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ARTICLE

Travelling to See, Reading to Believe: Being Fascists after the End of the Second World War

Andrea Martini

Department of Cultures and Civilizations, Viale dell'Università 4, 37129 Verona, Italy
andrea.marti@hotmail.it

This article focuses on two practices which, while neglected by historiography, played a fundamental role in the re-emergence of the fascist community after 1945, namely travel and reading. Travel allowed fascists to realise that the political cause they were fighting for had remained alive even outside their own borders, and to strengthen and renew their transnational network, while reading books – often banned books – allowed them to reinforce their ideology and score a victory over the authorities. By leaving aside a reconstruction focused purely on political events, this article sheds light on how fascists were materially able to re-think their political identity and to influence, albeit to different degrees, the transformed political context of the immediate post-war period.

An 'enforced withdrawal into reading and reflection'. These were the words that Oswald Mosley used to describe the period of internment that the British government imposed on him in May 1940. The leader of the British Union of Fascists – a political formation that was banned by the authorities a month after the start of his detention – used that time to immerse himself in certain Greek classics and to improve his knowledge of foreign languages, starting with German. Mosley also engrossed himself in Goethe's *Faust*, becoming so passionate about the play that in 1949 he released an English version with a preface of his own authorship through Euphorion Books, the publisher that he co-owned with his wife, Diana Mitford.[1] Mosley perceived in Goethe's work 'an explanation of how challenge and evil could be the spur towards the creation of a higher form and the creation of a new civilisation', one of Caucasian origin whose task would be 'to save Europe'.[2]

Mosley, in short, used his readings to endow his political agenda with a European perspective.[3] As he wrote at the end of the Second World War in his magazine *Mosley News Letter*, both democratic and fascist regimes had made a serious mistake by confronting the challenges of modernity with an approach that was 'too nationalistic': it was time to begin again with a 'new sense of European kinship'.[4] Europe needed to start perceiving itself as a nation, given that this was the only way it could continue to play a role in the altered geopolitical context characterised by the emergence of two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union.

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[1] Robert Skidelsky, *Oswald Mosley* (London: Macmillan, 1975), 465–80. For more about Euphorion Books, see Graham Macklin, *Very Deeply Dyed in Black: Sir Oswald Mosley and the Resurrection of British Fascism after 1945* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 135–6.

[2] Joe Mulhall, *British Fascism after the Holocaust*: *From the Birth of Denial to the Notting Hill Riots 1939–1958* (London: Routledge, 2020), 107.

[3] This does not mean that Mosley had completely underestimated the European dimension in the past. See the article 'The World Alternative', which was published in the *Fascist Quarterly* in October 1936 and had been greatly appreciated by Adolf Hitler. See Macklin, *Very Deeply Dyed in Black*, 79.

[4] Oswald Mosley, 'The Extension of Patriotism. Union of Europe: The Idea of Kinship', *Mosley News Letter*, Jan.–Feb. 1947, 1.

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Mosley took up these themes in the long essay, *The Alternative*, that he published in 1947. This was very quickly translated into German,[5] and also circulated in other countries, with selected chapters appearing in periodicals like *L'Ora d'Italia* – a daily newspaper edited by Emilio Patrissi, a deputy of the Italian Constituent Assembly and member of a populist, right-wing movement named *Uomo qualunque*, whose numerous supporters were nostalgic for the Fascist dictatorship[6] – and *La Hora*, a mouthpiece of the Spanish University Union (*Sindicato Español Universitario*).[7]

In addition, having long been denied a passport by the UK authorities,[8] Mosley resumed his travels as soon as he regained one, visiting France, Spain, Portugal and Italy in the summer of 1949.[9] This trip, the first of many, was aimed at signing agreements to enable *The Alternative* to reach overseas audiences,[10] and more generally at strengthening his network of exponents of the far right and of fascism.[11] Mosley, for example, met with Ramón Serrano Suner, a former foreign minister in the Franco regime, and Filippo Anfuso, a former ambassador of the Italian Social Republic (RSI), who, despite living in Spain, retained strong ties in Italy, where the Italian fascist front had re-emerged after the fall of the Mussolini dictatorship, to the point of establishing a new party, the Italian Social Movement (MSI), that would go on to exert an influence on the political life of the country for decades.[12]

If, in Mosley's case, reading and travel supported his attempt to re-position himself in the new geopolitical context and assisted his (at least partial) revival, more broadly such practices were also crucial for the entire fascist front that, although composed of a relatively small number of supporters, had managed to survive the Second World War. Reading and travel, in particular a form of travel that one might call 'ideological tourism',[13] helped the fascists to acquire or regain political prestige, increase their knowledge, refine their political agenda and strengthen their network of contacts. But, more importantly, reading and travel, and the two together, provided ways to develop a common understanding of the recent past and of the political moves to make in the future. They were important prerequisites for the development of a sense of belonging to the same political universe, particularly in a movement distinguished by a wide range of positions regarding the new geopolitical horizons that were emerging (to the extent that even using expressions such as 'fascist community' and 'political universe' in the singular, despite my decision to do so, is somewhat problematic).[14]

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[5] The Geman title was initially *Die Alternative* (1949), then *Die Europäische Revolution* (1950). It was edited by the Nazi Karl-Heinz Priester. See Graham Macklin, *Failed Führers: A History of Britain's Extreme Right* (London: Routledge, 2017), 111.

[6] Sandro Setta, *L'Uomo qualunque: 1944–1948* (Rome: Laterza, 1975).

[7] Macklin, *Very Deeply Dyed in Black,* 37, 101.

[8] See 'Liberty and the Home Office: Mosley Refused Passport Despite Health', *Mosley News Letter*, June 1947.

[9] Oswald Mosley, *My Life* (London: Nelson, 1968), 418–25.

[10] Pablo del Hierro, 'The Neofascist Network and Madrid, 1945–1953: From City of Refuge to Transnational Hub and Centre of Operations', *Contemporary European History,* 31, 2 (2022), 171–94.

[11] On the fascist networks before the Second World War see, at least, Arnd Bauerkämper and Grzegorz Rossolinski, *Fascism without Borders: Transnational Connections and Cooperation between Movement and Regimes in Europe from 1918 to 1945* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2017).

[12] Macklin, *Very Deeply Dyed in Black,* 101–13. On the origin of MSI and the re-emergence of fascism in Italy more generally, see Antonio Carioti, *Gli orfani di Salò. Il "Sessantotto nero" dei giovani neofascisti nel dopoguerra, 1945–1951* (Milan: Mursia, 2008); Giuseppe Parlato, *Fascisti senza Mussolini: le origini del neofascismo in Italia* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2012); Nicola Tonietto, *La genesi del neofascismo in Italia*: *dal periodo clandestino alle manifestazioni per Trieste italiana* (Florence: Le Monnier, 2019). For a broader picture of the history of MSI, see Piero Ignazi, *Il polo escluso: profilo del Movimento sociale italiano* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1989) and Davide Conti, *L'anima nera della Repubblica: storia del Msi* (Rome: Laterza, 2013).

[13] François Hourmant, *Au pays de l'avenir radieux. Voyages des intellectuels français en URSS, à Cuba et en Chine populaire* (Paris: Aubier, 2000), 11.

[14] On the crucial role of travel in the process of the 'construction of imagined collective identities' see, for instance, John K. Walton, 'Introduction', in John W. Walton, ed., *Histories of Tourism: Representation, Identity and Conflict* (Clevedon: Channel View Publications, 2005), 7. On how reading and writing practices create and are reciprocally shaped by 'interpretive communities' see, at least, Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980).

Several studies have grasped the potential political impact, in the broadest sense of the term, of reading and travel, focusing on the subversive nature of both activities and their ability to forge common imaginaries.[15] In the wake of these studies, this article aims to shed new light on an issue that has not yet been adequately explored, namely how the fascist cause, despite being associated with the horrors of the war, was able to recover and maintain a consensus, albeit a modest one, not only among those nostalgic for the past but also among the younger generation.[16] The idea is to do so precisely by paying attention to practices – those of travel and reading – that the field of fascist studies, particularly those focused on the post-1945 period, has for many years disregarded. This, to a large degree, is due to the field's limited inclination to combine the tools of political history with those of cultural history but also to the decision to pay more attention to more recent decades in an attempt to comprehend only the short-term political causes of the rise of far-right parties, like Jean-Marie Le Pen's Front National.[17]

Only in the last few years has it been possible to discern a reversal of this trend, albeit a partial one, with greater attention being placed on the immediate post-war period (leaving aside a few pioneering research efforts that were understandably unable to take advantage of the vast array of sources which are nowadays available).[18] Some of the works concerned have adopted a national perspective,[19] while others have opted for a more global approach by investigating groups that offered escape routes to fascists subject to arrest warrants, and the subsequent transformation of these networks into international organisations.[20] This article takes inspiration from these studies, particularly from those that are trying to move away from an event-driven analysis and aiming to show how certain practices in everyday life have allowed the fascists to re-emerge. I am referring, in particular, to Pablo del Hierro's most recent work, which perfectly illustrates how the revival of the fascist community tended to take place in specific urban spaces like some of Madrid's neighbours.[21] But, more generally, this article follows in the wake of recent studies[22] that have stressed the importance of the transnational dimension in the analysis of post-1945 fascism, to the extent that one might talk about a kind of transnational turn in this field of studies.[23] A good example is Galadriel Revelli's article focusing on the international impact of the magazine *Confidentiel*, founded in Paris in 1979 by a group of former *Ordre Nouveau* (New Order) members, which helped fascists from different parts of Europe to revitalise themselves.[24] But I also think of Martin Durham's work investigating the relationships between European and American right-wing extremists, which pays particular attention to the practice of travel to emphasise how this transatlantic relationship took shape on a material level.[25]

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[15] However it is important to stress that historiography has paid attention to the practice of travel only recently. On the other hand, studies about the importance of the practice of reading are more consolidated. On travel and its political impact, see Daniel Roche, *Humeurs vagabondes. De la circulation des hommes et de l'utilité des voyages* (Paris: Fayard, 2003); Walton, *Histories of Tourism* and 'Welcome to the *Journal of Tourism History*', *Journal of Tourism History,* 1, 1 (2009), 1–6. See also some analyses of very interesting case studies, such as Christopher Endy, *Cold War Holidays: American Tourism in France* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Sasha D. Back, *Tourism and Dictatorship: Europe's Peaceful Invasion of Franco's Spain* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) and Anne Dulphy, Yves Léonard and Marie-Anne Matard Bonucci, eds., *Intellectuels, artistes et militants. Le voyage comme expérience de l'étranger* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2009). On the practice of reading, see, at least, Roger Chartier, 'Texts, Printing, Readings', in Lynn Hunt, ed., *The New Cultural History, The New Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 154–75; Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, *Histoire de la lecture dans le monde occidental* (Paris: Seuil, 1997); Robert Darnton, *The Case for Books: Past, Present, Future* (New York, NY: PublicAffairs 2009); Daniel Bellingradt and Jeroen Salman, 'Books and Book History in Motion: Materiality, Sociality and Spatiality', in Daniel Bellingradt, Paul Nelles and Jeroen Salman, eds., *Books in Motion in Early Modern Europe: Beyond Production, Circulation and Consumption* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 1–11. More specifically on the political impact of the practice of reading, see, for example, Judith Lyon-Caen, *La Lecture et la Vie. Les usages du roman au temps de Balzac* (Paris: Tallandier, 2006) and Alberto Mario Banti, *La nazione del Risorgimento: parentela, santità e onore alle origini dell'Italia unita* (Turin: Einaudi, 2000).

[16] On the political and cultural difficulties that fascists had to deal with at the end of the Second World War, see Roger Griffin, 'Interregnum or Endgame? The Radical Right in the "Post-Fascist" Era', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 5 (2000), 165–6.

[17] See, for example, Paul Hainsworth, ed., *The Politics of the Extreme Right: From the Margins to the Mainstream* (London: Pinter, 2000); Cas Mudde, *The Ideology of Extreme Right* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); Elisabeth Carter, *The Extreme Right in Western Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005). On the Front National and its historical background see, at least, James Shields, *The Extreme Right in France: From Pétain to Le Pen* (London: Routledge, 2007). In addition, the historians who offered a global picture of the history of extreme-right and fascist parties have generally not paid a great deal of attention to the immediate post-war period. See Piero Ignazi, *Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Pierre Milza, *L'Europe en chemise noire: les extrêmes droites en Europe de 1945 à nos jours* (Paris: Fayard, 2004); Jean-Yves Camus and Nicolas Lebourg, eds., *Les droites extrêmes en Europe* (Paris: Seuil, 2015) and Damir Skenderovic, *The Radical Right in Switzerland. Continuity and Change, 1945–2000* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2009).

[18] Angelo Del Boca and Mario Giovana, *I 'figli del sole'. Mezzo secolo di nazifascismo nel mondo* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1965) and Joseph Algazy, *La tentation néo-fasciste en France de 1944 a 1965* (Paris: Fayard, 1984).

[19] Tonietto, *La genesi del neofascismo in Italia*, and Mulhall, *British Fascism after the Holocaust.*

[20] Gerald Steinacher, *Nazis on the Run: How Hitler's Henchmen Fled Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Nicolas Lebourg, *Les Nazis ont-ils survécus? Enquête sur les internationales fascistes et les croisés de la race blanche* (Paris: Seuil, 2019).

In light of these studies, my hypothesis is that these practices were partly, and perhaps even mainly, responsible for the fascists' ability to renew their political agenda and ensure its continued attractiveness in the constantly evolving context of the early stages of the Cold War. In particular, I argue that they allowed the grassroots to point to the existence of an alternative universe to the one being defined by the post-war democracies and to restore symbolic practices (including the Roman salute, fascist anthems and the use of uniforms) that the countries they were living in had banned or at least threatened to attack. In other words, it is possible to say that reading and travel allowed the fascists to regain their feeling of belonging to the same 'emotional community', that is, according to Barbara H. Rosenwein, a group of 'people who share the same or similar valuations of particular emotions, goals, and norms of emotional expression'.[26] This particular step, while not entirely sufficient in itself, was of crucial help in finding new space in a different 'emotional regime', centred on democratic and antifascist values.[27]

However, this attempt to shed light on the readings and travel itineraries of ordinary men and women, in particular, as well as on the circulation of people and texts between political associations and parties in different countries, first requires the limitation of the range of the analysis to certain geographical areas, in this case to Europe and specifically to the western part of the Old Continent. It also requires the use of a range of sources: first of all, the announcements and newspaper articles belonging to the political groups under investigation, but also reports produced by the intelligence services that monitored them. The latter reveal first and foremost the posture assumed by the democracies in the face of the re-emergence of fascists, yet it is crucial to try to grasp, or at least deduce, the emotions, thoughts and imagery of the fascist community implicit in this documentation if we wish to penetrate a political front that did not always operate in the light of day.[28]

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[21] Del Hierro, *The Neofascist Network and Madrid*, 172.

[22] See, for instance, Martin Durham and Margaret Power, eds., *New Perspectives on the Transnational Right* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Matteo Albanese and Pablo del Hierro 'A Transnational Network: The Contact between Fascist Elements in Spain and Italy, 1945–1968', *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 15, 1 (2014), 82–102; Andrea Mammone, *Transnational Neofascism in France and Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Pauline Picco, *Liaisons dangereuses: les extrêmes droites en France et en Italie (1960–1984)* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2016); Johannes Dafinger and Mortiz Florin, eds., *A Transnational History of Right-Wing Terrorism: Political Violence and the Far Right in Eastern and Western Europe since 1900* (London: Routledge, 2022).

[23] Galadriel Ravelli, 'Strategies of Survival: Reviving the Neo-Fascist Network through a Transnational Magazine', *European History Quarterly*, 52, 1 (2022), 67. However, we should never forget that transnationalism is also an imperfect methodological approach, as pointed out by Nancy L. Green, *The Limits of Transnationalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019).

[24] Ravelli, 'Strategies of Survival', 65–86.

[25] Martin Durham, 'White Hands across the Atlantic: The Extreme Right in Europe and the United States', in Durham and Power, eds., *New Perspectives on the Transnational Right,* 149–69.

[26] Barbara H. Rosenwein and Riccardo Cristiani, *What Is the History of Emotions?* (Cambridge: Polity Press 2018), 4. See also Barbara H. Rosenwein, 'Worrying about Emotions in History', *American Historical Review*, 107, 3 (2002), 821–45 and H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

[27] Despite the fact that Barbara H. Rosenwein looks sceptically at the category of emotional regimes conceived by William Reddy in *The Navigation of a Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), I believe, as partially suggested by Rob Boddice, *The History of Emotions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2018), 79, that the two categories (namely emotional community and emotional regime) can be combined with each other.

Before and After Malmö: Journeys for a New Beginning

In May 1951, dozens of fascists from all over Europe converged on Malmö. There were delegates from Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and Switzerland, as well as from Norway and Denmark, all hosted by Per Engdahl and his extreme right-wing party, the *Nysvenska Rörelsen*.[29] Among the German delegates it is worth mentioning Fritz Rössler (better known after the war as Franz Richter), who had a past in the ranks of the Nazis and went to Malmö as a representative of the *Sozialistische Reichspartei Deutschlands*, a party explicitly inspired by the Nazi ideology.[30] Among the French attendees were Maurice Bardèche and René Binet.[31] Bardèche had gained great renown in the fascist world for his fierce criticisms of the French government's purges and of the judges who had ruled against Nazi war criminals at Nuremberg that he published in *Lettre à François Mauriac* (1947) and *Nuremberg ou la Terre promise* (1948).[32] Binet, on the other hand, had converted to fascism after a period as a member of the Communist Party and during the war served in the Waffen SS Charlemagne, an infantry division made up largely of French volunteers. In the aftermath of 1945 he founded *l'Accueil*, an association aimed at helping collaborationists released from prison, which later became the *Parti Unitaire Français*, and he also launched the fascist periodical *Le Combattant Européen*.[33] The Italian delegation consisted of: Fausto Gianfranceschi, a young man who represented the *Raggruppamento giovanile studenti e lavoratori*, a youth section of the MSI, and the *Fasci d'azione rivoluzionari* (FAR), a parallel organisation with an even more radical attitude; Fabio Lonciari, director of the newly established Centre of European Studies; and Giuseppe Berti, representative of the University Front of National Action (FUAN), which was also linked to the MSI.[34] The pretext for the meeting was the celebration of the tenth congress of the Swedish party, but the real aim was to establish a transnational organisation that would bring the various fascist parties together in a federation. This was an idea that had been maturing for years and had already taken a step forward in a meeting in Rome in March 1950.

The meeting in Malmö effectively signalled the birth of the European Social Movement (ESM) which, as can be seen from an analysis of its statutes, set itself the task of defending the values of 'western culture'.[35] More generally, the ESM appeared from its political manifesto to be a democratically inclined organisation which, while certainly conservative in its approach, was not necessarily extremist. While this was in fact a purely formal posture,[36] the decision to conceive such a moderate manifesto generated discontent among some of the fascists, to the point that they arranged a new meeting in Zurich in November 1951 and set up an alternative organisation with a much more radical attitude, the New European Order (*Nouvel ordre européen*; NOE), which was led by Binet and the Swiss Gaston Armand Amaudruz.[37]

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[28] As suggested by Del Hierro, *The Neofascist Network and Madrid*, 4.

[29] That party continued to exist until the 1990s, as attested by Lena Berggren, 'Swedish Fascism – Why Bother?', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 37, 3 (2002), 400. On the Malmö meeting see Report n. 486/21, 16 July 1951, Ministère des Affaires étrangeres – Direction des Archives (Minister of the Foreign Affairs, Direction of Archives, Paris; FR MAE), 205 QOSUP/3.

[30] Philip Rees, ed., *Biographical Dictionary of the Extreme Right since 1890* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), 328 and Macklin, *Very Deeply Dyed in Black*, 107. Soon afterwards, the Federal Republic of Germany banned Richter's party. See Ignazi, *Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe*, 64.

[31] The French delegation also included Victor Barthélemy who, in the 1930s, had been a member of Doriot's French Popular Party (*Parti Populaire Français*) and even became the party secretary in Nice. See Lebourg, *Les Nazis ont-ils survécus?*, 118.

[32] Maurice Bardèche, *Lettre à François Mauriac* (Paris: La Pensée libre, 1947) and *Nuremberg ou la Terre promise* (Paris: Les Sept Couleurs, 1948).

[33] Dossier Mouvement Socialiste d'Unité française, 30 Dec. 1948, Les Archives Nationales (The National Archives of France; AN), Papiers des chefs de l'Etat. IVe République (1947–1959), 4AG/76.

[34] See Report 'Italian Social Movement', 2 Aug. 1952, TNA, KV 3/267. While, according to the French authorities' report (n. 486/21, 16 July 1951, FR MAE, 205QOSUP/3), instead of Berti the representative of the Centre of European Studies would have been Armando Stefani. The various lists of those who took part in the convention offered by a wide variety of intelligence services are incoherent (and thus not completely accurate), but they nevertheless suggest that a good number of spies were able to penetrate the fascist network.

[35] This was an extremely ambiguous concept which would have divided fascists between those who theorised a Europe capable of acting as a third force in a geopolitical scenario in which the United States and the Soviet Union were opposed,

Neither the ESM nor the NOE were able to make a significant impact on the European political scene, but the fact that dozens of fascists could meet for discussions is indicative of how that community was striving to reactivate a transnational network (as well as revealing the general inaction of the security forces of the various countries which, as the archival sources show, chose to monitor such gatherings rather than prevent them). The revival of these kinds of networks was achieved thanks to the centralised activities of certain movements and political groups that were attempting to re-emerge on the public scene, but it was also the result of individual actions taken mainly by members of the younger generation, who, more than any others, felt the need to acknowledge the existence of other fascist movements.

In May 1949, as shown by a letter intercepted by the British intelligence service MI5, Mosley's 'assistant secretary', Alf (Lawrence) Flockhart,[38] reminded Roberto Mieville – a leading figure in the MSI and a member of parliament – that any member of the Italian party who wanted or needed to travel to the United Kingdom could 'get in touch with the Union Movement' (UM), Mosley's new political creation.[39] The UM was attempting to establish itself more firmly on both the domestic and international political stages, and the MSI was inevitably one of the most important points of reference in the shifting fascist political universe. It was therefore imperative to establish a channel of communication with it.[40]

The first contacts between the organisations probably date back to 1947, as indicated by two visits to Italy by the then 23-year-old Desmond Stewart in April and October of that year. Stewart, who went on to pursue a career as a writer, was then a student at Oxford University and had become so fascinated by Mosley that he ran one of the associations that supported his return to the political scene, the Oxford Corporate Club.[41] According to the report by MI5, which had followed both of Stewart's trips closely, the first was aimed at making the acquaintance of a number of Italian fascists, while the second, financed entirely by Mosley,[42] was aimed at offering *The Alternative* to the Italian market.[43]

Stewart's two journeys revealed many things, including the extent to which Mosley aspired to condition the political agenda of European fascism by taking advantage of the changing balance of power, but they also demonstrate the limited means that the UM leader had at his disposal. Indeed, it is doubtful whether a proposal from a young intermediary like Stewart could ever have been taken seriously by the Italian publishers that supported post-war fascism.[44] It is important, however, to make

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and those who, in order to defeat communism, were prepared to ally themselves with the Americans despite the fact that they had materially contributed to the fall of fascist regimes.

[36] The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), for example, had no doubt that the ESM was 'neo-fascist in orientation and its leadership'. See 'Attachment B', FOIA, CIA-RDP78-00915R000400120004-0.

[37] Lebourg, *Les Nazis ont-ils survécus?*, 127–8. On Amaudruz, see Damir Skenderovic and Luc van Dongen, 'Gaston-Armand Amaudruz, pivot et passeur européen', in Olivier Dard, ed., *Doctrinaires, vulgarisateurs et passeurs des droites radicales au XX siècle (Europe-Amériques)* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2012), 211–30 and Skenderovic, *The Radical Right in Switzerland*, 279–83.

[38] Macklin, *Failed Führers*, 317.

[39] See a report of Flockhart's letter addressed to Mieville, 21 May 1949, TNA, KV 3/42. On UM, see, at least, Nicholas Hilmann, '"Tell me chum, in case I got it wrong. What was it we were fighting during the war?": The Re-emergence of British Fascism, 1945–58', *Journal of Contemporary British History*, 15, 4 (2001), 1–34.

[40] Tonietto, *La genesi del neofascismo in Italia,* 171.

[41] Skidelsky, *Mosley*, 493 and Macklin, *Very Deeply Dyed in Black*, 37.

[42] Report, 14 Jan. 1948, TNA, KV 3/42.

[43] Note on Sir Oswald Mosley's attraction to fascists in Italy, 6 Jan. 1948, TNA, KV 3/42.

[44] Also indicative of the limited resources available to Mosley at the time is his later decision to entrust the translation of *The Alternative* to figures who, at least apparently, had neither an important role in the Italian fascist community nor as

clear that Stewart's first trip did not have an exclusively political purpose, at least not in a literal sense. It was, rather, a journey aimed first and foremost at 'seeing'. In a geopolitical context that was complicated for the fascists, experiences like Stewart's allowed them to immerse themselves in the daily political life of other active and equally determined groups, and to build awareness of a common symbolic universe. They also had an impact on the home front: Stewart was able to pass on his observations to his own circle, in keeping with the dynamics typical of ideological tourism.[45]

If the British fascist community was fascinated by the Italian one, Mosley's return to the political scene also ended up triggering the opposite process. This did not affect the whole of the MSI, as is shown, for example, by the criticisms of an important party representative, Concetto Pettinato, whose columns for the fortnightly *Il Meridiano d'Italia* accused British fascism of being overly subordinate to the National Socialist paradigm, of undervaluing the importance of the Mussolini model and of having failed to speak out against the terms of the peace treaty imposed on Italy, which had seen its colonial possessions taken away.[46] It was, if anything, young people who were fascinated by Mosley and the UM, and I believe it is no coincidence that it was a representative of the Centre for European Studies, Etro Pietro, who responded to Pettinato. Pietro pointed out that the dialogue with British fascism was particularly desirable precisely because of Pettinato's own invitation to abandon a 'narrow nationalism' in the name of a 'new nationalism' characterised by a European dimension. Moreover, Pietro himself, following a trip to Britain in 1948, where he read the UM's bulletin, *The Union*, reassured Pettinato on one point: Mosley's fascists were on the side of Italy and proud opponents of the Labour government.[47]

The student Ambrogio Masciadri was another young man attracted to Mosley. Taking advantage of a short stay in London, he therefore decided to write to the UM headquarters, stating that he would love to meet Mosley in person and have his photo taken with him. Mosley's loyal followers, Raven Thomson and Alf Flockhart, did not delay their response, making clear that the UM political secretary was completely willing to meet with him and reassuring him of the language in which the conversation might be held – German – which Mosley had refined during his time in prison.[48]

The first official meetings between the leaders of the respective parties had to wait until March 1950 when Mosley spent a week in Rome and met the then secretary of the MSI, Augusto de Marsanich, as well as his predecessor, Giorgio Almirante.[49] But, on the same occasion, the Italian capital was also hosting many other individuals involved in reconstituting fascist networks, including representatives of the Spanish Phalange and of the *Bruderschaft*. The latter, a 'semi-secret postwar organisation of perhaps 2,500 right-wing nationalists', mainly former members of the *Groß Deutschland Division*, the SS and the NSDAP, was established with the purpose of creating a pressure group in Germany with strong international ties that could help to rehabilitate the country and secure its rearmament, and at creating a Europe independent of both the United States and the Soviet Union.[50] Also visiting the MSI on that occasion were two French representatives, Georges Albertini and Guy Lemmonier, both of whom were bankers with a history in the French People's Party and were among the principal supporters of a fascist international with anti-communist objectives.[51]

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contributors to publishing houses, and who proved to be less than punctual in fulfilling their commitments. See, for example, the letter from Franco Boni to Desmond Stewart, 12 Jan. 1948, TNA, KV 3/42.

[45] Hourmant, *Au pays de l'avenir radieux*, 13.

[46] Concetto Pettinato, 'Mosley and Co.', *Il Meridiano d'Italia*, 12 June 1949, 1, 4.

[47] Etro Pietro, 'Difesa di Mosley e Co.', *Il Meridiano d'Italia*, 26 June 1949, 4.

[48] Letter translated into English from Ambrogio Masciadri to Mosley, 22 Nov. 1948 and Call Tapping, 27 Nov. 1948, TNA, KV 3/42.

[49] He also had the opportunity to meet other MSI politicians, like Mirko Giobbe and Luigi Romersa. See Report of the Chief of Police to the Minister of Interior, 24 Aug. 1950, Archivio centrale dello Stato (Central Archive of the Italian State, ACS), Minister of Interior (MI), Gab., Ag., Fasc. correnti, 1950–52, b. 46, fasc. 'Movimento fascista. Affari generali'.

[50] Norman J. W. Goda, *Hitler's Shadow: Nazi War Criminals, U.S. Intelligence, and the Cold War* (Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 2010), 53–9.

[51] Lebourg, *Les Nazis ont-ils survécus?*, 115.

Rome was also the venue for another important meeting, held in October of the same year, namely the first European Congress of National Youth.[52] The special guests were Engdahl, Mosley and Karl-Heinz Priester. The latter, a former member of the Nazi youth organisation *Hitler-Jugend*, then a war correspondent for the Luftwaffe and a lieutenant in the Wehrmacht, had re-launched himself in the post-war period (after his internment by US forces) first by joining the *Nationaldemokratische Partei*, a right-wing political group, and then by supporting the establishment of a new party with a much more radical political agenda, the *Nationaldemokratische Reichs-Partei*.[53]

Another of the most favourable pretexts for meetings of fascists were party or association conferences. This was the case in Malmö, but also in Naples in October 1951 during the Second National Congress of the Female Italian Movement Faith and Family (MIFF).[54] Officially established on 28 October 1946 (not an arbitrary date for fascists), the MIFF enjoyed the protection and hospitality of the Vatican in the post-war era and dedicated itself to assisting fascists, especially those who had been caught up in the purges, although article 1 of its statute referred generically to the 're-educative' nature of the association and its commitment to preserving Catholic and European values and customs.[55] In particular, the movement offered fascists legal help and assisted their escape abroad, and it is therefore no coincidence that it had branches in Spain and Argentina and that its events were open to fascist-minded personalities from all over the world.[56] For example, among the guests at the 1951 Congress was the anti-Semitic Canadian Adrien Arcand, who in the 1930s had founded *Le Parti National Social Chrétien*. Like Mosley, Arcand had to spend some years in prison, but once he regained his freedom he 'was able to resume his campaign of hateful propaganda against the Jews' not only, as Hugues Théorêt has pointed out, by taking advantage of the inertia of the Canadian government, but also using the network of contacts that he was able to nurture.[57] Arcand acknowledged this in a long interview with the *Montréal Gazette* in February 1947 in which he claimed to have relationships with 'people who think as I do' in the United Kingdom, New Zealand, South Africa and the United States.[58] It cannot, of course, be ruled out that he was overstating his connections, but his presence in Naples is evidence of his efforts to re-launch himself as well as of the MIFF's desire to bring an international dimension to its work.

Another important guest in Naples was the American Francis Parker Yockey, who had travelled to Germany to work for the US administration, only to be dismissed because of his markedly pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic positions.[59] At that point, he began a long journey that led him to meet Mosley, with whom he shared a passion for the philosophy of Oswald Spengler. However, by the time they met, relations between them had cooled significantly, the main point of divergence being that the leader of the UM, identifying communism as the greatest threat to Europe, was inclined to maintain a channel of communication with the United States, while Yockey was unwilling to make such a compromise.[60] Yockey, therefore, was taking a different path to that of Mosley and many other fascists, one that, if possible, was even more radical.[61] It is precisely for this reason that his presence at the MIFF congress is somewhat surprising since that organisation gravitated around the MSI, which, as mentioned, at least formally endeavoured to show respect for the rules of democracy so as not to encourage intervention from the authorities. At the very least, Yockey's presence points to the coexistence in Italian fascism of a law-abiding dimension with another much more subversive one.

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[52] 'La gioventù nazionale al I Congresso Europeo', *Il Meridiano d'Italia,* 15 Oct. 1950.

[53] Rees, *Biographical Dictionary,* 303–4. On the presence of foreign delegates, see Macklin, *Very Deeply Dyed in Black*, 103–4. See also the Report of the Consul General of France in Naples, Mathieu Pasqualini (who, due to the presence at the congress of many Neapolitan fascists, mistakenly placed the event in Naples rather than Rome), 24 Oct. 1950, FR MAE, 193QO/197. However, it is interesting to note that Italian security sources overlooked the event, failing to grasp its highly political and subversive dimension, as can be seen from the Report of the Chief of the Police, 30 Oct. 1950, ACS, MI, Gab, Ag, Fasc. correnti, 1950–52, b. 46, fasc. 'Movimento fascista. Affari generali'.

[54] Report, 26 Nov. 1951, ACS, MI, Gab, Ag, Fasc. correnti, 1950–2, b. 46, fasc. 'Movimento fascista. Affari generali'.

[55] See Statuto Movimento italiano femminile – Fede e Famiglia, ACS, Mi, Gab., Ag. Fasc. permanenti, enti e associazioni (1944–66), b. 260, fasc. 'Movimento italiano femminile – Fede e famiglia'. It is interesting to note how the Italian authorities themselves underestimated the MIFF, taking the content of the statute literally and thus judging it to be an 'apolitical' movement. See report of the Chief of the Police, 9 Sept. 1947 in ACS, Mi, Gab., Ag. Fasc. permanenti, enti e associazioni (1944–66), b. 260, fasc. 'Movimento italiano femminile – Fede e famiglia'. In order to stress the importance of the links between the MIFF and the Vatican it is important to point out that one of the MIFF's leaders was Monsignor Mattei, who, at the same time, was the head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and that the MIFF's headquarters were located, at least in the Movement's first months, within the borders of the Vatican City. See Federica Bertagna, 'Un'organizzazione neofascista nell'Italia postbellica: il Movimento italiano femminile "Fede e famiglia" di Maria Pignatelli di Cerchiara', *Rivista calabrese di storia del '900*, 1 (2013), 5–32.

[56] Albanese and Del Hierro 'A Transnational Network', 88.

[57] Hugues Théorêt, *The Blue Shirts: Adrien Arcand and Fascist Anti-Semitism in Canada* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2017), 11.

[58] The contents of Arcand's interview, which was published in several parts by the *Montréal Gazette* on 22, 24 and 25 Feb. 1947, were largely resumed by 'The International of Anti-Democracy', *The Wiener Library Bullettin*, 3–4 (1947), 12.

The MIFF congress would not have been complete without a Spanish delegation. Thus Maria Victoria Eiroa, the head of the Francoist women's section in Ferrol, travelled to Naples to bring greetings from Pilar Primo de Rivera, sister of José Antonio Primo de Rivera. The latter was a genuinely totemic figure in the fascist universe, as the founder of the Phalange but above all because he perfectly encapsulated the martyrdom that was so central to the fascist political religion due to the death sentence imposed on him in November 1936 by the republicans.[62]

More generally, Spain as a whole was a point of reference for fascists of all nationalities. It was not only one of the most welcoming countries for fascists on the run, allowing them to start a new life, but was also a favourite destination for ideological tourism.[63] As Macklin pointed out, Mosley's contacts with the Spanish fascist front were not only aimed at broadening the circulation of *The Alternative* to that country, but also at pointing his comrades to a sort of earthly paradise where they could wear the black shirt without fear of intervention from the authorities. In the United Kingdom, in contrast, the black shirt had been banned by the Public Order Act of 1936 and without it the London marches that Mosley had tried to re-launch seemed to have lost at least some of their symbolic impact.[64] The UM therefore organised regular trips to Spain, as did fascist parties in other countries.[65] The MSI, for example, offered its young militants an 'earth cruise' to be held between late August and early September 1953. The trip was designed to combine moments of leisure, including an overnight stay in Barcelona near the bathing establishments and tours of 'typical Spanish' nightclubs, along with moments of reflection. The intention was therefore that the tour would retrace the routes 'already travelled in combat by the Italian legionaries in 1939, 1938 and 1937' and include a stop in Zaragoza where, although not made explicit in the programme, the fascists would presumably pay homage to the Italians who had fallen in the Spanish Civil War with a visit to the *Torre de los Italianos*

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[59] See, for instance, Lebourg, *Les Nazis ont-ils survécus?*, 101–2.

[60] Ibid., 102.

[61] Yockey in turn started an international organisation known as the European Liberation Front. See Mulhall, *British Fascism after the Holocaust*, 109.

[62] On José Antonio Primo de Rivera's legacy, see Miguel Angel Perfecto, 'La mémoire imposée du franquisme. Le Mythe de José Antonio Primo de Rivera et l'école nationale-catholique', in Olivier Dard, ed., *Références et thèmes des droites radicales au XX siècle (Europe-Amériques)* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2015), 57–82. Primo de Rivera was broadly commemorated by fascists in the post-war period, as attested by the many articles that appeared in the UM's magazine *The Union*; see, for example, 'José Antonio: Leader and Patriot', 22 Nov. 1952, 2.

[63] Albanese and Del Hierro, *A Transnational Network* and Del Hierro, *The Neofascist Network and Madrid.*

[64] Richard Thurlow, 'State Management of the British Union of Fascists in the 1930s', in Mike Cronin, ed., *The Failure of British Fascism: The Far Right and the Fight for Political Recognition* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), 29–52; David Renton, *Fascism, Anti-Fascism, and Britain in the 1940s* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000); Jon Lawrence, 'Fascist Violence and the Politics of Public Order in Inter-War Britain: The Olympia Debate Revisited', *Historical Research*, 76, 192 (2003), 238–67. Even Lionel Rose, the leader of one of the most important associations to denounce Mosley's re-emergence, the Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen, admitted that, without the black shirts, the public meetings and marches organised by the fascists looked like a gathering of ordinary men. See Macklin, *Very Deeply Dyed in Black,* 51–2.

[65] The announcements and itineraries of the trips are easily traceable by scrutinising the fascist magazines. See, for instance, 'Visit to Spain', *The Union*, 21 Nov. 1953, 3 and 'Vacances en Espagne', *Défense de l'Occident,* May 1953.

(Tower of the Italians), whose construction had been encouraged by Mussolini.[66] The excursion therefore had multiple dimensions that reveal the central importance of pilgrimage for the fascist community which, along with observing anniversaries, worked to reinforce a knowledge of recent history, especially among the youngest, and more generally to shape, or rather to re-shape, the tradition of the community.[67]

Another noteworthy trip to Spain was the one to Medina del Campo in February 1949, led by the journalist Leo Negrelli, who had been head of Mussolini's press office during the RSI. Negrelli had been one of the organisers of the first fascist networks in the 1920s and one of the most important figures in the post-war effort to revive the same networks.[68] Negrelli described the most important parts of the trip in *Il Meridiano d'Italia*. The tour had taken around forty people of different nationalities and ages to experience the atmosphere in one of the many schools of the women's section of the Phalange, enabling them to immerse themselves in the daily life of the institution and take part in its activities. According to the journalist's account, the most moving moment came towards the end of the day with an hour of prayers and readings from the Phalange's founder. At that moment, the female teachers and pupils raised their arms 'in the Roman salute' and the visitors followed suit, using a gesture often banned in their own countries to pay homage to Primo de Rivera and all the dead 'who had faith in common', before ending by singing the hymn of the Phalange, *Cara al sol con la camisa nueva*.[69]

Books in Motion

On 16 August 1949, a unit of the Special Branch of the London Metropolitan Police detained a nineteen-year-old Italian student on his way to catch the ferry to France from the port of Newhaven.[70] This was Fausto Gianfranceschi, the young man who attended the founding of the MSE in Malmö a year later. He claimed to have spent eight days in the United Kingdom, during which he visited some of the country's universities and made a brief stay in London to visit the UM's headquarters. Gianfranceschi's trip is undoubtedly an example of ideological tourism: his goal was first and foremost to strengthen contacts between Italian and British fascism, and his tour of university campuses is therefore not surprising given that several groups supportive of Mosley had emerged from them.[71] The letters found in Gianfranceschi's luggage confirm the political purpose of the trip. One, for example, revealed that the Roman student was representing the *Raggruppamento giovanile studenti e lavoratori*, the aforementioned organisation with direct links to the MSI. On the other hand, another missive suggested that he was also an intermediary between Raven Thomson and the director of the fascist magazine *La Sfida*, Enzo Erra. Thomson had sent Gianfranceschi a letter laying out the political position of the UM, which condemned any government that was formally democratic but in fact subordinate to the United States.

However, a deeper political dimension can also be discerned in Giafranceschi's time in England. The student had embarked on his trip to experience other forms of fascism at first hand, and he took away important mementos, such as press clippings of Mosley at a rally and a 'silver metal badge' 'bearing a likeness of Sir Oswald Mosley and the words "Our Leader"'. Gianfranceschi also took back with him the address of Paul Gentizon, something that probably indicates his desire to add to his network of contacts. He also used the trip to broaden his reading: it is no coincidence that he took back from the United Kingdom a dozen copies – presumably to distribute to his Italian comrades or to any French contacts he might make on his return journey – of one of the articles that best summarised Mosley's thoughts on the fate of Germany, *Germany: Key to Europe* (1949), as well as copies of *Portrait of a Leader*, a text by Arthur Kenneth Chesterton from 1937 that glorified the UM founder and was still in circulation after the war. Finally, the suitcase searched by the police also contained a copy of *My Answer* (1946), the first political pamphlet produced by Mosley after the war, as well as Raven Thomson's *The Coming Corporate State*, the first edition of which dated back to 1935 but which was reprinted in 1947 precisely because, in Mosley's opinion, corporatism had to remain at the centre of the fascist political agenda.[72]

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[66] 'Programma del Viaggio in Spagna', *Il Meridiano d'Italia* 13 July 1952, 3.

[67] On the importance of the cult of martyrs for the fascist ideology and the extreme right more generally, see Francesco Germinario, *L'estremo sacrificio e la violenza. Il mito politico della morte nella destra rivoluzionaria del Novecento* (Trieste: Asterios, 2018) and Emilio Gentile, 'Fascism as Political Religion', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 25, 2–3 (1990), 229–51. On the continuities and discontinuities between the cult of martyred fascists before and after the turning point of 1945, see Amy King, 'Antagonistic Martyrdom: Memory of the 1973 *Rogo di Primavalle*', *Modern Italy*, 25, 1 (2020), 33–48.

[68] Albanese and Del Hierro, 'A Transnational Network', 89 and Tonietto, *La genesi del neofascismo in Italia,* 216.

[69] 'Un giorno in Castiglia con la gioventù spagnola', *Meridiano d'Italia*, 20 Feb. 1949, 3.

[70] Special Branch report, Metropolitan Police, 16 Aug. 1949, TNA, KV 3/42.

[71] Pro-Mosley clubs came into being at least in Cambridge and Oxford, see Lionel Rose, *Fascism in Britain. Factual Survey No. 1* (London 1948), 4.

These were all volumes that, as Gianfranceschi admitted, he had bought during his trip so that he could delve deeper into his 'interest in fascism', as he defined his commitment to the political front, and which in turn confirms what I suggested in the introduction, namely that, in the immediate post-war period, reading and, even more so, the circulation and exchange of books played an important role in the revival of the fascist cause.[73]

Often moments of ideological tourism fostered the circulation of books. This was the case with the trip taken by Barry Atkin, a British fascist whose comrades in Verona assured Etro Pietro of their absolute willingness to host him. Pietro, however, asked Atkin to do him the courtesy of taking some books with him: Peter H. Nicoll's *Britain's Blunder: How England Lost the Second World War* (1949), as well as an English–Portuguese dictionary, a German–Danish (or alternately English–Danish) dictionary and a grammar textbook, so that he could learn Danish.[74] Pietro was probably keen on foreign languages, but it cannot be ruled out that he was influenced in his choice of which ones to learn by the shifting centre of gravity of the fascist network. Spain and Portugal were important points of reference in the aftermath of 1945, so it was very useful to be able to speak their languages, but the same could be said of the Scandinavian countries, which were assuming a much greater influence than they had in the 1930s and 1940s.

At other times, books were circulated alongside other goods in order to increase their chance of passing through customs and checkpoints imposed by national authorities. On the one hand, the fact that part of the fascists' literary production had attracted the attention of the authorities is indicative of the political potential that democratic institutions attributed to such volumes in the post-war period. On the other, the fact that some of these books, despite the vigilant control of the security forces, still managed to end up in the hands of the fascists and be traded reveals the strength of right-wing activists and their awareness that reading these volumes, and even just the material possibility of leafing through them, helped to keep their political cause alive. The case of the two texts written by Léon Degrelle in 1949, *La Campagne de Russie* and *La Cohue de 1940*, is particularly illustrative of this.

Degrelle had been the founder of the Rexist movement in Belgium and one of the most ardent supporters of the National Socialist cause in the inter-war years, to the point of participating in the Russian campaign.[75] At the end of the conflict, he had managed to escape the Belgian judicial authorities, who were forced to sentence him to death in absentia, by taking refuge in Spain. Degrelle never abandoned the fascist cause and in fact ended up becoming one of the reference points of the post-1945 fascist network.[76] Just as important, although less thoroughly explored by the historiography, is the role that he played in the immediate reconstruction of the events of the recent past that was a characteristic of the fascist front and the result of a vast literary production.[77] This was a strongly distorted revisionist retelling that was able to circulate in Europe and also elsewhere, for example in Argentina, where a large Nazi and fascist community was sheltered by the Peron government.

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[72] Corporatist ideas were also widely disseminated through the *Mosley News Letter*, see Thomson's article 'The Corporate State: They Live and Learn', Dec. 1946–Jan. 1947.

[73] Gianfranceschi's luggage also contained the volume *The Initiation* by the founder of occultism, Rudolf Steiner, which had probably accompanied the Roman student on his trip, and the eight-page political manifesto of the FAR. Gianfranceschi might have distributed copies of this manifesto to British comrades and/or read key passages aloud.

[74] Etro Pietro's Letter to Raven Thomson, 29 Dec. 1950, TNA, KV 3/43.

[75] Martin Conway, *Collaboration in Belgium: Léon Degrelle and the Rexist Movement 1940–1944* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993).

Both of Degrelle's books were immediately banned by the Belgian authorities and, at least in the case of the second volume, also by those of Switzerland and France,[78] but we nevertheless have proof that at least *La Cohue de 1940*, a text in which the author attacked his own government, was able to circulate. In order to achieve this, Degrelle and the network of political actors linked to the literary market that he relied on adopted a low profile, deciding not to publish the work through Éditions du Cheval Ailé – La Diffusion du Livre, the Franco-Swiss publishing house that had previously produced the volume on the Russian campaign. Run by the Swiss Constant Bourquin, but conceived by the literary expert and Pierre Laval's former cabinet director, Jean Jardin, Éditions du Cheval Ailé had been giving a platform to a whole series of authors who had supported the collaborationist cause in France and elsewhere, and the fascist cause more generally.[79] *Laval parle*, a book prefaced by his daughter, Josée Laval de Chambrun, and put into circulation in 1948 on the French market with a run of 50,000 copies, was emblematic.[80] Relying once again on Éditions du Cheval Ailé, as Degrelle had initially planned (as can be seen from the announcement of its launch printed in *La campagne de Russie*) was evidently judged too risky, which is why a more anonymous publishing house (or perhaps a front?) was chosen: Robert Crausaz éditeur. In line with the choice of adopting a low profile, it was also decided to publish the volume in Switzerland, unlike the previous one, which had been printed near Paris.[81]

For their part, the authorities tried to respond immediately, but they were unable to prevent the circulation of the book. Even though in February 1950, only a little more than a month after its appearance, there had already been a debate in Switzerland about banning the text,[82] the *Service des Renseignement généraux*, the French Intelligence Service, had to inform the Ministry of the Interior of the arrival of about 400 copies in France in April 1950 (probably after a first batch which had already reached the country).[83] And even after the decision taken in May 1950 by the French authorities to ban the book,[84] there is another piece of evidence showing that Degrelle and his team managed, in some way, to bypass this measure. In fact, a report from the National

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[76] See, at least, Christoph Brüll, 'Léon Degrelle comme référence des droites radicales allemandes après 1945', in Dard, *Références et thèmes des droites radicales au XX siècle*, 37–55.

[77] Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning, and Recovery* (New York, NY: Metropolitan Books, 2003).

[78] In the case of France, the book was banned on 15 Nov. 1949. See Report of Direction de la Règlementation, AN, 19860581/8. The Swiss decision can be deduced from the article – in the same folder – signed by Pierre Beguin, 'La manie des interdictions', *Gazette de Lausanne*, 22 Feb. 1950.

[79] On Jean Jardin and more specifically on the 'éditions du cheval ailé' (also known as 'A l'enseigne du cheval ailé'), of which, however, a more detailed analysis is required, see Pierre Assouline, *Une éminence grise: Jean Jardin (1904–1976)* (Paris: Folio, 2007), 261–4.

[80] Alain Clavien, 'Les intellectuels collaborateurs exilés en Suisse', *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps*, 67 (2002), 87. On Switzerland and its role in harbouring many collaborationists, see Luc van Dongen, *Un purgatoire très discret. La transition 'helvétique' d'anciens nazis, fascistes et collaborateurs après 1945* (Paris: Perrin, 2008).

[81] *La Campagne de Russie* was printed by the Imprimerie Crété in the Paris suburbs, while *La Cohue de 1940* was printed by the Imprimerie de la Plaine du Rhone S.A. in Aigle on 31 Dec. 1949.

[82] See Pierre Beguin, 'La Manie des Interditions', *Gazette de Lausanne*, 22 Feb. 1950. The article was unearthed in AN, 19860581/8 and is very interesting because it shows how not all of Swiss society welcomed such measures. In the opinion of the journalist, the Swiss Confederation should have persisted with the democratic approach demonstrated by the willingness to allow the circulation of other texts, including Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, the aforementioned memoirs of Pierre Laval and the diaries of Galeazzo Ciano.

[83] Report Service des Renseignement généraux, 26 Apr. 1950, AN, 19860581/8.

[84] 30 May 1950, AN, 19860581/8.

Intelligence Service dated 5 September 1950 stated that the book, after being banned in Switzerland, had been printed in Offenburg, a German town located in the French occupation zone a few kilometres from the border; it is therefore not surprising that it was readily available in Strasbourg.[85]

It is impossible to determine how many fascists were actually able to read Degrelle's works, but this issue calls for a broader reflection. The impression is that the leaders of the various fascist groups were attempting to encourage their community – which, it should be emphasised, was comprised of people not necessarily used to reading – to identify a sort of fascist literary canon, that is a series of books and pamphlets that could assist with the pivotal task of building a better understanding of contemporary reality and facing the new political challenges. It did not matter if the books were read or not, as the general idea was to spread the message that volumes with presumably subversive anti-democratic messages still existed and could be circulated. It is otherwise difficult to understand why fascist magazines constantly publicised books and printed two- or three-line summaries of their contents. In 1953, for example, *The Union* suggested reading the memoir *Stuka pilot,* written by the crack German wartime pilot and post-war Nazi activist Hans-Ulrich Rudel,[86] and in the same year *Défense de l'Occident* recommended a text by the Italian fascist Julius Evola, *Gli uomini e le rovine* (Men Among the Ruins).[87] This last case is particularly emblematic since one might imagine that there were very few French fascists who ended up taking possession of a text written in a foreign language and printed by a small publishing house that would not have been able to distribute its books outside Italy. Nevertheless, this kind of literary announcement was made precisely to signal the presence of a kind of parallel library, a parallel cultural canon challenging the one being constructed by the democratic culture.

It is easy to arrive at the same conclusions with regard to the works of Maurice Bardèche: *Lettre à François Mauriac* (1947), *Nuremberg ou la Terre promise* (1948) and *Nuremberg II ou Les Faux Monnayeurs* (1950), three books that were part of a major literary contribution that proved to be fundamental in the renewal of fascist ideology.[88] In this case, however, we also know that the international distribution of the books was significant and occurred first and foremost through their translation. For example, *Lettre à François Mauriac*, a book in which, as already mentioned, Bardèche raged against French retributive measures, reached Portugal thanks to a translation by the French writer Jean Haupt, an intellectual very close to Salazar.[89] *Nuremberg ou la Terre promise*, which was released by Les Sept Couleurs, a publishing house founded by Bardèche himself, made inroads in the Italian, Swiss and German publishing markets as well as in that of Argentina. In Italy it was taken on by a conservative publisher, Leo Longanesi, who released it in 1949 under the title *I servi della democrazia* (The Servants of Democracy);[90] in Switzerland it was translated into German for a small publisher, Brugg Verlag, by 'Rudolf Hans', a pseudonym of Hans Oehler, a journalist who had been attracted to the National Socialist cause and whom the Swiss federal court had sentenced to two years' imprisonment for betraying the interests of the Confederation during the war.[91]

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[85] Report of Direction des Renseignement généraux, 30 Aug. 1950, AN, 19860581/8.

[86] *The Union*, 3 Jan. 1953, 4. On Rudel, see Martin A. Lee, *The Beast Reawakens: Fascism's Resurgence from Hitler's Spymasters to Today's Neo-Nazi Groups and Right-Wing Extremists,* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1997) 110–17.

[87] *Défense de l'Occident,* Oct. 1953. On Evola, see Elisabetta Cassina Wolff, 'Evola's Interpretation of Fascism and Moral Responsibility', *Patterns of Prejudice,* 50, 4–5 (2016), 478–94.

[88] On Bardèche's role in the renewal of fascist ideology, see, at least, Ian Barnes, 'A Fascist Trojan Horse: Maurice Bardèche, Fascism and Authoritarian Socialism', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 37, 2 (2003), 177–94 and Shields, *The Extreme Right in France*, 99–103.

[89] Alain de Benoist, ed., *Bibliographie générale des droites françaises*, Vol. 3 (Paris: Dualpha, 2005), 601.

[90] Ibid., 602. On Longanesi, see Raffaele Liucci, *Leo Longanesi. Un borghese corsaro tra fascismo e Repubblica* (Rome: Carrocci, 2016).

[91] The circulation of the volume in Switzerland is attested to by 'International Fascists on the Move', *Bullettin Wiener Library,* Jan. 1950, 21. For a further investigation of Hans/Oehler see Walter Wolf, 'Oehler, Hans', in *Dizionario storico della Svizzera (DSS)*, available at https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/it/articles/020368/2015-01-12/ (last accessed May 2022). See also Skenderovic, *The Radical Right in Switzerland,* 285.

Another German translation, entrusted to the Alsatian Joseph Baumann, dates back to 1950, but in this case it was destined for Argentina, where there was a sizeable German community, including many Nazi émigrés. Also in Argentina, the 'cleric-fascist' Jordán Bruno Genta edited a Spanish version in the same year.[92]

While the translations of *Nuremberg ou la Terre promise* did not automatically guarantee that it would be read, they are proof of an interest that came about not only in reaction to the decision of the French authorities to ban it,[93] but that was also rooted in the contents of the text. The book denounced the contradictions and limitations of the judicial system that had supposedly characterised the so-called Nuremberg trial and, not even with much subtlety, ended up suggesting that the crimes perpetrated by the Germans were probably not as serious as the European democracies claimed.

Bardèche's ideas also circulated through articles in fascist newspapers and periodicals. Once again, it is difficult to establish whether and to what extent the fascist community considered it important to engage with his reflections and read his writings. It is difficult, in other words, to ascertain precisely how important the experience of reading works by or about Bardèche was in rebuilding the fascist universe in the post-war period. Nevertheless, I believe that, like the opportunity of the journey that allowed its participants to 'see' and thus to touch the existence of other fascist communities with whom they shared many of the same values, the post-war fascists' propensity to circulate certain texts and extend their reach through reviews, translations and reprints of salient passages helped their entire community to strengthen its faith in certain beliefs. In other words, while travel helped them to see and the reports of those experiences brought them to life for their comrades, the practice of reading allowed fascists to strengthen their own faith, and reporting on such readings allowed them to spread that faith to their comrades. One cannot therefore underestimate the effort of one of the most popular magazines of the Italian fascist front, *Il Meridiano d'Italia*, in mediating Bardèche's vast production by reproducing several extracts with the consent of the French intellectual himself who, not surprisingly, visited its office in December 1949 to show his appreciation.[94]

The fortnightly periodical gave considerable coverage to the publication of Bardèche's first post-war literary work, *Lettre à François Mauriac*, describing it as an 'irrefutable indictment of the savage and liberticidal work . . . of the Anglo-Americans on French soil'.[95] The magazine's editorial board then decided to commission a translation and serialise it, starting on 8 May 1948.

The release of *Nuremberg ou la Terre promise* was greeted with the same enthusiasm by *Il Meridiano d'Italia*, which dedicated a front-page article to the book on 20 February 1949 that referred to the text as a true 'masterpiece'.[96] The article could also not avoid mentioning the author's judicial misadventures following the publication of that text: the authorities had in fact accused him of '*apologie des crimes de meurtre*' (apology for crimes of murder), a charge which allowed the government to prevent the circulation of a text in spite of the 1881 law guaranteeing the freedom of the press.[97]

Finally, *Il Meridiano d'Italia* also gave broad circulation to what was probably Bardèche's most abrasive piece of writing, *Nuremberg II*. This was a text that Robert Brasillach's brother-in-law wrote specifically as a response to the celebrated court cases in which he had been personally involved. The purpose, according to him, was to argue his position with due accuracy, to take an opportunity that he had not yet been granted in court.[98] From the very first lines, in short, Bardèche adopted the rhetorical key which the fascist universe had ended up resorting to from the immediate post-war period onwards, presenting himself and the entire fascist community as victims of purges and, more generally, of the unequal treatment that democracies imposed on those who had embraced the fascist cause. It was a winning rhetorical technique, so often used by leading fascist personalities in pamphlets, memoirs and newspaper articles that it ended up being introjected by the readers themselves.[99]

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[92] Federico Finchelstein, *The Ideological Origins of the Dirty War: Fascism, Populism, and Dictatorship in Twentieth Century Argentina* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 95. De Benoist, *Bibliographie générale des droites françaises,* 602.

[93] 'Le livre de M. Bardeche saisi et poursuivi', *L'Aube,* 21 Dec. 1948, in AN, 20080095/6.

[94] 'Saluti a Maurice Bardèche', *Il Meridiano d'Italia,* 4 Dec. 1949, 3.

[95] See the advertisements placed in *Il Meridiano d'Italia*, 11 Apr. 1948.

[96] 'Norimberga Terra Promessa', *Il Meridiano d'Italia,* 20 Feb. 1949.

[97] Christophe Bigot, *Connaître la loi de 1881 sur la presse* (Paris: Guide légipresse, 2004). The affair would continue until 1954 when the Court of Cassation first confirmed the sentence pronounced in the Court of Appeal in May 1952 of one year in prison and a large fine. Then, however, the President of the Republic René Coty intervened, granting a pardon to the author, who actually ended up serving only a few days in prison. See 'Arrestation et liberation de Maurice Bardèche', *Défense de l'occident*, Aug.–Sept. 1954. Shields, *The Extreme Right in France,* 57.

However, the resonance that *Il Meridiano d'Italia* gave to *Nuremberg II* calls for further reflection. The work can be considered one of the first examples of Holocaust denial literature to appear on the market.[100] In fact, while Bardèche's previous work concentrated mainly on criticising the Allies' approach to the Germans, *Nuremberg II* ended up suggesting that the crimes perpetrated by the Nazis ought at least to be downplayed and even perhaps considered a fabrication by Jewish people. In supporting this thesis, moreover, the writer referred to the testimony of Paul Rassinier, who was causing a sensation (and inspiring indignation) in those very months.[101]

The article, which appeared on 25 March 1951 in *Il Meridiano d'Italia* – which in that period had a circulation of 20,000 copies per week[102] and was therefore one of the most widely read periodicals in the fascist community – emphasised that '*Nuremberg II* is . . . a book to be read by everyone'[103] and backed Bardèche's theses, offering an endorsement that was not met in later issues with any change of heart by the editorial staff or the reading community. Thus, a magazine with very close ties to the MSI appeared to speak directly to the heart of the fascists. In spite of the fact that formal respect for the rules of democracy (a necessary condition for the MSI if it wished to avoid being shut down by the authorities on the charge of attempting to reconstitute a fascist movement, as prescribed by the Italian Constitution) imposed a relatively moderate attitude and demanded that language be purged at least of explicit forms of anti-Semitism, the reference to readings such as those of Bardèche allowed the Italian fascist community to keep alive certain values, certain distorted visions of reality. This is something that is scarcely if ever considered by the historiography, which is usually more inclined to emphasise the tendency of post-1945 Italian fascism, unlike that of other national realities, to distance itself from more radical and anti-Semitic tendencies.[104]

Conclusions

In a recent article, Aristotle Kallis has pointed out that among the reasons for the sensational 'international reach' of fascism between the wars was the 'appeal' 'of a set of generic ideological norms and political practices' that ensured its wide circulation.[105] This set of ideas and practices was taken up in different geographical contexts precisely because of its winning potential. However, Kallis remarks that this was not a passive or even wholesale appropriation (at least not always), as ideas and practices tended to be readapted in each context and integrated with others.

The end of the Second World War undoubtedly marked a slowdown in the evolution of fascism: the circulation of political ideas and practices was curbed and their appeal fell dramatically. Nevertheless, 1945 did not signal the end of this evolution. The fascist community did not escape the purges unscathed, but it nonetheless came through them and proved itself capable of re-launching a network that even led to the establishment of international organisations in the early 1950s. This transnational dimension, as well as the propensity to set up or revitalise international networks, was certainly not a feature unique to the fascist universe, as similar tendencies can be seen in other political subjects of the period,[106] but in the fascist case such attitudes could not, at the time, be taken for granted (just as the survival of fascism could not). The death of a number of prominent personalities, the consolidation of democracies at least in the western part of the Old Continent, and the horrors and crimes perpetrated by fascism that led many citizens to distance themselves from the ideology in fact had the potential to bring about the end of fascism. However, ultimately other dynamics came into play. The rather different outcome – which in some cases, as in Italy, resulted in the establishment of parties capable of surviving for several decades and even conditioning the political activity of parliament – was undoubtedly due to the ambiguous, perhaps even lenient, attitude of individual European governments towards the return of fascist movements (or at least those inspired by this ideology), concerned as they were by what they considered to be the main threat, communism. Another determining element was the stance taken by elements of the US intelligence services that saw some fascists as valuable resources to be deployed in the context of the Cold War. To this were added specific social dynamics, at least in some national contexts (for example, the arrival of migrants in the United Kingdom, particularly from the West Indies, which was widely exploited by Mosley and other small fascist groups attempting to gain popularity),[107] as well as economic circumstances and the 'generosity' of certain electoral systems (think, for example, of the case of Italy where the lack of a parliamentary threshold allowed the MSI to gain representation in the very first elections that it fought, in 1948).[108]

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[98] Bardèche, *Nuremberg II ou Les Faux Monnayeurs* (Paris: Les Sept Couleurs, 1950), 9–10.

[99] See, at least for the Italian case study, Andrea Martini, 'Defeated? An Analysis of Fascist Memoirist Literature and its Success', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 25, 3 (2020), 295–317.

[100] Valérie Igounet, *Histoire du négationnisme en France* (Paris: Seuil, 2000).

[101] Bardèche, *Nuremberg II*, 25–6.

[102] Giuseppe Pardini, *Fascisti in democrazia. Uomini, idee, giornali (1946–1958)* (Florence: Le Lettere, 2008), 89.

[103] 'Norimberga II ovvero i falsi monetari', *Il Meridiano d'Italia,* 25 Mar. 1951, 3.

[104] Gianni Scipione Rossi, *La destra e gli ebrei. Una storia italiana* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubettino, 2003).

[105] Aristotle Kallis, 'The Transnational Co-production of Interwar "Fascism": On the Dynamics of Ideational Mobility and Localization', *European History Quarterly*, 51, 2 (2021), 213.

Such factors, however, have already been considered, albeit not fully, by historians and political scientists. This article, therefore, has preferred to turn its attention elsewhere, namely to the cultural practices of reading and travelling which, as I have tried to demonstrate, played an equally important role in reactivating the possibility of being part of the same emotional community and, consequently, in finding new, even if limited, room for manoeuvre with which to confront the emotional regime (the democratic one) that had gained the upper hand in 1945. These practices, in other words, gave individual members of the vast and variegated fascist universe the opportunity to escape isolation, but also the chance, if not to embrace visions that went beyond exclusively nationalist horizons, at least to deal with them (some fascists in fact continued to support a nationalist approach). More specifically, travel allowed fascists to discover other realities and in turn convey them to the comrades of their own group. Reading, also by virtue of frequent state repression – at least in countries such as France, Belgium and to some extent Switzerland – above all gained a subversive potential. Taking possession of certain books, or even just leafing through them or learning about them in newspaper articles, in fact gave the fascists the feeling of having developed an alternative culture and bypassing the institutions, and thus encouraged the sense that they could challenge (and beat) the mainstream. Secondly, reading allowed the fascists to strengthen their ideological structures and thus to strengthen the conviction of their beliefs. Furthermore, this article has suggested how these practices were often intertwined, and shown how personal mobility accompanied and encouraged the circulation of readings and vice versa. The analysis has ultimately demonstrated the importance of going beyond the purely event-driven dimension of the history of fascism in the aftermath of 1945 and shown how fascist ideas continued to evolve and adapt, even if the end of the Second World War undeniably represented a turning point.

Examining the practices of reading and travelling might superficially be seen as being of secondary importance. I believe, however, that by focusing more attention on them it will eventually also become possible to deal more adequately with certain research questions that still await an answer, for instance whether and to what extent the re-emergence of post-war fascism was the result of a top-down process driven by the moneyed classes. The historiography has so far undervalued this issue, even though some traces of a top-down dynamic can be revealed. One thinks, for example, of the fact that the magazine *Le Combattant européen* was financed by the Mutualité agricole (Agricultural Mutual Fund) of the Île-de-France region, thanks to its secretary, Maurice Ribert, who was very close to René Binet's political movements.[109] But one also thinks of the MIFF, which received material support from the Vatican and, in 1948, even financing from the Italian Ministry of the Interior amounting to 250,000 lire.[110] In short, I believe that only by giving greater consideration to the movement of people and material effects related to the fascist universe will it be possible to address an issue that is of crucial importance to any attempt to develop an exhaustive history of post-1945 fascism.

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[106] See, for example, Éric Anceau, Jacques-Olivier Boudon and Olivier Dard, eds., *Histoire des Internationales, Europe, XIX–XX siècles* (Paris: Nouveau Monde éditions, 2017).

[107] Mulhall, *British Fascism,* 136–65.

[108] Franco Ferraresi, *Minacce alla democrazia. La Destra radicale e la strategia della tensione in Italia nel dopoguerra* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1995), 32.

However, one pivotal question remains, namely that of which aspects of this emotional and political community endured into the second half of the 1950s and beyond. This is not the place to provide an exhaustive answer to this question but, by way of a conclusion, I would like to offer some preliminary insights. First of all, as pointed out by Martin Durham, providing an account of the ties forged between fascists from different countries should not lead us to overestimate these relationships, or to believe in their indissolubility.[111] Mosley's story illustrates this quite well: the UM was never able to gain significant success in Britain to the extent that, in 1953, Mosley decided to move to France because he considered it to be one of the fascist network's most important nerve centres. One of his last projects was the establishment of the National Party of Europe in the 1960s, which was the outcome of another international meeting, the so-called Venice Conference of 1962;[112] however, even this came to a short end, in part because of Mosley's own decision to retire from political life after his failure in the 1966 Shoreditch by-election, where he received only 4.6 per cent of the vote.[113] Yet, despite this history of failure, the immediate post-war season was able to foster a significant renewal of fascist ideology. In this sense, the parable of Bardèche is emblematic. He was able to impose himself in the renewed fascist network thanks to his successful publications of the late 1940s and early 1950s, and these were followed in 1961 by the book *Qu'est-ce que le fascisme?*,[114] which was translated only two years later by the Italian publisher Giovanni Volpe (the main publisher of the Italian extreme-right, according to Pauline Picco).[115] Furthermore, when Western Europe was shaken by the Algerian War and by the consequent Évian Accords (March 1962) that granted Algeria its independence, the fascist movement was completely prepared to take advantage. Even if it is questionable whether the *Organisation Armée Secrète* (OAS, Secret Armed Organization) could be considered an extreme right group, there is no doubt that the fascist political universe instrumentalised OAS actions to gain popularity and portray itself to the public as the defender of a French, that is European, Algeria. The fact that it was possible to do so was certainly dependent on the network that the fascists had already established.[116] Finally, we might also jump forward in time to consider one of the most important personalities of the extreme right in the 1960s and 1970s, Franco Freda, who played a critical role in the so-called Piazza Fontana massacre that struck Milan and shocked the whole of Italy on 12 December 1969. Studying this figure once again makes it clear that the network that had come into being in the post-war period continued to be highly significant in the subsequent decades. It is not a coincidence, in fact, that in his role as the founder of Ar, a highly influential publishing house in extreme right-wing circles, Freda commissioned an Italian translation of Bardèche's Holocaust-denying theories.[117] Conversely, when Freda went to prison under investigation for his role in the Piazza Fontana attack,[118] Amaudruz, the leader of the New European Order, during the movement's assembly held at the end of December 1974, expressed his sympathy for the Italian fascist and identified his imprisonment as an example of the alleged persecution of democracy.[119] It is therefore perfectly possible to claim that the reactivation of a fascist network in the immediate post-war period eventually bore fruit, with its protagonists coming to represent a sort of point of reference, albeit a partial one, for the next generation, in a context of mutual contamination and dialogue that was extremely detrimental to European democracies in the 1960s and 1970s.

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[109] Lebourg, *Les Nazis ont-ils survécus?*, 95. At least formally, this aid was granted because of MIFF's charitable role, but it is reasonable to imagine that the Italian government was aware of MIFF's true purpose and that at least the more conservative wing of the main coalition partner, the Christian Democratic Party, had particular sympathy with the organisation's anti-communist orientation.

[110] Roberto Guarasci, *La lampada e il fascio* (Reggio Calabria: Laruffa editore, 1987), XXXI.

[111] Durham, 'White Hands across the Atlantic', 165.

[112] Macklin, *Very Deeply Dyed in Black*, 135.

[113] Ibid., 137.

[114] Paris: Les Sept Couleurs, 1961.

[115] Picco, *Liaisons dangereuses,* 192, n. 34. The founder of the publishing house, Giovanni Volpe, was the son of the nationalist and pro-fascist historian Gioacchino Volpe. See F. Cossalter, *Come nasce uno storico contemporaneo: Gioacchino Volpe tra guerra, dopoguerra, fascismo* (Rome: Carocci, 2007).

[116] Mammone, *Transnational Neofascism in France and Italy*, 97–9.

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[117] Pauline Picco, 'Franco G. Freda: idéologue, éditeur, activiste', in Dard, ed., *Doctrinaires, vulgarisateurs et passeurs des droites radicales au XX siècle (Europe-Amériques),* pp. 148–9. Bardèche's Holocaust-denying theories were reported in the 1963 pamphlet *Manifesto del gruppo di Ar.*

[118] The most detailed reconstruction of the Piazza Fontana massacre is that of Benedetta Tobagi, *Piazza Fontana: il processo impossibile* (Turin: Einaudi, 2019). On the so-called Strategy of Tension, see, at least, Anna Cento-Bull, *Italian Neofascism: The Strategy of Tension and the Politics of Nonreconciliation* (New York, NY: Berghan Books, 2008).

[119] Picco, 'Franco G. Freda', 155.

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