simpatia per l’Italia” (the politics of peace with justice, pursued by Mussolini, has increased among the Americans the respect and sympathy for Italy).²⁶⁵

Dual-loyalty on the part of Italian Americans towards Mussolini and the United States could therefore be openly expressed and socially tolerated but only up until a certain point; after Mussolini brought Italy into the war on the side of Germany in June 1940 open attachment to the fascist project began to bear social consequences and so Italian Americans began to conceal their sympathy for the homeland. Historian John Diggins noted that after “Italy attacked France... American opinion rose to a crescendo of condemnation.”²⁶⁶ In this context Italian organizations in the U.S. such as the Dante Alighieri Society came under suspicion for accusations of political propaganda,²⁶⁷ and even use of the Italian language itself became “a marker of potential disloyalty.”²⁶⁸

Stefano Luconi cited voting records to show that many Italian Americans remained faithful to Mussolini’s Italy “in the secrecy of the voting booth”: plummeting support in the community for Roosevelt and the Democratic Party in the 1940 presidential election and the shift

²⁶⁵ “La ‘Giornata dell’Italia’ all’Esposizione di Nuova York,” *Corriere della Sera*, September 25, 1939; the same day the Italian ambassador to the U.S. spoke of how Italian American “lealtà verso gli Stati Uniti non è incompatibile con l’amore ed il rispetto per la Madrepatria” (loyalty towards the United States is not incompatible with love and respect for the mother country), see “La ‘Giornata dell’Italia’ all’Esposizione di New York,” *La Stampa*, September 25, 1939.

²⁶⁶ Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 324.

²⁶⁷ “La pretesa propaganda politica in America,” *Corriere della Sera*, June 15, 1940.

²⁶⁸ For a detailed study of Italian American language in relation to the WWII years see Nancy C. Carnevale, “‘No Italian Spoken for the Duration of the War’: Language, Italian-American Identity, and Cultural Pluralism in the World War II Years,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 22, no. 3 (2003): 3-33.

to Republican candidate Wendell Willkie was attributed to “Roosevelt’s stigmatization of Italy’s eleventh-hour declaration of war on France as a stab in the back of her neighbor.” But, “in the light of day...as the United States clearly sided with France and Great Britain against Italy and rumors about a pro-Fascist Italian-American fifth column circulated...most Italian Americans distanced themselves from Fascism and showed off their allegiance to their adoptive land for fears of being discriminated against because of their national origin.” Dual-loyalty in such a context was thereby tested and Italian Americans would have to learn to play two increasingly incompatible roles as citizens between worlds on the cusp of collision.²⁶⁹

The fascist *Corriere della Sera* would come to interpret the shift in American outlook as evidence of oppression of the Italian Americans. One *Corriere* article spoke to this new context in the months following Italy’s entry into the war. Towards the beginning it quoted the words of an ordinary Italian American grocer: “‘Questa è l’ora degli sciacalli... e nessuno ci sarà per proteggerci, poichè lo stesso Roosevelt, con i suoi discorsi contro le ‘quinte colonne’, non fa che eccitare i più bestiali pregiudizi e seminare odio contro di noi’” (This is the hour of the jackals... and no one will be there to protect us, since the same Roosevelt, with his speeches against the ‘fifth columns’, does nothing but excite the most bestial prejudices and sow hatred against us). The article spoke to the hysteria and panic in American society that translated into outward expressions of hate towards peaceful, ordinary Italian Americans. Because of the Nazifascist sympathies of the *Corriere* of this time, however, the writers went one step further, claiming that

²⁶⁹ Stefano Luconi, “Fascism and Italian-American Identity Politics,” *Italian Americana* 33, no. 1 (2015): 15.

such antifascist American hysteria was the work of a nefarious Jewish element that wished to stir up the population in favor of an intervention against the Axis alliance.²⁷⁰

Though this *Corriere* article must be scrutinized for its propagandistic perspective, one can nevertheless pick out some important pieces of information that shed light on the situation of the Italian Americans during this time. For example, after introducing the social context of a suspicious American public and the consequent collective anxiety of the Italian expatriate community, the article noted that thousands of Italians who had up until that point preserved their Italian citizenship were then attempting to naturalize as Americans so as to avoid any potential future legal issues arising from holding foreign citizenship of a potentially hostile nation.²⁷¹

Likewise, towards the end the *Corriere* article spoke to the unique historic moment for the Italian American community in which, despite growing social disapproval of Mussolini's Italy, attachment to the fascist regime had not yet been severed by the introduction of a state of war between the U.S. and Italy:

Si vivono, insomma, ore di amarezza e di angoscia in queste nostre collettività d'America; ma nel cuore delle masse la fiducia nell'avvenire non vacilla e si esprime in una sola parola: Duce. Nessuno in questo momento oserebbe invocare ad alta voce questo nome nelle vie dei quartieri italiani di Harlem, di Brooklyn e del Bronx, come durante il conflitto etiopico... ma il cuore generoso di questi nostri connazionali non è per nulla mutato e l'invocazione al Duce sgorga spontanea nelle circostanze più impensate.

They live, in sum, hours of bitterness and anguish in these American communities of ours; but in the heart of the masses the faith in the future does not falter and is expressed in a single word: Duce. No one in this moment would dare to invoke this name aloud in the streets of the Italian quarters of Harlem, of Brooklyn, and of the Bronx, as during the Ethiopian conflict... but the generous heart of these conationals of ours has not changed at

²⁷⁰ “La psicosi della ‘quinta colonna’ guadagna anche l’America,” *Corriere della Sera*, August 16, 1940.

²⁷¹ *Ibid*; for more on Italian American naturalization during WWII see Nancy C. Carnevale, “‘No Italian Spoken for the Duration of the War’: Language, Italian-American Identity, and Cultural Pluralism in the World War II Years,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 22, no. 3 (2003): 6.

all and the invocation of the Duce springs spontaneously in the most unexpected circumstances.²⁷²

The spontaneous expression of support for fascist Italy to which the article referred took place during a religious celebration, when news of an Italian naval victory brought joy to the Italians in the Bronx. While they could not openly celebrate for fear of a police intervention, a fruit vendor found a unique way to manipulate words to express support for Mussolini. A call to those on the streets to come for the vendor's "dolce" (sweet) fruit turned into a growing chant instead for a similar word: "'duce, duce, duce.'"²⁷³

This concluding section to the article thus noted how even in an atmosphere of fear, Italian Americans were seen by those in the homeland as having maintained their support for the leader who had not yet declared war on the U.S., the land in which the expatriate community lived. Times surely had changed; they could no longer openly proclaim their support for Italian fascism as they had done just five years prior during the Ethiopian conflict. But faith in Mussolini largely remained during this early period of the war.²⁷⁴

In this context of fear and suspicion some leaders of the Italian American community began to distance themselves from the fascist homeland, drawing the ire of the writers at the *Corriere*. The Italian American Mayor of New York City would become a frequent target of the newspaper for his criticism of Mussolini's Italy, and reminders of his Jewish heritage added a layer to the vitriol that was unfortunately all too characteristic of discourse within the *Corriere* during the final years of fascism.²⁷⁵ The *Corriere* quoted the words for example of Domenico

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ La Guardia had previously spoken in more positive terms about Mussolini and fascism but Stanislao Pugliese noted that the mayor "had to walk a fine line between his instinctive anti-fascism and the popularity of Fascism among his constituents"; for more on this and La

Trombella, one of Mussolini's most ardent Italian American supporters and director of the Italian American newspaper *Grido della Stirpe*, in which Trombella had attacked La Guardia, “accusandolo di fare asserzioni insensate ad uso dei nemici dell'Italia e dichiarando che ‘un sindaco cinese è da preferire a un falso Italiano il quale offende sistematicamente i sentimenti più nobili dei cittadini italiani d’America’” (accusing him of making senseless assertions for the use of the enemies of Italy and declaring that ‘a Chinese mayor is to be preferred to a false Italian who systematically offends the most noble sentiments of the Italian citizens of America’).²⁷⁶ Although La Guardia came under attack from fascist ideologues such as Trombella, Italians during the postwar period would ultimately come to recognize the importance of his strong belief in a democratic and antifascist Italy; even the Italian communist newspaper *l’Unità* referred to him as “l’amico di sempre del popolo italiano” (the eternal friend of the Italian people) for his support of Italian liberation.²⁷⁷

Another prominent Italian American, Generoso Pope, owner of the largest Italian-language newspaper in the U.S., *Il Progresso Italo-Americano*, and a firm supporter of Mussolini throughout the preceding decades, would come under occasional attack due to his gradual disillusionment with fascist Italy.²⁷⁸ In a *Corriere* article from September 1941, the fascist-leaning Italian American newspaper *Grido della Stirpe* was again cited, this time for its

Guardia's criticism of fascist Italy after its entry into the war see William J. Connell and Stanislao G. Pugliese, eds., *The Routledge History of Italian Americans*, 359, 374.

²⁷⁶ “Fiorello La Guardia accusato di ‘asserzioni insensate,’” *Corriere della Sera*, June 18, 1940; For more on Trombella see William J. Connell and Stanislao G. Pugliese, eds., *The Routledge History of Italian Americans*, 361.

²⁷⁷ *l’Unità*, July 23, 1946.

²⁷⁸ Pope, unlike La Guardia, was not referred to by the writers at *l’Unità* in such glowing terms; after all, Pope remained steadfastly anticommunist, drawing criticism from the newspaper which in at least one case called him a “‘gangster’ arricchito” (enriched gangster) for his anticommunist rhetoric, see “Terrore a Milano?” *l’Unità*, August 1, 1948; for more on Pope's gradual, complicated turn against Mussolini and fascism see Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 347-349.

notification that every day thousands of letters arrived to its editorial board, all of them critical of “l’opportunistico atteggiamento antitaliano assunto improvvisamente da Generoso Pope” (the opportunistic anti-Italian attitude suddenly assumed by Generoso Pope). The writers of the *Corriere* took this as evidence of “l’indistruttibile fede patriottica” (the indestructible patriotic faith) of the Italians resident in the U.S. In any case, the divergence of views that was emerging regarding the fascist homeland pointed to the beginning of a shift of opinion against Mussolini that would gain steam in the months and years to come.²⁷⁹

These instances of public disapproval for fascism seemed to highlight a growing rift within the Italian American community, but the writers at the *Corriere* still believed—or at least continually asserted—that the vast majority of Italian Americans kept the fascist faith and were simply the victims of racist oppression within American society. After all, Italian Americans expressed their disapproval when, for example, Italian diplomatic representatives were expelled from the United States, or upon hearing that Italians residing illegally were to be sent to a concentration camp in Montana, even before the U.S. and Italy were officially at war.²⁸⁰

But other than Italian American disapproval for such actions deemed as oppression, a discourse emerged during this time within the pages of the *Corriere della Sera* that highlighted the struggles of the Italian Americans within the context of a United States dominated by ethnic rivalry. One article appearing in the *Corriere* in May 1941 for instance spoke at length of the contradiction inherent in the American conception of the country as a melting pot. While purporting to portray the country’s history as one of peaceful ethnic assimilation, the metaphor in fact masked the continued social dominance of an Anglo-Saxon elite that pressured ethnic

²⁷⁹ “Roosevelt Lavora Per La Guerra,” *Corriere della Sera*, September 24, 1941.

²⁸⁰ “I consoli italiani e tedeschi si sono imbarcati sul ‘West Point,’” *Corriere della Sera*, July 16, 1941; “Violenze della polizia americana ai danni di cittadini italiani,” *Corriere della Sera*, May 19, 1941; see also “Novanta connazionali arrestati a New York,” *La Stampa*, May 11, 1941.

groups to submit to their own political and cultural supremacy. The *Corriere* article referred to the Italians in the U.S. as the “inassimilabili” (the unassimilables), or those who resisted the pressure to “anglicizzarsi” (anglicize) or “americanizzarsi” (americanize), and in the context of increasing American social disapproval of the actions of fascist Italy, such pressures multiplied and even expanded to encompass outward hate and oppression. In the eyes of the *Corriere*, this was not the America of a peaceful mixing of peoples and races, but the Anglo-Saxon dominated land of ethnic rivalry and tension, domination and oppression.²⁸¹

One article even spoke of the religious dimension, and the way in which a militant, imperialist Anglo-Saxon protestantism played a role in combatting the influence of its perceived enemies: Italian Americans, the fascist fatherland, and the Catholic Church, the latter of which, in the case of fascist victory, might find the opportunity to spread even further its version of the faith in the Mediterranean and beyond through missionary activity.²⁸² American interreligious rivalry, particularly in light of the perceived threat of an expanding Catholic Church, thus compounded ethnic tensions and worked to decrease trust in an increasingly diverse country.²⁸³

The significance of this emergence within the newspaper of the notion of an ethnically divided America should not be underestimated, for such a pattern would outlive the fascist period and play a role in how the Italian Americans were perceived by those in the homeland for years to come. However, what is important to highlight now is that on the eve of the Italian declaration of war on the United States, Italians back home viewed the expatriate community in some way as a victim of circumstance. Their children might be fully American in the sense of

²⁸¹ “Propaganda d’odio e violenze per forzare l’opinione del popolo,” *Corriere della Sera*, May 19, 1941.

²⁸² “Il pugnale dietro la Bibbia,” *Corriere della Sera*, June 21, 1941.

²⁸³ For more on the relationship between American anti-Catholicism and anti-fascism see Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 199-202.

citizenship, and they had read before about the threat of assimilation to the community. But for now the Italian Americans were still viewed as a patriotic element within the global nation, even if suffering at the hands of the American enemies of fascism and Italy.

4.4 Italian Americans at War

Mussolini's decision to choose sides in June 1940 brought Italian Americans into a new paradigm in which the actions of their fatherland of origin evoked suspicions that affected their social position in American society. In the aftermath of Pearl Harbor and Italy's declaration of war on the U.S. days later in December 1941 dual-loyalty finally confronted the ultimate test: would Italian Americans choose Mussolini's Italy or the U.S.? In order to answer this question, it will be useful to split this final section into two parts. First we will discuss the time during the state of war between fascist Italy and the U.S., which I will define as starting with Mussolini's declaration of war on the U.S. on December 11, 1941,²⁸⁴ and ending with September 8, 1943, when the Kingdom of Italy officially surrendered to the Allies, around which time much of the country came under occupation by Nazi forces with Mussolini acting as head of the fascist Republic of Salò, based in the north.²⁸⁵ Then we will discuss the period from September 8, 1943 until the end of the war, a period of gradual setbacks for the Nazifascist forces that would see a state of civil war in the country, ending with Allied victory in 1945.²⁸⁶

Scholars of Italian American history have traditionally viewed Pearl Harbor and Mussolini's declaration of war on the United States just days later as a turning point. Stanislao Pugliese stated that "Mussolini's declaration of war on the United States was the death knell for

²⁸⁴ William J. Connell and Stanislao G. Pugliese, eds., *The Routledge History of Italian Americans*, 371.

²⁸⁵ Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 523-524.

²⁸⁶ For more on this Italian civil war see Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 535-538.

Fascism in Italian America.”²⁸⁷ According to Diggins, “when the moment of truth arrived, the Italian-Americans did not hesitate... at last it was clear that Italian-Americans were more American than Italian... war was the fuel of the melting pot.”²⁸⁸ This traditional view *is* largely accurate, but one must take into consideration its adoption by Italian Americans and the role it has played in their collective process of self-narration. This story served to justify Italian Americans’ place in American society in subsequent years as a faithful and patriotic ethnic grouping in the United States, and it engaged in a poetic generalization of Italian American ethnic integration as the ultimate test of allegiance, which the community is said to have collectively passed during World War II. By taking instead the view of Italy during this time, a more conflicted picture emerges; although articles appearing in the *Corriere della Sera* during this time must be scrutinized in light of the newspaper’s fascist editorial perspective, they offer a more nuanced view of the Italian Americans that stresses the negative effects of war on the expatriate community.

One *Corriere* article, for example, from March 1942, spoke of an Italian American miner living in Oregon. The miner wrote in to the *Corriere* and spoke of his life, largely with a sense of regret. He had not become successful in America, and now that war had broken out between Italy and the U.S. he had thoughts to return to his homeland. But for many reasons, such as disagreements with family, lack of money, and the realization that he would be of little use to the Italian nation, he felt his return was impossible.²⁸⁹

The miner spoke of being a prisoner of the “Job,” a concept he described at length as that which attracted millions of Italians overseas to America but that, ultimately, was a false promise,

²⁸⁷ William J. Connell and Stanislao G. Pugliese, eds., *The Routledge History of Italian Americans*, 361.

²⁸⁸ Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 351-352.

²⁸⁹ “Lettera del minatore rimasto nell’Oregon,” *Corriere della Sera*, March 4, 1942.

having left many such as himself still in poverty, and, even worse, detached from the homeland and everything they once knew. The “Job” even divided families, creating new Americanized, practically foreign, children, ashamed of the older, emigrant generation, and the result was a split identity in which everything revolved around the materialistic life of the “Job.”²⁹⁰

Perhaps this miner was not representative of the vast majority making up the expatriate community, or he might have been invented wholesale by *Corriere* journalists. Even so his story sheds light on the way in which war affected those between two worlds in the Italian American community. The miner clearly felt a greater allegiance to Italy, but the fact that he highlighted the difference between his generation and that of his children also pointed to a shift in which the younger generations felt more attached to the U.S. than to Italy. War between the two countries would be traumatic for older Italian Americans with a strong attachment to the homeland, but for their American-born descendants the absence of a dual-loyalty played a key role in binding the Italian American community to the United States.²⁹¹

In addition to the negative impact war had on this more personal level, the conflict also ushered in a period of institutional oppression of Italian Americans which, though relatively tolerable compared to the treatment of Japanese Americans, still constituted systematic discrimination based on ethnicity.²⁹² The *Corriere* covered the internment of Italian Americans throughout the course of the war. One article reported on a ship arriving in Gothenburg, Sweden, which carried on board 124 Italians in the process of repatriation from America. The article stated they were previously held in concentration camps and prisons, where they had

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² For more on this see Dominic Candeloro’s essay “World War II Changed Everything” in William J. Connell and Stanislao G. Pugliese, eds., *The Routledge History of Italian Americans*, 370-384.

suffered terribly.²⁹³ One line of the article stuck out in particular however, in which the repatriated Italians stated that many Italians in the U.S. wanted to repatriate as well.²⁹⁴

Such a society in which racial and ethnic groups could be singled out for systematic oppression was deemed by the fascist *Corriere della Sera* to be a walking contradiction; in other words, the United States spoke the language of democracy and equality, but its actions showed that such ideals were not absolute and could indeed be disregarded in times of uncertainty. This thesis formed the basis of a lengthy article appearing in the *Corriere* in June 1942. The title, “Un mosaico che si sfalda,” (A mosaic that flakes [in other words, falls apart]) alluded to what was seen as the crumbling of the ethnically diverse American society.²⁹⁵

The article began with an encounter the writer had with some Sicilian American workers and it quoted the sentiments they expressed:

Mi metterei volentieri in uno di quei bauli... pur di tornare in Italia... Qui la vita si è fatta grama... L’America è finita per noi. Ci aveva promesso la fortuna e ci ha dato miseria. Pensavamo di poterci stare come a casa nostra e ce la siamo trovata nemica. Ora ci ha tolto via anche i nostri figli e li vuol mandare a combattere contro i nostri fratelli. Ma prima di sparare contro un italiano, essi si faranno tagliare le mani.

I’d willingly put myself in one of those suitcases... just to return to Italy... Here life has become difficult... America is finished for us. It promised us fortune and gave us misery. We thought we could stay there as if it was our home and we found it an enemy. Now it has taken away from us also our sons and wants to send them to fight against our brothers. But before shooting an Italian they will cut off their hands.

²⁹³ Internment of Italian Americans was not widespread but did take place, mainly on the West Coast; for more on this see William J. Connell and Stanislao G. Pugliese, eds., *The Routledge History of Italian Americans*, 372-374.

²⁹⁴ “Altri 124 italiani ritornati dagli Stati Uniti in Europa,” *Corriere della Sera*, July 28, 1942.

²⁹⁵ “Un mosaico che si sfalda,” *Corriere della Sera*, June 7, 1942.

Even if there was exaggeration in such statements, they spoke to the unique historic moment when increasingly infeasible conceptions of dual-loyalty led at least some of those involved to take the side of the homeland.²⁹⁶

The article then went on to critique the myth of the American melting pot, and the way in which those who clung to their traditional ways, whether in their culinary choices, language, religious values, or even their very name, were seen as problematic to an Anglo-Saxon majority. The writer went on to question the very identity of the American state: “gli Stati Uniti sono un paese, ma non sono una nazione, sono uno Stato ma non una Patria, sono una popolazione ma non un popolo” (the United States is a country, but not a nation, it is a State but not a homeland, it is a population, but not a people). This was a somewhat poetic way of stating the fact that the U.S. as a country could not be identified as an ethnically defined nation; rather, it was “un mosaico di popoli” (a mosaic of peoples), but one that “non si è mai cementato abbastanza” (was never cemented enough).²⁹⁷

Finally, in the concluding section, all was tied together to the present moment that continued to witness the oppression of Italians (and other ethnic groups) due to circumstances of war:

Ma l'America, dubitosa di se stessa, sospettosa dei suoi stessi cittadini, pensa al tradimento e si dilania con le sue mani, ricorrendo a crudeli rappresaglie contro taluni gruppi delle sue comunità e scavando nuovi fossati di rancore tra gruppi e gruppi, tra quartiere e quartiere. Il mosaico razziale degli Stati Uniti si sfalda. L'America minaccia di cadere a pezzi.

But America, doubtful of itself, suspicious of its own citizens, thinks of betrayal and tears itself apart with its own hands, resorting to cruel reprisals against certain groups of its communities and digging new moats of rancor between groups and groups, between neighborhoods and neighborhoods. The racial mosaic of the United States is falling apart. America threatens to fall to pieces.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

History and time would tell that the U.S. was in fact more stable than such a bleak picture portrayed, outlasting such powers as fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, and Soviet Russia.

Nevertheless, the discursive pattern, that of an ethnically, racially divided America, played a key role in shaping the way Italians back home viewed the expatriate citizenry and its descendants abroad, shedding light on crucial stages of Italian American ethnogenesis at a time when allegiances in the early stages of war were all but clear.²⁹⁸

Before moving on to the period of war between the U.S. and fascist Italy I would like to point attention to one final *Corriere* article that potentially raises more questions than it answers, but which speaks to the complexity of the Italian American experience during this stage of war. Titled “Testimonianza eroica degli emigranti italiani” (Heroic testimony of the Italian emigrants), the article spoke broadly about the bravery of Italian emigrants who had returned to serve Italy during the war. As we know, many Italian Americans were drafted into the U.S. military to fight during World War II.²⁹⁹ But this article’s mention of Italians, “che da fanciulli e da giovani hanno vissuto nel Brasile o in Francia, nell’America del Nord o in Russia o in Egitto” (who as children and young people lived in Brazil or in France, in North America or in Russia or in Egypt), and who fought alongside Italians born and raised in the homeland, raises the question of Italian Americans who may have returned to fight for fascist Italy during the conflict.³⁰⁰ This is a topic that requires further research; for now it is enough to say that this article is an

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Mangione and Morreale, *La Storia*, 341.

³⁰⁰ It has been nearly impossible to find in the secondary literature even a mention of whether some Italian Americans returned to fight for fascist Italy. The best I have been able to find is Mark Choate’s comment: “Three hundred thousand emigrants returned to fight for Liberal Italy in World War I; few returned for Mussolini’s lost cause.” See Choate, *Emigrant Nation*, 231.

important piece of evidence in reconstructing the history of Italian Americans during World War II, apparently not all of whom fought on the side of the Allies.³⁰¹

During the early stages of the state of war between the U.S. and Italy much was left unsettled and the position of the Italian Americans remained to be determined, but after the Italian fascist capitulation to the Allied invasion of the peninsula in 1943, changing wartime circumstances had led to a paradigm shift that finally did away with the fascist mythology surrounding Mussolini. This shift reopened the possibility for Italian American pride in both the homeland of origin and that of adoption.³⁰² As Diggins noted, in reasserting American loyalty, Italian Americans did not have to do away with “traditional Italian patriotism” because they “could now maintain that the real betrayer of the Italian nation was Benito Mussolini.”³⁰³ Roots of such a transformation could be traced back to the shifting stances of elite figures in the Italian American community such as Mayor La Guardia and Generoso Pope, but even during the darker days of Italian American internment olive branches began to be offered to Italian Americans, if only, at the beginning at least, to cement their loyalty to the U.S. president and his cause.

For example, a *Corriere* article from October 1942 reported on the U.S. announcement that Italian nationals resident in the country would no longer be classified as “enemy aliens” and that certain restrictions against them would be lifted.³⁰⁴ The *Corriere* writers of course had their own interpretation of such a move: “Comunque, l’inconsistente gesto di Roosevelt... è esclusivamente rivolto a fini elettorali, nella speranza di procurarsi i voti di una parte dei cittadini nordamericani

³⁰¹ “Testimonianza eroica degli emigranti italiani,” *Corriere della Sera*, March 30, 1943.

³⁰² For more on fascism’s loss of legitimacy during the war in the Italian context see Chapter 12 “The Failed Identity” in Gentile, *La Grande Italia*, 198-208. For more on the Italian American context see Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 351.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁴ For more on the U.S. announcement see William J. Connell and Stanislao G. Pugliese, eds., *The Routledge History of Italian Americans*, 361.

di origine italiana. Ciò in vista delle imminenti elezioni nelle quali la posizione di Roosevelt non si presenta brillante, dato l'aumento di popolarità del partito repubblicano” (However, Roosevelt’s inconsistent gesture... is exclusively aimed towards electoral purposes, in the hope of winning the votes of a part of the North American citizens of Italian origin. This in view of the imminent elections in which the position of Roosevelt does not appear bright, given the increase in popularity of the Republican Party). But despite the spin on the story, which in all honesty had a hint of truth to it, Italians back home reading this would have been able to bear witness to the early stages of attempted reconciliation between the Italian Americans and the country in which they resided. Behind such a move one can perhaps dig up motives of political expediency, but also a key logical implication: Italian Americans had by then become an integral part of the American political fabric, deserving equal consideration with other ethnic groups before the law, and by allowing policy to reflect this the American government could begin to win them over from any previous flirtation with fascism.³⁰⁵

Of course this “carrot” policy of reenshrining equality under law of Italians resident in the U.S. accompanied more coercive policies that also ended up furthering Italian integration into the American political project. Likely the most consequential of these in hindsight was the conscription of Italian Americans into the U.S. military. Italian American young men were in this regard, at least on paper, no different from other Americans who were called up to fight in the war. But they did find themselves in the unique position of having to take up arms against the country from which many of them, or at least their parents or grandparents, had come,

³⁰⁵ “Espedienti di Roosevelt in vista delle elezioni,” *Corriere della Sera*, October 17, 1942.

potentially to engage in violent conflict with friends and family on the other side, all while witnessing death and physical destruction in the Italian homeland.³⁰⁶

Interestingly enough, the conscription of Italian American men to fight a war in the homeland did not have as negative an impact on the group as it perhaps would have had on their parents and grandparents; after all, the average twenty-something Italian American soldier heading to fight in Italy in 1943 would have been born and raised in the U.S., perhaps brought up with a feeling of attachment to Italian culture due to the influence of family and friends, but not necessarily with an accompanying political allegiance to a country in which he had never stepped foot. In addition, Dominic Candeloro noted that Italian Americans' extended service in the U.S. military "amounted to intensive Americanization training," forming them into "very different individuals and groups in 1945 than they had been in 1940." These young American soldiers of Italian descent acted as a bridge between two worlds, as well as a wider force for integration that would cement Italian American loyalties to the fatherland of adoption.³⁰⁷

One Italian American man representative of this cultural shift was Charles Poletti. Most readers of the *Corriere* would have been introduced to Poletti around the year 1944, if they had not already personally become aware of him while living under his authority as an Allied military governor in occupied areas places like Sicily or Naples. Poletti was a child of Italian immigrants who would rise to the rank of Colonel in the U.S. Army during his time as a military administrator in Allied-occupied Italy. Though a bit older than most Italian Americans who would serve overseas, and having preserved such Italian cultural aspects as fluency in the language itself, Poletti could be seen as representative of the Italian American second generation

³⁰⁶ For more on Italian American service in the U.S. military during WWII see William J. Connell and Stanislao G. Pugliese, eds., *The Routledge History of Italian Americans*, 375-378.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

in terms of its relationship to both countries: born in the U.S. as American citizens, but to Italians who passed on cultural traditions such as language, yet having had little to no experience living in Italy itself, this generation truly was of two worlds.³⁰⁸

Such a situation could however be interpreted in tragically unfortunate terms from a fascist perspective, particularly in the aftermath of military capitulation. In this context, a *Corriere* article spoke of Poletti, introducing his life story before moving on to discuss the way in which he had put himself at the service of the American military against the land of his ancestors. In the words of the fascist *Corriere*,

Il ‘caso’ Poletti non è, cioè, che un miserabile episodio della grande tragedia dell’emigrazione: la prima generazione conserva immancabilmente fedeltà alla Patria; la seconda generazione già si insabbia, e, presa nell’ingranaggio degli interessi, della mentalità e delle pressioni ambientali, abbandona la cittadinanza dei suoi vecchi e tronca a poco a poco i legami intimi con la Patria fino ad accettare di portarlesi poi contro, se gli eventi la fanno nemica della nuova patria di adozione.

The Poletti case is nothing but a miserable episode of the great tragedy of emigration: the first generation invariably retains loyalty to the fatherland; the second generation already covers up, and, caught in the machinery of interests, of the mentality, and of environmental pressures, abandons the citizenship of its elders and gradually cuts off intimate ties with the fatherland to the point of agreeing to then go against it, if events make it the enemy of the new homeland of adoption.³⁰⁹

In this excerpt the unintended consequences of Italian emigration were cast in completely negative terms from a fascist perspective, but they do hint at an underlying truth that would come to form the basis of the realignment of Italian American loyalty after fascist capitulation: the second generation of Italian Americans ushered in a new era in which the feeling of national, if not ethnic, sentiment was fully American. Within this new paradigm, in which an Italian fascist regime no longer existed to play upon lingering nationalist sentiment within an expatriate community, and in which Italian American connection to the homeland increasingly devolved

³⁰⁸ For more on Poletti see Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 424-425.

³⁰⁹ “Morale sul ‘caso’ Poletti,” *Corriere della Sera*, July 8, 1944.

into the realm of nostalgia, the Italians back home would have little ability to conceptualize the Italian American community as still forming part of a global fatherland. Further still, the global vision of a “greater Italy” died along with the fascist imperialism that found inspiration within it, and the very notion of “fatherland,” let alone the notion of pride arising from it, was called into question in the context of a postwar Europe seeking to repair the wounds that became symbolic scars of the excesses of nationalism.³¹⁰ All of these factors contributed to a “deItalianization” of the Italian Americans in the eyes of Italians, as their *americanità* became predominant.

In addition to the ordinary Italian Americans who played a role in cementing the allegiance of the community to the United States, Italian American antifascists contributed significantly to the delegitimation of Italian fascism within the community. Prominent Italian American antifascists had been a vocal minority within the United States, gaining a reputation as *fuorusciti*, or troublesome exiles according to the Mussolinian regime. But after fascist Italy fell, Italian American opponents of fascism built upon the momentum provided by the Allied assault and played a role in propagating a vision of a new, democratic, and antifascist Italy, assisted in its liberation from fascism by American freedom fighters.³¹¹

Of course the fascist *Corriere della Sera*, operating from Milan in Nazi-occupied northern Italy, interpreted events in the Allied-occupied south in a completely different way. What antifascists viewed as “liberation” in the south was interpreted as “chaos” from a fascist

³¹⁰ Emilio Gentile provides an overview to the delegitimation of nationalism and the turn to supranational ideals in the postwar European context in Chapter 14 “Pull the Idol Down” and Chapter 15 “In Search of a Fatherland,” see Gentile, *La Grande Italia*, 231-267.

³¹¹ There were ideological divisions among Italian American antifascists but the notion of Italian liberation from fascism as a second Risorgimento that would restore Italian democracy was a common theme that united them and found favor even with many Italian American former fascist sympathizers; for more on this, the history of Italian American antifascism, and its influence during the WWII years see Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 111-143, 386-421, and William J. Connell and Stanislao G. Pugliese, eds., *The Routledge History of Italian Americans*, 354-360.

perspective. In one article liberated Rome was described as being at the mercy of men of various hostile races, with, for example, black troops from places like Senegal and Morocco constantly drunk on the streets, committing all sorts of offenses, above all against the women.³¹²

Particularly relevant in the article though was one detail that hinted at the transnational character of Italian antifascism during this time: “L’ira antifascista è la preoccupazione suprema del Governo Bonomi, aiutato dagli uffici appositamente formati quasi per intero da Italiani fuorusciti soprattutto d’America coadiuvati dagli elementi peggiori cittadini” (The antifascist wrath is the supreme concern of the Bonomi government, aided by the offices specially formed almost entirely by Italian exiles, above all from America, assisted by the worst citizen elements). The fascist bias of the *Corriere* must be taken into consideration of this article but what one does learn is that antifascist Italians from America played a role in the postwar administration of the capital city. The antifascist interpretation of liberation necessarily differed but what is relevant here is that Italian American antifascists worked alongside U.S. soldiers and military personnel in maintaining Rome under an antifascist administration, thus playing a key role as transnational Italians in the reestablishment of democracy in the homeland.³¹³

One final, crucial element contributed to the solidification of Italian American allegiance to the United States and that was the developing narrative that portrayed the Americans as liberators of an oppressed Italy in need of saving. Starting towards the end of the war and continuing on for years thereafter, this narrative interpreted fascism as an aberration in Italy’s history, viewed Italians themselves as unwilling participants and ultimately victims of the fascist project, and saw the defeat of Mussolini’s regime as “liberation.” This narrative ignored the popular consensus for fascism within Italy that had sustained Mussolini and his regime for over

³¹² “Roma ‘liberata,’” *Corriere della Sera*, August 22, 1944.

³¹³ *Ibid.*

20 years, as well as Americans' and Italian Americans' own former sympathies with the dictator, but its influence became dominant and paved the way for a collective amnesia over the fascist experience. The main protagonist of the liberation in American minds was the United States and its military, which, made up in part of Italian Americans themselves, was sent to Europe to free the Old World and the Italian homeland of fascist terror.³¹⁴

The seeds of this narrative were planted during the final stages of the war and one *Corriere* article from October 1944 provided necessary, if biased, context for what had begun to emerge: “Roosevelt, all’evidente scopo di raccogliere simpatia e, quel che per lui più conta, voti fra gli Italiani di America in vista delle prossime elezioni, finge di essere sempre più magnanimo e premuroso per l’Italia, mentre i suoi apologisti dal microfono di radio-Nuova York amano presentarlo addirittura come il ‘salvatore’ dell’Italia” (Roosevelt, with the obvious aim to gather sympathy and, that which for him matters most, votes among the Italians of America in view of the next elections, pretends to be always more magnanimous and thoughtful for Italy, while his apologists from the microphone of radio-New York love to present him as the ‘savior’ of Italy). With the Axis powers and fascism on the retreat in this later stage of war, and with Mussolini delegitimised in Italian American circles as the betrayer of Italy who had brought death and destruction to the country, the American liberators and President Roosevelt were thus uniquely positioned to assist in the “second Risorgimento” as guarantor of a free and democratic Italy.³¹⁵

The article then cited the words of the Italian American antifascist organizer Luigi Antonini,³¹⁶ which placed Roosevelt alongside the greatest men of modern Italian history:

³¹⁴ For more on this see Chapter 16 “The Rediscovery of Italy” in Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 422-443

³¹⁵ “Nell’Italia ‘liberata,’” *Corriere della Sera*, October 16, 1944.

³¹⁶ For more on Antonini see William J. Connell and Stanislaw G. Pugliese, eds., *The Routledge History of Italian Americans*, 279-281, 375.

L'italo-americano Luigi Antonini, tra questa schiera di giullari, ha forse battuto il primato delle lodi quando al banchetto offerto dal Consiglio italo-americano di Nuova York non ha esitato a collocare il Presidente accanto ai grandi nomi di Garibaldi e di Mazzini per concludere che 'quando gli storici studieranno questo periodo non potranno fare a meno di considerare: Colombo lo scopritore e Roosevelt il liberatore'!

The Italian American Luigi Antonini, among this group of jesters, has perhaps beaten the record of praise when at the banquet offered by the Italian-American Council of New York he did not hesitate to place the President alongside the great names of Garibaldi and Mazzini to conclude that 'when the historians study this period they will not be able to help but consider: Columbus the discoverer and Roosevelt the liberator'!³¹⁷

Luigi Antonini's thoughts aligned with the postwar antifascist conception of the Italian liberation from fascism as a second Risorgimento, by which the Italian antifascist resistance was seen to have continued the legacy of the country's unification.³¹⁸ The fascist *Corriere* mocked Antonini's elevation of Roosevelt to the Risorgimento pantheon alongside such patriots as Garibaldi and Mazzini, but the article is nevertheless revealing for the way in which it opened up the possibility in an Italian American context for one to see the President of the homeland of adoption as contributing in a significant way to the restoration of the Italian fatherland. Even within the biased pages of the fascist *Corriere della Sera*, the narrative of the United States as the liberator of Italy had begun to emerge, and its penetration into the wider Italian American collective psyche allowed the opening up of an ideological space that enabled those in the community to reconceptualize their own feelings of identity and national belonging.³¹⁹

All of these factors (American political recognition of the equality of Italian Americans, fascist capitulation at the hands of the United States military, participation of thousands of Italian Americans in the U.S. military, Italian American antifascist activity before, during, and after the

³¹⁷ "Nell'Italia 'liberata,'" *Corriere della Sera*, October 16, 1944.

³¹⁸ For more on the antifascist conception of liberation from fascism as a "second Risorgimento" see Gentile, *La Grande Italia*, 297-298, 311-312; see also "Le Bandiere della Repubblica," *l'Unità*, November 5, 1947.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

war, and the emergence of the narrative of the American liberation of Italy), in addition to decades of residence in the U.S., during which time the Italian American community had experienced relative success and the raising of fully American children to adulthood, had contributed to a new conception of the Italian Americans as committed to their new American homeland, while still culturally and nostalgically attached to the Italian land from which they originated. Now divorced from the failed fascist project that was seen to have led Italy to ruin, Italian Americans could once again feel a sense of nostalgic pride in a democratic Italy that was on the road to recovery in close partnership with the new homeland of adoption, the United States.

Viewed from the Italian homeland, this process of Italian American incorporation into the U.S. was interpreted as a sort “renationalization,” even “deItalianization.” Many of the older generation of Italian immigrants still lived, but their Americanized children and grandchildren stood as symbolic proof of the transformation. In the wake of global devastation that had all but delegitimized the kind of nationalist fervor that had sustained Italian and Italian American faith in the fatherland during the height of fascism, and in the context of a new Europe that would attempt to rebuild on a new, democratic, supranational basis, most Italians would do away with the concept of “greater Italy” and so the descendants of those who had left decades ago ceased in their view to form part of the Italian nation. The Italian Americans thus had roots in the Italian national story but to many they were Americans now and the ethnological earthquake of the Second World War had sealed their fate.

4.5 Conclusion

The social and political dynamics at play during the fascist period in Italian history help to explain the symbolic transformation of Italians in the U.S. from expatriates abroad to *Italian Americans*. The two decades of fascism took place during the birth of the second and third generations of Italians in the U.S., and perhaps such an ethnic transformation would have taken place anyway. But in order to fully grasp the Italian experience in America during this time it is important to understand both the role that Mussolini played in building up the confidence of the Italian American people early on, as well as the devastating impact that the failed alliance with Hitler and the disastrous war had on forcing Italians in the U.S. to side with their new country of adoption.

Mussolini helped Italians in America regain a sense of pride in their *italianità* but he also encouraged full integration into the American political, social, and cultural life, albeit to suit his own agenda. But his alliance with Hitler drew the Italian nation further away from the U.S., the land of adoption for the Italian Americans, and due to the circumstances of the time, in the end, most Italians in the U.S. remained faithful to the land that had helped them put bread on the table, the land in which their children had grown up, in some cases the land they and their sons had died for to liberate Europe.

In many ways it was the contradictory nature of the Italian Americans' relationship with Mussolini that contributed to a phenomenon that persists to the present day: the Italian Americans' enduring pride in their heritage. Having experienced positive results regarding the rebuilding of collective self-esteem during Mussolini's early period, but having avoided the death and destruction and the national, existential crisis that confronted the Italians in the

homeland after the war, Italian Americans were uniquely positioned to rebound and take pride in their heritage as they navigated post-war America as a rising ethnic group.

In the end, the *Corriere della Sera*'s portrayals of Italians in the U.S. during the fascist period show that the paper's fascist writers and editors made use of the Italian Americans as examples of patriotic expatriate citizens early on when times were good, but eventually turned on the more integrated ones towards the end when they were portrayed as Americanized betrayers of their Italian heritage and nation. Of course, it takes the critical eye of the historian to see through the blurred picture painted by fascist propaganda, but such a perspective still allows one to see how Italian Americans during the fascist period went from being seen as an integral part of the global Italian nation to Italian *Americans* by the time of the war's end.

5 CONCLUSION

By the end of World War II, the fate of the Italian Americans had been transformed. Surely many of the fading immigrant generation would maintain contacts with friends and family who remained in the homeland, even returning occasionally to visit the country they had left decades prior. But their children, the second generation, had grown up speaking English in schools, in the workplace, and more broadly in American society, had in many cases taken part as soldiers in the Second World War, symbolically solidifying their allegiance to the only land they had ever known as truly their own, and had by this point begun to give birth to those of the third generation, who would make up part of the postwar “baby boom” that would integrate themselves still further into American society, usually knowing little of Italy itself apart from nostalgic memories and bits and pieces of traditions handed down from still-living grandparents. This postwar picture of an Italian America on the cusp of full integration into American society concludes this study.³²⁰

What has been gained from this investigation into changing conceptions in the homeland of the Italian American community from the onset of the great migration to the end of World War II? What conclusions can be drawn regarding the evolving ways in which Italians conceived of the expatriate community in the U.S. and its descendants?

First of all, it must be stated that changing depictions of the Italian American community in the pages of the *Corriere della Sera* were directly tied to the political context of the time. The *Corriere* was (and in fact remains) a newspaper of the Italian political establishment, and so from the onset of the great migration to the rise of fascism the editorial stance of the paper reflected

³²⁰ Dominic Candeloro summed up the postwar situation of Italian Americans in William J. Connell and Stanislao G. Pugliese, eds., *The Routledge History of Italian Americans*, 382.

the political stance of the Italian state and monarchy and its liberal governing elite, while during the fascist period the newspaper fell gradually under the ideological sway of Mussolini and fascism, hardening towards the end of war into more extreme rhetoric as the alliance with Nazi Germany pushed Italian social discourse towards racism and an aggressive anti-Americanism.

During these two periods in Italian history, the Italian expatriate community in the U.S. and its descendants were viewed and portrayed in such ways that supported the ideological standpoint of the newspaper and its editors. This means that during the period of the great migration, particularly from 1890 to 1920, Italians in the U.S. were viewed as full Italian citizens participating in the peaceful expansion of “greater Italy” abroad.³²¹ They were often viewed paternalistically, and in times of need or oppression they were portrayed as in need of protection.

As Italians in the U.S. began to climb the American social ladder, experiencing greater success and integration, they began to be viewed less paternalistically and more as a political and economic force of their own, able to exert influence on American politics in favor of Italian interests while still remaining tied to Italy from an economic standpoint through remittances sent home and by forming the basis of a key market for Italian goods abroad. This was the state of the Italian American community during the rise of fascist Italy, and it was in this context that the increasingly fascist *Corriere* portrayed the Italian Americans as renewed patriots made to feel proud of their heritage because of the success of Mussolini’s national project of restoration. Finally, the portrayal of Italian Americans as loyal fascists would give way during World War II to their portrayal as thoroughly Americanized, to the point that their loss of *italianità* was seen to have directly contributed to their willingness to take up arms against the nation of their ancestors.

³²¹ See Choate’s concept of “emigrant colonialism” in Choate, *Emigrant Nation*, 2.

Despite these changing portrayals of the Italian Americans unfolding in the pages of the *Corriere* according to the political persuasions of liberal and fascist elites of the time, the emergence of two major discursive themes is revealed when one pierces below the surface of ideological rhetorical styles. The first is the notion of a gradual assimilation of the Italians in the U.S. to the American culture and society and an accompanying, perceived loss of *italianità*. Because the great migration started around the 1880s, instances of “Americanized” Italians appeared early on in the pages of the *Corriere*. Of course, a continued, expanding stream of migration in succeeding years, lasting into the early 1920s, meant that Italian culture would constantly replenish Italian American communities with the ways of the homeland for many years even if those coming from families who had migrated earlier had undergone prior assimilation. Nevertheless, by the mid-1920s the great migration had ceased and so especially from that point forward the gradual emergence of a discursive pattern regarding the “deItalianization” of Italian Americans, at least pertaining to those of the second and third generations, became a common element in discourse on the Italian American community.

At the same time, however, and particularly during the fascist period, a second discursive pattern came to characterize discussions of the Italian Americans, and this revolved around perceptions of the community’s on-going, patriotic sense of attachment to the Italian nation. Many of those Italians who had immigrated to the United States during the great migration came from disadvantaged, provincial backgrounds in the impoverished south of the country, and carried with them only vague sentiments of belonging to an Italian nation. But with the passing of time, along with experiences as foreigners in a new country mixing and mingling with fellow Italian peoples in ethnic enclaves, and with the advent to power of a new Italian leader perceived to have restored Italian greatness and inspired a sense of pride in national sentiment among

Italians worldwide, the Italian Americans in many ways became *more* Italian in America than they had been in the countryside of Italy. Under the influence of Mussolini and fascism Italian Americans developed an Italian ethnic/national sentiment in the United States and many viewed themselves as patriotic citizens of a global Italian fatherland. While Italian American faith in Mussolini did not stand the test of time, the pride in a shared Italian heritage that the dictator inspired among older generations continues to reverberate into the present.³²²

The simultaneous emergence of these two themes might appear contradictory at first glance, but much of the paradoxical nature is because the two themes were selectively stressed within the pages of the *Corriere* according to time and circumstance. *Corriere* writers could thus stress the patriotic feeling of Italian national sentiment within the expatriate citizenry and its descendants in the context of, for example, the Italian victory in Ethiopia and news coverage of celebrations among Italian Americans of the foundation of the empire.³²³ Conversely, however, the Italian Americans could just as easily be portrayed as “Americanized” and having lost their *italianità* in another situation when, for instance, they had taken up arms against Italy in the war and proven their betrayal of the homeland.³²⁴ In this sense both phenomena could be true at the same time, even if one might have been stressed at the expense of the other according to the circumstances: Italian Americans continued to maintain a pride in their heritage at the same time as they experienced an assimilation to American society.

Within this apparant contradiction between two emerging conceptions of the Italian Americans one can begin to better understand the rise of the Italian Americans as an ethnic group

³²² See Stefano Luconi, "Becoming Italian in the US: Through the Lens of Life Narratives," *MELUS* 29, no. 3/4 (2004): 151-64.

³²³ “Gli Italiani della Nuova Jersey celebrano la fondazione dell’Impero,” *Corriere della Sera*, August 18, 1936.

³²⁴ “Morale sul ‘caso’ Poletti,” *Corriere della Sera*, July 8, 1944.

and the process of ethnogenesis by which this occurred. Historical pressures of assimilation dictated that Italian Americans adapt to the new society in which they found themselves. But, at the same time, experience in that society as an “otherized” ethnic collective reinforced group cohesion in the face of adversity. In this context, previous sources of division within the community, arising from such factors as regional provenance and dialect, soon became less relevant as the years went by, as those who came to the U.S. as Sicilians, Neapolitans, and Calabresi gradually saw each other as equally Italian in America.³²⁵

This was the precondition for the emergence of an Italian American conception of a shared heritage. While younger generations would continue the process of assimilation into American society ushered in by their elders, they would likewise carry forth this legacy of a shared Italian heritage that would continue to shape the Italian American community for generations to come. Thus, in the aftermath of the Second World War, the younger generations of Italian Americans could conceptualize themselves as both fully American *and* firmly rooted to an Italian cultural heritage; the cultural currents of two worlds permitted the emergence of an ever-changing Italian ethnic identity in an American context and such a process of ethnogenesis found pieces of expression within the pages of the *Corriere della Sera*.

These two patterns of perceiving the Italian American community on the part of Italians in the homeland persist to this day. For example, on the theme of Italian American assimilation and Americanization, the Italian proclivity to label Italian Americans as “fake” Italians, or not even Italian at all, is clear to anyone who spends even just a few minutes engaging in Italian American social media online: all it takes is one mention of the dishes “chicken parmesan” or “fettuccine Alfredo” for the Italians to come out against what they perceive to be “fake” Italian

³²⁵ Again see Stefano Luconi, "Becoming Italian in the US: Through the Lens of Life Narratives," *MELUS* 29, no. 3/4 (2004): 151-64.

American corruptions of a perceived, sacred Italian cuisine. Exchanges between Italians and Italian Americans over such topics are not always hostile but there nevertheless remains a belief among many Italians that the living descendants of Italian immigrants who came to the United States over a century ago have lost all traces of *italianità*.³²⁶

The examples of Italian mockery of what Italian American culture has evolved into are endless and apparent, but this doesn't preclude recognition on the part of most Italians that there is a continued sense of pride that Italian Americans maintain in their heritage. One only needs to consider the words of the President of Italy himself, Sergio Mattarella, who during a 2016 speech in New York highlighted the Italian American community's lasting pride in a shared heritage:

Tre milioni (italoamericani) vivono oggi nei territori dello Stato di New York, New Jersey e Connecticut. Sono tutti orgogliosamente americani, e avvertono orgogliosamente di origini italiane...queste donne e questi uomini guardano al futuro degli Stati Uniti e anche dell'Italia con forti aspettative, consapevoli della loro grandezza, e del loro ruolo nel mondo, e della loro amicizia...voi rappresentate un 'ponte' tra Stati Uniti e Italia...voi siete cittadini degli Stati Uniti, leali al vostro paese, non avete però mai smesso di guardare all'Italia, unendo con le vostre energie le due sponde dell'Atlantico...se l'Italia è ammirata, se i suoi talenti sono apprezzati, se la nostra amicizia è così grande, questo si deve anche al vostro operato e al modo in cui avete vissuto la vostra identità, americana con origini italiane.

Three million (Italian Americans) live today in the territories of the state of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. They are all proudly Americans and they proudly feel of Italian origin...these women and these men look to the future of the United States and also of Italy with strong expectations, aware of their greatness, of their role in the world, and of their friendship...you all represent a 'bridge' between the United States and Italy...you are citizens of the United States, loyal to your country, but you have never stopped looking at Italy, uniting with your energies the two shores of the Atlantic...if Italy is admired, if its talents are appreciated, if our friendship is so great, this is also due to your work and the

³²⁶ For a good discussion on the question of Italian/Italian American authenticity see CUNY TV, “‘Real’ Italians and Non-‘Real’ Italians | Italics,” November 12, 2019, *YouTube* video, 28:09, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVyP4E3153A&list=WL&index=5>; for more on the history of food in an Italian American context and Italian reactions see Simone Cinotto's essay “Culture and Identity on the Table: Italian American Food as Social History” in William J. Connell and Stanislao G. Pugliese, eds., *The Routledge History of Italian Americans*, 179-192.

way in which you have lived your identity, American with Italian origins.³²⁷

Some might say that the Italian American pride in a shared heritage is one based less on the continued relevance of Italian traditions in everyday life than in nostalgia for a romanticized Italy of the past, but the sentiment nevertheless survives and the meaning and purpose it inspires to this day are worthy of note.

For these reasons I believe the topic of Italian American identity and the ethnic group's sociohistorical changes over time is a field ripe for research. This study has focused upon the years starting with the great migration through the end of World War II but equally promising for research is the period from the end of World War II until the present day. After all, the present study concludes at a time when the first generation of immigrants had not yet passed on, and investigating the ways in which the culture such immigrants had brought over have persisted into the present is indeed promising. In addition, newer currents of Italian immigration to the United States have been permitted after the relaxation of immigration laws in 1965 and research into the ways more recent Italian immigrants have interacted with the communities of those descended from the older generations would be particularly revealing as to questions of ethnic identity.³²⁸

This study has sought to discover the ways in which Italian views of the Italian American community have changed over time, and in concluding we have come to the emergence of an apparent contradiction that serves as the key to understanding the emergence of the Italian American ethnic group. It is within the dual pattern of continued attachment to Italian culture and continued assimilation into American society that the case of the Italian Americans is best

³²⁷ Presidenza della Repubblica Italiana Quirinale, "Saluto del Presidente Mattarella alla comunità italiana al Museo Guggenheim," February 11, 2016, *YouTube* video, 13:07, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lm9JLcu4BT4&t=1s>.

³²⁸ Teresa Fiore's essay "Immigration from Italy since the 1990s" is one example among many contemporary attempts to approach this topic, see William J. Connell and Stanislao G. Pugliese, eds., *The Routledge History of Italian Americans*, 581-595.

understood. It is this apparent contradiction that presents the Italian Americans with the space within which to individually conceive of themselves, finding meaning to varying extents in what they may or may not conceive to be their own Italian heritage.³²⁹

Some Italian Americans continue to travel to Italy and rediscover the language of their ancestors, and others will even reclaim their citizenship, perhaps making the reverse journey that their ancestors took more than a century ago.³³⁰ Others will live their lives hardly giving a thought to any notion of their own Italian heritage. Finally, perhaps most will find a middle ground, attached to their heritage in some ways but charting their paths forward as Americans. This is the state of Italian America today: A voluntary, changing, imagined, collective, social space in which contradictory patterns surrounding a fluid notion of shared ethnic identity form the background to lived experience, and within which opportunity is open for ultimately subjective conceptualizations of an ever-changing cultural identity, allowing individual Italian Americans to conceive of themselves, their past, and their future as they each see fit.³³¹

³²⁹ Richard Alba used the term “symbolic ethnicity” to describe this voluntary form of ethnic sentiment that lives on in the “twilight of ethnicity”; for more on this see Alba, *Italian Americans: Into the Twilight of Ethnicity*, 173-174.

³³⁰ For more on recognition of Italian citizenship *jure sanguinis* see Choate, *Emigrant Nation*, 221.

³³¹ For more on the varied ways in which Italian Americans today conceptualize their identity see Rosemary Serra’s essay “Contemporary Italian American Identities” in William J. Connell and Stanislao G. Pugliese, eds., *The Routledge History of Italian Americans*, 596-615.

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