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Economics, Aesthetics, and the Making of a New Via Roma in Turin

by

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Committee in charge:

Professor Mia Fuller, Chair
Professor Barbara Spackman
Professor Dylan Riley

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ABSTRACT

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Histories of Fascist-era architecture in Italy have traditionally focused on the connections between architectural theory and political discourse. Most of these studies emphasize the use of political language in architectural writings, and many are limited to the symbolic imperial center: the capital city of Rome. This dissertation differs in its approach by examining the period's architectural production through an economic rather than conceptual lens. The study is premised on the notion that the Fascist effort to redesign Italian society was not a strictly ideological process. Instead, it posits that practical financial considerations played a significant role in the regime's architectural interventions. Put simply, the regime needed money to achieve its political aims—in particular when those aims involved the destruction and construction of Italy's built environment. To this end, the government relied on elite financing, cheap labor, and broad economic restructuring to incentivize commercial activity and to support struggling domestic industries. Importantly, the web of Fascist economic policy, industrialism, and modernist architecture converged in Northern Italy. While Rome served as the functional and symbolic center of the Italian government, it lacked the economic strength of Italy's North. Turin, in particular, was home to some of the nation's most powerful financial elites who both lobbied for pro-business policies and funded the regime's construction projects.

The reconstruction of Via Roma, the central commercial street in Turin, is the focus of this study, as it is a prime example of the ways in which the regime's economic maneuvering influenced its architectural interventions. The new Via Roma was the regime's most significant construction project in Turin, taking roughly a decade to complete. The period of the road's reconstruction—from roughly 1931 to 1938—overlapped with the period of economic *fascistizzazione* in which the regime attempted to gain control of the national economy. Central to this study, therefore, are the Fascist government's two primary economic programs of corporatism—a foundational concept in Fascism's economic platform—and autarky—adopted explicitly in the late 1930s. Corporatism was proposed as an autonomous system for the regulation of capital and labor, while autarky emphasized war-readiness and self-sufficiency. The regime embraced these two systems as complementary programs for the expansion of state controls over the Italian economy.

This dissertation shows that the regime's attempts to merge these two economic systems resulted in significant aesthetic changes in Turin's built environment. The regime's efforts to navigate existing financial systems while also attempting to revolutionize Italy's economy resulted

in a scarcity of national bank reserves, a trend towards industrial monopolization, widespread unemployment, austerity measures for the working classes, and an increasingly elaborate welfare system. In the case of Turin's Via Roma, these conditions brought about changes in architectural patronage, labor demands, material availability, and of course, design. Over the years of the street's renewal, Fascist officials approved the construction of various buildings in different styles: first an array of neo-baroque *palazzi*, followed by a modernist steel-frame skyscraper, and finally, a master-planned collection of austere *stile littorio* buildings, examined in Chapter Two, Chapter Three, and Chapter Four, respectively. The result was a mix of distinct architectural styles, each linked to a key moment in the regime's economic history. By drawing connections between architectural design trends and economic policy, this dissertation presents a new way of framing the longstanding question of the regime's aesthetic shift from openness to uniformity. In short, this study explores Italian Fascism not merely in terms of political doctrine, but also as an economic reality—through the physical construction of the Fascist state.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

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The archival research for this dissertation was carried out in Turin, Italy at the Archivio Storico della Città di Torino. I am grateful to the archivists there, whose deep knowledge of the contents and organization of the collections was indispensable for my research. I owe a special note of gratitude to Salvatore Venezia who helped me identify sources both within and beyond the city archives, and engaged me in stimulating conversations about the Fascist regime's architectural legacy in Turin. My research in Turin was generously supported by the Barbieri Endowment of Trinity College, which funded my travel to Italy in 2021-2022.

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CHAPTER ONE
Introduction

Everything that concerns Turin, for profound political, economic,
and sentimental reasons, also concerns the nation.
— Benito Mussolini, 1932[1]

In the twenty years of the regime, Fascism has made practice
precede theory, practice precede doctrine.
— Paolo Thaon di Revel, 1941[2]

Nestled at the base of the Italian Alps, the city of Turin once held a central position in European politics. As the seat of the powerful House of Savoy, Italy's first and only royal family, Turin was declared the original capital of the unified Italian nation in 1861. For a brief moment, it was the most important city in the country. And yet, despite its four-year tenure as the country's political center, Turin is rarely figured as more than a stepping stone in Italy's path towards nationhood. This holds true in particular with regard to the Fascist period, as Turin is often characterized as peripheral to Mussolini's political program.[3] Unfortunately, this framing has produced a blind spot in histories of Italian Fascism. While there is no denying that the city of Rome held great symbolic and functional value for Mussolini's government, the Prime Minister's complicated relationship with the city of Turin was also a vital concern. Close ties to the industrial center would prove to be an economic necessity for the new leader, but an integration of Fascist policies in Turin would also require him to contend with two well-established and complementary authorities: on the one hand, the historical influence of the monarchy, and on the other, the economic oligarchy responsible for some of the most lucrative industries in the nation. Forming a strategic alliance with Turin's industrialists, therefore, represented a critical step towards ensuring Mussolini's political success. After all, a positive relationship with Turin's ruling classes held the dual promise of economic growth and political legitimation. At the same time, if the Fascist government were to overemphasize the value of Turin's existing powers, it would risk calling into question its own authority. In an attempt to reconcile this conflict, the Fascist government relied on varied and sometimes contradictory strategies. The result was a complex system of political and economic interventions that had profound implications on Turin's built environment.

Turin had experienced an industrial boom in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, transforming the city from a neglected former capital into a manufacturing powerhouse. Metal, mechanical, and automotive giants quickly eclipsed all other sectors of industrial production in the city.[4] In particular, the automobile manufacturer Fiat emerged as a national treasure. The company had recently embraced Fordist labor practices, resulting in unprecedented output of both consumer vehicles and war-ready automobiles used by Italian forces in their 1911

[1] Reprinted from *Il Popolo d'Italia* in *Torino: rassegna mensile*. Municipio di Torino, December 1936, n. 12, p. 2. Hosted by Museo Torino, www.museotorino.it/resources/pdf/books/531/. Accessed 23 March 2023.
[2] Minister of Finance and former *podestà* of Turin, Paolo Thaon di Revel quoted in Valerio Castronovo, *Storia dell'IRI*, p. 40.
[3] Mussolini described the industrial cities of Milan-Genoa-Turin as the "strategic triangle." While his forces had successfully conquered Milan and Genoa, according to MacGregor Knox, Turin remained impervious to Fascism's seizure of power in 1922 because "Turin was too distant from the road to Rome to warrant a major effort." See *To the Threshold of Power*, p. 366.
[4] "Torino", *Treccani*, www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/torino/. Accessed 23 March 2023.

invasion of Libya.[5] By the time of Italy's entry into the First World War in 1915, Turin had become a major producer of weapons, vehicles, and airplanes that were essential for equipping Italian soldiers for combat.[6] The rapid expansion of industrial manufacturing also transformed urban life in Turin. More than two hundred factories were scattered throughout the city by 1916, earning the city the moniker *città del lavoro* ("city of work"). While Turin had suffered a degree of population decline with the transference of the capital city to Florence in the late 1860s, and then to Rome in 1871, these losses were short-lived. As wartime manufacturing swelled in subsequent years, an influx of jobseekers produced a robust and sustained surge in the population, which had grown to nearly 500,000 residents by 1921.[7] Italy's participation in the war had propelled Turin's industrial growth, cultivating an interdependence between the Turinese economy and the Italian state—a link that would continue to shape Italy's fiscal and military strategies in the decades that followed.

Given these historical ties between Turinese industry and the Italian state, a central claim of this dissertation is that the city of Turin continued to play an essential role in the development of financing and production under Mussolini's rule. Early into Mussolini's career, financial support from Northern Italian industrialists had already proven critical to the politician's success. His newspaper *Il Popolo d'Italia*, founded in Milan in 1914, received financial support not just from radical and reformist political groups, but also from Turin's Fiat as well as other industry giants like Ansaldi, a Genoese metal and arms producer.[8] While *Il Popolo d'Italia* leaned towards revolutionary and socialist ideals in its early years, the publication also promoted an interventionist stance on World War I, making it an appealing platform for industrial producers.[9] Fiat, Ansaldi, and other metal and automotive manufacturers stood to profit significantly from Italy's involvement in World War I.[10] By the conclusion of the war, however, these industrialists withdrew their support for *Il Popolo d'Italia*, no longer needing to balance the paper's revolutionary rhetoric with its pro-war platform. As a result, Mussolini was nearly forced to give up the publication due to financial insolvency.[11] It was only at the end of 1920 when the director of the steel manufacturer ILVA offered to house *Il Popolo d'Italia*'s operations in their new printing offices that the newspaper found stable footing.[12] Thus, even before Mussolini took office, his career was contingent on his ability to attract and maintain industrial support.

By providing financial backing early in Mussolini's career, major industrialists established themselves as indispensable political resources for the future dictator.[13] Importantly, the immense wealth of the industrial elite had granted these individuals the autonomy to decide when, how, or

[5] The FIAT 15ter was the favored car model for the Italian invasion of Libya. See Valerio Castronovo, *Il Piemonte*, 1977, p. 281 and Centro Studi Piemontesi, *Torino, città viva*, 1980, p. 25.
[6] Giovanni Depaoli, "Aspetti della presenza militare nella vita torinese", *Torino, città viva*, Torino: Centro Studi Piemontesi, 1980, pp. 919-968, in particular, p. 925.
[7] "Torino," *Treccani*, https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/torino. Accessed 23 March 2023.
[8] Salvatore Lupo, "Il Popolo d'Italia" in *Dizionario del Fascismo* as cited in Lucy Maulsby, *Fascism, Architecture, and the Claiming of Modern Milan* p. 136. See also R.J.B. Bosworth's *Mussolini*, 2002, p. 107, and Piero Melograni, *Gli industriali di Mussolini*, 1972, p. 11.
[9] Maulsby, p. 136.
[10] Adrian Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, 2004, p. 211.
[11] Piero Melograni, *Gli industriali di Mussolini*, p. 12.
[12] Support from industrialists was both financial and political. In the days leading up to Mussolini's seizure of power in October of 1922, industrial tycoons including Gino Olivetti, Alberto Pirelli, and Antonio Stefano Benni contacted Italy's highest government officials to express their endorsement of the fascist leader. See Melograni, p. 13; Valerio Castronovo, *La stampa italiana dall'Unità al fascismo*, p. 265
[13] Roland Sarti, "Fascism and the Industrial Leadership in Italy before the March on Rome," ILR Review. 1968, p. 416.

if they would cooperate with Fascist policies. While industrialists had a vested interest in the nation's economic success, they did not form an authoritative political body, nor did they have total control of the government. Instead, their autonomy was exercised on a case-by-case basis. Under these conditions, different companies and sectors could work together or independently to either advance or block the government's plans. In other words, as Franklin Adler emphasizes, "autonomy was not hegemony."[14] Many Turinese industrialists, for example, were opposed to the violent tactics employed by Mussolini's *fasci di combattimento*. As Adrian Lyttelton puts it, "[t]error was at odds with the rationality of modern industry."[15] But the opportunity for real financial gain often outweighed moral arguments. And so, despite elements of Fascism that were antithetical to their views, many industrialists were still interested in collaborating with members of Mussolini's government when doing so was economically advantageous. Similarly, although Fascism was far from an industrialist movement, Fascist leaders were often willing to concede to industrialists' requests in order to satisfy their own material interests.[16] In this sense, the relationship between Fascist politicians and industrial leaders resembled an oligarchic system in which intermittent consent could be negotiated among a small number of participants based on mutually beneficial economic terms. The result of these relationships was a mingling of private capital and public policy.

A second core claim of this dissertation is that this complex interweaving of state and private interests had identifiable consequences on the built environment. More specifically, this dissertation argues that the evolving nature of these relationships can be traced through the regime's shifting preferences for different architectural styles. Over the course of Mussolini's roughly twenty years in office, the regime engaged in hundreds of architectural projects across Italy.[17] The quantity and range of these constructions contributed to a mythical representation of the omnipresence of both Fascism and the Duce.[18] Yet in reality, the government provided little direction for these new buildings, maintaining a policy of "aesthetic pluralism"—a label coined by Marla Stone in her 1998 book *The Patron State*.[19] According to Stone's analysis: "No one style, school, or monument summarizes the patronage of the state. Rather, the official culture of Italian Fascism is best defined by its diversities, contradictions and ambiguities."[20] From this perspective, the architectural proliferation fostered under Mussolini's government was marked in its early years by a stylistic noncommitment. The policy of aesthetic openness offered the crucial advantage of enabling the government to co-opt an array of architectural constructions in order to claim them as evidence of its own success.[21]

In the mid-1930s, however, the regime took a dramatic aesthetic turn when the strategy of "aesthetic pluralism" was eclipsed by a more uniform application of a streamlined interpretation of architectural classicism. This so-called *stile littorio* was a style of exaggerated dimensions and stripped-down forms adapted from Roman Antiquity. Practiced most famously by the architect

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[14] Franklin Hugh Adler, *Italian Industrialists from Liberalism to Fascism: The Political Development of the Industrial Bourgeoisie, 1906-1934*, p. 263.
[15] Lyttelton, p. 213.
[16] Adler, p. 264.
[17] Paolo Nicoloso, *Mussolini architetto*, Einaudi, 2008, p. 28.
[18] Nicoloso, p. 6 & p. 25.
[19] Marla Stone, *The Patron State*, 1998, p.4
[20] Stone, p. 4.
[21] For a comprehensive view of the varied architectural styles constructed under the regime, see Richard Etlin's *Modernism in Italian Architecture: 1890-1940*, MIT Press, 1991. See also: Giorgio Ciucci, *Gli architetti e il fascismo*, 2nd ed., 2002 (originally published 1989), and Paolo Nicoloso, *Mussolini architetto*, 2008.

Marcello Piacentini, it has now become synonymous with Fascist Italy. For Stone, 1936 marks the end of the period of aesthetic experimentation as the regime moved more decisively towards the adoption of the Piacentinian *stile littorio*. The timing also coincides with Italy's entry into an imperialist stage of governance, beginning with its invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. The concurrence of Italy's colonial conquest with the cultivation of a more consistent architectural style has prompted scholars to characterize the aesthetic turn as an ideological extension of the regime's shift towards imperialism.[22] However, colonialism itself offers little explanation for the choice. After all, during Fascism's period of stylistic pluralism, modernists successfully argued that their work embodied the spirit of Roman Antiquity, noting its imperial 'Mediterranean' forms that celebrated hierarchy and purity.[23] From this perspective, a variety of styles could make for a tidy symbolic fit with the regime's imperialist period.[24] Thus, while the government's *svolta imperiale* offers a partial explanation for some styles falling out of favor with the regime, an ideological argument alone does not make a satisfactory case for the adoption of Piacentinian uniformity.

Methods and Materials

This dissertation attempts to understand the regime's aesthetic shift by reading economic policy as a design input. Through a consideration of the Fascist government's financial practices, objectives, and limitations, this dissertation examines how economic policy shaped the fields of architecture and construction under Mussolini's government. More specifically, it argues that architectural styles in Italy's Fascist period were not determined solely by the ideology of the regime. Rather, it suggests that the shifting styles of the period were the logical result of the various financial, political, and social conditions of which the regime was both a product and producer. In other words, it suggests that the regime did not select a specific architectural aesthetic in order to reflect its political position, but instead that the regime's political position went hand-in-hand with a series of practical choices that produced specific aesthetic results. While these results varied depending on the different conditions of each building project—for example, whether a building project was urban or rural, privately or publicly funded, constructed pre- or post-financial crisis, and so on—this study suggests that architectural design under the Fascist government went beyond abstract political considerations.

As Alexander De Grand argues, "[h]ow fascism worked in practice must be considered more important than its ideology."[25] By investigating Fascist-era building projects in terms of practical concerns, this dissertation shows that the regime's attachment to various architectural styles was not determined exclusively by an alignment of architectural theory with Fascist rhetoric. While many studies have successfully demonstrated the allure of politically-charged designs for the Italian Fascist state, none has proven that the so-called "aesthetic turn" was an entirely symbolic decision.[26] This dissertation proposes that an examination of the economics of

[22] MacGregor Knox, *Hitler's Italian Allies*, 2000.

[23] Mia Fuller, *Moderns Abroad*, 2007 and David Rifkind, *The Battle for Modernism*, 2012.

[24] Labeling modern forms as 'Mediterranean' reconciled problem of internationalist aesthetics under a nationalist government, for more on this Fuller, especially Chapter 2: "Geographies". For a common definition of the *stile littorio* see *The Oxford Companion to Architecture*, 2009.

[25] Alexander J. De Grand, *Italian Fascism*, p. xiii.

[26] Stone's analysis of the aesthetic turn rests largely on the representational value of various styles. While she acknowledges the regime's autarkic platform, the discussion is framed primarily as an ideological rather than practical constraint: "As priorities shifted and fascist culture demanded explicit representations of *italianità* (Italianness), *romanità* (Romanness), empire, war, and autarchy, artists still within the system had to adjust their work accordingly in exchange for official support." See Stone, *The Patron State*, p. 16. More recent studies such as

architectural production under the regime can serve as an important complement to studies of Fascist-era architectural theory. Indeed, as Henri Lefebvre suggests in *The Production of Space*, "[s]pace is what makes it possible for the economic to be integrated into the political."[27] Following Lefebvre's assertion, this study takes economics as a starting point for an investigation into the politics of architecture under Fascist rule.

As an interdisciplinary study, this project is informed by scholarship in the fields of economic and architectural history. It is rooted in the work of economists Pierluigi Ciocca and Gianni Toniolo whose *L'Economia italiana nel periodo fascista* presents a detailed look at economic conditions and policies implemented under the regime.[28] Philip Morgan's *Italian Fascism* and Franklin Hugh Adler's *Italian Industrialists from Liberalism to Fascism* have also provided critical information.[29] Alessio Gagliardi's various writings on corporatism under the Fascist government have proven equally vital.[30] Additionally, Valerio Castronovo's detailed studies of Piedmontese history, including *Il Piemonte* and *Giovanni Agnelli*, as well as *Storia dell'IRI*, a study of the Fascist regime's Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale, have all informed this project.[31]

In addition to Marla Stone's discussion of "aesthetic pluralism" in *The Patron State* described above, recent scholarship in the field of architectural history has provided crucial inspiration and material. Lucy Maulsby's 2014 study of Fascist architecture in Milan makes a persuasive case for decentering discussions of Fascist architecture beyond Rome.[32] Similarly, David Rifkind's 2012 study of the short-lived architectural journal *Quadrante* provides a useful look at the politicization of Northern Italian architecture in the Fascist period.[33] More geographically pertinent to this project, Luciano Re and Giovanni Sessa's studies of various Fascist-era interventions in Turin, including a 1992 publication on Via Roma, provided indispensable context to archival materials.[34] Giorgio Ciucci's *Gli architetti e il fascismo*, which includes a chapter on Via Roma, also served as a valuable resource.[35] In addition, Paolo Nicoloso's *Mussolini architetto* and *Gli architetti di Mussolini* provided crucial information about the

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Aristotle Kallis' "Futures Made Present: Architecture, Monument, and the Battle for the 'Third Way' in Fascist Italy" and Joshua Arthurs' *Excavating Modernity* also emphasize the regime's economic platform as an architectural influence, but primarily in terms of efforts to align aesthetics with rhetoric rather than as a consideration of practical constraints. On the other hand, Diane Ghirardo's 1980 article on Giuseppe Terragni's Casa del Fascio in Como suggests that the regime's autarkic response to the sanctions imposed by the League of Nations in 1935 was linked to a reduction in the popularity of modernist commissions. She points out, however, that a comprehensive study on this connection has not been carried out. See Ghirardo, "Politics of a Masterpiece", p. 467.

[27] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 321.

[28] Pierluigi Ciocca and Gianni Toniolo, *L'Economia italiana nel periodo fascista*. Il mulino, 1976. See also: Gianni Toniolo, *The Oxford Handbook of the Italian Economy Since Unification*. Oxford University Press, 2013.

[29] Philip Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1919-1945*. St. Martin's Press, 1995; Franklin Hugh Adler, *Italian Industrialists from Liberalism to Fascism: The Political Development of the Industrial Bourgeoisie, 1906-1934*. Cambridge University Press, 1995.

[30] Alessio Gagliardi, *Il corporativismo fascista*, 1. ed., Laterza, 2010.

[31] Valerio Castronovo, *Il Piemonte*, G. Einaudi, 1977; Valerio Castronovo, *Giovanni Agnelli*. Unione Tipografico-Ed. Torinese, 1971; Valerio Castronovo, *Storia dell'IRI. 1. Dalle origini al dopoguerra: 1933-1948*. Editori Laterza.

[32] Lucy Maulsby, *Fascism, Architecture, and the Claiming of Modern Milan*, 1922-1943. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014.

[33] Rifkind, David. *The Battle for Modernism*, Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura Andrea Palladio, 2012.

[34] Luciano Re and Giovanni Sessa, *Torino Via Roma*, Torino: Il Quadrante, 2015. See also: "La formazione e l'uso di Via Roma nuova a Torino," pp. 142- 167. *Torino tra le due guerre*. Giovanni Bertolo (ed.). Torino: Musei civici, 1978.

[35] Giorgio Ciucci, *Gli architetti e il fascismo: architettura e città 1922-1944*, Torino: Einaudi, 2002.

regime's broader urban development strategies and the state's role in shaping the architectural profession in Italy.[36]

Primary materials for this study were gathered from the Turin city archives (Archivio Storico della Città di Torino, ASCT), as well as the digital archives from the Politecnico di Torino and Museo Torino. This dissertation also draws on digital and print editions of Fascist-era architectural journals including *Casabella* and *L'Architettura Italiana*. Additionally, the digital archives of the Turin daily newspaper *La Stampa* provided insight into public opinion through local press coverage in the Fascist period.

Chapter Summaries

This dissertation is built around a case study of Via Roma, the central commercial street in Turin that was reconstructed over the course of the 1930s. As the product of both competing and compatible interests between private investors and the state, the reconstruction of Via Roma sheds light on how political compromises were brokered at varying points during the Fascist *ventennio*. Following the different phases of Via Roma's reconstruction, the dissertation is organized into three core chapters and a conclusion that track the street's reconstruction from 1931 to 1938. Together, these chapters examine how the financial considerations of labor, materials, and profitability shaped the Fascist regime's architectural interventions in Turin.

The study begins with Chapter Two "*Sfruttamento* and *Fascistissima Volontà*" an investigation of the first phase of Via Roma's reconstruction carried out between 1931 and 1933. The chapter focuses on the financing of the first phase of redevelopment, which was negotiated between the city and private investors. In order to make the project appealing to investors, the local government sought permission from the state to declare the reconstruction plan a work of public utility. This legal classification would expedite expropriations and help relieve investors of burdensome taxes, ensuring higher profits for the redevelopment of each block. The government's legislative maneuvers were enabled by several laws dating to the period of unification, which had set a historical precedent for heavy-handed urban interventions in the name of *risanamento*.[37] With the economy reeling from the 1929 stock market crash, the Fascist government was eager to attach its name to this privately-funded construction project, which not only offered visible signs of progress under the regime, but also resulted in the creation of hundreds of temporary jobs for the city's unemployed masses. Aesthetics were only a minor consideration in this phase of Via Roma's reconstruction, as developers and city officials relied on proposals from several decades earlier in order to make a case for a Fascist-era reconstruction of the street.

Chapter Three "Industrial Efficiency and the Construction of Italy's First Steel-frame Skyscraper" focuses on the brief window from 1933 to 1934 when technical advances in construction offered a promising solution to the country's continued economic concerns. In the early 1930s, Italy was already several decades behind countries like the United States in the field of skyscraper construction. By 1933, however, welding technology had advanced significantly in Italy, finally placing the prospect of an Italian-made steel-frame skyscraper within reach.

[36] Paolo Nicoloso, *Gli architetti di Mussolini: Scuole e sindacato, architetti e massoni, professori e politici negli anni del regime*, Milano: FrancoAngeli, s.r.l. 1999; *Mussolini architetto: propaganda e paesaggio urbano nell'Italia fascista*, Torino: G. Einaudi, 2008.

[37] For the purposes of this study, I translate *risanamento* in the context of Via Roma as a "cleaning up" of the downtown. However, the implications of the Italian word go far beyond notions of urban tidiness. Other useful translations include "making hygienic" or "rehabilitating," both of which capture the ways in which poor neighborhoods were pathologized at the time of national unification and under the regime. More literal translations of "redevelopment" or "renovation" fail to capture the slum-clearing connotations of the term.

Modernist architects embraced the new material possibilities with alacrity, mounting a series of exhibitions and temporary structures to showcase the advantages of steel-frame construction. In the same period, Turinese officials struggled to find a financier for the final block of Via Roma's first section. Their solution was to authorize the construction of a modernist steel-frame tower on the final block. This would not only entice developers, who sought the largest possible returns on investment through greater exploitation of the land, but it would also stand as a testament to the advancement of Italian construction. Between the years of 1933 and 1934, the nation's first steel-frame tower was designed and constructed at record speed, bringing the first stage of Via Roma's reconstruction to a spectacular conclusion. The building's name "Torre Littoria" as well as its soaring dimensions marked the tower as a symbol of the Fascist party and a representation of the *fascio littorio*.

Despite the obvious advantages of steel-frame construction, the technique was not used in the final section of Via Roma. Chapter Four "A New Aesthetic for Via Roma" considers this decision in the second phase of Via Roma's reconstruction, carried out in the years between 1935 and 1937. More specifically, this chapter examines the effects of the elaboration and expansion of three centralized government bodies in this period: the Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale (Institute for Industrial Reconstruction, IRI), the Sindacato Nazionale Fascista Architetti (National Fascist Architects' Syndicate), and the Istituto Nazionale Fascista della Previdenza Sociale (National Fascist Institute of Social Security, INFPS). A series of economic shocks in the mid-1930s had brought about the centralization of economic controls under the state. The increased state controls emerged from both planned and unplanned interventions, but in both cases, they had lasting effects on the built environment. The formation of the IRI in 1933 was an emergency maneuver to salvage national industries in a precarious financial state. As such, the IRI brought a large portion of Italian production under the state's temporary control. But rather than following through with its original plan to dismantle the institute after restoring profitability to key industries, the state opted to transform the IRI into a permanent body. This decision would allow the state to coordinate war production more efficiently as it prepared to invade Ethiopia. It would also help to justify the state's position as a high-demand patron of military production, giving the government a mechanism for creating thousands of factory jobs for unemployed Italians.

In the same period, the state expanded worker benefits through the elaboration of vast welfare programs. Years of austerity measures and wage cuts had pushed the government to develop wide-ranging organizations like the INFPS, which promised social benefits in exchange for mandatory wage contributions. Through these contributions, the INFPS became a reservoir of collective funds, which were then redirected towards for-profit investment. At a moment when conventional creditors had failed, the INFPS became a valuable investor in the development of luxury retail and housing in the new Via Roma. Finally, under the state's corporatist policies, architects were organized as members of the National Fascist Architects' Syndicate. Membership in the national syndicate had become a precondition for consideration for state commissions. It also provided an incentive for collaboration in place of debate between the practitioners of various styles. As the government's war preparations escalated, it imposed autarkic policies designed to promote Italy's self-sufficiency. This resulted in material constraints that made certain architectural aesthetics more feasible than others. Consequently, architectural debates shifted away from theoretical concerns and converged on considerations of material viability. Work was granted to architects who could operate within the material and professional constraints imposed by the regime, resulting in a more uniform architectural aesthetic.

Chapter Five concludes this study by providing a brief look at the year of 1938, when the final component of Via Roma's renovation—an underground subway system—was left unbuilt. This chapter shows how the government's mid-1930s shift towards autarky had profound implications on material concerns in the field of architecture. Without the materials required to complete the subway system, the unfinished tunnel was reimagined as an exhibition space, which hosted exhibitions for the promotion of national products and the new state policy of autarky. Ironically, Italy's autarkic economic program had prevented the acquisition of the raw materials required to bring the Via Roma project to completion.

By analyzing Fascist Italy's architectural history through a politico-economic lens, this dissertation aims to address the unresolved question of the regime's aesthetic turn. In doing so, it considers economic viability as a starting point for an investigation of architectural style. Through its study of materials, labor, and financing, this dissertation argues that an examination of *how* architectural constructions were realized under the regime is as essential to the history of Fascist-era architecture as *what* was constructed. This framing provides crucial insights into the network of forces that shaped Fascism's architectural legacy.

CHAPTER TWO
Sfruttamento and *Fascistissima Volontà*: Economic and Political Forces in the Reconstruction of Via Roma, Phase One 1931-1933

> Everything evolves in this world and even for the apparently most daring ideas you can find a link of intentions in the past!
> — Giuseppe Pagano, 1933[38]

Under the first several years of Mussolini's government, Turin remained a political outlier. Even with Mussolini's victorious March on Rome, the Partito Nazionale Fascista (National Fascist Party, PNF) had failed to attract a stable base of supporters in the Piedmontese capital. Turinese politics were dominated instead by the substantial population of left-leaning laborers who constituted the political mainstream.[39] Accordingly, local enrollment in the PNF remained low. Existing records account for only two thousand PNF members in the city before 1928 compared to a total urban population of 557,000 in the same year.[40] Within the Turinese chapter of the PNF, supporters fell into two opposing groups on either side of the city's historical political divide: on one side, the Fascist movement had attracted a small group of conservative monarchists, and on the other, a minority of anti-establishment extremists.[41] For the most part though, Turin's citizens remained outside of Fascist party politics, even retaining socialist unions in the city's factories rather than joining the state-sanctioned labor groups.[42] As a result, daily life in Turin remained mostly unchanged by Mussolini's appointment as prime minister.[43]

This general disinterest in Fascism, however, would not last long. Public opinion of the new government soured in 1924 when Mussolini's party became the center of a political scandal involving the kidnapping and murder of the socialist leader Giacomo Matteotti at the hands of Fascist squads. The incident grew into one of the most serious threats to Mussolini's rule, calling into question the legitimacy of the Fascist leader and his supporters who continued to employ violent and illegal tactics to destroy their political opponents.[44] As anti-Fascist sentiment swept across the country, Turin was poised to become a center of political resistance.[45] But despite the

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[38] Giuseppe Pagano, "L'estetica delle costruzioni in acciaio," *Casabella*, August/September 1933, pp. 66-69.
[39] Nicola Tranfaglia (ed.), *Storia di Torino, vol. 8: Dalla grande guerra alla liberazione (1915-1945)*, (Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1998) p. 235.
[40] For PNF membership, see archiviodistatotorino.beniculturali.it/naviga-patrimonio/progetti/pnf-federazione-torino. Accessed 23 March 2023. It is worth noting that records of Fascist membership were sometimes destroyed and therefore may be incomplete. For total population: "Grafico 6" from the digital publication *Torino 1915-2015: Cento anni di cambiamenti*, (Città di Torino: Area Servizi Civici Servizio Statistica e Toponomastica, 2015) p. 22, www.comune.torino.it/statistica/pdf/QM2016Torino%201915-2015_Cento%20anni%20di%20cambiamenti.pdf. Accessed 23 March 2023.
[41] Nicola Tranfaglia (ed.), *Storia di Torino, vol. 8*, p. 234.
[42] Franklin Hugh Adler, *Italian Industrialists from Liberalism to Fascism: The Political Development of the Industrial Bourgeoisie, 1906-1934*, p. 308.
[43] Norberto Bobbio, *Trent'anni di storia della cultura a Torino (1920-1950)*, p. 28.
[44] Adrian Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power: Fascism in Italy 1919-1929*, (Taylor & Francis Group, 2003) Chapter 10 "The Matteotti Crisis," pp. 196-222. https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/berkeley-ebooks/reader.action?docID=214549. Accessed 23 March 2023.
[45] For a comprehensive overview of the resistance to Fascist politics among Turinese workers and industrialists see Raoul Ghezzi, *Comunisti, industriali e fascisti a Torino, 1920-1923* (Torino: Ditta Eredi Botta, 1923), especially "L'offensiva social-comunista dell'aprile 1920", pp. 7-22, "La resistenza degli industriali" pp. 23-34, "L'occupazione delle fabbriche, I precedente e le conseguenze" pp. 35-88, "L'intransigenza del Senatore Agnelli ed

deep-seated socialist views of the working class, on the whole Turin failed to resist Mussolini's influence.

Confronted with the PNF's weak position in Turin, Mussolini distanced himself from the grassroots movement of *squadrismo*, which had failed to garner much support in the city. He turned instead towards existing networks of the city's elites for political support, finding himself in a complex partnership with the industrialist Giovanni Agnelli.[46] As the head of the automotive manufacturing giant Fiat and owner of the city's premier daily newspaper *La Stampa*, Agnelli benefitted from significant social and economic influence. Furthermore, he shared with Mussolini an interest in restricting the political power of leftist wage workers, whose demands for higher pay and better working conditions threatened to infringe on Fiat's profits.[47] Like many industrialists, Agnelli was wary of government involvement in business.[48] His relationship with Mussolini was characterized by bouts of skepticism and stubbornness from both parties.[49] On the whole, though, both stood to make meaningful gains through collaboration. Throughout Mussolini's rule, Agnelli and his peers leveraged their financial influence to evade the tightening grasps of the Fascist regime, often relying on independent relationships to expand private capital in the face of the state's broader efforts towards economic consolidation.[50] In turn, the concessions that the prime minister granted to these industrial elites earned him much needed support within Turin's powerful productive sector.

In the wake of the Matteotti crisis, for instance, industrialists in Turin made only a narrow condemnation of the extremism within the Fascist movement, rather than denouncing Mussolini for stoking political violence among his followers. In doing so, the industrialists effectively absolved the Fascist leader of any responsibility in the scandal, and expressed tacit approval for his position as the head of government.[51] The industrialists' continued acceptance of Mussolini was all the more striking when, in January of 1925, the leader declared the beginning of the Fascist regime. In his infamous *discorso del 3 gennaio*, Mussolini brazenly took moral responsibility for Matteotti's murder and initiated the transformation of Italy's coalition government into a full-fledged dictatorship.[52] With the government's move towards authoritarianism, industrialists were confronted with the possibility of new restrictions on what had been until now mostly autonomous operations. But rather than mandating restrictions across the board—as the industrial elite had feared—the dictator continued to offer private concessions and individual protections to the

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alcuni fatti che lo motivano" pp. 138-152. According to Norberto Bobbio, "There was no city in which Fascism was as culturally sterile as in Turin." See Bobbio's *Trent'anni di storia della cultura a Torino (1920-1950)*, p. 28. In the industrial sphere, Fascist groups were frequently left out of labor negotiations between business leaders and laborers. See Adler, *Italian Industrialists from Liberalism to Fascism*, p. 308. For more on the Turinese industrial leaders' resistance to government intervention, see Chapter 12 "The Origins of the Corporate State," pp. 256-276 of Lyttelton's *The Seizure of Power*.

[46] Adrian Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, p. 265, ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/berkeley-ebooks/reader.action?docID=214549. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[47] Nicola Tranfaglia (ed.), *Storia di Torino, vol. 8*, 235.

[48] Adrian Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, p. 264, ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/berkeley-ebooks/reader.action?docID=214549. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[49] Adrian Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, p. 190, ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/berkeley-ebooks/reader.action?docID=214549. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[50] Nicola Tranfaglia (ed.), *Storia di Torino, vol. 8*, p. 236.

[51] Nicola Tranfaglia (ed.), *Storia di Torino, vol. 8*, p. 236.

[52] Adrian Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, chapter 10 "The Matteotti Crisis," pp. 196-222. ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/berkeley-ebooks/reader.action?docID=214549. Accessed 23 March 2023.

nation's most powerful economic forces.[53] In a dynamic that would come to define the Fascist government's approach to Turinese industry, Agnelli was permitted extensive freedoms in the operation of both Fiat and *La Stampa* thanks to his direct relationship with Mussolini.[54] By granting exclusive concessions to individuals like Agnelli, the state not only earned financial support from the industrial league, but most importantly, it could make larger changes to the economic system without facing resistance from the country's most influential economic players.[55]

In the years following Mussolini's declaration of dictatorship, the regime enacted a series of corporatist laws in an effort to reinvent the Italian economy for a new political era. Some of these laws restricted the freedoms of businesses, while others were designed to compensate for the very restrictions that they imposed—for example, by allowing employers to maintain their profits by slashing worker wages and trimming down their workforces. The compounding economic pressures of wage cuts and rising inflation on the working class came to a head in the spring of 1925 with a metalworkers' strike in Lombardy that drew national attention to the government's failure to resolve class conflicts and salvage Italian industry.[56] The incident set off a cascade of strikes in solidarity, prompting industrialists to question whether or not they could manage labor relations on their own.

As they reassessed the potential benefits of a nationalized system of production and labor, industrialists came to view the government's economic intervention "not solely as a threatening intrusion into their own sphere of influence, but also as an opportunity whose potential they would actively collaborate to realize."[57] In response to this new openness to collaboration, the government introduced its first major legislative change in 1925: The Palazzo Vidoni Pact. The pact was an agreement between the Confederation of Industrialists (Confederazione dell'Industria Italiana, or Confindustria) and the Fascist government. It ended syndical pluralism in the industrial sector, which meant that the stronghold of socialist unions in Turin's factories was now illegal. Until this point, Confindustria had been quiet about its participation in the regime's discussions of economic policy, limiting its influence to private channels.[58] With the Vidoni Pact, however, Confindustria publicly agreed to hand over labor negotiations to the state. Under the new restrictions, workers' councils were dissolved and only Fascist syndicates were permitted. The agreement also stripped workers of their most powerful bargaining tools: lockouts and labor strikes.[59]

The following year in 1926, the Ministry of Corporations was formed. Directed in name by Mussolini with Giuseppe Bottai initially deputized as the organization's leader, the Ministry of Corporations was intended to serve as the official ruling body to oversee the national corporations. But with only theoretical groupings of professional syndicates under its purview, the organization served no discernible function.[60] Nevertheless, labor relations were regulated through a series of corporate-syndical laws spearheaded by Alfredo Rocco, a staunch supporter of state-led

[53] Nicola Tranfaglia (ed.), *Storia di Torino, vol. 8,* p. 236.
[54] Nicola Tranfaglia (ed.), *Storia di Torino, vol. 8,* 235.
[55] Nicola Tranfaglia (ed.), *Storia di Torino, vol. 8,* p. 236.
[56] Philip Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, p. 105.
[57] Alessio Gagliardi, "The Entrepreneurial Bourgeoisie and Fascism" in *In the Society of Fascists: Acclamation, Acquiescence, and Agency in Mussolini's Italy*, 2012, p. 120.
[58] Adrian Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, p. 175, ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/berkeley-ebooks/reader.action?docID=214549. Accessed 23 March 2023.
[59] Alessio Gagliardi, "The Corporatism of Fascist Italy Between Words and Reality," in *Estudios Ibero-Americanos*, v. 42, n. 2, p. 418, May-August 2016. dx.doi.org/10.15448/1980-864X.2016.2.22336. Accessed 23 March 2023.
[60] Gaetano Salvemini, *Under the Axe of Fascism*, p. 147; H. Arthur Steiner, *Government in Fascist Italy*, p. 113.

corporatism.[61] The new regulations essentially extended the terms established in the Vidoni Pact to all industries, further consolidating the state's control.[62] Then in April 1927, the government approved one of the most significant pieces of corporative legislation: the *Carta del Lavoro* (Labor Charter). In addition to calling for the creation of the Labor Court, the charter confirmed the subordinate status of the workers' syndicates by outlining only loose workers' rights and shifting bargaining power from the syndicates to the yet-to-be-created corporations.[63] In line with the regime's increasingly authoritarian policies, the charter instilled the government with ultimate juridical powers.[64] A third major shift, the *sbloccamento* (unblocking), was enacted in 1928 when the nascent national labor syndicate, the Confederazione Nazionale dei Sindacati Fascisti (National Confederation of Fascist Syndicates, CNSF), was fractured into smaller categories, each dedicated to different productive sectors.[65] The result of this "unblocking" was a weakening of laborers' collective bargaining powers.[66] Together, the labor policies introduced in the final years of the decade facilitated pay cuts for wage workers and restricted their negotiating rights—two practices that would continue to shape the regime's economic strategy throughout the 1930s.

In the same period, global and domestic concerns forced the regime to confront rising inflation.[67] International trends—in particular, the revalued dollar and pound sterling—had intensified the financial burden of Italy's war debts to the U.S. and Great Britain, making it even more difficult for Italy to recover the costs of its involvement in the Great War.[68] The situation worsened in 1924 when low agricultural yields forced Italy to import large quantities of grain to make up for a dip in domestic production.[69] As a result, the weakened value of the lira coupled with an unusually heavy reliance on imports made international trade untenable. Fortunately, the nation's largest businesses were positioned to weather these economic hardships. Agnelli, for example, maintained his wealth despite the upheaval of the late 1920s because he had set up Fiat subsidiaries around the world. These autonomous operations throughout Europe, and in Latin America and Asia allowed the company to maintain steady production overseas despite the high cost of exports and low domestic demand in Italy.[70]

Smaller firms, though, were not equipped to handle the new conditions, and the corporatist labor laws alone could not provide sufficient support for these companies to maintain profitability. With crisis impending, the government imposed several extreme austerity measures on the country, hoping to alleviate the financial stress on businesses by shifting the burden onto the general public. These measures took the propagandistic form of economic "battles"— the "battle of grain" in 1925 and the "battle of the lira" in 1926—both designed to counteract Italy's reliance

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[61] Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, p. 272.

[62] An April 1926 law regulated collective labor bargaining by prohibiting right to strike. A July 1926 law saw called for the creation of Consiglio nazionale delle corporazioni to oversee labor negotiations, but the council was not inaugurated until the end of 1929.

[63] Alberto Aquarone, *L'organizzazione dello stato totalitario*, pp.141-144.

[64] Franklin Hugh Adler, *Italian Industrialists from Liberalism to Fascism*, p. 424.

[65] Alberto Aquarone, *L'organizzazione dello stato totalitario*, p.147; Confederation of syndicates divided into 6 'categories' based on economic sector. Bottai admitted that before this, the definition of corporativism was still unclear, see Gaetano Salvemini, *Under the Axe of Fascism*, p. 114.

[66] Philip Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, p. 108 and Alberto Aquarone, *L'organizzazione dello stato totalitario*, pp. 147-159.

[67] Franklin Hugh Adler, *Italian Industrialists from Liberalism to Fascism*, p. 348 and Philip Morgan's *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, p. 116.

[68] Philip Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, p. 116.

[69] Ibid., p. 116.

[70] *One Hundred Years of FIAT: 1899-1999: Products, Faces, Images*, (Torino: U. Allemandi, 1999), p. 10.

on imports. The so-called "battle of the lira" or *quota 90* pegged the Italian currency at a roughly 90:1 exchange rate with the pound sterling—the value it held when Mussolini took office.[71] The Minister of Finance, Giuseppe Volpi, supported the proposal of a currency revaluation, viewing it as a useful tool to counteract the increasingly dire economic circumstances in Italy. But he worried that the prime minister's fixation on a 90:1 exchange rate was an unrealistically aggressive rate, given its current valuation at around 150 lire to the pound.[72] He pushed instead for a more conservative revaluation, fearing that an extreme change would only further upset the economy.[73] Like Volpi, industrialists in the metal and mechanical sectors were interested in a small price adjustment in order to lower the costs of importing their raw materials.[74] They were, however, opposed to the 90:1 quota, noting that a dramatic price adjustment would make their products significantly more expensive on the international market and therefore decrease exports.[75] They advocated instead for *quota 120*—a less catchy but far more stable rate of revaluation.[76] But while Mussolini had shown support for industrialists' interests by appointing Volpi (a former businessman and industrialist himself) as the Minister of Finance, the dictator did not accept Volpi's advice nor did he comply with the industrialists' request for *quota 120.*

As the industrialists had predicted, *quota 90* had crippling effects on Italian manufacturing.[77] The textile and metal sectors, which were largely oriented towards foreign trade and therefore relied on low production costs to keep prices competitive on the international market, suffered disproportionately as a result of the policy.[78] Meanwhile, the automotive, chemical, and electric industries, comprised mostly of too-big-to-fail firms fared well under these conditions. [79] In fact, the largest companies in these sectors were able to take advantage of the economic upheaval by buying up weaker firms and thereby increasing their market share. As smaller firms continued to struggle, the opportunities for consolidation within the industrial sector grew. The conditions set off a process of monopolization within the domestic market—a process supported by the corporatist policies of the regime—despite the uncertain outlook of trade beyond Italy's borders.[80] As a result, "[t]he gap (in terms of profits and political influence) between the few genuinely large corporations and the mass of small and medium businesses widened, and a small nucleus of the largest private enterprises coalesced to form the backbone of Italian big business

[71] Philip Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945* p. 117.
[72] Roland Sarti, "Mussolini and the Italian Industrial Leadership in the Battle of the Lira 1925-1927", *Past & Present*, May, 1970, No. 47 (May, 1970), pp. 97-112. Published by: Oxford University Press on behalf of *The Past and Present Society*. https://www.jstor.org/stable/650450, p. 97. For a recent quantitative analysis, see Davide Bernardi and Roberto Ricciuti's "An Economic Analysis of 'Quota 90'" University of Verona, Working Paper Series. N. 9, June 2021. http://dse.univr.it/home/workingpapers/wp2021n9.pdf, p. 4.
[73] Roland Sarti, "Mussolini and the Italian Industrial Leadership in the Battle of the Lira 1925-1927," p. 108.
[74] Davide Bernardi and Roberto Ricciuti's "An Economic Analysis of 'Quota 90'," p. 4.
[75] See Jon S. Cohen, "Was Italian Fascism a Developmental Dictatorship? Some Evidence to the Contrary," The Economic History Review, Vol. 41, No. 1 (Feb., 1988), pp. 95-113. Published by Wiley on behalf of the Economic History Society, www.jstor.org/stable/2597334, p. 98 and Fernanda Salsano and Gianni Toniolo, *Da Quota 90 allo Sme*, (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2010), p 13. Italy's economic growth in this period depended on its ability to export low cost goods overseas. See Pierliuigi Ciocca's chapter "L'economia Italiana nel contesto internazionale" in *L'economia italiana nel periodo fascista*, especially p. 31.
[76] Davide Bernardi and Roberto Ricciuti, "An Economic Analysis of 'Quota 90'" University of Verona, Working Paper Series, n. 9, June 2021, http://dse.univr.it/home/workingpapers/wp2021n9.pdf, p. 6.
[77] Alessio Gagliardi, "The Entrepreneurial Bourgeoisie and Fascism", p. 113.
[78] Alessio Gagliardi, "The Entrepreneurial Bourgeoisie and Fascism", p. 113 and Philip Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, p. 118.
[79] Alessio Gagliardi, "The Entrepreneurial Bourgeoisie and Fascism", p. 113.
[80] Ibid., p. 113.

for the next four decades."[81] Only a handful of firms would benefit from the combination of global market conditions and corporatist legislation in the *ventennio*. The trend towards monopolization allowed the regime to bolster industrial support among a few key players, even as it implemented radical economic changes.

Local Effects of Global and National Economic Shifts

As Italy's economy moved towards financial and productive consolidation, the path to postwar economic recovery remained unclear. The conclusion of the war had brought an end to the booming wartime economy, leaving several industries—particularly in the metallurgic and heavy machinery sectors—in crisis.[82] And while the years immediately following the war were met with frenzied consumer spending, the industrial sector struggled to adapt to the shift in demand from wartime products to consumer goods.[83] As the postwar consumer economy cooled, industrialists were confronted with lower demand for all kinds of products, both domestically and abroad. They responded by curtailing production and closing factories, leaving thousands of workers unemployed.[84] With the economic situation in decline, jobseekers throughout the second half of the 1920s were met with greater competition for work.[85] As a result of this growing unemployment, the perpetually lower wages enabled by the regime's corporatist policies, and inflation, the working classes were forced to endure poor living conditions.

Concerns over urban crowding were particularly salient in Northern Italy where the possibility of factory work in large industrial cities continued to attract laborers from across the country.[86] In Turin, these conditions accelerated economic and demographic trends that had already taken root decades earlier. Turin's population density and cultural prestige had both dropped significantly in 1864 when the city lost its position as the nation's capital.[87] Consequently, traditionally aristocratic neighborhoods were emptied and then taken over by an entrepreneurial middle class in the hopes of establishing themselves as rentiers.[88] As industry expanded at the turn of the century, a growing working-class population filled the once-empty residences in the city center. Formerly aristocratic apartments came to be occupied by wage workers who had few alternatives to the now outdated residences, many of which lacked modern amenities like indoor

[81] Alessio Gagliardi, "The Entrepreneurial Bourgeoisie and Fascism," p. 113

[82] See Raoul Ghezzi, *Comunisti, industriali e fascisti a Torino, 1920-1923*, "L'occupazione delle fabbriche del settembre 1920 e le sue ripercussioni nei rapporti economici con l'estero" pp. 87 -114 and "La riscossa industriale del 1921" pp. 115-137.

[83] Gianni Toniolo, "Italian Banking 1919-1936," in *Banking, Currency, and Finance in Europe Between the Wars*, ed. Charles H. Feinstein, (Oxford University Press: 1995) p. 299. Oxford Scholarship Online: November 2003. DOI: 10.1093/0198288034.003.0011. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[84] "La riscossa industriale del 1921" pp. 115-137 in Raoul Ghezzi's *Comunisti, industriali e fascisti a Torino, 1920-1923*.

[85] Despite factory closures, the numbers of workers in Turin grew by 35% between 1927 and 1939. See Alberto Abriani's "Edilizia ed edilizia popolare nello sviluppo urbano di Torino 1919-1941" in *Torino tra le due guerre*, p. 122.

[86] Abriani notes "the incessant and conspicuous flow of immigrants" to the city, which doubled in size between 1919 and 1941 and prompted antiurban response from the government. See "Edilizia ed edilizia popolare nello sviluppo urbano di Torino 1919-1941" p. 122.

[87] The population dropped from 220,000 to190,000 residents when the city lost its status as state capital. "Torino: Il Risorgimento," *Treccani*, www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/torino/. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[88] Maria Vona, "Le trasformazioni socio-spaziali della piazza S. Carlo a Torino narrate con la *digital history*," p. 44, Politecnico di Torino, 2017. DOI:10.4399/97888255045144. Accessed 23 March 2023.

toilets.[89] By the mid-1920s, in the aftermath of Turin's wartime economic boom, city officials were appalled to find an urban landscape that they felt reflected neither the city's noble legacy nor its more recent boom of industrial wealth.

The poor living conditions in this period brought renewed enthusiasm for urban revitalization projects in Turin. In 1925, city officials revived a plan for a massive reconstruction project in the heart of the city: "Via Roma Nuova." Originally proposed in 1911 and planned for construction in 1914, the transformation of Via Roma was intended to modernize the city for the twentieth century by broadening the street and creating arcaded storefronts along the new road.[90] The original street, *contrada nuova*, had last been modified in the seventeenth century under the supervision of Carlo Emanuele I, the Duke of Savoy.[91] However, the Duke's modifications were mostly limited to the buildings' facades.[92] This meant that for centuries, the buildings behind the street fronts had remained unchanged, even with the street's renaming in 1871 to "Via Roma," in honor of the nation's new capital. Consequently, the noble refashioning of the area in the seventeenth century belied the obvious need for twentieth-century updates. At the time of the street's first renovation around 1615, the urban population hovered around 35,000 residents.[93] But more than three hundred years later, in 1921, the population had grown to half a million residents.[94] In the span of several hundred years, Turin had evolved from a small regional capital to an industrial powerhouse, drawing hundreds of thousands of workers to the city.[95] These new conditions in Turin went beyond demographic expansion, as the introduction of trams and automobiles in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had also changed circulation patterns in the city center. With its prominent position between the train station and the historical center, Via Roma had developed into a major thoroughfare for traffic of all kinds. This meant that

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[89] "Le condizioni igieniche delle case di Via Roma", *La Stampa*, page 5, 27 April, 1929. http://www.archiviolastampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,5/articleid,1154_01_1929_0101_0005_24884115/. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[90] For the conclusion that the approved plans will be porticoed, see "Via Roma—Riassunto della questione," Nov. 1925, ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1925, cart. 3, fasc. 4, n°8bis, p. 2. For a selection of proposed designs—some with and some without porticoes—see "Progetti per l'allargamento e risanamento della Via Roma e delle vie laterali", ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1925, cart. 3, fasc. 4

[91] Luigi Cibrari, *Storia di Torino* (Torino: Alessandro Fontana, 1846). Volume 2, part I. Digital edition hosted by the Politecnico di Torino: https://digit.biblio.polito.it/3487/21/Storiatorino2_parte_I.pdf. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[92] Plinio Marconi, "Urbanistica: Il concorso per il piano regolatore del secondo tratto di Via Roma a Torino," p. 295 in *Architettura: rivista del sindacato nazionale fascista architetti*, Marcello Piacentini (ed.), 1934, v.5. digitale.bnc.roma.sbn.it/tecadigitale/visore/#/main/viewer?idMetadato=20275874&type=bncr. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[93] For population see Claudio Pizzigallo, "Quanti eravamo nel...? La popolazione di Torino dal Medioevo a oggi", *Torino Today*, 10 June 2016, www.torinotoday.it/cronaca/abitanti-torino-da-sempre-ad-oggi.html. Accessed 23 March 2023. For specific dates of the road's construction, see Plinio Marconi, "Urbanistica: Il concorso per il piano regolatore del secondo tratto di Via Roma a Torino," *Architettura: rivista del sindacato nazionale fascista architetti*, Marcello Piacentini (ed.), 1934, v.5, esp. pp. 295-298. digitale.bnc.roma.sbn.it/tecadigitale/visore/#/main/viewer?idMetadato=20275874&type=bncr

[94] Claudio Pizzigallo, "Quanti eravamo nel...? La popolazione di Torino dal Medioevo a oggi", *Torino Today*, 10 June 2016, www.torinotoday.it/cronaca/abitanti-torino-da-sempre-ad-oggi.html. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[95] Largely due to immigration, Turin's population grew from approximately 250,000 residents to a nearly 500,000 residents between 1881 and 1921. See *Torino* "Dalla *belle époque* alla liberazione" *Treccani*, treccani.it/enciclopedia/Torino/. Accessed 23 March 2023. The city would gain nearly 100,000 residents over the following decade. See Claudio Pizzigallo, "Quanti eravamo nel...? La popolazione di Torino dal Medioevo a oggi", *Torino Today*, 10 June 2016, www.torinotoday.it/cronaca/abitanti-torino-da-sempre-ad-oggi.html. Accessed 23 March 2023.

pedestrians, trams, cars, and horses all jockeyed for space along the road, making it increasingly difficult to ignore the need for intervention.[96]

Reconstruction was initially set for 1914, but the onset of World War I had delayed the municipality's reconstruction plans indefinitely. By the end of the 1920s, though, city officials had set their sights once again on Via Roma as an opportunity for aesthetic renewal and social reorganization.[97] Planners hoped to transform the urban center from a predominantly working-class neighborhood to an upscale district full of high-end retailers and luxury residences.[98] Rather than attempt to upgrade the buildings for the current residents, they wanted to modernize the "deplorable" working class quarters through an extensive destruction and reconstruction of twelve blocks stretching from the monarchy's historical headquarters at Piazza Castello, through two grand plazas—Piazza San Carlo and Piazza Carlo Felice—and concluding at the Porta Nuova train station.[99]

Financing under Fascism

The vast reconstruction project would be an expensive undertaking, but conditions were favorable to potential investors: real estate prices and the cost of labor had dropped amidst the country's economic woes, making commercial real estate development an increasingly affordable venture. In theory, this would make it easy for city officials to find financiers for the project. In reality, however, the Fascist regime's aggressive economic interventions had created a major credit problem. In May of 1926, the government issued a royal decree revoking a former law that allowed the Bank of Naples and the Bank of Sicily to issue currency. The new law stated that the Bank of Italy alone held the sole right to issue the national currency.[100] Then, in August of the same year, in order to reach the goal of *quota 90,* the government restricted the number of lire in circulation by limiting the credit available through the Bank of Italy.[101] The regime's efforts towards fiscal consolidation continued with a royal decree in November that entrusted the Bank of Italy with the task of supervising savings banks.[102] Finally, it implemented the policy of the *prestito del littorio* through a royal decree in December, which reduced the liquidity of assets by converting public debt securities into long-term investments.[103]

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[96] According to a 1931 article in *The New York Times*, "The biggest architectural problem of the present moment in Italy concerns the rebuilding of Turin's main street, Via Roma, which has grown too small for its traffic." See "Architecture in Italy", *The New York Times*, November 1, 1931, p. 127, timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1931/11/01/98343365.html. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[97] "Via Roma—Riassunto della questione", November 1925, ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1925, cart. 3, fasc. 4, n°8bis, p. 2.

[98] This legacy has been carried through to the present day. Via Roma hosts designer shops including Louis Vuitton, Hermès, and Gucci. The Torre Littoria, a former office building, was converted to high-end apartments in 2020 by Santandrea Luxury Houses. See www.torinotoday.it/attualita/casa-lusso-torre-littoria-foto-prezzo.html. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[99] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1929, cart. 3, fasc. 2

[100] Gianni Toniolo, "Italian Banking, 1919–1936" p. 303.

[101] Davide Bernardi and Roberto Ricciuti, "An Economic Analysis of 'Quota 90'" University of Verona, Working Paper Series, n. 9, June 2021, http://dse.univr.it/home/workingpapers/wp2021n9.pdf, p. 6.

[102] *R.D.L. 6 novembre 1926, n. 1830,* www.normattiva.it/atto/caricaDettaglioAtto?atto.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=1926-12-16&atto.codiceRedazionale=026U1830&tipoDettaglio=originario&qId=&tabID=0.8416234020442876&title=Atto%20originario&bloccoAggiornamentoBreadCrumb=true. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[103] Davide Bernardi and Roberto Ricciuti, "An Economic Analysis of 'Quota 90'" University of Verona, Working Paper Series, n. 9, June 2021, http://dse.univr.it/home/workingpapers/wp2021n9.pdf, p. 6; *R.D.L. 3 marzo 1927, n. 296,* www.normattiva.it/atto/caricaDettaglioAtto?atto.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=1927-03-

These deflationary policies put Italy into a mild recession, and resulted in the failures of small banks, which were too weak to withstand the economic tumult of the period. But instead of bailing out these institutions, the Bank of Italy accepted many of these small bank failures, preferring to stabilize the banking sector as a whole by weeding out the less established financial institutions.[104] In a speech for the National Council of Corporations in 1930, Mussolini justified the government's passive attitude, explaining that "not everyone can be saved—some deserve to sink. The majority belong to the latter category of business bunglers [*abborracciatori*]: men more reckless than enterprising; acrobats of industry and finance; supremely and casually encyclopedic in initiatives; their range goes from concrete to chocolate; from the heaviest like lead, to the lightest like artificial silk."[105] This final expression of disdain was directed at the rayon industrialist Riccardo Gualino, known not only as a textile magnate, but also as a cultural tastemaker, and later as a risk-blind speculative investor.[106] Gualino's ill-advised investment strategies had led to the demise of his lender, the Turinese bank Banca Agricola Italiana.[107] The bank's original owner Angelo Cravario, had signed on as an early financier of the Via Roma reconstruction, but had pulled out of the project by the mid-1920s.[108] In 1923, Cravario disinvested from the Banca Agricola Italiana, leaving Gualino to drain its credit. This was not an uncommon fate for small banks at the time, as over-eager industrialists sought large and risky loans from smaller lenders when well-established banks refused to offer them financing.[109] But as the frenzied era of "wildcat banking" and risky lending brought down smaller banks towards the end of the 1920s, there were fewer banks to provide financing in the real estate sector.[110] This change had real and lasting implications on the Turinese real estate market.

Historically, smaller local banks had played a leading role in real estate lending and development in Turin.[111] But amidst the bank failures and the general postwar reshuffling of the economy, investment in the real estate sector shifted away from banking capital and towards

16&atto.codiceRedazionale=027U0296&tipoDettaglio=originario&qId=&tabID=0.8416234020442876&title=Atto%20originario&bloccoAggiornamentoBreadCrumb=true. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[104] Gianni Toniolo, "Italian Banking, 1919–1936", p. 306.

[105] "Banca Agricola Italiana - Piemonte, Torino," *Mappa Storica: Le radici al plurale di Intesa San Paolo*, Archivio Storico Intesa San Paolo, https://mappastorica.intesasanpaolo.com/bank/detail/IT-ISP-MAPPAITALIA-0000168/banca-agricola-italiana. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[106] His office building in Turin, Palazzo Gualino, is a landmark of rationalist design. Gualino 's investments were largely financed by the Banca Agricola Italiana, which was overtaken by the Banca Nazionale del Lavoro in 1932. Gualino was arrested in Turin sent to internal confinement for the damage his risky investments had inflicted on the Italian economy. See "Riccardo Gualino" in *Treccani Dizionario Biografico* treccani.it/enciclopedia/riccardo-gualino_(Dizionario-Biografico). Accessed 23 March 2023; "I mondi di Riccardo Gualino collezionista e imprenditore" *Musei Reali Torino*, https://museireali.beniculturali.it/events/i-mondi-di-riccardo-gualino-collezionista-e-imprenditore/. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[107] "Banca Agricola Italiana - Piemonte, Torino," *Mappa Storica: Le radici al plurale di Intesa San Paolo*, Archivio Storico Intesa San Paolo, mappastorica.intesasanpaolo.com/bank/detail/IT-ISP-MAPPAITALIA-0000168/banca-agricola-italiana. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[108] "Elenco delle domande presentate per la ricostruzione della Via Roma" ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, 1925, cart. 2, fasc. 6, vol. 5 (1917-1940).

[109] G. Guarino and G. Toniolo (ed.), *La Banca d'Italia e il sistema bancario 1919-1936*, (Editori Laterza, 1993), p. 41. Digital edition hosted by Banca d'Italia: https://www.bancaditalia.it/pubblicazioni/collana-storica/documenti/documenti-07/CSBI-documenti-07.pdf?language_id=1. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[110] Gianni Toniolo, "Italian Banking, 1919–1936," p. 306.

[111] Rocco Curto, "Rapporti tra capitale industriale e capitale immobiliare a Torino durante il fascismo" in *Torino tra le due guerre*, p. 90.

industrial and insurance capital beginning around 1930.[112] In the case of industrial capital, national deflation and lower demand for exports had curtailed heavy manufacturing in the 1920s, creating unfavorable conditions that disproportionately affected smaller industries. As the industrial sector trended away from small firms and towards large enterprises and monopolies, the financial sector experienced an infusion of industrial capital from the nation's biggest manufacturers. The Fiat-linked Agnelli group, for example, set up the Italian Financial Institute (IFI, later known as the Istituto Finanziario Industriale or Industrial Financial Institute) in July of 1927, a holding company for its investments in Italian and foreign industries.[113] The strong financial position of the Agnelli group allowed the industrial firm to gain control—through a partnership with the publishing tycoon Feltrinelli—of the Credito Italiano, one of the two prominent privately controlled banks remaining in Italy.[114]

The situation was quite different for insurance companies in this period. Instead of relying solely on the share capital of company owners, insurance providers could put a portion of client contributions towards speculative investments. This meant that even while the banking industry suffered from a credit crunch, insurance companies still had plenty of credit available for investments, including real estate development.[115] The access to this collective capital transformed ordinary insurance companies into key players in real estate development, overtaking the roles of traditional real estate businesses in the 1930s.[116]

Between the monopolization in the industrial sector and the resource depletion of traditional creditors in the banking sector, the regime had effectively restricted the nation's economic influence to a small handful of key figures. "It was precisely this restricted economic 'oligarchy,'" explains Alessio Gagliardi in his analysis of the regime's economic policy, "that provided concrete support for the authoritarian compromise with Fascism, from which it would draw significant material benefits, largely to the disadvantage of the widely dispersed galaxy of small business owners."[117] The regime's open favoritism of specific firms created opportunities for the nation's biggest businessowners to continue to expand both their profits and market share. This only furthered the divide between middle class entrepreneurs and elite heads of enterprise. The result of this concentration of wealth in the hands of a small group was a greater willingness among the financial winners to collaborate with the Fascist government.

The partnership between big business and government lay at the heart of the regime's corporatist experiment, which sought to end class conflict by promoting the national economy.[118] And while this utopian vision was never fully realized, there is no doubt that the attempt to implement a corporatist framework had very real consequences for Italy both during and after the

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[112] Rocco Curto, "Rapporti tra capitale industriale e capitale immobiliare a Torino durante il fascismo" in *Torino tra le due guerre*, p. 91.

[113] See *One Hundred Years of FIAT: 1899-1999: Products, Faces, Images*, (Torino: U. Allemandi, 1999), p. 11 and "IFI" in *Treccani*, https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/ifi. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[114] Gianni Toniolo, "Italian Banking, 1919–1936," p. 298.

[115] Rocco Curto, "Rapporti tra capitale industriale e capitale immobiliare a Torino durante il fascismo" in *Torino tra le due guerre*, p. 90.

[116] Rocco Curto, "Rapporti tra capitale industriale e capitale immobiliare a Torino durante il fascismo" in *Torino tra le due guerre*, p. 90.

[117] For a general overview, see Philip Morgan's chapter "Corporatism and the Economic Order" in *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism*, ed. Richard Bosworth, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). For a more detailed examination, see Alessio Gagliardi's *Il corporativismo fascista* (Laterza, 2010). See also Ugo Spirito. *Il Corporativismo: Dall'economia liberale al corporativismo, I fondamenti della economia corporativa, Capitalismo e corporativismo*. Firenze: Sansoni, 1970.

[118] Alessio Gagliardi, "The Entrepreneurial Bourgeoisie and Fascism," p. 120.

ventennio.[119] The reconstruction of Via Roma in Turin serves as just one example of the lasting effects of this collaboration between the financial elite and the Fascist regime. As a government project, the new Via Roma was touted as an employment generator and as a path towards recovery in the face of regional, national, and global conditions that had brought severe economic decline in Turin.[120] But in order to attract investors in the insurance and industrial sectors—two industries with ample available credit—the government had to guarantee the project's profitability through changes in local and state legislation, many of which disadvantaged average city residents.[121] And while the reconstruction of the street did succeed in creating short-term construction jobs that temporarily eased unemployment, it ultimately exacerbated long-term economic inequalities in the city.

Given these contradictions, the framing of the reconstruction of Via Roma as a "public" project can only be understood through a corporatist lens. In the corporatist vision, each member of Italian society was expected to play his part—from laborer to financier—in order to achieve national economic success. In other words, Italy's economic recovery depended on reaffirming rather than erasing social divisions. In this model, public needs would be subsumed under the private interests of a small group of financial and political elites. As Gagliardi puts it, "[t]he assumption of a public role by the industrial class thus ultimately resulted in the privileging and protection of the interests of a limited segment of the business world. At the same time, however, [corporatism] represented an undisputable change in the relationship between the state and a collective social group, because it eroded the boundaries between state institutions (the *public*) and important economic actors (the *private*), consolidating the 'authoritarian compromise.'"[122] Thus, while the regime presented the reconstruction of Via Roma as project for public benefit, it was only "public" insofar as it supported the government's goal of improving the economy as a whole.[123] While the reconstruction would create economic opportunities for members of all classes, the value and availability of these opportunities differed significantly across social groups. For many citizens, the damage inflicted by the reconstruction outweighed the benefits; the process not only edged out middle-class landholders, but also forced the physical displacement of hundreds of Turinese renters by driving up housing costs along Via Roma and pushing lower- and middle-class residents to the city's outskirts.[124]

Evictions and Expropriations: "*Via Roma Se Ne Va*"

The destruction of Via Roma began in the early weeks of 1931 with "the first strikes of the pickaxe" exacted on Casa Tardivo, a run-down building bordering Via Roma.[125] The Tardivo

[119] Alessio Gagliardi, "The Corporatism of Fascist Italy Between Words and Reality," in *Estudios Ibero-Americanos*, v. 42, n. 2, p. 418, May-August 2016. dx.doi.org/10.15448/1980-864X.2016.2.22336. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[120] A 1933 *La Stampa* article describes the inauguration of the street in terms of the hope and excitement of the public. "La lettura del messaggio di Mussolini: la grande arteria rinnovata." *La Stampa*, 29 October 1933, p. 1. www.archiviolastampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,8/articleid,1144_01_1933_0257_0008_24905140/

[121] Rocco Curto, "Rapporti tra capitale industriale e capitale immobiliare a Torino durante il fascismo" in *Torino tra le due guerre*, p. 93.

[122] Alessio Gagliardi, "The Entrepreneurial Bourgeoisie and Fascism", p. 122.

[123] Ibid., p. 110.

[124] Rocco Curto, "Rapporti tra capitale industriale e capitale immobiliare a Torino durante il fascismo" in *Torino tra le due guerre*, p. 92.

[125] "I primi colpi di piccone nella casa Tardivo preludio alle demolizioni in grande stile", *La Stampa*, 20 January, 1931, n. 17, p. 6.

property, described as an "affront" to the city, was an obvious target for the first round of demolitions.[126] It was situated along the prestigiously named via Principe Amedeo and adjacent to a notorious brothel on Via del Montone.[127] Early planners had referred to the area as the most shameful block of the entire reconstruction zone, describing Via del Montone as a "horrible alley."[128] A series of *La Stampa* articles echoed the sentiment, arguing that it was inconceivable that Turin, a city with "a luminous tradition of civility and cleanliness," had continued to host such a blight.[129] With reports of onlookers praising the demise of Casa Tardivo, the building's demolition stood as a symbol of progress amidst the tedious regulatory debates that would come to stall the construction of Via Roma for many months to come.

The massive scope of the project and central location of the site meant that city officials had to juggle competing opinions from merchants, business owners, architects, investors, regional and federal authorities, and residents, among others. Tenants and building owners in the reconstruction zone were resistant to the idea of being evicted from their homes or being subjected to property seizures in exchange for low indemnities. After reading about the reconstruction plans in the newspaper, a local business owner Aldo Mauro appealed to the *podestà* in an effort to keep his barbershop in his possession. As a former Fascist soldier, he explained that he supported the government's efforts, but argued that his building was still relatively new and therefore did not need to be torn down. [130] Giving up his shop for a meagre government compensation, Mauro wrote, would be a financial blow that he could not recover from: "I paid a total of 25,000 lire for a decent location to have an honest means to earn bread for my children. Now I am paying my debt with serious sacrifices and privations […] I do not understand the utility of this work, which will be the ruin of me and of many families after the misery of so many years of sacrifice."[131] Mauro's message is representative of the many businessowners in the area who stood to lose their investments and income from the reconstruction project. Dozens more would write to the *podestà*

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www.archiviolastampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,6/articleid,1148_01_1931_0017_0006_24894260/. Accessed 23 March 2023. Demolitions of this type by the regime's *piccone risanatore* or *piccone demolitore* were essential to urban interventions in this period. See Daniele Manacorda and Renato Tamassia. *Il piccone del regime*, 1985. In Rome in particular, extensive demolitions were carried out following the approval of a new regulatory plan in 1931. For studies of the Roman case, see Spiro Kostof's article "His Majesty the Pick: The Aesthetics of Demolition," *Design Quarterly. Meanings of Modernism: Form, Function and Metaphor*. 1982, No. 118/119, pp. 32–41 and Kostof's book *The Third Rome, 1870-1950: Traffic and Glory*, 1973. See also Antonio Cederna, *Mussolini urbanista: lo sventramento di Roma negli anni del* consenso, 3rd ed., Laterza, 1980. In particular, see chapter two "Lo sventratore", pp. 47-73.

[126] Luciano Re and Giovanni Sessa, *Torino Via Roma*, (Torino: Il Quadrante, 2015) p. 42.

[127] Luciano Re and Giovanni Sessa, *Torino Via Roma*, p. 42; ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, 1931, cart. 16, fasc. 1, n°24.

[128] Medardo Caretta-Colli. *Progetto di sistemazione di Via Roma in Torino* (Atti della Società Degli Ingegneri e Degli Architetti in Torino, 1911). Digital edition hosted by Politecnico di Torino https://digit.biblio.polito.it/420/1/1911_006.pdf. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[129] Luciano Re and Giovanni Sessa, *Torino Via Roma*, p. 42 and "La Fiera di tutte le merci in Via Roma con l'imminente impianto del Padiglione in Piazza San Carlo," *La Stampa*, 14 January 1931, p. 6. www.archiviolastampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,1/articleid,1148_01_1931_0012_0001_24361305/. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[130] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, 1931-1932, cart. 16, fasc. 2, n°181. Note: Mauro's letter is concerned specifically with the second phase of reconstruction. I have included his story in this discussion of the first phase of reconstruction in order to present a more complete picture of the effects of the evictions and expropriations on different types of residents, renters, and owners in the reconstructions zone of the entire project. It is also worth noting that the *podestà* sent a response to Mauro explaining that the plans could not be adapted for private interests. See ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, 1931-1932, cart. 16, fasc. 2, n°182.

[131] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, 1931-1932, cart. 16, fasc. 2, n°181.

expressing similar fears that their businesses would be lost in the reconstruction process. But Mauro's letter in particular highlights the most glaring contradictions at the heart of the plan. Namely, that while official documents describe the hygienic and social necessity of the work, in reality the "cleaning up" of Via Roma entailed the destruction of many established businesses and buildings in good condition. The justification for the project was so paradoxical that even a devoted supporter of the Fascist movement like Mauro who had already made tremendous sacrifices under the government's austerity measures could not find a rational explanation for the street's reconstruction.

As the demolition phase continued, residents and renters posed a growing challenge to the city's plans. While the buildings planned for destruction varied in condition, in most cases they were not vacant. This meant that the government would have to evict hundreds of citizens before construction could begin. What's more, the government had to carry out these evictions as quickly as possible in order to meet the project's approved timeline, which required the demolition and reconstruction to be completed within eight years.[132] Officials used several strategies in their efforts to push out residents by cutting water, gas, and electricity to the buildings to make the structures unlivable, and enlisting police officers to forcibly remove reluctant residents.[133] A *La Stampa* article from the summer of 1931 described the chaotic scenes of the evictions:

> The reader's imagination will be much better than this paltry description at reconstructing the scenes that took place amidst disorderly shouts that rose from the mezzanines up to the attics (the men who carried out the thankless undertaking listened impassively to protests of all kinds that rained on them, but remained unflinching in carrying out the task: it must be cleared out [*bisognava sgombrare*])…Open buildings were left in an indescribable disorder—people coming and going, dragging boxes, furniture, objects—this was the dominant impression. Narrow and dark stairs; those who went down slowly, those who went up quickly, to get things. Men shouting, yelling at each other, cursing; women screaming. Behind the overflowing carts some could be seen with a frying pan or a coffee pot in hand, following the convoy, comically waving their trophy. In daylight, some of those women who had not had time to go do their *toilette* looked pale, ghostly, with disheveled clothes, matted hair; grim with rage, they hurled insults and curses at that house from which they were forcibly driven out. [134]

The haunting scenes described in the local newspaper are reminiscent of Matilde Serao's *Il ventre di Napoli* (1884). Serao's work, first published as serialized articles in 1882 and 1883, and later published together with a supplemental reflection written in 1904, presents a cacophony of vivid and disturbing descriptions of Neapolitan slums. The book is framed as a challenge to the Neapolitan mayor's declaration that "Naples must be emptied out [*bisogna sventrare Napoli*]"—

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[132] *R.D.L. 3 luglio 1930, n. 976, art. 4*, www.normattiva.it/atto/caricaDettaglioAtto?atto.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=1930-07-25&atto.codiceRedazionale=030U0976&atto.articolo.numero=0&atto.articolo.sottoArticolo=1&atto.articolo.sottoArticolo1=10&qId=&tabID=0.8416234020442876&title=lbl.dettaglioAtto. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[133] Luciano Re and Giovanni Sessa, *Torino Via Roma*, p. 42.

[134] "Negli antri di Via Roma," *La Stampa*, 2 July 1931, p. 8.www.archiviolastampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,8/articleid,1149_01_1931_0156_0010_24890974/. Accessed April 1, 2022.

a sentiment echoed in the *La Stampa's* journalist's declaration: "it must be cleared out [*bisognava sgombrare*]."[135]

Serao's evocative descriptions responded directly to Italy's post-unification era in which the centralized authority in Northern Italy acted with heavy-handed and often out-of-touch interventions to address a diversity of problems across the young nation. In the case of Naples, the state government exercised its newly broadened reach by imposing a series of urban planning laws in order to refashion the city to align with Northern Italian tastes. To this end, three major urban policies were introduced in 1865. The first in March, followed by two more in June, granted the city unprecedented powers to clear crowded and outdated areas in order to promote hygiene and widen roads in the name of public utility.[136] In the wake of the cholera epidemic, which had struck Naples particularly hard in 1884, a fourth urban planning law was introduced: the *legge per il risanamento della città di Napoli*.[137] This 1885 law, often referred to simply as the *legge di Napoli*, outlined new compensation terms for property seizures in cases of public utility.[138] Under the *legge di Napoli*, compensation to building owners would be made based on the rental income from the last decade, or if rental records were not available, it would be calculated from a capitalization rate based on local conditions.[139] Together, these policies made evictions and expropriations in the name of *risanamento* ["cleaning up"] both efficient and cost effective.

Serao's work takes aim at this urban planning legislation, charging that the notion of *risanamento* is deeply flawed. For, not only is it rooted in a failure to recognize the humanity of the city's poorest residents, but perhaps more significantly, it is ineffective. According to Serao, the beautification of the urban center serves as a quite literal facade that conceals systemic social issues: "Of a whole part of the people for whom the hygiene and *risanamento* was wanted, a hundred million were destined to die of infections after having lived behind all the new buildings," writes Serao, "this is what makes our hearts lift with pain and regret and makes the external majesty

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[135] The statement was made by Naples' Mayor Nicola Amore, but Serao addresses her work to the Prime Minister Depretis, the representative of the national government. See Matilde Serao, *Il ventre di Napoli*, (Napoli: Delfino, 1973), p. vii.

[136] *R.D.L. 20 marzo 1865, n.* 2248.www.normattiva.it/atto/caricaDettaglioAtto?atto.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=1865-04-27&atto.codiceRedazionale=065U2248&atto.articolo.numero=0&atto.articolo.sottoArticolo=1&atto.articolo.sottoArticolo1=10&qId=&tabID=0.8416234020442876&title=lbl.dettaglioAtto; R.D.L. 8 giugno 1865, n. 2321 www.normattiva.it/atto/caricaDettaglioAtto?atto.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=1865-06-12&atto.codiceRedazionale=065U2321&atto.articolo.numero=0&atto.articolo.sottoArticolo=1&atto.articolo.sottoArticolo1=10&qId=&tabID=0.8416234020442876&title=lbl.dettaglioAtto; R.D.L. 25 giugno 1865, n. 2359 www.normattiva.it/atto/caricaDettaglioAtto?atto.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=1865-07-08&atto.codiceRedazionale=065U2359&atto.articolo.numero=0&atto.articolo.sottoArticolo=1&atto.articolo.sottoArticolo1=10&qId=&tabID=0.8416234020442876&title=lbl.dettaglioAtto. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[137] *R.D.L. 15 gennaio 1885, n. 2892* www.normattiva.it/atto/caricaDettaglioAtto?atto.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=1885-01-19&atto.codiceRedazionale=085U2892&atto.articolo.numero=0&atto.articolo.sottoArticolo=1&atto.articolo.sottoArticolo1=10&qId=&tabID=0.8416234020442876&title=lbl.dettaglioAtto. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[138] For more on the government's response to the cholera outbreaks in Naples in the 1880s and 1910-1911, see Frank M. Snowden, *Naples in the Time of Cholera, 1884-1911*. Cambridge University Press, 1995. For connections between notions of hygiene and city planning from the late nineteenth century through the Fascist period, see Guido Zucconi's 1989 book *La città contesa dagli ingegneri sanitari agli urbanisti (1885-1942)*. See also Zucconi's 2022 publication *La città degli igienisti. Riforme e utopie sanitarie nell'Italia umbertina* for a closer examination of public health policy as it relates to urban interventions in late nineteenth-century Italy.

[139] Compensation for building owners was based on the property's estimated capitalization rate (an indicator of the property's profitability).

of the new buildings seem a mocking irony, behind which there are putrid and gangrene." [140] The same laws that enabled the *risanamento* of Naples in the wake of the Risorgimento remained in effect through the Fascist era, continuing to shape urban policy for nearly a century.

Legislation and the Question of Public Utility

To carry out the reconstruction of Via Roma, officials in Turin relied on the same urban legislation that Serao fought against. City leaders argued for the importance of creating hygienic conditions in Turin's center. But in reality, the local government was less concerned about the welfare of the businesses and working-class residents in the redevelopment zone, and more preoccupied with the process of carrying out property seizures from middle-class landholders. One concern was the 1865 *legge n. 2359*, which had empowered the government to seize properties in the pursuit of urban rehabilitation, but also required the city to provide a fair price for expropriations as determined by a third-party commission.[141] The process of assembling a commission to determine fair compensation and then to negotiate with property holders would delay the project's timeline significantly. But local officials were eager to begin reconstruction as quickly as possible. Fortunately for investors, the updated 1885 *legge di Napoli*, had streamlined the compensation policy for public utility projects by waiving the requirement for market-rate reimbursements.[142] The problem now centered on the fact that neither the extended powers of expropriation nor the updated compensation policy applied to the Via Roma plans approved in 1914 because these plans were not considered a public utility. But if the project could be reapproved under this new legal status, construction could begin more quickly, and most likely at a lower cost.

The incentives for classifying the reconstruction as a public utility led to a series of disputes between local authorities, who could not agree on a legal justification for the change. In 1919 the city council deliberated the reconstruction plan's status, but ultimately left out the entire Via Roma project from Turin's 1920 *piano regolatore*, citing the project's "unnecessary constraint for the administration and for private individuals."[143] After being omitted from the 1920 city plan, the now-lapsed *risanamento* project would require a separate declaration of public utility in order to be reclassified. But when the request was forwarded to the Ministry of Public Works in 1922, it was rejected again due to the economic burden that expropriations would impose on the area's existing property holders.[144] Officials also expressed concern that the project might exacerbate a housing shortage in the city, leaving thousands of families without homes.[145] They did not see a

[140] Matilde Serao, *Il ventre di Napoli*, "Dietro il paravento", pp. 98-99.
[141] See "Prezzo di mercato," Art. 39 of R.D.L. 25 giugno 1865, which specifies a compensation of "fair price" ["*giusto prezzo [...] che avrebbe avuto l'immobile in una libera contrattazione di compravendita*"] www.normattiva.it/atto/caricaDettaglioAtto?atto.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=1865-07-08&atto.codiceRedazionale=065U2359&atto.articolo.numero=0&atto.articolo.sottoArticolo=1&atto.articolo.sottoArticolo1=10&qId=&tabID=0.8416234020442876&title=lbl.dettaglioAtto. Accessed 23 March 2023.
[142] See Art. 12 of *R.D.L. 25 giugno 1865*, "On expropriations for public utility" ["*sulle espropriazioni per causa di utilità pubblica*"] www.normattiva.it/atto/caricaDettaglioAtto?atto.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=1865-07-08&atto.codiceRedazionale=065U2359&atto.articolo.numero=0&atto.articolo.sottoArticolo=1&atto.articolo.sottoArticolo1=10&qId=&tabID=0.8416234020442876&title=lbl.dettaglioAtto. Accessed 23 March 2023.
[143] "Via Roma—Riassunto della questione," Nov. 1925. ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1925, , cart. 3, fasc. 4, n°8bis, p. 3.
[144] "Via Roma—Riassunto della questione," Nov. 1925. ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1925, cart. 3, fasc. 4, n°8bis, p. 3.
[145] Letter from Commissario Prefettizio to Prefetto della Provincia, 6 Aug. 1925, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1925, cart. 3, fasc. 4.

need to cause major housing and traffic disruptions for a multi-year project, believing that minor building repairs would be sufficient.[146]

In the years that followed, the government continued to receive pushback from the project's supporters. Among them was the architect Emilio Chauvie. A resolute and exacting figure, Chauvie wrote continuously to local government leaders requesting their reconsideration and even submitting his own technical plans for the project in 1923.[147] Despite Chauvie's campaign, the Ministry's grounds for refusal were well-founded. The building owners confirmed the concerns that the Ministry had raised in regards to their property rights. They even submitted a formal complaint to Turin's civil court in October of 1925.[148] The legal notice affirmed the owners' support for the project in general, but it also expressed their opposition to forced government buyouts. As an alternative, they requested the right of first refusal and the right to rebuild their own holdings in accordance with the technical standards for the project.[149]

But this final request was at odds with the cohesive plan that city officials envisioned. In their proposals, the new constructions along Via Roma would span entire city blocks, replacing a jumble of structures with one unified building for each street. Individual building owners were unlikely to have the financial resources needed to reconstruct these extensive projects, especially in the short time frame stipulated in the plans. They were outmatched by larger real estate developers whose deep pockets allowed them to finance such an operation. At the same time though, these potential big investors were only willing to participate if they could ensure profitability. In November of 1925, the real estate company Società Anonima Edilizia Via Roma, already enlisted as a potential financier, wrote to the *commissario prefettizio*, Donato Etna, requesting a guarantee that the project would be classified as a public utility under the Naples law.[150] In other words, the company would only invest if the government could guarantee that evictions and expropriations would not be blocked.

As competing interests mounted, Etna assembled a committee of engineers and government officials to study the proposals and come to a final decision.[151] In November, the

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[146] Letter from Commissario Prefettizio to Prefetto della Provincia, 6 Aug. 1925, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1925, cart. 3, fasc. 4.

[147] "Via Roma—Riassunto della questione," Nov. 1925, p. 2. ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1925, cart. 3, fasc. 4, n°8bis, p. 9. Chauvie's plans. For more on Chauvie's work, see his ventures with architect Emilio Decker in Susanna Peyronel Rambaldi, Gabriella Ballesio, and Matteo Rivoira's *La grande guerra e le chiese evangeliche in Italia (1915-1918),* (Torino: Claudiana, 2016), esp. p. 232. See articles in *La Stampa* for Chauvie's views on the Via Roma project: "Come sarà rinnovata Via Roma secondo il progetto Chauvie adottato dal Partito fascista," in *La Stampa*, 17 September 1925, p. 5, www.archiviolastampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,5/articleid,1167_01_1925_0222_0005_24385130/anews,true/; "Via Roma" in *La Stampa*, 19 September 1925, p. 6 www.archiviolastampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,6/articleid,1167_01_1925_0224_0006_24385164/anews,true/ ; "Via Roma: Un'intervista con l'ing. Chauvie", in *La Stampa*, 23 September 1925, p. 6. www.archiviolastampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,6/articleid,1167_01_1925_0226_0006_24385206/anews,true/; Emilio Chauvie, "Per il risanamento di Via Roma," in *La Stampa*, 29 April 1926, p. 6, www.archiviolastampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,6/articleid,1162_01_1926_0101_0006_24382077/anews,true/. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[148] "Notificazione legale", 17 Oct. 1925, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1925, uff. 8 cart. 3, fasc. 4.

[149] "Notificazione legale", 17 Oct. 1925, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1925, uff. 8 cart. 3, fasc. 4.

[150] Olivetti Canova, letter from Società Anonima Edilizia to Commissario Prefettizio, 11 Nov. 1925, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1925, uff. 8 cart. 3, fasc. 4.

[151] "Deliberazione 1925," Commissario Prefettizio (Decreto del Prefetto della Provincia di Torino 20 giugno 1925),

group arrived at a verdict—not, as they had been tasked, with a decision on the Via Roma renovation, but instead with the decision that they were not equipped to decide.[152] They agreed that the question should be left up to the self-proclaimed totalitarian ruler, Benito Mussolini, who had already endorsed the project several months prior.[153] Earlier that year, the provincial political secretary Dante Maria Tuninetti had relayed the Duce's support for the Via Roma project, citing Mussolini's view that "[t]he question of Via Roma, which has been dragging on for 35 years now, must be addressed and resolved urgently by Fascism."[154] The Duce's message of support was clear, but with only vague declarations of the political significance of the work, the committee was unsure as to how to carry the project forward in accordance with their leader's wishes. Because, apart from declarations of the project's Fascist spirit and several admonitions against the local government for its failure to execute the plans, Mussolini's message did not address the major roadblocks that had stalled the street's reconstruction until this point. His message included no technical instructions and no practical information about financing. Most significantly, the message failed to address the central concern about the project's legal classification as a public utility. But without a decision on the applicability of the Naples law for expropriations, no further action could be taken. To make matters worse, Mussolini's intermediary Tuninetti had become uncooperative, choosing not to attend further meetings.[155]

The committee failed to reach any actionable conclusions that day, but with Mussolini's express support for the reconstruction of Via Roma, the state was now officially involved. Accordingly, inspectors from the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Public Works were assembled to assess the issue. They voted in favor of the reconstruction, enlisting the engineers Giuseppe Godino and Giorgio Scanagatta to update the plans for resubmission.[156] The Godino-Scanagatta plan was based largely on the guidelines already approved by the municipal technical office in 1914.[157] The engineers made minor modifications—slightly expanding the areas designated for reconstruction, modifying some of the alleys to bring together irregular blocks, and adjusting the area around the churches at the southern edge of Piazza San Carlo.[158] The new guidelines also made a major change to the funding by extending the deadline for private investors to submit proposals for participation.[159] In March, Turin's *podestà* Luigi Balbo Bertone di Sambuy pressed the issue forward, requesting that the prefect declare the *risanamento* a public work.[160] The updated plan was granted municipal approval by the *commissario prefettizio* in April of 1926.

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[152] "Deliberazione 1925," Commissario Prefettizio (Decreto del Prefetto della Provincia di Torino 20 giugno 1925),
[153] "Commissione per il risanamento di Via Roma: verbale della seduta 12 novembre 1925," ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1925, cart. 3, fasc. 4; "Deliberazione 29 ottobre 1925" ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1925, verb. 21 cart. 3, fasc. 4.
[154] Letter from Dante Maria Tuninetti, 29 September 1925, ACST, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1925, cart. 3, fasc. 4.
[155] Tuninetti describes feeling slighted by the perceived informality of Etna's invitation, which he believed showed a lack of respect for his station, according to a letter from Dante Maria Tuninetti to Donato Etna, 12 November 1925. ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1925, cart. 3, fasc. 4.
[156] "Via Roma – Allargamento – Risanamento dei Quartieri Adiacenti – Approvazione del piano – Modalità per la ricostruzione", *Torino*, N.1 May 1926, p. 44.
[157] "Via Roma – Allargamento – Risanamento dei Quartieri Adiacenti – Approvazione del piano – Modalità per la ricostruzione", *Torino*, N.1 May 1926, pp. 42-46.
[158] "Via Roma – Allargamento – Risanamento dei Quartieri Adiacenti – Approvazione del piano – Modalità per la ricostruzione", *Torino*, N.1 May 1926, pp. 45-46.
[159] Alberto Stefano Massaia, "Gli interventi di ristrutturazione urbanistica del centro storico di Torino: da via Pietro Micca alia nuova Via Roma" in *Studi piemontesi*, v. 38 (2009), fasc. 2, p 501.
[160] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1928, ogg. 58, cart. 3, fasc. 1.

It had succeeded in determining aesthetic and technical standards for the project, but with only municipal approval, the fundamental problem of the plan's legal classification was left unresolved.

In July, when a new prefect Luigi Maggioni was installed, the *podestà* Sambuy raised the issue yet again, later following up in September to reiterate his concern about costs, which stemmed from the project's uncertain legal classification and the associated capitalization rate.[161] In October of 1928, Maggioni, responded on behalf of the Ministry of Public Works, denying the city's request to reclassify the project as a public utility.[162] Despite this rejection, local officials were steadfast, insisting on the public benefit of the reconstruction. The city's newest *podestà*, Paolo Ignazio Maria Thaon di Revel, wrote to the prefect the following spring, restating his predecessor's concerns over the capitalization rate, and imploring the prefect to implement legislation that would bring great benefits to the city through the project's "viability, hygiene, aesthetics, and morality."[163] A letter from the *questore* to the *podestà* echoed these concerns, describing the "deplorable conditions" of the slated reconstruction zone as "infected" not only by "pests" (*monelli*) but also by "people whose social rank [did] not attest favorably to the decorum of the city." [164] With greater emphasis on the sanitary and moral necessity of the project, the *podestà*'s requests were finally approved on July 3rd, 1930 through a royal decree that described the reconstruction of Via Roma as a work of public utility.[165] At long last, the project was authorized at every level of the government. Importantly, the decree confirmed that expropriations would be carried out according to the Naples law.[166]

Moving Forward with *Fascistissima Volontà*

To minimize disruptions, it was decided that the reconstruction would take place in two stages, the first of which included the blocks between Piazza Castello and Piazza San Carlo. Investors were eager to begin demolitions on the first section, but they still had to contend with existing property owners in the reconstruction zone, many of whom had grown frustrated with the terms of the expropriations. According to the owners, these terms had been consistently manipulated to their disadvantage.[167] In accordance with the Naples law, the building owners were legally entitled to refuse the expropriations for the *risanamento* of Via Roma. Those who rejected the payouts could opt to carry out the reconstruction on their own—so long as they conformed to the technical standards approved by the government. But because of the aesthetic uniformity required for this particular project, individual buildings could not be rebuilt piecemeal.[168] Building owners who refused expropriation would therefore be obligated to fund and execute the

[161] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1928, ogg. 58, cart. 3, fasc. 1.
[162] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1929, cart. 3, fasc. 2.
[163] "Podestà Revel scrive a Prefetto di Torino", 17 April 1929, ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1929, ogg. 58 cart. 3, fasc. 2
[164] 19 Sept 1929 letter from the Questore to the Podestà citing a recent article in *La Stampa*. ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1928, cart. 3, fasc. 1
[165] *R.D.L. 3 luglio 1930*, n. 976 www.normattiva.it/atto/caricaDettaglioAtto?atto.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=1930-07-25&atto.codiceRedazionale=030U0976&atto.articolo.numero=0&atto.articolo.sottoArticolo=1&atto.articolo.sottoArticolo1=10&qId=&tabID=0.8416234020442876&title=lbl.dettaglioAtto. Accessed 23 March 2023.
[166] Luciano Re e Giovanni Sessa, "La formazione e l'uso di Via Roma nuova a Torino" in *Torino tra le due guerre*, p. 146.
[167] Letter from building owners of Via Roma to the prefect, 12 Oct. 1930, ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1930, cart. 3, fasc. 4. n°56.
[168] "Via Roma – Allargamento – Risanamento dei Quartieri Adiacenti – Approvazione del piano – Modalità per la ricostruzione," *Torino*, N.1 May 1926, p. 43, art. 9

reconstruction not just for their own building, but for their entire block.[169] If owners could not fund the reconstruction through their own means, they would be granted only thirty days to assemble a consortium to carry out the reconstruction.[170] Given the short timeframe and large upfront costs of reconstruction, it was infeasible for most building owners to retain their properties. In other words, although the law offered opportunities for fair compensation and the right of first refusal, the terms were so heavily constrained that most owners had no real possibility of objecting to the property seizures.

The restrictive terms of expropriation reflected the urgency with which planners approached the project. City officials had already expressed concerns about removing housing and closing businesses during the reconstruction process, which they viewed as "antieconomic" disruptions.[171] But as unemployment continued to rise throughout 1930, they were forced to weigh these negative effects against the opportunity to create economic growth through construction work. Unemployment rates in Turin had skyrocketed that year, leaving more than thirty-thousand Turinese jobless.[172] The massive construction project of the highway from Turin to Milan was helping to absorb some of the effects of mass unemployment, but within the city limits, opportunities for construction work were becoming increasingly limited.[173] Fearing a surge in joblessness, the *podestà* Revel pushed for a rapid execution of Via Roma's *risanamento*.[174] According to Revel, in a matter of months the city would be in crisis. It was, therefore, all the more important that the reconstruction begin as soon as possible.[175] The press carried this message to the public, describing the reconstruction not only as an effort to modernize the city, but "above all to relieve laborers' unemployment."[176]

Although the street's reconstruction was publicized in terms of public benefit—namely, for job creation and sanitization—the legal adjustments that made the demolitions possible evidenced a more fundamental concern for private gains. Throughout the planning process, officials optimized the terms of reconstruction in order to secure funding and satisfy investors. For instance, as the demolition date approached, officials were met with yet another request for a

[169] "Via Roma – Allargamento – Risanamento dei Quartieri Adiacenti – Approvazione del piano – Modalità per la ricostruzione," *Torino*, N.1 May 1926, pp. 45-46

[170] Luciano Re e Giovanni Sessa, "La formazione e l'uso di Via Roma nuova a Torino" in *Torino tra le due guerre*, p. 147. The authors cite R. Gabetti- C. Olmo, "Cultura edilizia e professione dell'architetto: Torino anni '20-'30", in Autori Vari, *Torino 1920-1936, Società e cultura tra sviluppo industriale e capitalismo*, Torino, Edizioni Progetto, 1976, p. 29.

[171] Letter from the Podestà (Revel) to the Director General of Antiquity and Fine Arts (Paribeni), 5 January 1930. ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1930, cart. 3, fasc. 3. n°2

[172] Luciano Re e Giovanni Sessa, "La formazione e l'uso di Via Roma nuova a Torino" in *Torino tra le due guerre*, p. 142. The unemployment crisis in Turin made headlines in the U.S. See: "Turin Rioters Call for Mussolini's Head", *The New York Times*, 1 December 1930. timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1930/12/01/96174996.html?pageNumber=30. See also: "Police Battle Unemployed at Turin City Hall When Hungry Families Plead for Larger Dole" *The New York Times*, 29 November 1930. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[173] Luciano Re e Giovanni Sessa, "La formazione e l'uso di Via Roma nuova a Torino" in *Torino tra le due guerre*, p. 142; Letter from the Podestà (Revel) to the Prefect, 4 Jan 1930. ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1930, cart. 3, fasc. 3. n°1.

[174] Ibid.

[175] Ibid.

[176] "La città che si rinnova: le demolizioni di Via Roma e il nuovo mercato del pesce a Porta Palazzo," 24 April 1931, *La Stampa* archiviolastampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,6/articleid,1148_01_1931_0097_0006_24894063/. Accessed 23 March 2023.

concession: an adjustment to the capitalization rate from around 4% to 7%. Supporters argued that this adjustment would ease financial concerns amidst the changing economic conditions, which had worsened since the investors had agreed to fund the project several years prior.[177] Without much fanfare, the request was approved and the rates were raised to 7%, giving financiers even greater returns on their investments.[178] Lawmakers insisted that the revisions aligned with the timeframe outlined for the project, and would therefore help to ensure results that Mussolini himself expected.[179] Local support from the PNF reiterated the Fascist government's endorsement of the project, expressing faith in the *podestà*'s "most fascist will" (*fascistissima volontà*) in his execution of the plans.[180]

Profit, Aesthetics, and the Philosophy of *Sfruttamento*

With the Fascist government's stamp of approval, planners were now tasked with executing the *risanamento* as quickly as possible. But the economic conditions brought on by the global depression and the regime's economic policies had fundamentally altered the real estate sector in Turin. Economic disruption in the 1920s—namely, *quota 90* and the related credit shortage—shifted the real estate market away from traditional practices of bank-backed development.[181] The bank failures and the stock market crash had subsequently opened the world of property development to new financiers from outside the real estate sector.[182] In Turin, the credit void was filled by companies that still held large financial assets: insurance agencies and major industrial leaders. Capital from these sectors would become the key source of funding for the Via Roma project, in particular as the municipality was adamant that it would not bear the majority of costs of the project.[183] In this respect, the project epitomized the intertwining of public works and private industrial capital—a relationship that was fundamental to the regime's efforts to transform the built environment.

To participate in the reconstruction, big businesses formed specialized real estate groups. As autonomous businesses, these firms allowed individual investors to take advantage of pro-business tax exemptions and shelter themselves from the tax burden of personal property transfers.[184] This convention simultaneously obscured the movement of industrial capital to the real estate sector. The connection was further obscured by the fact that firms were named not for their primary stakeholders, but rather for specific ventures. In the redevelopment of Via Roma, for

[177] Letter from the Società Anonima Risanamento Via Roma to the Podestà di Torino. ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1930, cart. 3, fasc. 4. n°18.

[178] R.D.L. 26 marzo 1931. www.normattiva.it/atto/caricaDettaglioAtto?atto.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=1931-04-24&atto.codiceRedazionale=031U0354&tipoDettaglio=originario&qId=&tabID=0.8416234020442876&title=Atto%20originario&bloccoAggiornamentoBreadCrumb=true. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[179] The changes were implemented through a new law on March 26, 1931: Regio decreto-legge 26 Mar. 1931, n. 354. *La proprietà edilizia italiana rivista mensile*, books.google.com/books?id=TqULYfeyMOYC, p. 433. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[180] Letter from Angelo Milia to the Podestà, 23 June 1930, ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1930, cart. 3, fasc. 4, n°32.

[181] Rocco Curto "Rapporti tra capitale industriale e capitale immobiliare a Torino durante il fascismo" in *Torino tra le due guerre*, p. 88

[182] Ibid., p. 92

[183] *R.D.L. 3 luglio 1930, n. 976*, www.normattiva.it/atto/caricaDettaglioAtto?atto.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=1930-07-25&atto.codiceRedazionale=030U0976&atto.articolo.numero=0&atto.articolo.sottoArticolo=1&atto.articolo.sottoArticolo1=10&qId=&tabID=0.8416234020442876&title=lbl.dettaglioAtto. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[184] Rocco Curto "Rapporti tra capitale industriale e capitale immobiliare a Torino durante il fascismo" in *Torino tra le due guerre*, p. 88

example, the Società Anonima Edilizia San Federico, Società Anonima Via Roma, and L'Immobiliare San Vincenzo each developed different blocks along the street. And while none displayed a discernible link to the industrial sector, all were powered by industrial capital. Take for instance, the Isolato San Federico developed by the Società Anonima Edilizia San Federico. Giovanni Agnelli, the head of Fiat was one of the financial backers for the real estate company, participating through Fiat's subsidiary Società Assicuratrice Industriali (SAI).[185] SAI shared the 30 million-lire investment with the brothers at the helm of the textile enterprise Fratelli Canova e Rivetti.[186] Under the direction of engineer Giovanni Canova, the architect Eugenio Corte was enlisted for the block's reconstruction. Impresa Garbarino e Sciaccalugo would serve as the builder.[187] The new block would include a movie theater, a French-style shopping arcade (the Galleria San Federico), and the new headquarters for Agnelli's newspaper *La Stampa*.

The design of the new buildings was determined largely by the regulations set in the royal decree authorizing the project in 1930. The decree outlined three major aesthetic guidelines for the reconstruction: the buildings would have porticoes supported by granite columns, there were to be no bow-windows on the facades flanking Via Roma, and crucially, the designs "must harmonize with the eighteenth century style of Piazza San Carlo, at least in their main lines with recurrence of the cornices at the same level for each block."[188] The aesthetic restrictions were holdovers from earlier versions of the plan that had been approved by the municipality in 1914.[189] But more than a decade later, these guidelines would become the source of great controversy, in particular among rationalist architects who had developed a strong presence on the Northern Italian architectural scene. Giuseppe Pagano-Pogatschnig and Gino Levi-Montalcini were the protagonists of the Rationalist movement in Turin, advocating for a sleek and efficient architecture for Italy's modern age. Together, the pair formed Turin's *Movimento italiano per l'architettura razionale* (Italian Movement for Rational Architecture, MIAR), along with fellow rationalist architects Umberto Cuzzi, Ottorino Aloisio, and Ettore Sottsass. But Pagano alone was left to defend MIAR's modernist convictions while serving on a commission for Via Roma's reconstruction. He insisted that the requirement to blend in with the centuries-old piazza would be "the death of the future Via

[185] "Via Roma", 12 Dec. 1930, ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1930, cart. 3, fasc. 3. n°68.

[186] The Canova brothers initially took charge of the entire block, but construction was stalled when they faced credit issues. At the urging of Podesta Revel, Agnelli stepped in to salvage the operation through the Società Immobiliare San Federico. He put engineer Vittorio Bonade Bottino in charge of most of the works, leaving the theater to Federico Canova. Eugenio Corte handled the gallery. See Gian Luca Giani, *L'incanto della torre*, pp. 93-94.

[187] "Elenco degli enti, imprese e progettisti che hanno cooperato alla ricostruzione di nuovi palazzi di Via Roma," ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, 1931-1932, cart. 16, fasc. 3. n°174.

[188] "Via Roma – Allargamento – Risanamento dei Quartieri Adiacenti – Approvazione del piano – Modalità per la ricostruzione," *Torino*, N.1 May 1926, p. 43, Art. 4, 5, and 6. Critics have pointed out the incorrect periodization of the original character of the surrounding architecture, which is described in the regulation as "eighteenth century," but in fact was constructed in the seventeenth century. For a history of the street's original construction, see volume 2, part I, p. 485 of Luigi Cibrario's *Storia di Torino* (Torino: Alessandro Fontana, 1846). Digital edition hosted by the Politecnico di Torino: https://digit.biblio.polito.it/3487/21/Storiatorino2_parte_I.pdf. Accessed 23 March 2023. For criticism, see Giuseppe Pagano, *La Via Roma di Torino - progetto M.I.A.R.* (1931). Digital edition hosted by Museo Torino, www.museotorino.it/resources/pdf/books/154/files/assets/common/downloads/publication.pdf. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[189] "Risanamento della Via Roma e delle vie laterali: Norme per la fabbricazione" art. 4, *Consiglio Comunale di Torino: estratto di verbale della terza seduta*, Rete Archivi Piani urbanistici – Politecnico di Milano, www.rapu.it/ricerca/pdf/ces_s_0315.pdf. Accessed 23 March 2023.

Fig. 1. “Via Roma Arcades” by Jeremy Hunsinger. Licensed under CC BY 2.0. www.flickr.com/photos/44124368926@N01/17074438

Fig. 2. The seventeenth-century baroque Piazza San Carlo (left) and the twentieth-century imitation of the architectural style on the new Via Roma (right). Image taken by the author.

Roma."[190] His protest against the stylistic constraints, however, was immediately dismissed. The *podestà* was firmly opposed to any aesthetic adjustments, as these would require the project to be submitted and approved yet again—an undertaking that the city was not willing to pursue.[191] Hoping to avoid any further delays, the commission determined that the general aesthetics of the new buildings would conform to the street's existing surroundings, and only minor deviations from the aesthetic guidelines would be considered for approval on a case-by-case basis.[192]

Undeterred by the commission's brusque rejection, Pagano sought reinforcements to help bring his modernist vision to life. Together with the other members of the Turinese MIAR, Pagano spent the next several months developing a complete architectural plan for the renewed Via Roma. In March of 1931, the architects presented their work at the *II Esposizione Italiana di Architettura Razionale* (Second Italian Exhibition of Rational Architecture) held in the Galleria di Roma directed by the architectural critic Pier Maria Bardi. The exhibition served as a national stage of sorts where architects working under the regime were invited to present their work not only to fellow designers, but also to high-ranking fascist officials. Giuseppe Bottai, the Minister of Corporations was a prominent supporter of the event, which was inaugurated by Mussolini.[193] The Duce's presence at the exhibition points to a crucial moment in the regime's architectural history, in which state officials were particularly open to modernists' arguments for a "rational" architecture of the state.[194] Bardi directed his convictions towards Mussolini, making the case for a distinctly Fascist architectural aesthetic in his *Rapporto sull'architettura (per Mussolini)*. In the document, Bardi attempted align the ideology of the regime with the rationalist movement, explaining that "[t]he new architects aim to identify national life in the Mussolinian city, defined by rigid military education, by the primacy of the world, by absolute obedience to the Duce. Air, light, fields, cleanliness are presented as many cornerstones to inform their art." [195] In Bardi's view, architecture would be the key to shaping daily life in accordance with Fascist ideals, thereby providing the framework for national unity.

MIAR's proposal for Via Roma embodied Bardi's vision by tackling the quest for an architecture of the state at an urban scale. The architects presented their designs along with a manifesto, "La Via Roma di Torino," detailing the theoretical and practical considerations that had informed their work. Their primary concern was that the stylistic and technical regulations of the city's current plan had created unnecessary constraints on the project. The mandated imitation of seventeenth-century design, they argued, could not reflect the modern and industrial character of Turin (fig. 1).[196] The "aesthetic problem" centered on the irrational impulse towards conformity (fig. 2), despite the city's rich history of mixed architectural styles.[197] Most concerning, though, were the commercial limitations of the neo-baroque style. In order to promote commercial success,

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[190] "Relazione della commissione permanente per l'esame dei progetti per la conversione in legge dei decreti-legge, ecc. ecc.," 5 November 1930. ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1930, cart. 3, fasc. 3. n°31

[191] "Ibid.

[192] "Seduta del 10 luglio 1930," ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1930, cart. 3, fasc. 3. n°18, verb. 16.

[193] Cesare de Seta, "Introduzione", *Architettura e città durante il fascismo*, Giuseppe Pagano, p. XL

[194] Ibid.

[195] Silvia Danesi Squarzina and Luciano Patetta, *Il Razionalismo e l'architettura in Italia durante il fascismo*, (Venezia: La biennale di Venezia, 1976) p. 189 citing Bardi's *Rapporto sull'architettura (per Mussolini)*.

[196] Giuseppe Pagano, *La Via Roma di Torino - progetto M.I.A.R.* (1931), p. 15. Digital edition hosted by Museo Torino. https://www.museotorino.it/resources/pdf/books/154/files/assets/common/downloads/publication.pdf. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[197] They cite one notable example, the Palazzo Madama with its baroque façade and ancient roman posterior, located in Piazza Castello, just steps from the Via Roma site. *La Via Roma di Torino - progetto M.I.A.R.* (1931), p. 14.

they argued, the design should include modern and luminous storefronts that could draw the attention of passersby.[198] They argued that economic considerations were also a political concern because they addressed the interests of state-sanctioned syndical groups like the Federazione Fascista del Commercio della Provincia di Torino.[199] Of even greater concern for the authors, was the fact that the baroque aesthetic was economically burdensome to developers. The height requirements of this style, for example, limited the potential value that could be derived from the area through more modern styles. In other words, "from a strictly aesthetic point of view, the innovations that modern technology can allow for a more, intensive and rational exploitation [*sfruttamento*] of the areas."[200] By pointing out the financial incentives of their modern designs, the architects hoped to make a practical case for a modern utopia. With this strategy, futuristic representations of gleaming glass facades and sleek curved skyscrapers were presented as sensible rather than fantastical.

MIAR's design for Via Roma drew praise from the press. Art historian and critic Roberto Papini lauded the project as a "logical and sage" solution to the "urban planning and aesthetic errors about to be committed in Turin," which he argued made economic compromises in service of outdated stylistic preferences.[201] The newfound publicity prompted the architects to reopen the issue with city officials.[202] In June of 1931, the group sent a lengthy letter to *podestà* Revel describing the benefits of their design and declaring Mussolini's support for their vision for the new Via Roma.[203] Revel invited the architects to discuss their views at his office the following week.[204] But it was clear at that point that little could be done to alter the course of the reconstruction. Work had begun the month prior, and local officials were unwilling to halt the construction that was already underway. And so, despite the outcry from rationalist architects and the wave of publicity now surrounding the project, local authorities deemed the designs "inalterable." [205] With that, officials proudly concluded that "the attacks of the five Anabaptist prophets of futurism" had been effectively silenced.[206]

Aesthetic Harmony and Political Discord

At the time, the choice of "aesthetic harmony" described in the original regulations seemed to be the simplest solution for the new road. But the task of coordinating this harmony would prove deceptively complex. Because, while the project was conceptualized as a complete reconstruction of the street, the funding had been acquired in fragments. Each block was owned by a different entity, and each entity had enlisted a different architectural firm to redesign their block. This meant that each block in the first phase of redevelopment would have different designs. Given this disjointed arrangement, the commission's greatest challenge was not to determine the overall style of the buildings—as Revel had already confirmed, this was clearly stated in the project's guidelines—but rather to ensure the overall aesthetic coherence of the *risanamento* in an effort to

[198] Ibid., p. 6.
[199] Ibid., p. 15.
[200] Ibid., p. 15.
[201] Roberto Papini quoted in "Via Roma - Via Nuova," *La casa bella*, July 1931, v. 43, p. 10.
[202] "Via Roma 'novecentista,'" 10 June 1931, *La Stampa*, p. 6 www.archiviolastampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,6/articleid,1149_01_1931_0137_0006_24894741.
[203] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici: Via Roma – Miscellanea, 1931, cart. 16, fasc. 1. n°70
[204] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici: Via Roma – Miscellanea, 1931, cart. 16, fasc. 1. n°71
[205] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici: Via Roma – Miscellanea, 1931, cart. 16, fasc. 1. n°69
[206] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici: Via Roma – Miscellanea, 1931, cart. 16, fasc. 1. n°69

Fig. 3. View of the “Lux” movie theater (formerly “Dux”) with the vaulted glass ceiling of Galleria San Federico. Image taken by the author.

"constitute a harmonious whole of a uniform character."[207] To this end, the city would require all designs to be submitted for a collective review before construction could begin.[208] This was an onerous task according to Revel, who noted that while the decision to finance individual blocks had helped planners attract financing more easily, ultimately the strategy had made it more difficult for the city to carry out the project in a timely manner.[209]

Ensuring architectural cohesion was a tedious task, but the guidelines in the official declaration had equipped officials with clear standards for assessment. Supervising each building's construction process, on the other hand, would pose much greater challenges to the local government. The arcaded shopping mall within the San Federico block, for example, became the source of controversy in the fall of 1932. Developers had opted to import glass from Germany to create the building's luminous vaulted ceilings (fig. 3).[210] But when local manufacturers discovered that they had been passed over, they were incensed. The Turinese branch of the industrial workers' union, the Confederazione Nazionale dei Sindacati Fascisti dell'Industria, lodged a complaint with the prefect's office claiming that local manufacturers had been snubbed in favor of a foreign producer.[211] This decision violated a 1927 royal decree that required state ventures—including projects for public utility—to prioritize the use of domestic products over imports.[212] Officials agreed that the use foreign materials had likely exacerbated the problem of unemployment in the region.[213] And so began a months-long debate over the quality of the Italian glass—a dispute that was eventually escalated to the state government via the Ministry of Corporations.[214] The leaders of S.A. Edilizia San Federico argued that the Italian glass was inadequate for the technical requirements of their project, while the Italian manufacturers resolutely denied the assertion.[215] Ultimately, though, the domestic producers had limited recourse because, according to developers, the German glass had already been shipped.[216]

A similar grievance was lodged against the developers in the summer of 1933 when a local electrician complained that the wiring for the new movie theater in the San Federico block had been outsourced to a Florentine company.[217] This, he asserted, would make it more difficult for his firm to retain its staff. The *podestà* supported this position, pointing out that the developers were supposed to support local workers whenever possible.[218] But at that point, little could be done to change the work that had already been carried out. Furthermore, the laws against foreign imports did not apply to goods and services sourced within Italy. Related accusations afflicted the

[207] "Via Roma – Allargamento e Risanamento dei Quartieri Adiacenti – Ricorsi di Interessati alle Sezioni Giurisdizionali del Consiglio di Stato – Situazione dei Rapporti col Comune," ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1930, cart. 3, fasc. 3. n°33

[208] "Seduta del 10 luglio 1930," ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1930, cart. 3, fasc. 3. n°18, verb. 16.

[209] Schema di deliberazione del podesta" 28 July 1930, ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1930, cart. 3, fasc. 3. n°13.

[210] The economic circumstances in Germany meant that finished industrial products were frequently less costly than Italian versions. See "Mussolini and the Italian Industrial Leadership in the Battle of the Lira 1925-1927," *Past & Present*, p. 102.

[211] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici: Via Roma – Miscellanea, 1931-1932, cart. 16, fasc. 2. n°2, n°150

[212] Regio Decreto-Legge 20 Marzo 1927, n. 527, "Norme integrative della legge 15 luglio 1926, n. 1379, per la preferenza ai prodotti dell'industria nazionale," *Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d'Italia*, N. 95, 25 May 1927 gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/gu/1927/04/25/95/sg/pdf. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[213] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici: Via Roma – Miscellanea, 1931-1932, cart. 16, fasc. 2. n°2

[214] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici: Via Roma – Miscellanea, 1931-1932, cart. 16, fasc. 2. n°5

[215] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici: Via Roma – Miscellanea, 1931-1932, cart. 16, fasc. 2. n°1

[216] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici: Via Roma – Miscellanea, 1931-1932, cart. 16, fasc. 2. n°3

[217] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici: Via Roma – Miscellanea, 1931-1932, cart. 16, fasc. 2. n°167

[218] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici: Via Roma – Miscellanea, 1931-1932, cart. 16, fasc. 2. n°168

developers of other blocks as well. The San Vincenzo block, developed by the Società Anonima Isolato San Vincenzo, a firm set up by the industrial textile manufacturer Società Anonima Lane di Borgosesia was questioned about the inclusion of non-Turinese doors and windows in their building's construction.[219] The company retorted that the exterior doors were, in fact, made in Turin. But that more importantly, no requirement for Turinese products had been stipulated in their contract.[220] The question of the interior doors was left unanswered.

The developers of the San Vincenzo block and the San Federico block had also been entangled in a similar back-and-forth with the administration in 1931 when they enlisted a Milanese firm to carry out the demolitions. The developers argued that they needed the demolitions to be done within a hundred days' time, but that the Turinese workforce did not have the skillset to do the job efficiently.[221] The administration agreed to permit a crew of twenty specialized workers from Milan to work on the Via Roma demolitions, but on the condition that the rest of the workforce—about fifty laborers—would be Turinese.[222] This compromise, they believed, would be enough to satisfy local workers and prevent potential unrest.[223] The resolution between local officials and developers underscored the motives at the heart of the project: to prioritize the interests of the financiers who sought quick returns on their investments, and to consider the interests of the laborers exclusively in terms of mitigating disruption. Insofar as lower- and middle-class interests were concerned, local authorities were more hesitant about exacerbating traffic and taking housing stock off the market than they were about the financial well-being of the average citizen.

Over the course of both the planning and building stages, officials spoke openly of the "public works" classification in terms of its commercial success rather than in terms of the benefit that it might provide for the city's residents. And while this might seem contradictory to the project's "public" label, it is important to recall the municipality's stated aim of urban *risanamento* ["cleaning up"]—not public relief. The invocation of the *Risorgimento*-era term signaled the city's interest in creating the appearance of hygiene and beauty for the center. But this purportedly "civic" concern would prove in many ways to be fueled by a quest for private gains rather than for public assistance. Because, while the municipality was interested above all in enhancing the beauty and status of the city, it could only achieve these aims with private funding and changes to state legislation. Given the private and party interests involved, it is no surprise that this approach to urban policy did little to address the root of the problem. Local officials let the interests of ordinary residents and business owners fall to the wayside in order to secure the financing and political support needed to carry out their long-awaited reconstruction project. To this end, they prioritized the interests of financiers and government officials who had their own expectations for the new Via Roma.

The developers, for their part, were most concerned with profitability. Throughout the planning and construction phases, developers emphasized the *sfruttamento* (exploitation) of the land, hoping to derive as much value as possible from the project. They were not, however, particularly interested in the architectural style of the new buildings. As far as aesthetics were concerned, investors spent no time weighing in on the appearance of the new street, simply accepting the conclusions of the local authorities. The only exception to this general laissez-faire

[219] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici: Via Roma – Miscellanea, 1931-1932, cart. 16, fasc. 2. n°156
[220] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici: Via Roma – Miscellanea, 1931-1932, cart. 16, fasc. 2. n°158
[221] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici: Via Roma – Miscellanea, 1931, cart. 16, fasc. 1. n°74
[222] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici: Via Roma – Miscellanea, 1931, cart. 16, fasc. 1. n°78
[223] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici: Via Roma – Miscellanea, 1931, cart. 16, fasc. 1. n°81

approach occurred when aesthetic requirements interfered with *sfruttamento*. For instance, developers were not keen on the height restrictions mandated in the aesthetic and technical guidelines. On several occasions, construction was stalled when developers attempted to build more stories than permitted in the guidelines, or in the case of S.A. Edilizia Federico, to build deeper underground to accommodate a movie theater.[224]

At the state level, the regime supported the project in an effort to associate itself with progress. Mussolini's superficial declarations of support for the project's Fascist spirit initially did little to resolve the technical roadblocks. But with a resounding endorsement from the *capo del governo*, the Ministry of Public Works was willing to declare the project a public utility. This status gave the developers a legal mechanism for quick and cost-effective land acquisition, making it easier to attract funding for the reconstruction. The total expenses of the street's reconstruction have not been accounted for, but job-related spending was publicized on the street's inauguration. In the end, it was reported that the project provided a total of eighty million lire in workers' wages resulting from an estimated five hundred thousand days of work from 1931 through 1933.[225] These new jobs proved to be a major benefit, as they helped hundreds of working-class residents make ends meet amidst widespread unemployment.[226] Importantly, they also became a key indicator of the project's success, especially as criticism surrounding the architectural design began to circulate. It is important to note, however, that job creation only became a point of discussion after construction was approved, and it was often highlighted in response to residents' complaints about labor and materials imported from outside the city.[227] Indeed, both the national legislation that enabled the reconstruction and the local government's discussions of the street's renewal confirm that working-class jobs were merely an afterthought.

Conclusion

The renewed section of Via Roma was opened on October 28th, 1933, the eleventh anniversary of the Fascist squads' March on Rome. The celebration in Turin was a symbolic reiteration of the regime's seizure of state power more than a decade earlier, with the newly fascistized Via Roma serving as a stand-in for the capital city for which it was named.[228] Fascist groups ranging from the *camicie nere* to workers' syndicates to youth organizations marched down the newly reconstructed stretch of Via Roma in honor of the invasion. A *La Stampa* article detailed the festivities: "The inaugural march was carried out to the happy tune of *Giovinezza* and to the a continuous, very high, resounding cheers to the Duce. From the balconies, already populated with people, cheers were shouted and flowers were thrown."[229] Yet, the celebratory picture painted in

[224] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici – Isolato San Federico, 1930-1931, cart. 7, fasc. 1. n° 63 and n°55

[225] "Via Roma in cifre," *La Stampa*, 27 October 1933, p.6. www.archiviolastampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,6/articleid,1144_01_1933_0255_0006_24905728/. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[226] "Via Roma in cifre," *La Stampa*, 27 October 1933, p.6. www.archiviolastampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,6/articleid,1144_01_1933_0255_0006_24905728/. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[227] While the municipality was initially focused on "risanamento," outcry from local workers and business owners during the first phase of construction drew the municipality's attention to public concerns. ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici: Via Roma – Miscellanea, 1931-1932, cart. 16, fasc. 2.

[228] "Le camicie nere e il popolo di Torino hanno celebrato la storica Marcia", *La Stampa*, 29 September 1933, p. 8. http://www.archiviolastampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,8/articleid,1144_01_1933_0257_0008_24905140/. Accessed 18 April 29, 2022.

[229] Quoted from "Le camicie nere e il popolo di Torino hanno celebrato la storica Marcia", *La Stampa*, 29 September 1933, p. 8.

the press was countered by a wave of critical reviews of the street's design following the inauguration. Giuseppe Pagano, who had recently been appointed as editor of the modern architectural journal *Casabella*, called the renovation "a street full of humorous contrasts, saturated with precious warnings, filled with supreme inconsistencies."[230] So great was this failure, argued Pagano, that he and his fellow co-creators of the alternate design for the street "could not dream of a more exhaustive proof of [their own] wisdom," referring to MIAR's rationalist plans for the street.[231] Indeed, MIAR's brazen criticism displayed at the Second Italian Exhibition of Rational Architecture had brought unexpected attention to the Turinese project, opening discussions of Via Roma's reconstruction to a global audience. Even the *New York Times* weighed in, calling the renovation a "mocking eighteenth century masquerade."[232] With Via Roma now at the center of the National Fascist Architects' Syndicate's aesthetic debates, the question of the street's design could no longer be considered just a local concern.

As critics continued to cast doubt over the renovation, the professional world of architecture was undergoing its own phase of tumult. The National Fascist Syndicate of Architects was growing increasingly centralized, due in large part to the government's corporatist efforts. The economic situation both in Italy and globally had also shifted significantly between the project's authorization in 1930 and its completion in 1933. Continued failures in the industrial and banking sectors posed a threat to the entire Italian economy, and cast doubt over the potential sources of funding for the second stage of construction. With a second wave of economic failures looming, and architects still unwilling to compromise in their definitions of a true Fascist aesthetic, the second phase of the project would come to draw even more attention than the first. Somehow, what had begun as a backlogged local renovation plan had grown into the subject of international discussion. While architects launched into public debate, behind closed doors the regime's economic maneuvering would have equally profound effects on the remaining constructions of Via Roma. Funding for the street's second section had yet to be secured, and it seemed almost certain that the city would have to reassess its aesthetic regulations. But even more pressing was the question of the Torre Littoria slated for construction on the final block of Via Roma's first section. If carried out successfully, the tower would be the first of its kind in Italy, but it was still unclear if the city was capable of constructing such a daring design.

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http://www.archiviolastampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,8/articleid,1144_01_1933_0257_0008_24905140/. Accessed 18 April 29, 2022. The *Giovinezza* was anthem of the National Fascist Party.

[230] Giuseppe Pagano, "Registro: Via Roma - Via Nuova," *Casabella*, Milan vol. 12, iss. 11, November 1933, pp. 36-37. proquest.com/docview/2315434007/1CD48011B4AD4836PQ/18?accountid=14496&imgSeq=1. Accessed 26 March 2022.

[231] Giuseppe Pagano, "Registro: Via Roma - Via Nuova," *Casabella*, Milan vol. 12, iss. 11, November 1933, pp. 36-37. proquest.com/docview/2315434007/1CD48011B4AD4836PQ/18?accountid=14496&imgSeq=1. Accessed 26 March 2022.

[232] "Architecture in Italy". *The New York Times*, November 1, 1931, p. 127. timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1931/11/01/98343365.html. Accessed 23 March 2022.

CHAPTER THREE
Industrial Efficiency and the Construction of Italy's First Steel-frame Skyscraper 1933-1934

> Like every poet, the architect must be a prophet and interpreter of the society in which he lives: forging a new artistic measure in the law that history imposes on him.
> — Ernesto Nathan Rogers, 1958[233]

A decade after taking office, Benito Mussolini made his second official visit to Turin. He arrived by train at the Porta Nuova station on October 23, 1932, and for two days he toured the factories and construction sites of the Piedmontese capital. He concluded his visit on October 25 with a visit to Fiat's Lingotto factory, where he appeared uncharacteristically apprehensive in front of an audience of factory workers. He could not stay long, he explained, due to his busy schedule and, after a few brief words about his ability to outlast his critics, he was gone.[234] Of course, the Duce's reticence to address the workers was not unwarranted.[235] Nine years earlier when Mussolini visited the Lingotto factory for the first time, he was met with an embarrassingly cold reception from Fiat's employees.[236] At the time, Mussolini dismissed their lack of applause as a form of silent respect, believing that the workers would inevitably come to admire him.[237] But the admiration he hoped for never came. In fact, factory workers in particular remained wary of the Duce throughout his rule.[238] Still, it was undeniable that Mussolini's second visit to Turin was met with greater acceptance than the first, as the hush of disapproval was replaced with the scattered applause of acquiescence.[239]

With nearly a decade of rule under his belt—half of which had been conducted as a dictator—the Fascist leader had established himself as a tenacious and enduring head of government. Yet, his reluctance to visit one of the most important economic hubs in Italy for the majority of his time in government suggested a degree of uncertainty about his status in Turin. By 1932, Italy along with the rest of the world had suffered tremendous economic upheaval. As a result, industrial production reached record lows both domestically and globally.[240] Even the automotive manufacturing giant Fiat was forced to cut its Turinese workforce by several thousand in the midst of the economic crisis.[241] In the same period, the city's population swelled as migrants

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[233] Ernesto N. Rogers, *Esperienza dell'architettura*, Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1958, p. 84.
[234] Luisa Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class*, 1987, p. 188.
[235] For speculation about the possible hostility of the Turinese public on Mussolini's second visit to Turin, see Arnaldo Cortesi, "Mussolini Reverts to Former Tactics," *The New York Times*, 18 May 1930, p. 52.
[236] Passerini, pp. 187-188.
[237] In Piero Gobetti's account, Mussolini is quoted as saying "If in 12 months I have succeeded in making them listen, to me, next year they will be applauding me." Reprinted in Passerini, p. 186.
[238] The working classes in particular suffered from Fascism's austerity measures and labor policies. Passerini's *Fascism in Popular Memory* recounts workers' continued cold reception of Mussolini in Turin (in 1923, 1932, and 1939) as indications of "latent" dissent. See Passerini, pp. 188-190. See also Valerio Castronovo's "Lo sviluppo economico e sociale" in *Torino 1920-1936: Società e cultura tra sviluppo industriale e capitalismo*, p. 10.
[239] Passerini, p. 185.
[240] Philip Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, p. 158
[241] The largest waves of Fiat's labor cuts were carried out over the summer of 1929, with roughly 4,000 workers cut from the payroll between June and August. See Giulio Sapelli's *Fascismo grande industria e sindacato: Il caso di Torino 1929/1935*, "Licenziamenti e sospensioni dal lavoro alla FIAT" pp. 228-231. Unemployment rose

remained undeterred by the growing scarcity of factory jobs in Turin.[242] Immigrants to the city consistently outnumbered emigrants by several hundred—and sometimes several thousand—each month.[243] As a result, in the decade between 1921 and 1931 the population expanded by nearly 100,000 residents, bringing the city's total legal population up to more than 600,000 by the end of 1932, and it only continued to rise into the 1930s.[244] The growing population exacerbated existing concerns over the constrained housing supply, rising rates of unemployment, and the high cost of living.[245] As problems of joblessness and poverty worsened, it became increasingly clear that despite the Fascist government's claims about an economic "third way," the regime had done little to resolve the nation's greatest financial challenges.

Fascist Corporatism in 1932

For more than a decade, Italy's Fascist government had promoted corporatism as the ideal economic system for the modern era. Yet so far, corporatist practices had failed to save Italy from the economic downturn. By 1932, the government had succeeded in establishing a few elements of a corporatist system, but the "corporate state" as whole was still a work in progress. For example, Mussolini's government had formed the Ministry of Corporations in 1926 to oversee labor negotiations. But the Ministry was still of little use, as the corporations themselves were non-existent.[246] What's more, the Ministry of Corporations operated separately from the Ministry of Finance, giving the former only nominal powers to set prices and wages within industries, while the latter held much greater controls over broad financial regulations concerning taxation and the national budget.[247] Crucially, Mussolini's prioritization of private concessions over standard policies posed a continued challenge to the implementation of a state-wide corporatist system.[248] Frequent political favoritism often benefitted key industrialists, but it undermined the corporatist

dramatically throughout Turin in the first years of the 1930s, with roughly 13,000 unemployed in January 1930, peaking around 40,000 unemployed in June 1931. See Sapelli "Disoccupazione" pp. 223-224.

[242] In the face of the global economic crisis, internal migrants mostly from rural areas of the Veneto and southern Italy flocked to Turin in the hopes of finding work in the city's factories. See Luciano Re and Giovanni Sessa, *Torino Via Roma*, p. 44.

[243] See monthly editions of "Bollettino Statistico Mensile" in *Torino: rassegna mensile*, 1930-1933, in particular the section "Note introduttive: Demografia," p. 3. Digital editions hosted by Museo Torino, www.museotorino.it/resources/pdf/books/533 (1930), www.museotorino.it/resources/pdf/books/520/ (1931), www.museotorino.it/resources/pdf/books/521 (1932), and www.museotorino.it/resources/pdf/books/522 (1933). Accessed 18 October 2022.

[244] "Bollettino Statistico Mensile" in *Torino: rassegna mensile*, 1933, n. 12, p. 7. Digital edition hosted by Museo Torino, www.museotorino.it/resources/pdf/books/522. Accessed 18 October 2022.

[245] Between June of 1927 and November of 1930, the cost of living index in Turin jumped from 100 lire to 159.33 lire, increasing by nearly 60%. For base cost of living see "Bollettino Statistico Mensile" in *Torino: rassegna mensile*, 1933, n. 2, p. 4. Museo Torino, www.museotorino.it/resources/pdf/books/522. For 1930 end-of-year data see "Statistica: Dicembre 1930 (IX)" in *Torino: rassegna mensile*, 1931, n.1. www.museotorino.it/resources/pdf/books/520. Accessed 18 October 2022.

[246] For the evolution of corporatism in Italy, see Alberto Aquarone, "Italy: The Crisis of the Corporative Economy," esp. p. 42. See also Philip Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, p. 107 and Gaetano Salvemini, *Under the Axe of Fascism*, p. 128.

[247] Franklin Hugh Adler, *Italian Industrialists from Liberalism to Fascism: The Political Development of the Industrial Bourgeoisie, 1906-1934*, p. 293. The formation of competing and redundant government bodies was typical of Italian Fascism. See Adler p. 293 for more examples of "overlapping" entities.

[248] Adler, p. 266.

project as a whole, and evidenced Mussolini's preference for garnering elite support over implementing a specific economic ideology.[249]

As head of the Ministry of Corporations from 1926 to 1932, Giuseppe Bottai was at the forefront of Italy's greatest advances in corporatist policy.[250] His efforts included the transformation of existing syndical systems into official components of the corporatist framework.[251] Through these modifications, Bottai aimed to construct a system in which laborers and businessowners could dutifully participate in the national economy with the help of expert intermediaries and advisors.[252] The implementation of Bottai's most substantial corporatist policies were promoted as the first signs of a truly Fascist economic system in which, "[c]apital and labor work together harmoniously in a country where strikes and lockouts have become unknown."[253] In the name of corporatist harmony and in an effort to bring all parties to the negotiating table as equals rather than adversaries, laborers had been stripped of their rights and wages.[254] Such policies supported the Fascist vision of a new Italy, reincarnated as a corporatist state in which workers and employers shared a common aim to uphold the state's broader economic interests. And while these efforts had succeeded in tamping down labor unrest, they did so by tilting the balance in favor of the already powerful employers.[255] The reality of a stable and equitable corporatist system, therefore, remained out of reach.[256]

The imbalance between employers and employees posed one of the greatest challenges to the corporatist project by hindering the possibility for self-regulation between the two groups.[257] The Great War had left in its wake seemingly irresolvable disparities between the working class and the owners of industrial production.[258] Together, the wartime economy and the regime's subsequent postwar recovery strategies had stacked the economic deck in favor of a handful of powerful monopolists, who had benefitted significantly from the government's patronage.[259] The working class, on the other hand, had been forced to bear the brunt of the regime's postwar

[249] Giuseppe Belluzzo, the Minister of National Economy from 1925-1928, admitted that powerful business owners, not the state, controlled the Italian economy. See Salvemini, p. 385.
[250] The Ministry of Corporations was most active in its implementation of corporatist policy between the years of 1929 and 1934, in the wake of the global economic crisis. See "Corporativism and the Great Depression" in Philip Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, pp. 156-161.
[251] For example, the transformation of the *Comitato Intersindacale Centrale* into the *Comitato Corporativo Centrale* was seen a major win for industrialists who hoped to purged the economic system of expressions of class solidarity among factory workers. See Alberto Aquarone, *L'organizzazione dello stato totalitario*, p. 146.
[252] Bottai hoped to establish "gruppi di competenze" (competence groups) to offer unbiased guidance to support an industry as a whole rather than advocate for class-based interests. Franklin Hugh Adler, *Italian Industrialists from Liberalism to Fascism: The Political Development of the Industrial Bourgeoisie, 1906-1934*, p. 350 and p. 358.
[253] "Fascists' 10th Year Hailed by Marconi," *The New York Times*, 16 October 1932, p. 8.
[254] Franklin Adler notes that instead of erasing class lines, as some corporatist intellectuals hoped, the corporatist system in Italy wrote class divisions into law by create separate legislation for capital and labor groups. For more on the distinctions between autonomous models of corporatism and the state-led system that was partially implemented in Italy, see "Nonintegral corporatism" in Adler, pp. 357-369, esp. p. 358.
[255] The Vidoni Pact in 1925 and subsequent syndical laws in 1926, for example, established a Fascist monopoly on unions, weakening workers' power by bringing their negotiations into the orbit of the party and state. See Adrian Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, pp. 265-275, ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/berkeley-ebooks/reader.action?docID=214549. Accessed 23 March 2023.
[256] Alexander J. De Grand, *Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany*, p. 43.
[257] Philip Morgan, "Corporatism and the Economic Order," *Oxford Handbook of Fascism*, p. 152 and p. 154.
[258] Alexander J. De Grand, *Italian Fascism: Its Origin and Development*, p. 80.
[259] Alessio Gagliardi, "The Entrepreneurial Bourgeoisie and Fascism," *In the Society of Fascists*, 2012, p. 111.

austerity measures, weakening its position even further.[260] Workers were prohibited from holding lockouts and strikes, and then barred from forming independent unions in 1925 and 1926.[261] The subsequent *sbloccamento* in 1928 had then fractured the state-sanctioned unions into smaller, and therefore weaker, bargaining units.[262] This was followed by a series of government-approved wage cuts in the years between 1930 and 1934.[263] With the existing imbalances, workers had no real say in negotiations with employers.

Meanwhile, employers continued to benefit from the regime's efforts to implement corporatism through policies that strengthened monopolies and promoted output. As historian Philip Morgan explains, "[t]he main criterion was always what was best for or most likely to maximise production, and hence the economic strength of the nation. It was the production rather than the distribution of wealth that really mattered."[264] With national economic strength as its guiding principle, the Fascist regime responded to the global slump in industrial production in 1932 by authorizing industrial cartels.[265] This allowed the biggest industrial players to maintain their positions either by edging out or consuming competitors.[266] As the nation's biggest industrial producers continued to consolidate power, the corporatist ideal of self-regulating interclass negotiations grew impossible. The regime's productivist policies had effectively weakened the mediation powers granted to the Ministry of Corporations, leaving employers free to impose their own profit-minded policies.[267] As a result, labor discussions were essentially one-sided. Under this half-realized corporatist model, employees were simply too weak and employers too powerful to establish harmonious and collaborative relations without direct government intervention. [268]

Despite these imbalances, the greatest limitation to the corporatist project in Italy was not the representation for the working classes, but rather the lack of consensus surrounding its implementation. In its purest form, corporatism was an unsophisticated economic model based on simplistic views of social harmony. The regime insisted that corporatism was an essential component of Fascism's revolutionary politics, but officials could not agree on how to realize the system.[269] In an effort to a definitive approach to the so-called "corporatist solution," the regime organized the International Conference on Corporatism in May of 1932.[270] Intellectuals and politicians from around the world were invited to Ferrara in order to determine how they might

[260] For example, tax reform under the Fascist government disproportionately favored big business and disadvantaged lower classes. See Adler p. 294. Similarly, wage cuts in the 1930s were used to help businesses recover from the economic depression by pushing transferring the losses to workers. Rural workers in particular suffered as a result of these policies. See Philip Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, p. 159.
[261] Alberto Aquarone, "Italy: The Crisis of the Corporative Economy," esp. p. 42.
[262] See Chapter Two of this dissertation, p. 3.
[263] Philip Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, pp. 158-159. A January 1933 also favoured existing power players in industrial manufacturing by requiring government approval for the construction of new factories. The increased regulation diminished competition and gave the upper-hand to industrialists who applied defensively for construction approval in order to block competitors. See Philip Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, p. 159.
[264] Philip Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, p. 107.
[265] Alexander J. De Grand, *Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany*, pp. 41-42.
[266] Philip Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, p. 158-159.
[267] Philip Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, p. 158.
[268] Alexander J. De Grand, *Italian Fascism*, p. 80
[269] The 1932 "Doctrine of Fascism," the most official statement of the principles of Mussolinian fascism, describes corporatism as a key feature of fascism. See *La dottrina del fascismo*. La Libreria dello stato, 1936
[270] Adler, p. 365.

create a full-fledged corporatist economy in Italy. No real progress was made on this front, and the conference ultimately failed to generate a viable solution to Italy's economic concerns.[271]

With no solution in sight, Bottai was dismissed from his post as head of the Ministry of Corporations in June, and Mussolini was restored as the entity's official leader. [272] But a change in leadership alone would do little to address the limitations of the corporatist system in Italy. It was clear that the government's efforts to create a harmonious and profitable economy had resulted in programs that were too easily manipulated by the nation's most powerful participants. But it would take years for the government to establish a stronger economic plan. As the government wrestled with the corporatist problem, it continued to implement protectionist strategies to support the nation's biggest businesses. Industrial manufacturing of energy-intensive materials like steel, for example, made little economic sense for Italy to produce domestically. But under the regime's lopsided corporatist system, industrial leaders had won extensive state protections. This allowed them to beat out international competitors, which only added to the country's economic inefficiencies.[273]

Via Roma in 1932

Turin was, by now, several years into the construction of the new Via Roma. Officials had been quick to recognize that the project's demand for manual labor could provide a short-term solution to some of the city's most pressing concerns of joblessness and poverty.[274] It was Mussolini's belief that Turin's urban troubles should be concealed from public view, and it was undeniable that construction projects like the renewed Via Roma could both provide temporary reprieve for jobseekers and serve as public displays of economic progress.[275] As a consequence, short-term fixes took precedence over long-term planning to resolve the city's economic troubles.[276] During Mussolini's second visit to Turin the dictator had communicated to the *podestà* Paolo Thaon di Revel that "the new Via Roma must be the street *par excellence*—the main artery of rich commerce, elegant shops, luxurious fashion houses—where all the splendors of the true national center of the automobile come together in a permanent exhibition, a living and perennial testimony of the infinite resources of its industrial production." [277] In other words, he wanted the renovated street to serve as a counterimage to the dire economic reality. "Understood in this way,"

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[271] Of particular note was the debate that surfaced between the industrialist Gino Olivetti and Ugo Spirito, the proponent of a unifying, self-regulating economy. See Adler, pp. 321-324.

[272] Adler, p. 433.

[273] Harold James and Kevin H. O'Rourke, "Italy and the First Age of Globalization, 1861–1940," *The Oxford Handbook of the Italian Economy Since Unification*, ed. Gianni Toniolo, 2013. DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199936694.013.0002. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[274] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Isolato Sant'Emanuele, cart. 4, fasc. 4, n°116. Letter from the head of Società Reale Mutua to Turin's Podestà Paolo Thaon di Revel explaining plans to add labor hours for local workers, 17 December, 1932.

[275] Beginning around 1930, construction projects throughout Turin were leveraged as tools for job creation. In a letter telegraph to Rome, Turin's prefect Umberto Ricci describes the city's plan to address worker unrest by putting former factory employees to work on the Turin-Milan highway construction, cited in Valerio Castronovo, *Giovanni Agnelli*, Torino: 1994, p. 490 and Luciano Re e Giovanni Sessa, "La formazione e l'uso di Via Roma nuova a Torino," in *Torino tra le due guerre*, Torino: 1978, p. 142.

[276] Thousands of workers were employed in short-term contracts for the construction of the new Via Roma and the Mercati Generali, among other projects. See "Le opera pubbliche dell'anno XI," in *Torino: rassegna mensile*, 1933, n. 10, pp. 6-27. Museo Torino, www.museotorino.it/resources/pdf/books/522. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[277] "Per la ricostruzione del secondo tratto di Via Roma," *La Stampa*, 2 December 1932, p. 6, www.archiviolastampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,6/articleid,1147_01_1932_0287_0006_24894733/. Accessed 23 March 2023.

explained the Turinese daily paper *La Stampa*, "the function of Via Roma will assume an importance in direct relationship with the strengthening of our industries, reaffirmed by the head of government. The Turinese will feel drawn to the Duce by a new surge of gratitude for yet another act of valorization of their city, full of such a high and civil significance." [278]

Yet the dictator's lofty praise for the city's reconstruction was impossible to square with his decade-long absence from Turin. While he peddled the importance of the new Via Roma for both Turin and the Fascist state, Mussolini's involvement in the project remained largely symbolic. That is, while he supported the project in theory, he failed to provided state funding for the street's reconstruction.[279] Without direct support from the national government, local authorities and wealthy Turinese elites had stepped forward to determine how they might realize the Duce's vision of prosperity and productivity for the city. The regime's economic policies leading up to 1932 had allowed a handful of powerful entrepreneurs to consolidate wealth and expand their market share.[280] In Turin, where industrial production was the foundation of the local economy, these policies helped support the largest owners of industry despite the difficult economic conditions. By partnering with wealthy private investors, local authorities could secure the necessary funding for the reconstruction project without tapping into the state's resources. They had, in fact, already used this strategy to carry out the first five blocks of Via Roma's reconstruction, which were on track to be completed before the next year's end.[281] But the construction of the first section could not be considered officially completed until both the developers and the city could agree on a solution for the Sant'Emanuele block, the northwestern section of the reconstruction zone facing Piazza Castello.[282]

The prestigious site at the top of Via Roma was oriented directly across from the former royal headquarters. The main square, which served as a sort of urban compound for Italy's monarchy, was charged with political symbolism. The Royal Palace was located directly across from the Sant'Emanuele block, flanked by a cluster of royal buildings: the Palazzo Madama, the Chapel of the Holy Shroud, the Royal Library, and the Royal Armory.[283] The Palazzo Madama—a royal palace built into the ancient Roman gates of the city and refurbished with a baroque façade—represented the historical continuity between the Savoy Dynasty and Roman Antiquity.[284]

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[278] Mussolini's message paraphrased by a *La Stampa* reporter in an article entitled, "Per la ricostruzione del secondo tratto di Via Roma", *La Stampa*, 2 December 1932, p. 6, www.archiviolastampa.it. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[279] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Isolato Sant'Emanuele, cart. 4, fasc. 3, n°2. Letter from Silvia Bianco, one of the building owners in the redevelopment zone, 23 July 1930. The letter to the Minister of Public Works and the Minister of Justice in Rome acknowledges that the project will not be paid for with public funding, but instead that the private developers will assume the costs for the reconstruction of their blocks.

[280] In addition to weakening workers' bargaining powers, pro-industry policies like tariffs and subsidies protected domestic production. Adding to its pro-business efforts, the government implemented a 25-year tax exemption for new commercial construction, which incentivized developers, but also deprived the government of funds. This set the conditions for private development over government-financed construction. See Adler p. 294.

[281] "Per la ricostruzione del secondo tratto di Via Roma," *La Stampa*, 2 December 1932, p. 6, www.archiviolastampa.it. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[282] "Cinque isolati su sei in via di demolizione: Nuovi ostacoli per Via Roma?", *La Stampa*, 5 May 1931, p. 6, archiviolastampa.it/component/option.com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/Itemid,3/action,viewer/page,6/articleid,1149_01_1931_0107_0006_24892928/; "I lavori in Via Roma estesi alla notte", *La Stampa*, 4 August 1931, p. 6, http://www.archiviolastampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/Itemid,3/action,viewer/page,6/articleid,1149_01_1931_0184_0006_24893273/. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[283] "Musei Reali," *Residenze Reali Sabaude Piemonte*, www.residenzereali.it/index.php/en/residenze-reali-del-piemonte/musei-reali. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[284] "Musei Reali," *Residenze Reali Sabaude Piemonte*, www.residenzereali.it/index.php/en/residenze-reali-del-piemonte/musei-reali. Accessed 23 March 2023.

The Chapel of the Holy Shroud marked the monarchy's Christian legitimacy, as it held the rumored burial shroud of Jesus Christ, one of the most coveted religious relics in Christianity. Finally, completing the complex were the Royal Library and the Royal Armory, which housed the family's literary and military collections. Unified in a single urban site, these symbols of historic, religious, cultural, and military legitimacy stood as a testament to the monarchy's centralizing authority. Piazza Castello had served for centuries as the political center of the House of Savoy. But with the country now firmly under Fascist rule and with Turin's largest urban intervention underway, authorities wondered how to adapt the political symbolism of Piazza Castello to the new era.

As the center of Turin's political heritage, the intersection of Piazza Castello and the renovated Via Roma was the obvious location for a monument to the new Fascist government. On the one hand, the royal square represented the powerful force that had unified Italy. On the other, the new Via Roma represented a distinctly Fascist solution to Turin's contemporary problems of poverty and overcrowding in the city center—at least, according to the leaders of the Fascist government.[285] Given the symbolism of the site, the redevelopment of the Sant'Emanuele block was considered the perfect location for Turin's *Casa littoria*, the local headquarters for the National Fascist Party (PNF).[286] Unfortunately for local Fascist leaders, the PNF was not a particularly powerful institution in Turin and therefore did not have the funds to construct a new building.[287] By contrast, dozens of smaller local PNF chapters across Italy were able to construct new *case del fascio* in the same period, complete with soaring *torre littorie* ("lictor towers"). The absence of a similar structure in Turin was an embarrassment to Fascist representatives in the city, who hoped for an urban redevelopment plan that would "bear the mark of the *Littorio*."[288] But constructing prominent new party headquarters in Turin would be too costly and cumbersome for the local chapter, which had just relocated to a seventeenth-century palazzo in the city center.[289] With Turin's PNF unable to redevelop its own headquarters, it became clear that the Fascist symbol that Mussolini hoped to erect in Turin would have to be funded by private investors.

As with the rest of Via Roma, the Sant'Emanuele block would not be paid for with state funding. Instead, private developers would assume the costs for the reconstruction and they would reap the financial benefits of renting out the modern, luxury spaces of the new buildings.[290] The Milanese department store La Rinascente already owned a large portion of the block, and was therefore approached early on to redevelop the area.[291] However, the firm was not confident in the

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[285] A letter from Dante Maria Tuninetti relayed Mussolini's message about Via Roma as a problem to be "resolved urgently by Fascism," 29 September 1925, ACST, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1925, cart. 3, fasc. 4.

[286] Lucy Maulsby's *Fascism, Architecture, and the Claiming of Modern Milan, 1922-1943* covers a similar architectural conundrum regarding the construction of new headquarters for the PNF in Milan's Piazza San Sepolcro. See Maulsby, Chapter 5 "Urban Networks: Fascist Party Headquarters, 1931–1940", pp. 106-134.

[287] The Turinese PNF was located a few blocks away on via Carlo Alberto in Palazzo Campana. It served as Turin's *Casa littoria* from 1929 until 1943, when a group of protesters set fire to the building.

[288] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, anno 1925, cart. 3, fasc. 4. Message from Fascist representative Dante Maria Tuninetti relaying Mussolini's vision for Via Roma's reconstruction, 29 September 1925.

[289] "La nuova casa littoria", *La Stampa*, 17 February 1930, p. 2, archiviolastampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,2/articleid,1151_01_1930_0041A_0002_24886685/. Accessed 23 March 2023; "Ex Casa Littoria (ora Palazzo Campana, sede universitaria)", Museo Torino, www.museotorino.it/view/s/644089eec3fc4ce1a85a38c165a79a6f. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[290] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Isolato Sant'Emanuele, cart. 4, fasc. 3, n°2. Letter from Silvia Bianco, one of the building owners in the redevelopment zone acknowledging the cost to private developers, 23 July 1930.

[291] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Isolato Sant'Emanuele, cart. 4, fasc. 3, n°13. 31 October 1930.

profitability of the project and therefore chose not to participate, forcing the city to find a new investor for the site.[292] After several months of negotiations, the Turin-based insurance company Società Reale Mutua Assicurazioni, led by the Fascist senator, Giuseppe Brezzi, stepped in to finance the reconstruction of the Sant'Emanuele block.[293] The company planned to build a towering skyscraper to house luxury offices as well as private residences.[294] This plan would maintain the seventeenth-century aesthetic of the lower portion of the building in accordance with the regulations, while also maximizing the real estate value of the block by building vertically. When the city and the developer finally settled on the terms in 1932, they also agreed that the new building would serve as an emblem of Fascism.[295]

With the new tower now slated for construction at the prestigious site across from the royal palace, officials had finally found a solution to the PNF's financing problems. That is, instead of constructing new party headquarters on Via Roma, or taking on the costs of adding a bell tower to the party's existing building nearby, Turin's *Casa del fascio* would remain in its original location. The new Reale Mutua tower, however, would be declared as a symbol of the regime, although it would function as a for-profit real estate venture.[296] In June of 1933, Turin's *podestà* Paolo Thaon di Revel wrote to the provincial prefect to formalize the plan and request permission to name the new luxury apartment complex "Torre Littoria."[297]

Towers, Skyscrapers, and Industrial Design

As lictor towers grew increasingly popular over the course of the 1930s, it became standard practice for the structures to be either attached or adjacent to the Fascist party headquarters.[298] But in 1932, when Turinese officials struck a deal with Reale Mutua to label the company's privately-owned building as a symbol of the *littorio*, the typology of the lictor tower was still very much in flux. The design of Turin's *torre littoria*, therefore, was shaped by the precise moment of experimentation in which it was built. With few typological precedents, architects seized the opportunity to create original concept buildings that were unlike anything ever constructed in Italy. In 1933, Gio Ponti set the stage for experimental lictor towers with his cutting-edge design for a Torre Littoria at the Milano Triennale V. Ponti's tower was a 108-meter, free-standing structure constructed from welded metal tubes. More of a sculpture than a building, the soaring metal tower

[292] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Isolato Sant'Emanuele, cart. 4, fasc. 3, n°7. 19 September 1930. When La Rinascente was approached again as a possible financier of the second section, the department story reiterated its need for a guaranteed profitability if it was going to participate. As La Rinascente's president pointed out, the company was not in the business of real estate development and therefore preferred to lease its store space. Letter from podestà Thaon di Revel to La Rinascente's President, 28 December 1934, ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici: Via Roma – Miscellanea, 1931-1934, cart. 9, fasc. 4, ogg. 109.

[293] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Isolato Sant'Emanuele, cart. 4, fasc. 3. In a letter from 14 March 1932, the Società Reale Mutua agreed to buy the block from La Rinascente and begin reconstruction by 15 June 1932.

[294] "Torre, detta Littoria". Museo Torino, www.museotorino.it/view/s/33a14d5c4e3c447096c6d1c5e67378f4. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[295] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Isolato Sant'Emanuele, cart. 4, fasc. 3, n°56. Telegram from Turin's Podestà Paolo Thaon di Revel and the head of Società Reale Mutua Giuseppe Brezzi to Benito Mussolini, 24 March, 1932.

[296] Gian Luca Giani, *L'incanto della Torre*, p. 127.

[297] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Isolato Sant'Emanuele, cart. 4, fasc. 4, n°122. Personal letter from Podestà Paolo Thaon di Revel to Provincial Prefect, 30 June, 1933. An alternate name, "Dux," was deemed unsuitable for the tower, but was granted to the newly constructed movie theater two blocks down on Via Roma.

[298] In 1932, PNF secretary Achille Starace mandated bell towers for new party headquarters. See Giani, *L'incanto della Torre*, p. 125.

was engineered by Cesare Chiodi and Ettore Ferrari and built by the Milan-based construction company Dalmine in just two and a half months.[299] Ponti's Torre Littoria was not a habitable building, but the sculptural metal skeleton that rose above Parco Sempione proved that industrial technologies could be used in the field of architecture to bring Italian design quite literally to new heights. What's more, the expansion of industrial materials and techniques into the building and construction sectors signaled an exciting opportunity for industrial growth at a moment when production was at an all-time low. [300]

While Ponti's tower was viewed as a striking feat of Italian engineering, American builders were already decades ahead. Construction companies in the U.S. had begun testing electric welding as a replacement for the standard gas-and-flame technique in building construction around the turn of the century, placing the U.S. at the forefront of skyscraper technology by the 1930s. Electric welding had proved to be a more efficient technique and, importantly, it allowed for more technically complex configurations of the metal joints.[301] But it was not until several decades later that Italian builders began experimenting with the technology in the field of architecture. In addition to the Milanese company Dalmine that constructed Ponti's tower, the Turin-based construction company Officine Savigliano was one of the first Italian companies to embrace arc welding.[302] Savigliano invested heavily in research and development, enlisting the professor Giuseppe Albenga from Turin's Regia Scuola d'Ingegneria to investigate the method.[303] Thanks to Albenga's research, Savigliano was equipped with an early understanding of the efficiency and strength of electric welding. The company quickly began integrating the technique into its projects, first for the construction of railways and railcars in 1918. A decade later, Officine Savigliano expanded its use of electric welding into architectural construction.[304]

In 1932, Savigliano joined forces with the architect-engineer Guido Fiorini, who had developed an innovative technology called *tensistruttura*.[305] The theoretical *tensistruttura* design was a suspension system that entailed hanging the floors of a skyscraper from steel cables suspended from a stable core.[306] Fiorini's innovation took to the extreme what many architects and engineers were just coming to understand about the power of steel: that it could support the mass of towering buildings without adding bulk to the structures themselves. While the *tensistruttura* technology remained theoretical, debates about the system's viability continued into the mid-1930s. A 1934 issue of *Casabella* brought to light concerns about the complexity of the system's

[299] "'Torre Littoria' al Parco Sempione," Gio Ponti Archives, gioponti.org/it/archivio/scheda-dell-opera/dd_161_5898/torre-littoria-al-parco-sempione/. Accessed 23 March 2023.
[300] Industrial production reached its lowest point in 1932. See Philip Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, p. 158.
[301] Giulio Molteni, "La saldatura nelle costruzioni di acciaio," *Casabella*, n. 11, August 1933, pp. 74.
[302] Molteni, pp. 74-77.
[303] Molteni, p. 77.
[304] Molteni, pp. 74-77.
[305] Guido Fiorini, "Tensistruttura 1934," *Casabella*, n. 77, February 1934, pp. 4-6. The famed Swiss architect Le Corbusier was so taken by Fiorini's *tensistruttura* design that he included the technology in his plans for the city of Algiers in 1932 and later attempted to convince Giuseppe Bottai of the technology's merits in 1935. See David Rifkind, *The Battle for Modernism*, pp. 216-218.
[306] Rifkind, p. 213.

construction, which would require highly skilled builders.[307] With laborers unprepared to realize the designs, Fiorini's technology remained untested, despite support from Savigliano.[308]

By the early 1930s, Savigliano had become a leader in steel-frame construction, working mostly on industrial projects and sometimes temporary exhibitions. In 1933, Savigliano was responsible for the construction of Giuseppe Pagano's concept building for the Milano Triennale V—a steel-frame pavilion known as the *Casa a struttura d'acciaio* (Steel-frame house). The temporary structure represented just a few floors of what Pagano imagined as a luxury high-rise apartment building that could be expanded to create a permanent building. The finished units displayed the modern luxury of high-rise living, while the lower section was intentionally left unfinished to show off the impressive metal skeleton of the structure.[309] A similar project at the Milano Triennale that year, the *Abitazione tipica a struttura d'acciaio* (Typical steel-frame dwelling) by Luigi Vietti and Carlo Daneri also explored the possibilities of industrial metals in Italian construction. Vietti and Daneri's design comprised four different prototypes for residential units, each with about eighty square meters of living space, arranged vertically in a steel-frame tower. Floor-to-ceiling windows on the front façade demonstrated the potential of metal construction to maximize light and air, with only minimal structural mass.[310] The cutting-edge pavilion was built by the Genovese firm Officine Meccaniche Servettaz Basevi using a combination of electric arc-welding and more traditional soldering methods and was erected in the span of just ten days. [311]

The speed of the construction process was a central feature of steel-frame building design. Reflecting on the era's construction practices, architect Ernesto Nathan Rogers argued that the lack of industrial and rational building systems in prior decades had affected "the productive capacity of architectural objects, slowing down the timing of implementation and weighing unfavorably on the economy."[312] But with the advancement of industrial materials and techniques, Rogers advocated for the incorporation of these resources in Italian architectural design: "We must aspire to obtain a great variety by taking advantage of the benefits of a more rational production and—it doesn't seem a paradox—really, pushing the principles of a more industrial system deeper." [313] With excitement growing around the possibilities of industrialization and automation, it seemed that Italian architecture was on the precipice of a modernist revolution.

The Industry of Architecture in 1933

While most the first section of Via Roma was approved without much consideration of stylistic trends, new material developments over the short period of the street's construction pushed investors and designers to reconsider the possibilities of the final block, which was designed and constructed almost entirely over the course of 1933. The year marked a pivotal moment in Italy's building history, thanks in large part to the advances in modern architecture

[307] The engineer Fausto Masi argued that the costs invested in the highly technical construction would outweigh the small savings from the reduction in building materials enabled by the delicate *tensistruttura* system. See Rifkind, p. 218 and Fausto Masi's article "Estetica delle costruzioni metalliche", *Casabella*, July, 1934, pp. 26-33.
[308] Officine Savigliano enlisted Fiorini to design a residential skyscraper in Turin, but the design—which ultimately was never realized—was a familiar steel-frame structure, not a *tensistruttura* system. See David Rifkind, *The Battle for Modernism*, p. 219.
[309] Rifkind, p. 118.
[310] "Abitazioni Tipiche", *Domus*, n. 70, October 1933, p. 544.
[311] "Abitazioni Tipiche", p. 544.
[312] Ernesto Nathan Rogers, *Esperienza dell'architettura*, p. 83.
[313] Rogers, p. 83.

displayed at the Milano Triennale V.[314] The groundbreaking feats of engineering were met with a series of major shifts in the field of architecture. 1933 saw the end of the traditionalist Ugo Ojetti's architectural journal *Dedalo,* as well as the refashioning of the well-known *La casa bella* into the new *Casabella* led by the modernist Giuseppe Pagano. Reflecting on his first year as the journal's editor, Pagano reiterated the significance of 1933, declaring that "[t]his was the year of the battle and of the systematic criticism, the year of the Triennale, of the great controversies, not conducted because for the stupid principles of the parish or of the people, but for the frank and responsible defense of a point of view that is not only aesthetic, but also moral and civil."[315] Under Pagano's direction, *Casabella* took on a distinctly modernist character, with a growing emphasis on materials and construction techniques rather than on furniture and housewares, which appeared more frequently in the journal's earlier editions.[316]

If *Casabella* represented the mainstream of Italian modernism, then the politically charged journal *Quadrante* was its radical counterpart. *Quadrante* was co-edited by the architect Pietro Maria Bardi and the writer Massimo Bontempelli, and—like the rebranded *Casabella*—it was created in the pivotal year of 1933.[317] The purpose of Bardi and Bontempelli's publication was to discuss the adaptation of art and architecture to the Fascist era. In the first edition of *Quadrante,* Bardi tied the publication specifically to the corporatist threads of Fascist politics, arguing that "a revolution has just begun: and we only conceive of permanent revolutions."[318] Yet, beyond these sorts of revolutionary claims, the connection between corporatist economics and modernist design rested on shaky ideological footing. Giuseppe Bottai's dismissal from the Ministry of Corporations in 1932 had evidenced the reality that corporatism in Italy was still very much up for debate. Similarly, the failure of the International Conference of Corporatism that same year proved that even corporatism's most vocal supporters could not agree on how to implement it.[319]

In the face of the state's ambiguous commitment to corporatism, modernist architects relied on general ideas of efficiency, speed, and industrialization to draw connections between their work and the ideals of the state.[320] These principles informed the works of Ciocca and Terragni, and were featured in exhibits of modern Italian architecture. According to Pagano, it was thanks to temporary showcases that modernists could prove the value of their designs. For Pagano, in an era when "the 'horrors' raged and the Milan train station, the Casa Madre del Mutilato, and the first part of the Via Roma in Turin were built, […] Where could the architectonic dreams of modern

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[314] So crucial was 1933 to Italian modernist architecture, architectural historian Francesca Bonfante refers to it as "the "magical" year of Italian rationalism," in her 2003 article "Spatialized corporatism between town and countryside." p. 7, published by EDP Sciences, doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20196302003. Accessed 23 March 2023

[315] Giuseppe Pagano, Giancarlo Palanti, and Eduardo Persico, "Programma 1934," *Casabella*, November 1933, p. 3.

[316] For Pagano's plans as director of the journal, see Giuseppe Pagano, "Programma 1933," *Casabella*, December 1932, pp. 9-10.

[317] *Dedalo* ran from 1920-1933. *La casa bella* ran from 1928-1933, and continues to run as *Casabella*, with a brief name change from 1953-1962. *Quadrante* ran from 1933-1936. For more on Quadrante, see David Rifkind's 2012 publication *The Battle for Modernism: "Quadrante" and the politicization of architectural discourse in fascist Italy*.

[318] P.M. Bardi, *Quadrante*, n. 1, p. 2. Biblioteca nazionale centrale di Roma, digitale.bnc.roma.sbn.it/tecadigitale/giornale/VEA0068137/1933/unico. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[319] Adler, pp. 321-324.

[320] These policies were often at odds with the state's shift toward autarchy, which relied less on industrial efficiency and was supported instead by the country's abundant labor supply. The shift in economic policy pushed Ciocca to reconsider the use of steel in his *case rapide*, making an effort to use locally sourced and lower cost materials. Notably, his 1935 article in *Quadrante* emphasizes the economic efficiency of his designs rather. See David Rifkind, *The Battle for Modernism*, p. 210. Similarly, Terragni post-rationalized the material symbolism of his *Casa del Fascio*, arguing in 1936 that the building's concrete structure was an autarchic and therefore fundamentally Fascist decision. See Rifkind's *The Battle for Modernism*, p. 189.

architects find release? In the expositions!"[321] Indeed, the proliferation of temporary exhibitions in the early 1930s and the promotion of industrial materials and methods made for an obvious partnership because metal structures required relatively quick assembly and disassembly as opposed to the slow-moving construction and demolition processes required for more traditional building types.[322]

In addition to the Milano Triennale, notable exhibitions in 1933 included Bardi's "Exhibition of Italian Architecture of Today" (*La Mostra dell'Architettura Italiana d'Oggi*), an international exhibit dedicated to modern Italian architecture. The exhibition, mounted first in Buenos Aires, Argentina and then in Alexandria, Egypt, touted the fusing of industrial materials and Italian construction through showcases dedicated to the use of manufactured materials like steel.[323] In the same period, the regime hosted the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution (*Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista*) in Rome, which ran from 1932 to 1934. For the exhibit, architects were invited to create "something of today, very modern and audacious," to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Fascism's takeover of the Italian government.[324] Under the direction of the Minister of Popular Culture Dino Alfieri, the designers eschewed the decorative and embellished styles of decades prior, even cladding the Palazzo delle Esposizioni, a nineteenth-century exhibition space, with industrially manufactured metals—steel and copper—to create a modern monument to Fascism.[325] Inside the space, Giuseppe Terragni paid homage to the March on Rome with a three-dimensional photographic collage, now remembered as "one of the masterpieces of propaganda art in Italy between the world wars."[326]

That same year, Terragni designed his own monument to Fascism, the *Casa del fascio* in Como. The building, which would serve as the city's PNF headquarters, was an architectural metaphor for Fascist politics as a "house of glass."[327] Terragni's description of his design highlights a meaningful shift in the debates surrounding Fascist-era architecture. The starting point of Terragni's design was not the formal language drawn from a particular school of thought, but rather, it was the connection between a specific building material and the regime's political platform—a connection he sought to make tangible through the building's construction. Unencumbered by debates about columns and arches, Terragni rooted his design in materiality and proportion. He sought to harmonize the abstract with the concrete, believing that "architectural order is located on a political level and coincides with the new order Fascism has conquered for corporate Italy."[328] In other words, Terragni believed that the politics of Fascism—along with its

[321] Giuseppe Pagano, "Parliamo un po' di esposizioni," prefatory attachment to the journal *Costruzioni-Casabella,* March-April, 1941. Casabella – Archivio – Numeri Storici, casabellaweb.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/CB-159-160.pdf. Accessed 23 March 2023. Also reprinted in David Rifkind, *The Battle for Modernism*, p. 129.
[322] "Costruite in Acciaio", *Casabella,* August/September 1933, pp. 2-3.
[323] David Rifkind, "Pietro Maria Bardi, Quadrante, and the Architecture of Fascist Italy", Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de Sao Paulo, www.davidrifkind.org/fiu/research_files/notes.pdf, p. 10. The exhibit was sponsored by the Directorate General for Italian Citizens Abroad to promote Italian migration and culture abroad. For more on Bardi's exhibition in Argentina, see Paolo Rusconi's chapter "Pietro Maria Bardi's First Journey to South America: A Narrative of Travel, Politics and Architectural Utopia" in *Intellectuals in the Latin Space During the Era of Fascism*, pp. 57–84. For a detailed biography of Bardi, see Francesco Tentori's *P. M. Bardi, con le cronache artistiche de L'Ambrosiano*. Milan: Mazzotta, 1990.
[324] Dennis Doordan, *Building Modern Italy*, quoting the Minister of Popular Culture Dino Alfieri, p. 131.
[325] Doordan, p. 131.
[326] Doordan, p. 134.
[327] Peter Eisenman, *Giuseppe Terragni: Transformations, Decompositions, Critiques,* pp. 262-263.
[328] Giuseppe Terragni quoted in Eisenman, p. 268.

economic policies—were indissolubly linked to modern Italian architecture and industrial materials.[329]

Like Terragni, the Turinese Giuseppe Pagano developed what can only be described as an obsession with the architectural applications of industrial materials. Under Pagano's direction, *Casabella* regularly published articles about metal construction. One such article was an analysis by Giulio Molteni, which attempted to compare the efficiency of metal-framing over other types of construction. In one case, Molteni cited the construction of a gasometer that would have taken thirty workers twenty weeks to complete using traditional construction techniques. Instead, using modern welding techniques the project only required sixteen weeks to complete with the labor of just twenty workers.[330] This was a difference of fewer than 11,200 labor hours assuming a forty-hour workweek, cutting the labor costs nearly in half.[331] In an even more extreme case, Molteni cited a similar welded construction that was estimated to have employed only one third of the workforce that would have normally been required with traditional construction methods.[332] The reduced labor requirements and the rapid pace of construction were undeniable advantages of steel-frame construction, guaranteeing a "very sensible savings [*sensibilissimo risparmio*]" of both time and money.[333]

With a greater emphasis on building technologies under Pagano's direction, *Casabella* was even given a new subheading: "the monthly magazine of architecture and technology," beginning in 1934.[334] The publication's new purpose, according to Pagano, would be to "evaluate architecture in all its forms and in all its expressions: building technique and architectural taste, technology of modern materials, economic sense and examination of costs."[335] This emphasis on economic considerations echoed an earlier sentiment expressed by Pagano upon his appointment as the journal's new director. In his opening letter as the journal's new editor, Pagano declared that his reimagined *Casabella* would be addressed "not only to technicians and specialists, but above all to the educated public […] to the 'elite' of future clients."[336] By orienting the new *Casabella* towards a wider audience that included potential patrons, Pagano cast the technical virtues of industrial materials as a selling point of modern design.

As construction processes became increasingly automated, architects sought to carve out their own roles as irreplaceable designers. Some architects even claimed that their intuitive, emotional, and moral abilities were more essential than ever before as factory efficiency or "Taylorization" became integrated into building design and construction.[337] Giuseppe Pagano argued in his article on "The Aesthetics of Steel Constructions," that architecture was an artform

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[329] In addition to glass, Terragni relied on producers from the aeronautics and automotive industries to supply steel and aluminum with sleek finishes designed to resist corrosion. He combined these industrial metals with marble and concrete to link Italian modernity with Roman antiquity as a symbol of Fascism. See David Rifkind, *The Battle for Modernism*, p. 188.

[330] Giulio Molteni, "La saldatura nelle costruzioni di acciaio", *Casabella*, n. 11, August 1933, p. 76.

[331] The traditional method would have required 24,000 labor hours while the welded method only required 12,800 hours, assuming a 40-hour workweek.

[332] Molteni, p. 76.

[333] Molteni, p. 76.

[334] Chiara Baglione, *Casabella: 1928-2008*, p. 100.

[335] Giuseppe Pagano, Giancarlo Palanti, and Eduardo Persico, "Programma 1934", *Casabella*, Nov. 1933, p. 3.

[336] Giuseppe Pagano, "Programma 1933", *Casabella*. December 1932, p. 10.

[337] See for example, Alberto Sartoris, "Gli elementi della nuova architettura", *La Casa Bella*, August 1929, pp. 9-13; Alberto Sartoris, "Architettura standard", *La Casa Bella*, November 1929, pp. 9-14; Giuseppe Pagano, "Le costruzioni in serie", *Costruzioni-Casabella*, December 1939.

before it was a business.[338] It was, therefore, the architect's role to elevate the quality of a design beyond what could ever be accomplished through simple engineering. In his words, "[t]he art of the engineer is a science, the science of the architect is an art."[339] But even as architects underscored their roles as unique artistic contributors, architectural debates continued to acknowledge the interests of patrons. Pagano's journal, for example, highlighted the artistic advantages of steel-frame construction, while also pointing out the "economy of time" and "economy of space" that steel afforded.[340]

The year in which the Torre Littoria was constructed in Turin mapped onto this brief window of modernist victories between 1932 and 1934. The moment marked a turning point in the regime's architectural preferences, captured most precisely in the year of 1933—the year in which the groundbreaking steel-frame displays were constructed at the Milano Triennale V, as well as the year of modernist triumphs in two major architectural competitions: first for the design of the Florence train station, and then for the town planning project of Sabaudia.[341] On the heels of these commissions, Mussolini declared his support for modernism, exclaiming: "I want to state unequivocally that I am for modern architecture, for an architecture of our time."[342] Giuseppe Pagano even lauded Mussolini for "rescuing" modern architecture.[343] And so, in the midst of this frenzied enthusiasm for industrial efficiency and sleek aesthetics, Turin's baroque-inspired renovation of Via Roma took a sharp aesthetic turn: it was decided that atop the *falso storico* facades of Turin's new street, a modernist skyscraper would be erected as a symbol of the regime.

Turin's 'Torre Littoria'

The renovation of the first section of Via Roma was characterized by a distinctive atmosphere of aesthetic incoherence. While the façades along Via Roma were regulated by the stylistic restrictions detailed in the *piano regolatore,* the architects and their patrons took greater aesthetic liberties wherever they could. In the case of the San Vincenzo block, for example, the rear façade that ran along Via Viotti was a radical stylistic departure from the Piedmontese baroque aesthetic on the building's front. The back façade was composed of horizontal ribbons of alternating brick and concrete that wrapped across the entire surface and around the building's curved edges (fig. 4).[344] While the two opposing styles were carefully stitched together on the south side of the building along via Antonio Bertola, the stark contrast between 1930s modernism and the *falso storico* baroque was impossible to overlook.[345] According to *La Stampa*, it was thanks

[338] As Pagano described it, "The sensitivity of the pioneers [of modern architecture] discovers the beauty of bare engineering, defends it because in it they perceive the emotion, of exactitude and of the negation of emphasis, they draw out [this emotion] every time the work of pure engineering contains, by chance and by intuition, something higher than a consequence of calculation." Giuseppe Pagano, "L'estetica delle costruzioni in acciaio", *Casabella*, August/September 1933, pp. 66-69.

[339] Giuseppe Pagano, "L'estetica delle costruzioni in acciaio", *Casabella*, August/September 1933, pp. 66-69.

[340] A list in *Casabella* described the advantages of steel construction, including the declaration that 90% of the cost of materials could be recouped through recycling in the case of demolition. "Costruite in Acciaio", *Casabella,* August/September 1933, pp. 2-3.

[341] The Florence commission was granted to Gruppo Toscano led by Giovanni Michelucci. The Sabaudia commission was granted to Cancellotti, Montuori, Piccinato, and Scalpelli.

[342] Benito Mussolini, meeting transcript, "Non aver paura di avere coraggio,"10 June 1934. Quoted from *The Battle for Modernism* by David Rifkind, p. 131.

[343] Giuseppe Pagano, "Mussolini salva l'architettura italiana", *Casabella*, June 1934, pp. 2-3.

[344] Gian Luca Giani, *L'incanto della Torre*, p. 147.

[345] The building was developed by the *Società Anonima Isolato San Vincenzo* and designed by architects Annibale Rigotti and Ilario Sormano with engineering by Ernesto Bogio.

Fig. 4. The rear facades along Via Viotti the San Vincenzo and Sant'Emanuele blocks. Image taken by the author.

to the unanticipated stylistic shift that the building had "acquired considerable and even unexpected importance. In some respects, indeed, it can be said that the curiosity of the public is pinned on Via Viotti with greater intensity than on Via Roma."[346]

The contrasting architectural styles on the front and back facades of the block suggested that Via Roma's developers were keen to adopt a modern aesthetic whenever possible.[347] While arguing in support of their style in the pages of *Casabella*, modernist architects had insisted that industrial construction and sleek aesthetics brought greater economic advantages than traditional styles. It appears that these arguments in favor of maximizing usable space and speeding up construction times had successfully swayed developers, who were more interested in exploiting the land for maximum value than upholding a particular visual philosophy. The mix of styles on the San Vincenzo block suggested that the investors' economic priorities took precedence over abstract architectural principles. Because, rather than developing an aesthetically unified block, the developers opted for profitability over artistic integrity. They built in the baroque style where it was mandated—along Via Roma—and on every other side of their project's site, they opted to forgo stylistic cohesion in favor of building higher and appearing newer.[348] The result dazzled the public and allowed for four more floors to be constructed on the building's back end, exceeding the height restrictions that had limited the front side of the block.[349]

A similar operation was carried out on the Sant'Emanuele block with the construction of the Torre Littoria. The building was designed by the architect Armando Melis de Villa and the engineer Giovanni Bernocco and rapidly constructed between 1933 and 1934. Like the adjacent San Vincenzo block, the tower on Sant'Emanuele was created with two distinct sections. At the base was a nine-story lower portion bounded by Via Roma, Via Viotti, and Piazza Castello. This section was designed in a baroque style indistinguishable from its surroundings. It conformed with the city's regulatory plan that required arcaded sidewalks and a *settecento*-inspired aesthetic. Rising out of the *falso storico* lower portion was a modern disruption—a narrow nineteen-story structure that towered above the building's ground-floor footprint. With curving edges on the Via Viotti façade, and a steel frame composition that rose dramatically eighty-seven meters above the street level, the upper portion of the building was more aligned with international trends of modernist expressionism than with the baroque character of Via Roma.[350]

The modernist style of the new building was accentuated by innovative details, such as luminous balconies constructed from sturdy glass brick that wrapped around the tower's northeastern edge. "The corner of brightness [*lo spigolo della luminosità*]," as the press called it, faced the royal castle—an orientation that further emphasized the building's modernity in contrast

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[346] "Una visione panoramica di Via Viotti", *La Stampa*, 27 September 1932, p. 6. www.archiviolastampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,6/articleid,1147_01_1932_0230_0006_24897781/. Accessed 23 March 2023

[347] Luciano Re e Giovanni Sessa, "La formazione e l'uso di Via Roma nuova a Torino", in *Torino tra le due guerre*, 1978, p. 164 citing R. Gabetti-C. Olmo, *Cultura edilizia e professione dell'architetto: Torino anni '20-'30*, in *Torino 1920-1936, Società e cultura tra sviluppo industriale e capitalismo*, Torino, Edizioni Progetto, 1976, p. 24.

[348] "Come sarà la torre-grattacielo", *La Stampa*, 6 September 1932, p. 6, www.archiviolastampa.it. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[349] Unlike the Via Roma side, which was restricted to a four-story vertical limit, the other sides of the building were permitted several additional stories ("*più numerosi piani*") bringing the tower's approved height in 1932 to 54 meters for the habitable portion of the building and up to 65 meters with the bell tower. These restrictions would later be loosened to bring the tower's height up to 87 meters. See "Come sarà la torre-grattacielo", *La Stampa*, 6 September 1932, p. 6, www.archiviolastampa.it. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[350] "Torre, detta Littoria", Museo Torino, www.museotorino.it/view/s/33a14d5c4e3c447096c6d1c5e67378f4. Accessed 23 March 2023.

to the traditional architecture of the former royal headquarters.[351] The incorporation of balconies was a traditional decision that linked the residences of the Torre Littoria to prototypical Italian apartment buildings. However, Melis designed the balconies with floors and balusters to be made entirely of transparent glass bricks that could be illuminated at night (fig. 5). The innovative application of glass as flooring not only highlighted the modern engineering required for the design, but also demonstrated the strength of industrial materials like steel and glass, defying the structural conventions of prior eras (fig. 6). What's more, the illumination of the balconies made electricity a central feature of the design, signaling a modern age of energy and electricity, pushing the design one step closer towards the image of a "great luminous artery" that the architects of MIAR had imagined for Via Roma two years earlier.[352]

The tower's developer, the Società Reale Mutua, had already partnered with Armando Melis de Villa on a 1928 project for Turin's *Esposizione di architettura e arti decorative* (Exhibition of Architecture and Decorative Arts) to create a pavilion for the company.[353] Melis was also commissioned to design six other buildings for the exhibition including a pavilion for the Fascist syndicates, which served as a monument to the regime's commitment to the corporative state.[354] The Società Reale Mutua was so satisfied with Melis' work that the company engaged him in 1931 to redesign its headquarters in Turin's Via Corte d'Appello.[355] Thanks in part to Reale Mutua's patronage, Melis gained commissions throughout Turin in the interwar period, establishing him as one of the city's most prominent Fascist-era architects.[356] In 1932, Melis co-founded the journal *Urbanistica* with his mentor and collaborator Pietro Betta, which he directed from late 1932 through 1945.[357] The following year he went on to direct the technical architectural journal *L'Architettura Italiana*, a position he held until 1941.[358]

In his publications, Melis advocated for rationalist principles as the foundation of architectural design. He teamed up with fellow Turinese rationalist Giuseppe Pagano to organize a circle of architects known as the *Gruppo Architetti Novatori Torinesi* (Group of Turinese Architect-Innovators, GANT). The group included Melis' mentor Pietro Betta, as well as Domenico Morelli, Ettore Pittini, Paolo Perona, Mario Dezzutti, Mario Passanti, Arturo Midana and Gino Levi Montalcini.[359] The architects of GANT wanted to bring modern and functional techniques to Italian architecture, ideals they showcased at the 1928 Exhibition of Architecture

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[351] "Come sarà la torre-grattacielo", *La Stampa*, 6 September 1932, p. 6, www.archiviolastampa.it. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[352] Giuseppe Pagano, *La Via Roma di Torino - progetto M.I.A.R.*, 1931, p. 15. Digital edition hosted by Museo Torino, www.museotorino.it/resources/pdf/books/154/files/assets/common/downloads/publication.pdf. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[353] The pavilion was called "Mutualità e Previdenza".

[354] "Esposizione di Architettura e Arti Decorative di Torino del 1928: padiglione dei Sindacati Fascisti", *Laboratorio di Storia e Beni Culturali - DIST*, Politecnico di Torino, collezionistoriche.polito.it/oggetti/?id=774. Accessed 23 March 2023

[355] "La sede della Società Reale Mutua di Assicurazioni, Torino", *Laboratorio di Storia e Beni Culturali - DIST*, Politecnico di Torino, collezionistoriche.polito.it/oggetti/?id=1360. Accessed 23 March 2023

[356] Melis maintained his prominence even after the fall of the regime. He began lecturing at the Politecnico di Torino during the Fascist era, and he continued both his independent architectural practice and instruction at the Politecnico through the postwar years.

[357] Melis took over the direction of *Urbanistica* following Betta's death in September 1932.

[358] "Melis de Villa Armando", *Laboratorio di Storia e Beni culturali – DIST*, Politecnico di Torino, collezionistoriche.polito.it/oggetti/?id=345. Accessed 23 March 2023

[359] GANT was just one among many initiatives undertaken by Giuseppe Pagano to garner support for modernist architecture in Italy. He also formed the Gruppo di Architetti Moderni Giuseppe Pagano and was a member of the Turinese branch of MIAR.

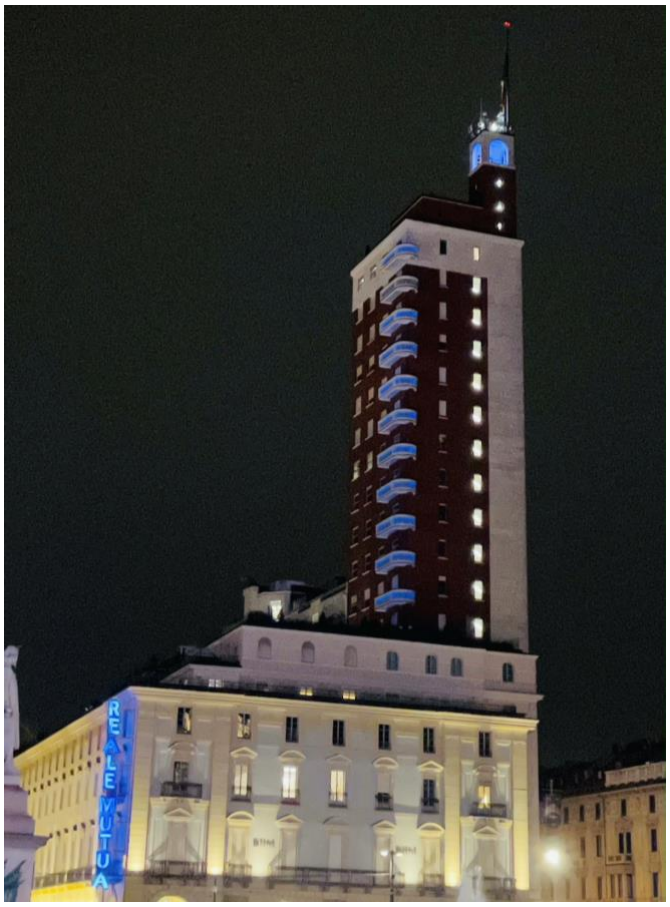

Fig. 5. The Torre Littoria at night with glass balconies illuminated in blue. Image taken by the author.

Fig. 6. “Torino - Torre Littoria” by Fred Romero. Licensed under CC BY 2.0. www.flickr.com/photos/129231073@N06/27352396029

and Decorative Arts with the *Casa degli architetti* ("Architects' house"), a pavilion designed collectively by the members of GANT.[360] Yet, despite the clarity and conviction with which they approached the modern design of the *Casa degli architetti*, the architects of GANT found themselves putting a variety of styles into practice. Melis' other commissions for the 1928 Exhibition, for example, represent an aesthetic sampling, ranging from vernacular to international modernism.[361]

Melis' earliest designs for the Torre Littoria were more aligned with the rest of the baroque-inspired façades along Via Roma. The first iterations included setbacks stacked symmetrically over the building's wide base, similar to conventional concrete structures that relied on load-bearing walls to support its vertical mass.[362] Adhering to the conventions of symmetry and balance mandated for the Via Roma façade, Melis' original proposals for the block incorporated classical and baroque ornamentation throughout.[363] One of his most classical proposals included a clock tower centered above the Via Viotti entrance—a structure that would later be transformed into a bell tower in the final design. In his revised proposals, the architect took advantage of the steel-frame construction to move away from the balanced baroque aesthetic, shifting the tower's mass towards the northeastern edge of the block to create an asymmetry that emphasized the vertical thrust of the building. Instead of attaching columns and cornices to the façade, he stripped the structure of almost all ornamentation, and clad the building in klinker brick.[364] The red klinker cladding visually linked the building to the adjacent Palazzo Madama, a baroque palace attached to an ancient Roman gate and a medieval castle, whose exposed brick towers are still visible along the rear façade (fig. 7).[365]

Melis' decision to deviate from the *settecentesco* style of the Via Roma side of the block was praised in the Turinese daily paper *La Stampa*.[366] For, while the first section of the new road took its stylistic cues from the baroque Piazza San Carlo, the Sant'Emanuele block was located at the opposite side of the new road and therefore required an entirely different approach, at least according to a 1932 article in *La Stampa*. The journalist argued that since the Sant'Emanuele site was "oriented towards the old, Roman and Medieval city, […] in this part of Turin of yesteryear, there is an ideal continuity through the stones, bricks and, alas! [*ahime!*] the concrete of the streets and squares. It is the austere area, guardian of the memories of the past, and nothing can be said to

[360] See the architect Pietro Betta's article, "Come è stata ideata la 'Casa degli Architetti' alla Esposizione di Torino", in the September 1928 issue of the journal *Domus*, pp. 25-45.

[361] See for instance, Melis' design for the rustic Padiglione Sardo compared to his sleek design for the Padiglione dei Fotografi available through the Politecnico di Torino, collezioni archivistiche: "Esposizione di Architettura e Arti Decorative di Torino del 1928: Padiglione Sardo" collezionistoriche.polito.it/oggetti/?id=810; "Esposizione di Architettura e Arti Decorative di Torino del 1928: Padiglione dei Fotografi," collezionistoriche.polito.it/oggetti/?id=813.

[362] "Prima proposta per la torre Littoria", Fondo Melis de Villa 1925-1961, Politecnico di Torino, e760. Reprinted in Sandra Poletto, "Armando Melis e la cultura urbanistica della prima metà del Novecento", *L'Architettura dell' "altra" modernità*, p. 169; Gian Luca Giani, *L'incanto della Torre*, p. 192.

[363] Caterina Franchini, "L'insediamento del terziario: rinnovamento urbano e continuità della tradizione", in *L'architettura dell'"altra" modernità*, 2010, pp. 205-211.

[364] Klinker was a newer, industrialized version of brick, marking it as a modern and therefore distinct from the material found in the Palazzo Madama structure.

[365] For a comprehensive history of the Roman origins and medieval and baroque afterlives of the Palazzo Madama, see Augusto Tellucini, *Il Palazzo Madama di Torino*, 1928. Digital PDF hosted by Museo Torino www.museotorino.it/view/s/4388de7672b24fb7aef64d607cad0ecb?highlight=. Accessed 23 March 2023

[366] "Per la ricostruzione del secondo tratto di Via Roma", *La Stampa*, 2 December 1932, p. 6, www.archiviolastampa.it. Accessed 23 March 2023

the contrary."[367] This argument gave the architect license to break away from the stylistic constraints outlined in the original contract, which had also limited the profitability of the development of the first section. At the same time though, the architect could justify the new, more profitable design by arguing that it was equally rooted in the city's history.

This approach imitated a strategy first suggested in MIAR's proposal for the street, which argued that while "the innovations of modern technology can allow for a more intensive and rational exploitation [*sfruttamento*] of the areas [...] the materials used must guarantee the aesthetics and durability necessary for the central street; the portions of the walls below the first floor must be covered with granite, marble or stone."[368] Unlike MIAR, Melis had opted for the smooth, industrially manufactured klinker brick over natural stone, reinterpreting the historic surroundings for the modern age. While the differences between MIAR's proposal and Melis' design are stark, both called for the incorporation of traditional materials to signal national heritage and historic continuity while also pushing for a modern *sfruttamento* of the site. With profit in mind, MIAR had envisioned not one, but two skyscrapers on either side of Via Roma, demarcating the entrance to Piazza Castello. The rationalist designers had proposed a "monumental entrance" for the street, framed by two identical rounded towers—each forty-four meters in height—that flanked the edges of Via Roma. [369] As MIAR saw it, the technology of skyscraper construction would be essential to the developer, who sought the most rational development of the area in order to maximize returns.

Despite the economic possibilities of the gateway towers proposed in MIAR's 1931 design, the piecemeal nature of the project's financing made these twin towers impossible.[370] Still, the allure of MIAR's twin skyscraper proposals undoubtedly added to the appeal of the single tower approved for construction on the new Via Roma.[371] The profitability of the block was essential to the Società Reale Mutua, which had agreed to develop the area with the expectation that it would receive a hefty return on the company's investment. Early into the project, however, with the demolition of the original block nearly completed, the city requested a last-minute modification to the plans. [372] After realizing that the area stood at the intersection of several important roadways, city officials demanded that a traffic island be installed at the base of the tower. The project nearly came to a halt when developers realized that this would cut into the buildable space of the site, and consequently into their profits, resulting in "intolerable economic damage" for the developer. [373] Reale Mutua was prepared to back out of the agreement, but after extensive negotiations with both the city and the Superintendent of Medieval and Modern Art Gioacchino Mancini, Reale Mutua

[367] "Per la ricostruzione del secondo tratto di Via Roma," *La Stampa*, 2 December 1932, p. 6, www.archiviolastampa.it. Accessed 23 March 2023

[368] Giuseppe Pagano, *La Via Roma di Torino - progetto M.I.A.R.*, 1931, p. 15. Digital edition hosted by Museo Torino, www.museotorino.it/resources/pdf/books/154/files/assets/common/downloads/publication.pdf. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[369] Giuseppe Pagano, *La Via Roma di Torino - progetto M.I.A.R.*, 1931, p. 15. Digital edition hosted *by Museo Torino*. www.museotorino.it/resources/pdf/books/154/files/assets/common/downloads/publication.pdf. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[370] Because the first section was not master-planned, each developer was free to build any design that conformed to the standards outlined at the project's onset.

[371] Sandra Poletto, "Armando Melis e la cultura urbanistica della prima metà del Novecento" in *L'architettura dell'"altra" moderna*, p. 171.

[372] Gian Luca Giani, *L'incanto della Torre*, p. 120.

[373] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Isolato Sant'Emanuele, cart. 4, fasc. 4, n°123. Letter from Giuseppe Brezzi, head of the Società Reale Mutua to Podestà Paolo Thaon di Revel, 10 August 1933.

agreed to cede the area in question to the city for public use.[374] In exchange, the city would allow the developers to build the tower two floors higher than originally permitted. This would allow the company to expand the square footage of its development while also providing the city with the extra street space that it had requested.[375]

As the tower grew in height, the exaggerated proportions offered unprecedented advantages. One major benefit of the tower's verticality was that the narrow shape of the future apartment building meant that each residential unit could occupy an entire floor. This allowed for windows and ventilation on every side of each residential unit, which according to the press, would create "the best conditions for light and hygiene."[376] From this perspective, the building aligned neatly with the city's stated goals of *risanamento*—that is, to modernize and "clean up" the old Via Roma. Whether intentional or not, the tower's extreme dimensions also transformed the building into a literal representation of the PNF because the vertical proportions gave the Torre Littoria the appearance of a *fascio littorio* (fig. 8). Within the bell tower, the word "*presente*" was inscribed numerous times along the bell's rim, recalling Adalberto Libera and Antonio Valente's installation in 1932 at the *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista*.[377] A "little tower" (*torretta*) was added to the top of the Turinese skyscraper, giving the building an even more imposing stature with an extra twelve meters in its "formidable leap towards the sky."[378] A flagpole was attached above the bell tower adding another ten meters above this. The flagpole and bell tower were bundled on one side of the building, adding to the imagery of the *fascio*.[379] The resulting building was an obvious symbol of the Fascist Party that loomed over the Piazza Castello, directly facing the former royal headquarters.[380] And if the building's form alone failed to communicate the image of the Fascist Party, an ornamental *fascio* littorio was affixed to the exterior of the bell tower and oriented in the direction of the castle.[381]

More powerful than these overt references to the PNF, however, was the fact that the Torre Littoria was a technological achievement for the Italian nation. The building was Turin's first steel-

[374] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Isolato Sant'Emanuele, cart. 4, fasc. 4, n°127. Letter from the Vice Podestà Euclide Silvestri to the Superintendent of Medieval and Modern Art, 18 October 1933. A note attached to this letter suggests that several in-person meetings took place between Reale Mutua and the Vice Podestà over the summer and fall of 1933.

[375] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Isolato Sant'Emanuele, cart. 4, fasc. 4. Letter from the Superintendent of Medieval and Modern Art Giuseppe Mancini to the Podestà, 3 February 1934.

[376] "La Torre di Via Viotti", *La Stampa*, 29 June 1933, p. 8, www.archiviolastampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,8/articleid,1143_01_1933_0153_0008_24902242/. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[377] Gian Luca Giani, *L'incanto della Torre*, p. 131; Libera and Valente's exhibit honoring the tenth anniversary of the March on Rome was a haunting memorial to the fallen heroes of Fascism. Their *sacrario* was installed in a circular room with the word "*presente*" inscribed continuously around the perimeter of space. Seemingly inspired by the exhibit, the bell of the Torre Littoria commemorated Fascist fighters with the same military roll call evoked in Libera and Valente's shrine See Denis P. Doordan, *Building Modern Italy*, p. 132.

[378] "La torre-grattacielo sale ancora: le opere che saranno inaugurate il 28 ottobre", *La Stampa*, 25 October 1933, p. 6, www.archiviolastampa.it. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[379] Such literal architectural references were not unprecedented for the regime: Adalberto Libera and Mario De Renzo had designed four metal *fasci* that for the façade of the 1932 *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista*.

[380] Luciano Re and Giovanni Sessa, *Torino Via Roma*, p. 51.

[381] The *fascio* ornament, along with the bell housed in the Torre Littoria's bell tower both disappeared in the wake of the Fascist liberation. See Giani, *L'incanto della Torre*, p. 131.

Fig. 7. Mixed architectural periods of Palazzo Madama. Image taken by the author.

Fig. 8. “Torre Littoria @ Tower observatory @ Cattedrale di San Giovanni Battista @ Turin” by Guilhem Vellut. Licensed under CC BY 2.0. www.flickr.com/photos/22539273@N00/49193159056

frame tower and Italy's tallest habitable structure.[382] As such, it represented not just "the Via Roma of tomorrow," but also a new era of technologically advanced construction for the entire nation.[383] This fact set the Torre Littoria apart from other contemporary Italian "skyscrapers" like the Torrione INA (1932) in Brescia and the Torre Piacentini (1940) in Genoa, both of which were engineered with the more familiar and less complex technology of reinforced concrete.[384] The Turinese Officine Savigliano's experience with cutting edge technology made the firm the obvious choice to carry out the construction of the country's first permanent steel skyscraper. Yet despite Savigliano's position at the forefront of Italian construction technology, in relation to other countries, Italy on the whole was a latecomer to the world of skyscrapers—a short-falling that the press worked tirelessly to overcome.

Comparisons between the Italian *torre* and the American skyscraper abounded as the press argued for the tower as a symbol of Italian exceptionalism. One article in *La Stampa* claimed that the so-called "American skyscraper" was, in fact, just an iteration of the Italian tower.[385] The insistence on referring to the building as a "tower" rather than as an Americanized "skyscraper" signaled the regime's efforts to mark its achievements in terms Italian heritage. A 1932 article in *La Stampa* pressed this point, explaining that the Torre Littoria "will not be a 'skyscraper' in the common sense of the word. We will always be in our house, we will not go to ask foreigners for anything on loan. It will be something, modern *yes*, but it will be Italian."[386] While the article conceded that citizens might be confused by the terminology because Italian towers were not traditionally used as apartment buildings, it emphasized that the new construction at the end of Via Roma "will be a tower—an Italian tower," not to be mistaken for a New-York-style skyscraper.[387] The article also underscored the architects' intentions, explaining that even with the steel frame, the building's brick cladding brought it "closer to the Italian tower, moving away from the American skyscrapers. This is precisely what the designers were aiming for."[388]

A year later, *La Stampa* returned to the argument, explaining that while the scale was much greater than a traditional Italian tower, the dimensions of the structure were intended to align with Italian traditions.[389] The paper emphasized yet again that while the building was constructed from a steel frame "like a skyscraper," it should not be confused with the American building style: "[t]he majestic pinnacle construction of Via Viotti is commonly called a 'skyscraper.' But, as we

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[382] "La Via Roma di domani: il più alto grattacielo d'Italia", *La Stampa*, 21 August 1932, p. 8, www.archiviolastampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,8/articleid,1146_01_1932_0199_0008_24898358/. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[383] "La Via Roma di domani: il più alto grattacielo d'Italia".

[384] For the Torrione INA see "Il Nuovo Centro di Brescia" in *Rassegna di Architettura*, November 1932, n. 11, pp. 453-457. See also "Torrione INA" in Regione Lombardia, *Lombardia Beni Culturali*, www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/architetture/schede/BS400-00610/. Accessed 23 March 2023. For the Torre Piacentini see Aristotle Kallis, "Futures Made Present: Architecture, Monument, and the Battle for the 'Third Way' in Fascist Italy." *Fascism*, 7.1, 2018, pp. 45-79.

[385] "La torre di Via Viotti", *La Stampa*, 29 June 1933, p. 8, www.archiviolastampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,8/articleid,1143_01_1933_0153_0008_24902242/. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[386] "Come sarà la torre-grattacielo", *La Stampa*, 6 September 1932, p. 6, www.archiviolastampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,6/articleid,1147_01_1932_0212_0006_24394104/anews,true/. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[387] "Come sarà la torre-grattacielo".

[388] "La torre di Via Viotti".

[389] The original dimensions (before additional structures were added to raise the building's height) were approximately sixty-five meters high with a nearly square base of fourteen meters by thirteen meters. See "Come sarà la torre-grattacielo", *La Stampa*, 6 September 1932, p. 6, www.archiviolastampa.it. Accessed 23 March 2023.

previously pointed out and as the designers intended, the denomination is wrong and it should be replaced with that of 'tower.'"[390] What's more, the paper argued that even American skyscrapers were only made possible thanks to Italian labor. In fact, the paper suggested that American skyscrapers were made by Italians who had migrated to the United States, claiming—rather accurately—that "most of these audacious American workers are none other than Italians of the finest origins [*della più bell'acqua*]. Our compatriots are highly sought after there by the [American] construction companies of skyscrapers."[391] Furthermore, the paper suggested that the engineers in New York had benefitted from more advantageous soil conditions that required less complex engineering, thereby allowing them to build taller buildings with less effort than was required in Turin.[392]

The Spectacle of Construction

As the nation's first habitable steel-frame building, Turin's Torre Littoria was touted as an architectural achievement made possible only by unifying Italy's traditional building typologies with its modern approach to labor. The design was praised for its bold application of industrial materials, for its sleek modern aesthetic, and above all, for the speed and drama of the construction. The newest addition to the Turinese skyline captivated residents as the building's metal frame grew above Piazza Castello over the course of 1933. A *La Stampa* article published that summer described the excitement of city dwellers as they watched the building rise above its surroundings: "It could be seen growing visibly, and it never stopped. The iron giant seemed to want to reach the clouds. To see the top, you had to raise your nose more and more, always risking a stiff neck. The onlookers increased every day, the show became more and more exciting, and the audience of Via Viotti became more and more crowded."[393] But it was not simply the size or the modern aesthetic that onlookers admired. For many, the construction process itself was the most remarkable feature of the Torre Littoria. Because, as the same *La Stampa* article went on to explain, the rapid construction of the tower was a demonstration of "[the building's] industriousness, its boldness of concept."[394] Together, these features gave the building a distinctive role in Turin, serving "as an accent of sincere and lively modernity over the expanse of the city, and in its tall stature visible from every point."[395] Thus, even in its earliest stages of construction, the skeletal frame of the tower served as a testament to the productive capacity of labor under the Fascist regime.

As the tower grew over the city, the possibilities of Italian labor under a modern system of management seemed limitless. The metal framework of the tower built atop the *settecentesco*-style

[390] "La torre di Via Viotti".

[391] Quotation translated from "La torre di Via Viotti", *La Stampa*, 29 June 1933, p. 8, www.archiviolastampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,8/articleid,1143_01_1933_0153_0008_24902242/. Accessed 23 March 2023. The newspaper's assertion about Italian workers in American skyscraper construction was not unfounded. Italian immigrants in the United States were valued for their expertise in masonry, carpentry, and tilework, among other specialties in building construction. In the first decades of the 1900s, Italian workers made up the vast majority of the workforce of New York's Department of Public Works. See "The Italians of New York: Five Centuries of Struggle and Achievement." *The Italian Voice = La Voce Italiana*, vol. 68, no. 9, 1999.

[392] "La torre di Via Viotti", *La Stampa*, 29 June 1933, p. 8.

[393] Ibid.

[394] Ibid.

[395] Ibid.

base was erected "almost miraculously" in approximately ninety days.[396] The emphasis that the Fascist regime placed on the speed of its architectural constructions helped to cultivate an image of power and efficiency.[397] In historian David Rifkind's assessment, the rapidity with which steel-framed buildings could be completed took on clear political importance."[398] In the case of the Torre Littoria, the almost mythical speed and proportions of the tower evoked an emotional sense of Italian greatness. But the spectacle of men at work was equally important to Fascism's politics of aesthetics. The press described workers as having always possessed a natural capacity for superhuman effort. The builders of the Torre Littoria were described as "intelligent workers […] in brief, masters."[399] The competence and courage of the construction workers dazzled onlookers, who would "collapse in admiration not only in front of the size and height of the gigantic steel skeleton, but also, and perhaps even more, in front of the acrobatics that the workers—similar to squirrels—perform on those aerial scaffolding. It seems that they have never done anything other than erect iron frames for very high buildings."[400]

By showing citizens exactly what Italian labor could accomplish, the spectacle of construction served as an inspiring display of the collective duty to work in support of the state's ambitions. Each day's construction was described as further proof of the valor and virtue of the Italian worker. According to the press, onlookers could proudly declare: "we too have 'Vespa men,' the 'men who do not fear vertigo' whose daring exploits are published in magazines, whose daring feats the magazines publish weaving the colossal iron cages of American skyscrapers."[401] It was only now, under the necessary circumstances of the regime, that Italian workers were able to unleash their talents.[402] From this perspective, the spectacle of the Torre Littoria's construction drew a moral link to the basic duties outlined in Gabriele D'Annunzio's *Carta del Carnaro*, a founding document of the corporatist movement, which argued that "only those who are assiduous producers and assiduous creators who add to the wealth and power of the State are full citizens."[403]

The extraordinary feat of the Torre Littoria's construction supported the corporatist myth that international supremacy could be attained through individual contributions of labor. As one *La Stampa* article put it, "[the Torre Littoria] is almost a reminder that the duty of today's Turinese and of today's Italian is precisely to elevate himself in his work—or even better, in the faith of his work, which will bring new prosperity and new glory to our country."[404] International acclaim was possible for Italy, the article suggested, but it would require the collaboration of the working class. The regime's affinity for this form of transcendent messaging has been identified in Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi's work as "Fascist spectacle."[405] For Falasca-Zamponi, "Fascism was one of the first movements to take advantage of aesthetics' radical political impulse while also simplifying

[396] Quote from "La torre di Via Viotti", *La Stampa*, 29 June 1933, p. 8, www.archiviolastampa.it. Accessed 23 March 2023. For the speed of construction see Giulio Molteni, "La saldatura nelle costruzioni di acciaio", *Casabella*, n. 11, August 1933, p. 76.
[397] In addition to the speed of construction of the various steel-frame pavilions discussed above, the regime also touted the 253-day timeline for the construction of Sabaudia. See David Rifkind, *The Battle for Modernism*, p. 122.
[398] David Rifkind, *The Battle for Modernism*, p. 122.
[399] "La torre di Via Viotti", *La Stampa*, 29 June 1933, p. 8, www.archiviolastampa.it. Accessed 23 March 2023.
[400] Ibid.
[401] Ibid.
[402] Ibid.
[403] Gabriele D'Annunzio, *La Carta del Carnaro*, 1920, art. xviii. Università di Torino: Dipartimento di Scienze Giuridiche, http://www.dircost.unito.it/cs/pdf/19200000_Carnaro_DAnnunzio_ita.pdf. Accessed 23 March 2023.
[404] "La torre di Via Viotti", *La Stampa*, 29 June 1933, p. 8, www.archiviolastampa.it. Accessed 23 March 2023.
[405] Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy*. Routledge, 1997.

its moral reach."[406] That is, rather than defining and enforcing a nuanced code of ethics, Fascism sought to shape the will of the public by inspiring mass participation in a broad, if oversimplified, political vision.[407] The "miraculous" construction of the Torre Littoria, for example, served as a reminder of the Fascist citizen's responsibility to contribute his labor for the good of the state. [408]

The dazzling sight of construction workers upheld the regime's labor policies, which compelled the working classes to do more in exchange for less. The partial implementation of corporatism had granted powerful employers the freedom to set prices and cut wages without suffering the repercussions of an uncooperative labor force. Conversely, while the regime was inclined to bend in favor of the nation's strongest economic tycoons, it was also willing to sacrifice workers' wellbeing in an effort to salvage the stagnating corporatist system. In order to make these conditions palatable to the masses, the regime emphasized the duty to work in service of the nation. As Philip Morgan puts it, "[t]he intrinsically Fascist character of the regime's economic crisis management was in the continued coercion of labour through the PNF and syndicates."[409] Recruiting Italian workers to make sacrifices for the greater good of the nation was, in fact, one of the few consistent strategies in the government's efforts to boost the economy.

On the tenth anniversary of Mussolini's rule, the government expanded its base by opening eligibility for party enrollment to every citizen—a major shift in the policies of prior years that had originally required party members to be established as 'first-hour' Fascists or to graduate from one of the regime's youth programs.[410] In the same year, enrollment in the PNF became a requirement for government employment, which created an incentive for party membership that was economic rather than political.[411] The PNF benefitted financially from this new arrangement, as increased membership brought in larger funds from party dues.[412] More importantly, though, the shift advanced the regime's totalitarian ambitions by drawing a formal link between Fascism and a broadened base of Italian citizens. With more Italians enlisted as official participants in Fascism, the regime could exercise greater controls by expanding both the benefits and demands of membership.[413] With membership now opened to all Italians, the movement had clearly evolved from the militant vigilantism of its earliest days. It was now a legitimate political administration synonymous with the Italian State.

For the first time, it became necessary for the regime to define its vision for Fascism in Italy. Together with the political philosopher Giovanni Gentile, Mussolini penned *The Doctrine of Fascism*, the most substantial formal declaration of the principles of Italian Fascism. Published in 1932, the document outlined the terms for what the authors deemed "the most ethical, the most coherent, the truest," form of governance.[414] The *Doctrine* offered a description of an authoritarian

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[406] Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, "Politics of Aesthetics", in *Political Aesthetics: Culture, Critique and the Everyday*, edited by Arundhati Virmani, Routledge, 2015, p. 30.
[407] Ibid., p. 37.
[408] Quote from "La torre di Via Viotti", *La Stampa*, 29 June 1933, p. 8, www.archiviolastampa.it. Accessed 23 March 2023. For the speed of construction see Giulio Molteni, "La saldatura nelle costruzioni di acciaio", *Casabella*, n. 11, August 1933, p. 76.
[409] Philip Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, p. 159.
[410] Alberto Aquarone, *L'organizzazione dello stato totalitario* p. 184.
[411] Philip Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, p. 129.
[412] Philip Morgan, "'The Trash Who Are Obstacles in Our Way': The Italian Fascist Party at the Point of Totalitarian Lift Off, 1930—31," *The English Historical Review*, vol. 127, no. 525, 2012, p. 341.
[413] In Philip Morgan's assessment, the expanded PNF was one tactic used to achieve the regime's totalitarian ambitions. As he puts it, "Greater demands could be made of someone who was inside rather than outside the party." See *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, p. 129.
[414] Partito nazionale fascista (PNF), *La dottrina del fascismo*. La Libreria dello stato, 1936, pp. 17-18.

state with a "corporative system in which divergent interests are coordinated and harmonized in the unity of the State."[415] The Fascist State was "unique" in its approach to government, it was imagined as "a State based on millions of individuals who recognize its authority, feel its action, and are ready to serve its ends."[416] It claimed to solve the dual crises of economics and ethics not simply by compelling its citizens to work, but by helping them to understand the privilege of service to the state, even for those at the bottom of the socio-economic pyramid: "We wish the working classes to accustom themselves to the responsibilities of management so that they may realize that it is no easy matter to run a business."[417] It was true that the economic conditions in the 1930s had resulted in difficulties for many businesses and workers alike. In general though, big businesses benefitted significantly from the regime's policies and from technological advances in machinery and automation, while workers suffered.

In spite of these facts, government officials and business owners clung to the myth that private gains would result in public benefits. In December of 1932, the Società Reale Mutua added a second shift of workers to expedite the tower's construction.[418] According to the company, the additional working hours would, at the very least, help to bring the construction work to completion within the two-and-a-half-year time frame stipulated in the contract.[419] Optimistically, the president of Reale Mutua hoped that the extra labor would push the building's completion to an even earlier date—October 28, 1933, the scheduled inauguration date of the first section of Via Roma and the eleventh anniversary of the March on Rome. The company also argued that the addition of a night shift would help to relieve unemployment in the city, by creating more jobs.[420] Of course, the distribution of a fixed number of labor hours across a greater number of workers would provide only a short-term fix for growing demand for work, without actually raising the cost to employers. Unsurprisingly though, this approach was officially adopted by the regime in October 1934 with the mandate of a maximum forty-hour workweek for employees in the industrial sector, allowing employers to provide more jobs while keeping labor costs fixed.[421]

In reality, Reale Mutua's claim of job-creation was only partially true. After all, the industrialized process of steel-frame construction was appealing to developers in part because it required less manpower to assemble.[422] The use of pre-fabricated metal pieces and efficient arc-welding techniques meant that the building could go from the design stages to a finished, rentable space much faster than any other building type. The growing reliance on machinery over manpower was modeled after American factory systems, which offered high wages to efficient workers in streamlined assembly lines. However, unlike the United States, whose strong economic conditions made this system possible, Italy's economy relied on shrinking wages to remain

[415] PNF, *La dottrina del fascismo*. La Libreria dello stato, 1936.
[416] Ibid.
[417] Ibid.
[418] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Isolato Sant'Emanuele, cart. 4, fasc. 4, n°116. Letter from the head of Società Reale Mutua to Turin's Podestà Paolo Thaon di Revel, 17 December, 1932.
[419] The city originally proposed a two-year timeframe for the block's reconstruction, but the Società Reale Mutua pushed back on what they considered an "excessively reduced" period for construction. After some deliberation, the window was extended to 30 months. See final decision in ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Isolato Sant'Emanuele, cart. 4, fasc. 3, Verbale n°11, art. 4. p. 5, "Deliberazioni del Podestà," 14 March, 1932 and annotated draft "Pro-memoria," cart. 4, fasc. 3, n°50.
[420] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Isolato Sant'Emanuele, cart. 4, fasc. 3, Verbale n°11, art. 4. p. 5, "Deliberazioni del Podestà," 14 March, 1932 and annotated draft "Pro-memoria," cart. 4, fasc. 3, n°50.
[421] Philip Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, p. 159.
[422] Luciano Re and Giovanni Sessa, "La formazione e l'uso di Via Roma nuova a Torino", in *Torino tra le due guerre*, 1978, p. 164.

competitive.[423] Despite increases in production after 1932, wages in Italy remained low, as there was an abundance of laborers in need of work and a dearth of natural resources to fuel production.[424] So, while the American model was appealing in theory, it was not a viable option for Italy. In fact, fast-paced construction processes using industrial materials often required fewer workers and greater imports, both of which only exacerbated issues of unemployment in the peninsula.[425]

After the drama surrounding the use of outsourced labor and imported materials in the first phase of Via Roma's reconstruction, officials made sure to negotiate for local workers and materials in the building contract for the Torre Littoria.[426] The city's approval of Reale Mutua's plans stipulated that construction must be carried out by local labor forces, except in rare cases when a specialized skillset was required.[427] Authorities also specified that the use of "machinery designed to reduce the number of employees" would not be permitted onsite.[428] Similarly, the city insisted that the scaffolding surrounding the building be made of wood, which required local labor to produce.[429] These restrictions helped to ensure that the renovation of Via Roma would provide short-term jobs in cases where developers might have preferred to use industrial materials and labor-saving processes.[430] Ultimately, the developers' interests in minimizing costs and maximizing efficiency only highlighted the contradiction of the regime's ambitions by proving that rapid industrialization could not solve Italy's labor crisis.

Conclusion

After a decade of false-starts and partial attempts to realize corporatism in Italy, Fascism had failed to revolutionize the Italian economy. The utopian self-regulating system imagined by Bottai and his fellow advocates of corporatism had done little to improve the financial conditions within Italy, and even more disappointingly, they had failed to advance the country's global position. From the earliest days of the regime, Fascists had tied their claims of revolutionary politics to an economic philosophy that was now proving ineffective. With little to show for their claims, they continued to embrace corporatist messaging in *The Doctrine of Fascism*. But rather than providing a tactical plan for realizing corporatism in Italy, the document focused on vague ideas of patriotism and harmony by insisting on sacrifice in service of the state. In Philip Morgan's reading, this picture of a corporate state offered "not so much a transformation of socio-economic

[423] Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, p. 109.

[424] This inherent asymmetry would eventually be used to support arguments in favor of Fascist Italy's colonial project, which sought to redistribute the country's population and gain access to new materials through the accumulation of foreign land. See "The Fascist Economy", pp. 277-302 in Lyttelton's *The Seizure of Power*.

[425] See analysis by Giulio Molteni, "La saldatura nelle costruzioni di acciaio", *Casabella*, n. 11, August 1933, p. 76 and discussion of imported glass ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici: Via Roma – Miscellanea, 1931-1932, cart. 16, fasc. 2. n°2.

[426] See Chapter Two of this dissertation for more detail on outsourced labor and materials, pp. 23-24.

[427] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Isolato Sant'Emanuele, cart. 4, fasc. 3, Verbale n°11, art. 4. p. 6, "Deliberazioni del Podestà", 14 March 1932.

[428] Luciano Re and Giovanni Sessa, *Torino Via Roma*, p. 53.

[429] The woodworkers' syndicate, the *Sindacato Lavoranti in Legno*, wrote frequently to the podestà 's office to dispute several of the developers' decisions in the reconstruction Via Roma, which it viewed as disadvantageous to the syndicate. See, for example, ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici: Via Roma – Miscellanea, 1931-1932, ogg. 58, cart. 16, fasc. 2. n°150.

[430] Upon the inauguration of the first renovated section, it was reported that five hundred thousand days of work were created as a result of the construction. See "Via Roma in cifre," *La Stampa*, 27 October 1933, p.6. www.archiviolastampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,6/articleid,1144_01_1933_0255_0006_24905728/. Accessed 23 March 2023.

reality as its sublimation in a changed national consciousness."[431] In other words, the doctrine pushed for a corporatist vision of a cooperative working class, without delivering on its promise to improve the economic conditions in return. As workers grew weary of limited job prospects and low pay, and a handful of prominent employers continued to reap the benefits, the state responded to this "acute embarrassment" by creating more elaborate bureaucratic systems.[432] The simplistic system of thirteen productive categories outlined under Bottai's leadership had proven too easily manipulated by a handful of elite entrepreneurs. And so, as the state sought tighter controls, Bottai's fledgling corporatist model was reassembled into "a highly visible but essentially weak system of twenty-two corporations" over the next two years.[433]

While the regime sought to hinder elite manipulation by creating a more convoluted corporatist system, an entirely different strategy was required for the working classes. Austerity measures and lower wages had saddled the lowest classes with the greatest economic burden. Yet, while state-sanctioned unions held little negotiating power with employers, the increasingly unbearable financial circumstances added pressure to the state to expand welfare programs like social security.[434] Similarly, in an effort to regain control of the intractable Italian economy, the regime developed temporary measures that operated outside of the corporatist framework, most notably the Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale (Institution for Industrial Reconstruction, IRI). As the following chapter will show, these programs not only concealed the economic realities, but also created new revenue streams for the Fascist government, which it could put towards for-profit investments. As Alexander De Grand explains, in this way "Fascism created a complex system in which the public and private bureaucracies interacted behind a façade of corporative organization."[435] Together, these shifts in the regime's financial strategy would shape urban development in Turin, bringing a new architectural aesthetic to the second phase of Via Roma's reconstruction.

[431] Philip Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, p. 132.
[432] According to Alexander De Grand, at this point, "the very simplicity of the structure became an acute embarrassment that could only be disguised by making it more complex." See Alexander J. De Grand, *Italian Fascism*, p. 80.
[433] Bottai oversaw the formation of thirteen theoretical economic categories, but it was not until 1934 that the corporations themselves (22 in total) were created. Alexander J. De Grand, *Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany*, pp. 43.
[434] Alessio Gagliardi "The Corporatism of Fascist Italy Between Words and Reality," in *Estudios Ibero-Americanos*, p. 422.
[435] Alexander J. De Grand, *Italian Fascism*, p. 88.

CHAPTER FOUR
A New Aesthetic for Via Roma, Phase Two
1935-1937

> What Mussolini has taken away from the people in the realm of political and intellectual freedom, he has endeavored to make up for in the sphere of material benefits. He has tried not so much to raise the common man to a higher level of civilized life as to dazzle him with spectacular Fascist achievements.
> — Gaetano Salvemini, 1935[436]

> Despite the condemnation of private rights, despite the rejection of class interests, despite the insistence that the State has no concern with providing material benefits for the present generation—despite all the fundamental theories of Fascism, Fascist leaders realize that the permanence of their regime depends, in the last analysis, upon its constructive achievements and upon its success in preventing social unrest.
> — H. Arthur Steiner, 1938[437]

By the mid-1930s, Italy's economy was in an undeniably precarious state. The financial crash at the end of 1929 had revealed the limits of the Fascist government's grasp over the national economy, and to make matters worse, the regime's efforts to define Fascist corporatism had come to a standstill. Yet, in a speech delivered to the National Council of Corporations in 1933, Mussolini ignored the economic reality by praising Fascism's corporatist efforts. He declared the triumph of a new financial landscape in which "[the corporate state] effects the total, material, and indivisible regulation of all productive forces, with a view to the development of the wealth, political power, and wellbeing of the Italian people."[438] These declarations of totalitarian control contradicted the glaring reality that the government had proven itself incapable of establishing a comprehensive fiscal strategy. It relied instead on improvised and inconsistent efforts both to manage the Italian economy and to conceal the lack of economic progress under its rule. Among this period's partial and inadequate interventions were the development and expansion of three major government entities: the Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale (Institute for Industrial Reconstruction, IRI), the Sindacato Nazionale Fascista Architetti (National Fascist Architects' Syndicate), and the Istituto Nazionale Fascista della Previdenza Sociale (National Fascist Institute of Social Security, INFPS). Each of these organizations evolved in response to the regime's corporatist policies in the 1930s. And while each organization brought only partial change to the national economic program, all three had significant effects on the design, planning, and funding of the second section of Turin's renewed Via Roma.

In 1933 Italy's two largest commercial banks, Credito Italiano and Banca Commerciale were on the precipice of collapse. The banks had experienced rapid growth in the 1920s, which had allowed them to build hefty portfolios of industrial stocks. Many of these stocks belonged to

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[436] Gaetano Salvemini, "Twelve Years of Fascist Finance", *Foreign Affairs*, April, 1935, Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 473-482. Council on Foreign Relations. www.jstor.org/stable/20030685. Accessed 23 March 2023
[437] H. Arthur Steiner, *Government in Fascist Italy*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1938, pp. 32-33
[438] Quoted in Giuseppe Tassinari, *Fascist Economy*, translated by Eduardo Cope, "Laboremus," 1937.

key industries like steel manufacturing and shipbuilding—crucial sectors for both national production and defense. At the same time, the extraordinary financial reach of the two major banks made it nearly impossible for the government to regulate all of their financial activity.[439] As a consequence of this alliance of heavy industry and banking, Mussolini's "totalitarian" regime held little control over the largest financial sectors of the country. This led to unchecked investments and sometimes fraudulent efforts on the part of the banks to boost the value of their holdings.[440]

Both Credito Italiano and the Banca Commerciale held large assets in industrial production—a strategy that had served them well in a booming economy. In the first year of economic decline, however, the value of their industrial shares was sure to plummet. To maintain the appearance of economic stability, the banks bought up even more shares of industrial stocks to keep prices afloat and to maintain appearances while the economy recovered. The state's central bank, the Bank of Italy, supported this move by putting five hundred million lire towards these efforts.[441] Without this funding, the commercial banks might have collapsed, bringing down major industries along with them. But with the state's support, the illusion of stable stock prices provided an effective stopgap measure, allowing the banks to continue operating normally without alarming the public. In an illegal maneuver, the banks used the same strategy to buoy their own stock prices by allocating company funds for the purchase their own shares.[442] The result was a closed circuit of stock holdings, which proved effective in temporarily lifting the banks' share prices, but ultimately could not withstand further economic decline. Despite the best efforts on the part of the banks to steel themselves against bankruptcy, industrial production in Italy only continued to drop, leaving the nation's largest financial institutions with large holdings of dwindling assets.

With most of their resources tied up in waning industrial stocks, it was clear that the banks would soon run out of money to fund everyday operations. The banks would be unable to make payroll and they were sure to tap out all of their liquid assets for withdrawals, which would almost certainly launch the country into an even deeper economic spiral.[443] Fearing total collapse, in 1930 Credito Italiano alerted the government to its disastrous circumstances. The bank proposed a plan to split its commercial operations and its industrial holdings into two distinct financial organizations.[444] The government, hoping to maintain economic stability, helped to fund the transition, and both Credito Italiano and Banca Commerciale moved their industrial stocks into holding companies in order to salvage their commercial operations.[445] Unfortunately, this move alone was not enough to protect the banks from the ever-growing industrial losses. With the industrial stocks in holding companies, the banks were no longer directly tied to the waning assets, which helped guard the institutions from a liquidity crisis in the short term. However, the banks still held credits for the stocks they had offloaded, indirectly tying the banks' long-term viability to an eventual industrial recovery.

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[439] Gianni Toniolo, "Italian Banking: 1919-1936", *The Oxford Handbook of the Italian Economy Since Unification*, ed. Gianni Toniolo, Oxford University Press, 2013, doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199936694.001.0001, p. 303.
[440] Valerio Castronovo, *Storia dell'IRI: Dalle origini al dopoguerra*, pp. 13-18.
[441] Toniolo, p. 303.
[442] Ibid., p. 304.
[443] A 1956 IRI report referred to the situation as a "more and more complicated" entanglement of the financial and industrial sectors, in which "the handling of industrial enterprise on the part of the banks now involved risks which were incompatible with the safe keeping of deposits entrusted to them by firms and individuals, both as saving and for current cash services." See *Istituto per la ricostruzione industriale*. IRI. Rome, 1956, p. 3.
[444] Toniolo, p. 308.
[445] Ibid., p. 308.

The holding companies had bought them time, but the industrial recovery did not come as quickly as officials had hoped. By the end of the year, the banks were in dire need of government intervention yet again.[446] To avoid a public scandal—or worse, a bank run—the government collaborated privately with Credito Italiano to provide a 330-million lire loan to the failing institution. Records of the government's support were hidden from the public.[447] In return, the bank was required to transfer its industrial stocks to a new holding company, the Società Finanziaria Italiana (Italian Financial Society, SFI), which would be controlled by the state's central bank. The Banca Commerciale, meanwhile, attempted to weather the rough financial storm without the state's support. However, the bank's independent efforts only lasted until the fall of 1931, when it could no longer sustain daily operations with its existing resources. If it had any chance of paying workers and avoiding collapse, the bank could not continue to hold onto its industrial stocks. But with the ever-sinking value of these stocks, the bank would be forced to sell its shares at a massive loss in order to free up cash for its operational expenses. To save the bank from total failure, the institution's leadership privately approached the government for a loan. In exchange for the Banca Commerciale's industrial shares, the government offered the bank one billion lire.[448] This, too, was kept secret from the public.

These rescue operations required large expenditures from the Bank of Italy, which limited the central bank's ability to support smaller financial institutions.[449] Like the Banca Commerciale and the Credito Italiano, smaller banks also suffered in the difficult economic conditions of the early 1930s. The financial difficulties of these smaller banks were sure to have long-term effects on the economy by limiting the sources of credit available to borrowers. But unlike the larger banks, their failure did not threaten to take down key national industries and therefore did not require an urgent resolution.[450] With the entire national economy now at risk, it was unclear exactly how to move forward. But the government hoped that by establishing a temporary reprieve from the unstable circumstances it could buy itself time while it sought a more permanent solution.[451] To this end, the government formalized its controls over the industrial sector with the formation of the Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale (IRI) in January of 1933.[452] As a government-owned organization, the IRI assumed the devalued industrial shares originally bought by Credito Italiano and Banca Commerciale, which, under the terms of the bailouts set by the central bank, had been temporarily controlled by separate holding companies. The IRI would consolidate these holdings as an emergency measure to ensure a clean separation between the industrial and financial sectors.

Given the IRI's provisional and emergency formation, it was determined that the institute would not need to be regulated as a public entity. Instead, it would be formed through private laws,

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[446] Ibid., p. 308.
[447] Ibid., p. 308.
[448] Ibid., p. 309.
[449] Due to the secrecy surrounding the bailouts of the two major commercial banks by the Bank of Italy, the implications of these loans on the rest of the financial sector are not well documented. See Toniolo, "Italian Banking: 1919-1936", esp. pp. 310-311 for several hypotheses.
[450]Alberto Aquarone, "Italy: The Crisis and Corporative Economy," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Oct., 1969, Vol. 4, No. 4, The Great Depression (Oct., 1969), pp. 37-58. www.jstor.org/stable/259835. Accessed 23 March 2023.
[451] The banks, meanwhile, were sheltered under the Istituto Mobiliare Italiano (IMI), which also helped to separate the industrial and financial sectors by shifted private holdings to the state. For a general history of IMI see group.intesasanpaolo.com/it/chi-siamo/storia/imi. Accessed 23 March 2023.
[452] The IRI was initially conceptualized as a four-year holding company to reorganize and make profitable the banks' former industrial holdings over the course of 1933-1936. *Istituto per la ricostruzione industriale*. IRI. Rome, 1956, pp.7-8.

effectively allowing the IRI to operate as a privately-owned company.[453] This meant that it functioned independently from the government, and therefore was not planned in accordance with the state's existing corporatist efforts. The legal independence granted to the IRI provided the organization with immediate advantages. Unlike the central bank, which was now barred by state law from granting long-term loans, the IRI could provide ailing industries with stable financial support for years rather than months.[454] In this way, the IRI could step in where the commercial banks had failed to offer a lifeline of credit to the nation's most important industries.[455] In theory, this allowed the IRI to respond more nimbly to the emergency conditions by operating outside the clunky bureaucracy of Italy's increasingly complex financial system. In reality, it had given the government a mechanism for nationalizing major industries without pushback from the remaining industrial elite.[456]

The emergency solution successfully salvaged the dual crises of banking and industry. Importantly, it had also given the regime a legitimate motive for wresting economic controls from the hands of some of the largest lenders and enterprises in the country.[457] To protect against further instability, the government had also barred banks from holding more than ten percent of their capital value in industrial stocks, blocking the possibility of any major alliances between bankers and industrialists in the future.[458] Meanwhile, the IRI was granted the authority to issue its own savings bonds. The IRI's bonds served as a stand-in for state bonds, but with the privilege of a longer time horizon, making the IRI a more valuable lender.[459] As a result of these policies, the regime had inadvertently stumbled into a state-centered economic model—one that held a surprising resemblance to theories of *corporativismo integrale* ("integral corporatism").[460] While the state-centric *corporativismo integrale* had not emerged from the corporatist debates as the favored economic program for Italy, the emergency measures implemented in the wake of the crisis had now opened the door for substantial state intervention.[461]

Through the formation of the IRI, the government now owned a quarter of the industrial sector and it had established complete control over the banking sector.[462] The extent of the state's industrial holdings was nearly unparalleled in Europe, rivaled only by the Soviet Union.[463] The resulting economic framework was a far cry from the self-directed financial model upheld by advocates of a pure corporatism. At the same time though, it was not a totalitarian economic system. While the state now held greater controls over the direction of production and labor, it

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[453] Toniolo, p. 311.
[454] In its own bailout efforts, the central bank had established an unwritten workaround of perpetually renewing short-term loans. See G. Toniolo, "Italian Banking: 1919-1936", p. 309. The IRI was not limited to this clunky (and arguably illegal) strategy. See also, p. 312.
[455]The IRI successfully assumed the functions of the commercial banks, eventually taking formal control of both Banca Commerciale and Credito Italiano in 1934. Despite the fact that the IRI-controlled the banks' shares, in practice, both banks maintained operational independence.
[456] Valerio Castronovo, *Storia dell'IRI: Dalle origini al dopoguerra*, p. 31.
[457] Castronovo, *Storia dell'IRI: Dalle origini al dopoguerra*, p. 25.
[458] This was formalized in 1936 with the introduction of the Banking Act, which made official the reorganization of the banking sector that had evolved in the first half of the decade. Toniolo, p. 312
[459] Toniolo, p. 312.
[460] Castronovo, *Storia dell'IRI*, p. 25.
[461] Alberto Aquarone, "Italy: The Crisis and Corporative Economy," p. 47.
[462] Castronovo, *Storia dell'IRI*, p. 45.
[463] Ibid., pp. 45-46 and Diane Yvonne Ghirardo. *Building New Communities: New Deal America and Fascist Italy*. Princeton University Press, 1989, p. 12.

continued to negotiate with the country's remaining economic elite.[464] In essence, the establishment of the IRI had altered the course of the Italy's corporatist efforts by giving the government a prominent seat at the table with Italy's industrial oligarchy. In the years that followed, the reins of Italy's economy would only continue to be drawn in as the corporatist structure became less self-regulated and instead more reliant on a class of ruling elites supported by increased government intervention. As Franklin Adler argues, despite the state's public commitment to the implementation of a corporatist system, its continued involvement with capitalist producers meant that "[the corporatist bodies] merely occupied formal political space, while all significant decisions were made elsewhere."[465] Indeed, by 1934 when the corporations were legally established, workers held almost no real representation on corporative committees. Instead, the corporations consisted mostly of the nation's most powerful employers who consulted with representatives of their own choosing in order to negotiate wages and prices with the approval of an official from the Ministry of Corporations or the PNF.[466] The state's interests in Italy's economy continued into the second half of the decade with the decision in 1935 to replace the Minister of Finance Guido Jung with the former *podestà* of Turin, Paolo Thaon di Revel, a longtime proponent of a powerful, centralized state authority.[467]

The state's growing influence in the industrial sector was met with surprisingly little resistance, as profits rose and the economy began to show signs of recovery from the 1929 crisis. Beginning in 1933, Italy's industrial production exceeded its agricultural output, which according to historian Alberto Aquarone signaled "a trend that, except for the interruption of the war, was to become increasingly accentuated in the future."[468] In other words, it appeared that the temporary rescue operation had succeeded in its mission to stabilize the private industrial sector. Importantly, while the state had not set out to seize control over private enterprise, it grew increasingly clear that the assumption of systems of capitalist production under the state's authority presented substantial opportunities in the political realm. Consequently, the IRI's function as an emergency intervention would be short-lived: shortly after its creation, it was transformed into a permanent body, marking a fundamentally new approach in the Fascist government's economic strategy.[469] Gone were the debates over which breed of corporatism would best serve Italy. Instead, by the mid-1930s, the state was more deeply invested in national industrial success than ever before. As a result, autarky emerged as the favored economic strategy, and it was championed as both the primary goal of—and the logical complement to—a national corporate economy.[470]

Aesthetic Debates and the Architects' Syndicate

While the government had inadvertently established significant controls over the industrial and banking sectors, its power to regulate labor through corporatist policies was the result of a

[464] Franklin Hugh Adler, *Italian Industrialists from Liberalism to Fascism: The Political Development of the Industrial Bourgeoisie, 1906-1934*, pp. 332-333.
[465] Adler, p. 358.
[466] Philip Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, p. 157.
[467] Castronovo, *Storia dell'IRI: Dalle origini al dopoguerra*, p. 38.
[468] Alberto Aquarone, "Italy: The Crisis and Corporative Economy," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Oct., 1969, Vol. 4, No. 4, The Great Depression, pp. 37-58, Sage Publications. https://www.jstor.org/stable/259835. Accessed 23 March 2023.
[469] Castronovo, *Storia dell'IRI: Dalle origini al dopoguerra*, p. 46.
[470] In his 1936 Regulatory Plan for the Economy, Mussolini discussed the corporations as the mechanism through which the state would regulate the national economy. See *Autarchy*, Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale, 1938 and Castronovo, *Storia dell'IRI: Dalle origini al dopoguerra*, pp. 47-48.

more intentional process. As part of the regime's efforts to organize the economy, all workers were subjected to government systems of classification. Membership in the regime's syndicates gave workers access to benefits, and for architects in particular, the status of "state-sanctioned artist" offered greater opportunities for government-sponsored projects.[471] The architects' syndicate, Sindacato Nazionale Fascista Architetti (National Fascist Syndicate of Architects), was headed by the dedicated Fascist supporter Alberto Calza-Bini who had helped form the group in 1924 and remained its secretary until 1936. In the original configuration established in 1924, the national syndicate of architects was classified under the Corporazione delle Professioni Intellettuali (Corporation of Intellectual Professions).[472] As the government continued to experiment with corporate organization, it scrapped this syndical system in April of 1926, reorganizing the groups into the Confederazione Nazionale dei Sindacati Fascisti (National Confederation of Fascist Syndicates).[473]

While the corporatist system slowly took form, national confederations in various industries aggregated regional syndical groups from ninety-four provinces across the peninsula.[474] Economists hoped that this would be the first step in creating a horizontal economic structure. In their initial concept, corporatism would entail the division of the national economy into seven different productive sectors. Each of these sectors would comprise two confederations: one to represent employees and another to represent employers. The professional sector—to which the architects would belong—would be the exception to this rule, containing only one confederation to represent the professional class.[475] This would bring the total number of original Fascist confederations to thirteen. Yet, this economic restructuring was never realized. Segmenting the economy into clear-cut categories proved to be an impossible task, and the seven corporations could not be created as planned. According to the anti-Fascist scholar Gaetano Salvemini, the unplanned system of syndicates and confederations that had been labeled as corporatist bodies hardly constituted a true corporatist government. The improvised configuration of the system meant that "[t]he term 'Corporative' could be applied to the Fascist State only by courtesy, in recognition of the fact that before 1935 there actually existed the syndicalist institutions which made the Corporative State possible."[476] Indeed, it was not until 1934 that the government officially established the twenty-two corporations that made up the government's reimagining of corporatism. And it was only in the final weeks of that year that the leaders of each corporation convened for the first time.[477]

The establishment of a unified corporation of architects had proven to be a painstaking process. Even several years after the National Fascist Syndicate of Architects was established, practitioners still remained scattered among various smaller subgroups, split mostly along regional lines with differing aesthetic philosophies.[478] The journal *Architettura e Arti Decorative*, under the leadership of the national syndical leader Alberto Calza-Bini, was appointed as the official architectural journal of the regime in 1927. Despite the journal's official status, it was not considered the authority of the architectural field. Instead, a number of journals representing the

[471] Marla Stone, *The Patron State: Culture & Politics in Fascist Italy*, 1998, p. 27.
[472] Richard A. Etlin, *Modernism in Italian Architecture, 1890-1940*, 1991, p. 384.
[473] Etlin, p. 384.
[474] Paolo Nicoloso, *Gli architetti di Mussolini: Scuole e sindacato, architetti e massoni, professori e politici negli anni del regime*, 1999, pp. 54-65. For more on the regional structure of the corporatist system see Steiner, p. 81.
[475] Steiner, p. 113.
[476] Gaetano Salvemini, *Under the Axe of Fascism*. Viking, 1936, p. 147.
[477] Steiner, p. 113.
[478] See Mia Fuller, *Moderns Abroad: Architecture, Cities and Italian Imperialism*. 2007, especially pp. 89-92.

various aesthetic factions continued to circulate widely, each making a case for a different trend or philosophy. Many architects belonging to the syndicate believed that only one of these stylistic currents would emerge as the definitive architectural choice of the regime. Rather than partake in the spirit of national collaboration deemed fundamental to Fascism's corporatist system, members of the National Fascist Syndicate of Architects hashed out their arguments publicly in journals like *Rassegna di Architettura*, *La casa bella*, *Dedalo*, *Domus*, and *Quadrante*. As a result, in the absence of a fully developed national corporatist system, the architects' syndicate was characterized by a spirit of animosity between the factions of different aesthetic practitioners.

These aesthetic disputes came to a head in the spring of 1931 when Pier Maria Bardi ignited a contentious debate on architectural style at the Second Italian Exhibition of Rational Architecture in Rome. At the event, the critic-turned-curator had set up a "room of controversy" (*saletta polemica*), a dedicated space for an antagonistic display intended to spark debate among architects and politicians alike. The centerpiece of the exhibit was Bardi's *Tavola degli Orrori*, a collage of recent architectural works that Bardi viewed as aesthetic affronts to Italy, ill-suited to the nation's present moment.[479] The collage singled out architects from two state-sanctioned architectural groups the National Fascist Syndicate of Architects and the Reale Accademia d'Italia (Royal Academy of Italy).[480] According to Bardi, both groups had failed to represent the revolutionary politics of the regime, and he argued that the rationalist style of MIAR was the only true aesthetic representation of the Fascist state.

Bardi's audacious condemnation of the two primary architectural institutions in the country sent a shockwave through the entire architectural field. The provocative exhibit was met with a flurry of rebukes from traditionalist architects like Ojetti and moderates like Piacentini, who ridiculed Bardi's aesthetic views as well as his belligerent tactics. While many architects had openly committed to hardline argumentation, it was clear that Bardi's unflinching criticism had gone a step too far. Because in denouncing his opponents, he had also called into question the taste of the state's most regarded architectural institutions—an offense that now threatened to disrupt the entire professional category.[481] Bardi's fierce attack on members of the syndicate had not only flouted the corporatist ideals of professional harmony, his accusations undermined the movement's relationship with the regime. Until this point, the regime had proven itself to be more concerned with the number of works associated with its patronage than it was with the designs of the buildings. Mussolini had used "buildings of different style indifferently"—to borrow a phrase from the architectural historian Paolo Nicoloso—in order to promote his image as "the great, unique builder of the nation […] the first architect of the new Italy." [482] Bardi's condemnation of regime-supported projects and professionals was therefore a condemnation of the Fascist government's efforts to formalize and institutionalize the field of architecture.

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[479] Despite its regal name, the Reale Accademia d'Italia was an academic institution established by Mussolini in 1929 to help legitimate the architectural discipline, along with other intellectual fields, in Italy. See Etlin, p. 388.
[480] "Calza Bini, Alberto", *Treccani*, www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/alberto-calza-bini_(Dizionario-Biografico) ; "Alberto Calza Bini", *Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica*, www.inu.it/alberto-calza-bini. For more on the French-inspired architectural academy, see Richard Etlin p. 388. According to Mussolini: "The Academy is necessarily eclectic, because it cannot be monochroic. In the Academy the life of the spirit enters in this manner, that which is continuous, complex, and unitary: from music to mathematics, from philosophy to architecture, from archaeology to Futurism. In the Academy is Italy with all the traditions of its past, the certainties of its present, and the anticipations of its future," quoted in Etlin, p. 388.
[481] David Rifkind, *The Battle for Modernism "Quadrante" and the Politicization of Architectural Discourse in Fascist Italy*, 2012, p. 44.
[482] Nicoloso, *Mussolini architetto*, pp. 4-5.

As the stylistic debates escalated, the state was not interested in picking sides. The National Fascist Syndicate of Architects, initially a strong supporter of MIAR's work, began to distance itself from designers associated with Bardi and his antagonistic stance.[483] Calza-Bini issued a statement on behalf of the national architects' syndicate in *Architettura e Arti Decorative* condemning at polemical attacks at the exhibition.[484] Consequently, the architects of MIAR disbanded in order to cut ties with Bardi and his polemical views, preferring to identify instead as simply "modernist" designers.[485] As the regime continued to elaborate its professional groupings into the mid-1930s under the centralized power of the state, there was no room for disruptive accusations like those leveled in Bardi's the *Tavola degli Orrori*.[486] "Bardi took Mussolini's rhetoric about revolution too seriously," writes architectural historian Richard Etlin, "[h]e mistakenly thought that the Rationalists could repeat for architecture what Mussolini and the Fascist squads had done for Fascism."[487] But the strategy of animosity was incompatible with the corporatist approach. In the years that followed, an architect's ability to cooperate within the organization of National Fascist Syndicate of Architects would become an increasingly essential indicator of professional success.

Bando di Concorso

The disorderly state of the architectural field in the early 1930s left the question of Via Roma's second phase unresolved. The first phase of construction had been the subject of much controversy, reflecting the lack of aesthetic consensus within the architectural profession. An article in *La casa bella* in the summer of 1931 mocked the city officials for their strict adherence to the stylistic guidelines laid out in the legal decree, calling them guilty of "a lazy habit of interpreting literally what is rather understood with an intuitive spirit." [488] Underpinning this laziness, suggested the author, was the misconception that "'harmonizing' means copying."[489] Another critic histrionically called the first section a "vulgar and illogical reconstruction" and an "artistic insult."[490] The negative publicity pushed Turinese officials to reassess their technical and aesthetic standards for the second phase of reconstruction. MIAR's vocal rejection of the Phase One design had turned the project into the subject of a heated national debate. Furthermore, the group's modernist plans for the street had quickly drawn praise from the architectural community. But a year later, in the wake of MIAR's dissolution and in the absence of state guidelines for the street's new aesthetic, local officials were paralyzed by indecision.

With the state's continued impartiality and the municipality unable to decide on the aesthetic for the second stretch of Via Roma, officials opted to open a design competition for the newest section of the street. The winner would be determined by a jury of experts, with

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[483] "Calza Bini, Alberto", *Treccani*, www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/alberto-calza-bini_(Dizionario-Biografico).
[484] Etlin, p. 386.
[485] Former members of MIAR quickly reassembled into a new group: the *Raggruppamento Architetti Moderni Italiani* (Grouping of Italian Modernist Architects, RAMI), garnering the support of the national syndicate.[485] The new organization had obvious links to MIAR—a connection they reinforced by reshuffling the same letters from the original acronym—but in taking a less hard-lined stance, RAMI avoided Bardi's mistake of ridiculing some of the most powerful academics and architects working for the regime.
[486] Francesca Billiani and Laura Pennacchietti. *Architecture and the Novel Under the Italian Fascist Regime*. Springer Nature, 2019, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-19428-4, p. 76.
[487] Etlin, p. 387.
[488] "Via Roma - Via Nuova," *La casa bella*, July 1931, v. 9, iss. 43, p. 9.
[489] "Via Roma - Via Nuova," *La casa bella*, July 1931, v. 9, iss 43, p. 9.
[490] Roberto Papini quoted in "Via Roma - Via Nuova," *La casa bella*, July 1931, v. 9, iss. 43, p. 14 and p. 10.

representatives from the government and from the architectural and engineering syndicates.[491] In February of 1933 the municipality announced the design contest for Phase Two of the street's reconstruction.[492] Architects were invited to submit their plans for the section stretching from Piazza San Carlo to Piazza Carlo Felice. The announcement of the competition was riddled with justifications for the "eighteenth-century" style of the first section and extensive explanations about the city's decision to change this aesthetic in the second half. As far as style was concerned, officials defended their traditionalist choices in the first section of the street. The neo-baroque style had not been a mistake, they explained, because it was required by the standards described in the original regulations. They went to great lengths to make clear that while they had successfully executed this first section, the criticism in the press had prompted them to change course. [493]

In light of the negative reviews that were circulating, the administration outlined its new priorities:

> [S]uffice it to say that [the criticism] touched a little bit on all of the topics: the width of the street, the formation of the arcades and their structure, the height of the buildings, the obligatory recurrences of the floors and cornices, but above all the obligatory architectural physiognomy, no longer—according to some—in keeping with the forms of modern aesthetics and the modern way of life: conditions all constituting mandatory cornerstones, according to which the work was begun and halfway completed and translated—always according to the opinion of some—into **anti-economic nature** [*antieconomicità*] of the construction.[494]

The competition was intended to address all of these concerns in order to avoid further criticism of the project. Importantly, with the nation still reeling from the economic crisis, a design's ability to stimulate commercial activity was considered a crucial feature of the winning proposal. To be selected for the top prize, the finalist would have to exhibit both modernity and economic progress through a carefully crafted modern aesthetic. Fortunately for city planners, while the first section of the street had, in the eyes of critics, been "condemned to reproduce forms in outdated aesthetics," the negative reception of the first phase of reconstruction had "excited the creative spirit of Rationalist architects," to create something entirely new. [495] And with MIAR out of the picture, the possibility of realizing a new vision for Via Roma was now open to any architect who could produce a "modern" and economically stimulating design.

The open *bando di concorso* invited these inspired new designs for the street, adding only two limitations to the competition guidelines: any plans would have to preserve the two churches at the south end of Piazza San Carlo—which were protected because of their historic value—and would have to include porticoes on both sides of the street to ensure continuity with the first

[491] In addition to Piero Portaluppi, who represented the National Fascist Syndicate of Architects, and Giovanni Battista Milani who represented the National Fascist Syndicate of Engineers, the judging committee included: the podestà Paolo Thaon di Revel, the vice podestà Euclide Silvestri, the regional superintendent of medieval and modern art Gioacchino Mancini, the municipality's lead engineer Orlando Orlandini. See "Il Concorso per il Piano Regolatore del Secondo Tratto di Via Roma," *Architettura*, May 1934, v.5, p. 300. digitale.bnc.roma.sbn.it/tecadigitale/visore/#/main/viewer?idMetadato=20275874&type=bncr. Accessed 23 March 2023.
[492] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Bando di Concorso, cart. 14, fasc. 2. verb. 8.
[493] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Bando di Concorso, cart. 14, fasc. 2. verb. 8, p. 3.
[494] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Bando di Concorso, cart. 14, fasc. 2. verb. 8, p. 4. Emphasis added.
[495] "Via Roma - Via Nuova," *La casa bella*, July 1931, v. 9, iss. 43, p. 9.

section.[496] In order to promote artistic freedom, no other stylistic standards would be imposed, but all submissions should be "rational and organic."[497] Most importantly, the judging committee would make their decision based on one key factor—that is, only "the best layout and the most advantageous exploitation [*sfruttamento*] of the areas," would be selected as the winner.[498]

An additional guideline established an eligibility requirement: only members of the National Fascist Syndicate of Architects and the National Fascist Syndicate of Engineers would be allowed to enter the competition.[499] By the time the competition was announced, thousands of practicing architects already belonged to the national syndicate.[500] Still, the membership requirement stipulated in the competition's terms was enough to prompt at least one straggler—an Italian architect based in New York—to officially enroll in the National Fascist Syndicate of Engineers in order to participate.[501] The competition, which was held throughout the spring of 1933, garnered a total of thirty-nine proposals from individual architects or architectural teams. The projects, which including one ingratiating submission entitled "Dux", were displayed at the Stadio Mussolini, which was itself a new building constructed by the regime and opened to the public that year.[502]

Of the thirty-nine submissions, a small selection drew recognition from the judging committee, each for different technical and artistic innovations. Both Gino Levi-Montalcini and the team of Ferruccio Grassi, Mario Passanti, Paolo Perona, and Luigi Ferroglio submitted plans with staggered building arrangements inspired by the French planner Eugène Hénard's "stepped boulevards."[503] They argued that this strategy would increase the economic advantages of the new development by adding more surface areas for shop windows and more space for cafes and restaurants to include outdoor seating. But as the architect Plinio Marconi noted in his review of the projects for the national syndicate's journal *Architettura*, these extra spaces would be hidden in the shadows of the mandated porticoes, making this a less than ideal solution for the new street.[504]

The Grassi-Passanti-Perona-Ferroglio plan offered another opportunity for "exploitation [*sfruttamento*] of the land," by adding two bands of skyscrapers running down each side of the

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[496] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Bando di Concorso, cart. 14, fasc. 2. verb. 8, p. 5.
[497] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Bando di Concorso, cart. 14, fasc. 2. verb. 8, p. 4.
[498] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Bando di Concorso, cart. 14, fasc. 2. verb. 8 (allegato), art. 2.
[499] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Bando di Concorso, cart. 14, fasc. 2. verb. 8 (allegato), art. 3.
[500] For data on enrollment in the architects' syndicate, see Nicoloso's *Gli architetti di Mussolini*, pp. 66-67. The competition represented a growing emphasis on national rather than regional participation. To the dismay of Turin-based architect Armando Melis de Villa, the competition was not limited to the Piedmontese chapter of the architects' syndicate. Instead, it had a distinctly nationalist character, drawing submissions from any architect enrolled in the national syndicate. ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici: Via Roma – Miscellanea, 1931-1934, cart. 9, fasc. 4, ogg. 55.
[501] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Bando di Concorso, cart. 14, fasc. 3, n°63.
[502] See "Lo 'Stadio Mussolini' in Torino," April 1933, hosted in digital PDF by Museo Torino, www.museotorino.it/resources/pdf/books/155/files/assets/common/downloads/publication.pdf. See also *Guida all'architettura moderna di Torino*, by A. Magnaghi, M. Monge and L. Re, 1982, pp. 100-101. The stadium was designed by Raffaello Fagnoni and engineered by Ortensi and Bianchini. The structure includes a large water tank housed in a vertical tower designed by Brenno del Giudice, engineered by Vannacci and Gustavo Colonnetti, and emblazoned with the name "MUSSOLINI."
[503] Plinio Marconi, "Il Concorso per il Piano Regolatore del Secondo Tratto di Via Roma", *Architettura*, May 1934, v.5, pp. 310-312. digitale.bnc.roma.sbn.it/tecadigitale/visore/#/main/viewer?idMetadato=20275874&type=bncr. Accessed 23 March 2023.
[504] Plinio Marconi, "Il Concorso per il Piano Regolatore del Secondo Tratto di Via Roma", *Architettura*, May 1934, v.5, pp. 310-312.

street. The added height meant greater density in the city center, and would therefore give developers a greater return.[505] Annibale and Giorgio Rigotti took this solution to even greater heights with plans for six 57-meter skyscrapers.[506] Meanwhile, the architects Armando Melis and Alessandro Molli took a more tempered approach, adding only two "monumental skyscrapers" on either side of Via Roma at the edge of Piazza Carlo Felice.[507] Their proposal included a detailed technical report, explaining their emphasis on density, luminosity, and luxury.[508] These features drew praise from the judges, who awarded the project a second-place prize.

Tied with the Melis-Molli entry for second place was a project entitled "Torino" presented by Dagoberto Ortensi and Luigi Michelazzi. Their plan was striking in its innovative addition of perpendicular streets that sliced across Via Roma. The configuration drew interest from the judging committee because it offered more room for shop windows and sidewalks, adding to the commercial appeal of the project. Still, critics argued that it had not gone far enough in addressing issues of density and traffic circulation.[509] Despite their plan's shortcomings, Ortensi and Michelazzi's idea to split up the long blocks into smaller units would inform the future Via Roma, as Piacentini went on to repurpose this strategy in his own plans for the street. This sort of refashioning of designers' submissions was well within the rights of the city planners. After all, the terms of the competition had stipulated that contestants would relinquish ownership of their work in exchange for awards or honorable mentions.[510] This meant that by accepting the second-place prize, Ortensi and Michelazzi—along with every other architect whose submission was awarded special recognition in the competition—had granted the city permission to use any portion of their design without additional compensation.

The third-place prize was granted to the "Julia Augusta Tauronium" project presented by Gustavo Colonnetti, Brenno Del Giudice, Aldo Vannacci, Giorgio Accinelli. Unlike Ortensi and Michelazzi, the team behind "Julia Augusta Tauronium" paid close attention to motor traffic and pedestrian circulation. Their plan was noted for its extensive underground networks of streets and parking areas that relocated vehicular traffic below street level.[511] Their plan included 1,200 parking spaces below street-level, anticipating a purpose for the city's underground space that it continues to serve today. In a prophetic remark, the architects also noted that these underground areas might prove useful in an airstrike—a function that it did, in fact, eventually serve in the 1940s.[512] Like many of their competitors, the designers of "Julia Augusta Tauronium" proposed innovative solutions to the period's most perplexing urban issues. But this project in particular demonstrated extraordinary prescience in how the city's spaces might be adapted for future use, either in the case of catastrophe or in the context of everyday urban life.

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[505] Plinio Marconi, "Il Concorso per il Piano Regolatore del Secondo Tratto di Via Roma", *Architettura*, May 1934, v.5, pp. 310-312.
[506] For a review of the Rigotti project, see "Il Concorso per il Piano Regolatore del Secondo Tratto di Via Roma," *Architettura*, May 1934, v.5, p. 307. The Torrione INA, a reinforced concrete tower in Brescia, reached the same height and was inaugurated at the end of 1932. See Arnaldo Riccotti, *Brescia - Pavia – Ancona*, Istituto Nazionale Luce, November 1932, patrimonio.archivioluce.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000046919/2/brescia-pavia-ancona.html?startPage=0. Accessed 23 March 2023.
[507] Plinio Marconi, "Il Concorso per il Piano Regolatore del Secondo Tratto di Via Roma", *Architettura*, May 1934, v.5, pp. 310-312.
[508] Ibid., pp. 310-312.
[509] Ibid., pp. 310-312.
[510] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Bando di Concorso, cart. 14, fasc. 2. verb. 8 (allegato).
[511] Marconi, pp. 310-312.
[512] Ibid., pp. 310-312.

In the end though, the committee arrived at a stalemate. The judges had hoped for a project "that could cover all aspects of the problem together—above all the technical, hygienic, financial and urban planning aspects."[513] But after concluding that "none of the projects submitted could be considered wholly satisfactory and therefore worthy of the first-place award," they agreed that they would not confer a top prize to any of the submissions.[514] The original terms of the competition had designated cash prizes ranging from 15,000 to 25,000 lire to be awarded to second- and first-place winners, with smaller sums of less than 5,000 lire available for honorable mentions at the judging committee's discretion.[515] But with no clear winner, the committee decided to split the original first-place prize money into two smaller sums to create the two second-place prizes for both the "Torino" and the Melis-Molli projects, and to add a third-place prize for "Julia Augusta Tauronium."[516] They also awarded small cash prizes of 4,000 lire to five projects that were granted honorable mentions.[517] But without a single winning design, the reconstruction of Via Roma would be delayed once again.

To recover from their indecision, officials enlisted the architect Marcello Piacentini to coordinate a shared vision for the renewed Via Roma, based on the top designs submitted for the competition. Piacentini had already carved out a role for himself as an aesthetic go-between: he favored no single aesthetic philosophy, and preferred to alternate between doling out criticism and giving praise to the work of his peers. In his words, he practiced an "architecture of truth," what he called "the real outlet of contemporary architecture: seeing where the problem is, finding it, and facing it without prejudice, without political parties: studying it for what it is, and solving it scientifically, technically and with *ideas*. That is, *ideas*, rather than *rationalism*."[518] Guided by these principles, Piacentini favored simple forms on a monumental scale, picking and choosing aesthetic elements from various camps, but never committing fully to a particular philosophy. He drew from an eclectic mix of architectural theorists in an attempt to balance history and modernity with legible references to the monuments of ancient Rome, but also with sleek geometries

[513] Ibid., pp. 310-312.
[514] "Relazione della commissione giudicatrice", ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Bando di Concorso, cart. 14, fasc. 3, p. 3.
[515] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Bando di Concorso, cart. 14, fasc. 2. verb. 8 (allegato), art. 8. Honorable mentions were awarded to Ottorino Aloisio; Domenico Abrate, Carlo Braida, and Guido Ravanelli; Annibale Rigotti and Giorgio Rigotti; Ettore Sott-Sass; and a project by Luigi Ferroglio, Ferruccio Grassi, Mario Passanti, Paolo Perona.
[516] "Relazione della commissione giudicatrice", ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Bando di Concorso, cart. 14, fasc. 3.
[517] This included two former members of Turin's MIAR Ottorino Aloisio and Ettore Sott-Sass, who each received honorable mentions. The three remaining honorable mentions went to: the architect Annibale Rigotti with the engineer Giorgio Rigotti; the architectural team that included, Ferruccio Grassi, Mario Passanti, Paolo Perona, and the engineer Luigi Ferroglio; a project entitled "ARBE" from the engineers Guido Ravanelli, Domenico Abrate, and Carlo Braida. See "Relazione della commissione giudicatrice," ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Bando di Concorso, cart. 14, fasc. 3. For more on the projects not discussed here, see Plinio Marconi's review "Il Concorso per il Piano Regolatore del Secondo Tratto di Via Roma", *Architettura*, May 1934, v.5, p. 312. digitale.bnc.roma.sbn.it/tecadigitale/visore/#/main/viewer?idMetadato=20275874&type=bncr.
[518] Marcello Piacentini, "Problemi reali più che razionalismo preconcetto," *Architettura e arti decorative*, v.1, n. 3 (1928-1929), pp. 103-113. Biblioteca di Archeologia e di Storia dell'Arte, periodici.librari.beniculturali.it/visualizzatore.aspx?anno=1928-1929&id_immagine=19965334&id_periodico=8000&id_testata=21. Accessed 23 March 2023. p. 113.

seemingly pulled from the futurist drawings of Sant'Elia.[519] In this way, his aesthetic struck a middle ground between the modernist and the traditionalist styles of competing groups, earning Piacentini a reputation for moderation—not only in terms of his own designs, but also in his ability to move between factions of quarreling architects. While his approach drew criticism from other architects—Giuseppe Pagano, in particular, ridiculed his aesthetic of "false traditions and monumental obsessions"—for the most part, Piacentini remained measured and diplomatic in response to his critics.[520] He maintained a matter-of-fact tone in the face of impassioned arguments against his work—a considerable feat given the ample opportunities he had to retaliate in his role as director of the national syndicate's journal *Architettura*.[521]

As an aesthetic and social mediator, Piacentini made for a logical leader for the redesign of the second section of Via Roma. It was clear by now that recreating the baroque-inspired designs of the first stretch was not an option. At the same time though, it was unclear how a modernized aesthetic could be applied to the project without referencing MIAR's contentious proposal. By inviting Piacentini into the mix, organizers could ensure a more tempered interpretation of the various projects proposed by the rising generation of modernists. Rather than selecting a single architectural team (which would mean siding with a single aesthetic approach), Piacentini could collect and curate elements from the various designs submitted to the competition. For instance, in the case of the "Torino" proposal, one of the top designs submitted by Dagoberto Ortensi and Luigi Michelazzi's, Piacentini chose to incorporate their idea of dividing the six large blocks into smaller blocks. As the designers explained, this would create more public spaces and improve both natural light and traffic circulation. Still, since the project was not awarded first place, the city did not have to commit entirely to every aspect of Ortensi and Michelazzi's design.

The possibility of extracting the most innovative features of various projects offered a major financial advantage. The terms of the competition stipulated that by accepting prize money, the designers would also relinquish their authorial rights to their designs, giving complete ownership of their work to the city.[522] In its failure to select a single winner, the committee could offer smaller monetary prizes to more of the projects submitted, effectively buying the rights to the designs at a lower cost than originally declared in the announcement. Of course, this was not the published narrative. Instead, the competition was pitched as a solution that would benefit all parties. One article in *La Stampa* in favor of the competition argued that "it is obvious that the competition does not harm anyone and helps the best success of the company: it does not harm the individual designer, who is given the only serious and sure way of highlighting his own merits, which obviously cannot result and be evaluated if not in comparison with other projects; and it benefits the City as the public tender guarantees it the best solution, the most convenient, either from a technical and aesthetic point of view, or from a financial one."[523] It was true that individual

[519] Diane Ghirardo, "Italian Architects and Fascist Politics: An Evaluation of the Rationalist's Role in Regime Building". *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 39(2), 109-127. University of California Press, 1980, p. 112.
[520] Giuseppe Pagano, "Potremo salvarci dalla false tradizioni e dalle ossessioni monumentali?" *Casabella-Costruzioni*, 1941, pp. 2-7. Also printed in Cesare De Seta's collection of Pagano's work entitled *Architettura e città durante il fascismo*, Laterza, 1976, pp. 129-141.
[521] Danilo Sergio Pirro, "L'arte nuova" e la battaglia per 'l'architettura di stato' nei documenti dell'archivio di Roberto Papini" Amici della Fondazione Ugo Spirito e Renzo De Felice Delegazione di Terni, pp. 511-539, 2017.
[522] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Bando di Concorso, cart. 14, fasc. 2. verb. 8 (allegato), art. 12.
[523] "Via Roma", *La Stampa*, 20 September 1925, p. 6 www.archiviolastampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,6/articleid,1167_01_1925_0224_0006_24385164/anews,true/. Accessed 23 March 2023.

designers were given the opportunity to showcase their work and to be recognized for their innovation. At the same time though, the terms of the competition were fixed so that every design who received a financial award could then be picked apart and mined for the best ideas, which could then be reassembled into a new design outside of the original architect's control. In this way, the format of the *bando di concorso* gave Piacentini a buffet of design innovations from which he could pick and choose. From this perspective, the competition constituted a sort of *sfruttamento* not just of the economic value of the land but also of the designers' labor.

As overseer of the entire second section, Piacentini harvested the best ideas from the top projects submitted to the *bando di concorso*. He also maintained a single simplified classicist aesthetic for every building included in the new design. This was a major departure from the first stretch of Via Roma, which did not have an individual designer to manage the independent blocks comprised in the reconstruction zone. But according to the national syndicate's journal *Architettura* directed by Piacentini, the strategy of uniformity was far superior. Piacentini was credited for developing a streamlined, modular design for the project—a result that was praised as "a very important arrangement, an adequate urban composition and an organic and unitary architecture, worthy of today's Italy and of the Savoyard city."[524] With the conclusion of the first phase of reconstruction, this notion of a project "worthy" of the city took on even greater meaning. The first phase of the street's *risanamento* was viewed as a worthwhile endeavor for the prestige it might bring to the former royal capital. But the description in *Architettura* of the second phase added notions of uniformity and modernity, suggesting that only a master-planned design with modern architectural lines would prove its worth. Indeed, the detailed ornamentation and variability of the designs of the first section had not only brought unwanted architectural criticism on the city, but even worse, the strict adherence to baroque conventions for building heights and spacing had also limited the potential profitability on the project—just as MIAR had warned.[525] Piacentini argued that a more modern design would resolve both issues of profitability and prestige.

Despite these advantages, a master-planned scheme posed a new kind of economic challenge. Upon seeing the design proposals, the critic Plinio Marconi wrote of the financial burden that such a totalizing project would impose:

> Such organic and unified building developments must be implemented by collective bodies, consortia or companies with formidable financial bases, which work on precise, long-term, profit-making programs. Are there such preliminary ruling programs? Do they possess the indispensable economic content? Is this the opportune moment to make them? It does not appear so.[526]

In the midst of the crises of banking and industry, the emergency formation of the IRI, and the government's improvised efforts to salvage the declining national economy, it was unclear how any government body or private entity might fund such a large-scale project. But despite this economic reality, the government appeared financially unconstrained as it developed increasingly

[524] Marcello Piacentini, "La ricostruzione del secondo tratto di Via Roma a Torino," *Architettura*, n. 6, 1939, p. 342. digitale.bnc.roma.sbn.it/tecadigitale/visore/#/main/viewer?idMetadato=20278914&type=bncr. Accessed 23 March 2023.
[525] Luciano Re and Giovanni Sessa, *Torino Via Roma*, p. 62.
[526] Plinio Marconi, "Il concorso per il secondo tratto di Via Roma a Torino", *Architettura*, n. 5, 1934, p. 310, http://digitale.bnc.roma.sbn.it/tecadigitale/giornale/VEA0010898/1934/v.5/24. Accessed 23 March 2023. Also quoted in Luciano Re and Giovanni Sessa, *Torino Via Roma*, p. 64.

elaborate systems of public works and welfare.[527] The obvious expense of these programs was almost impossible to square with the government's claim that it continued to operate debt-free.[528] And yet, the case of Via Roma suggests that the state had stumbled into yet another solution for its economic dilemmas. As the following section will show, this solution entailed the development of a complex system of distortionary incentives and unscrupulous sources of financing, which in some cases relied on the government's collection assets from the public that were then redistributed into investments for state profit.

The Fascist Welfare Landscape

In the midst of the bank failures in 1933, the Minister of Finance Guido Jung declared that "capital must no longer be financed by deposits."[529] The central bank had gone to great expense to finance the bank rescues, and was therefore eager to avoid a similar situation in the future. To make matters worse, the rescue operations had left the central bank with limited resources to fund the regime's architectural ambitions.[530] With a major source of credit now off the table, the regime sought new sources of funding. Unlike the failed banks, which were now barred from unregulated investments, the Fascist state's organization for retirement savings—the Istituto Nazionale Fascista della Previdenza Sociale (National Fascist Institute of Social Security, INFPS)—had deep reserves of collective savings. Purportedly established "to protect workers from the risks of disability and old age," the INFPS became one of the Fascist government's most important social welfare organizations. In 1919, a decree mandated that private workers participate in the social security system (known at the time, as the Cassa Nazionale di Previdenza per L'Invalidità e la Vecchiaia degli Operai, the National Workers' Fund for Social Security for Disability and Old Age). The decree was made into law in 1923 under the Fascist government. Then in 1933, the fund was renamed INFPS and the former leader of the Ministry of Corporations Giuseppe Bottai was appointed as the Institute's head. Over the course of the *ventennio*, mandatory unemployment insurance, family benefits, and tuberculosis insurance were added to the institute's purview.[531]

The elaboration of a state welfare system under the Fascist regime was the logical result of the government's corporatist measures. With union power greatly limited in wage negotiations, workers' representatives sought alternative forms of compensation by pushing for stronger social protections. [532] In the grim economic circumstances of the 1930s, welfare services gave the illusion of worker victories, but ultimately perpetuated a system of inadequate pay. While the expansion of state-run social programs was framed as a corporatist victory, critics have argued that the social welfare system developed under the Fascist regime was not a benevolent operation.[533]

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[527] See Ghirardo's study of the Fascist government's efforts to develop marshlands into 'New Towns' in *Building New Communities: New Deal America and Fascist Italy*, including a discussion of the regime's public assistance programs on pp. 32-33.

[528] The implausibility of Mussolini's claims prompted Salvemini to write sarcastically "he has indeed performed a miracle." ("Twelve Years of Fascist Finance," p. 473).

[529] Valerio Castronovo, *Storia dell'IRI*, p. 28.

[530] Gaetano Salvemini, "Twelve Years of Fascist Finance", *Foreign Affairs*, April, 1935, Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 473-482. Council on Foreign Relations, www.jstor.org/stable/20030685. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[531] "La storia dell'INPS", Istituto Nazionale della Previdenza Sociale, Direzione centrale Organizzazione e Comunicazione, www.inps.it/docallegatiNP/Mig/Istituto/La_storia_INPS_2021.pdf. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[532] Alessio Gagliardi, "The Corporatism of Fascist Italy Between Words and Reality", in *Estudios Ibero-Americanos*, v. 42, n. 2, p. 422.

[533] Gagliardi argues that Fascist welfare programming and corporatism co-evolved in this period. He writes that "In the early 1930s, welfare issues came to the forefront of the strategic horizon of Fascist syndicalism. It was

Organizations like the INFPS helped to paint the government in a positive light despite the state's continued economic oppression of the working class. As historian Paul Corner puts it, "welfare was a wonderful vehicle of propaganda for fascism, undoubtedly giving many the impression that, for the first time, the Italian state actually cared for them. And, since a vast proportion of the population was required to participate in the obligatory assistance schemes, the related propaganda impact was likely to be very strong, with a penetration involving social groups that had previously remained relatively untouched by the state."[534] For most workers, participation in these organizations was mandatory, drawing large numbers of mostly urban citizens into the institutional orbit of the Fascist state.

While the state did follow through on some of its assurances—namely, to build a modest amount of public housing, and to offer unemployment benefits to some workers—many of its promises remained unfulfilled. Corner's study, for instance, points out the favoritism practiced by the INFPS in granting government housing and larger pensions to middle class workers despite its official declaration of support for the nation's neediest citizens.[535] What's more, the benefits promised by the INFPS were contingent on formal participation in the workforce—a stipulation that both excluded large swaths of the population and reinforced the productivist message that the contribution of labor was a citizen's duty. Most of those excluded were agricultural workers who did not pose immediate social and political threats to the government. As Alberto Aquarone has argued, the joblessness and lack of housing in rural settings was easier to overlook and less likely to lead to organized protests that were, by now, commonplace in urban settings.[536]

Concern over social unrest in cities prompted the government to dissuade urban migration both through rhetorical and legal measures. But the Fascist government's efforts to deter rural-to-urban migration should not be interpreted as a fundamental anti-urban philosophy of the regime. Rather, these tactics represented just one side of the regime's broader efforts to tamp down urban unrest and to maintain control of the jobless and low-wage masses. The uneven distribution of INFPS benefits, for instance, favored urban over rural populations. This imbalance of state-run social welfare signals the regime's priority to mitigate urban unrest rather than to offer support to the nation's poorest citizens. To this end, the regime used varied and sometimes opposing strategies, simultaneously discouraging urban migration while also consolidating access to socialized benefits within cities.[537]

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precisely at this time that a tendency emerged which later became fully entrenched with the launching of corporations, namely: compensating on the political and legislative level for the unavoidable loss in terms of negotiating power." See Gagliardi, "The Corporatism of Fascist Italy Between Words and Reality," p. 422. Criticism of Italy's welfare system emerged primarily in the 1980s and 1990s. See Maurizio Ferrera's *Il welfare state in Italia: sviluppo e crisi in prospettiva comparata* (1984) and Guido Melis, "Il socialismo riformista e la burocrazia nell'età liberale" *Studi Storici*, Anno 33, No. 2/3, (Apr. - Sep., 1992), pp. 285-327. www.jstor.org/stable/20565507. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[534] Paul Corner, "Italian Fascism: Whatever Happened to Dictatorship?", *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 74, No. 2 (June 2002), pp. 325-351, The University of Chicago Press, www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/343410. Accessed 23 March 2023. pp. 341-342

[535] Corner, "Italian Fascism: Whatever Happened to Dictatorship?", p. 347. As Corner points out, this favoritism was made even more egregious by the fact that blue collar workers contributed larger portions of their wages (he estimates 15–20% of their earnings) to the INFPS than white collar workers (10-15% of earnings). See p. 347.

[536] Alberto Aquarone, "Italy: The Crisis and Corporative Economy," p. 57

[537] See Victoria De Grazia's study of state-run leisure programming by the Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro (National After work Club) in *The Culture of Consent: Mass Organization of Leisure in Fascist Italy*, 1982. For more on the systemic exclusion of agricultural workers, see Paul Corner's, "Italian Fascism: Whatever Happened to Dictatorship?", especially p. 342.

Although it is true that the Fascist government made great efforts to move low-class residents out of cities by campaigning for a nostalgic, agrarian lifestyle, on the whole, Fascism was neither anti-urban nor anti-consumerist. Instead, it preserved social order through different strategies at different times and in different locations. This strategic flexibility was perhaps best articulated by Palmiro Togliatti's declaration that "[n]othing, more than Fascist ideology, resembles a chameleon. Do not look to the ideology of Fascism without seeing the goal that Fascism intended to achieve at that particular moment with that specific ideology."[538] In some instances, the regime could conceal issues of poverty and unemployment by pushing citizens out of sight and into the countryside. In other cases, though, it stood to benefit more from real estate development in the city center—where rents were high—than it did from suburban expansion—where it had made empty promises to provide low-cost housing for blue collar workers.[539] Consequently, the regime overpromised and underdelivered on public housing. Fewer than 14,000 units of government housing were built across the country between 1935 and 1939, despite an assessment from the Ministry of Public Works that estimated the need for 320,000 rooms.[540] Given this shortage, thousands of workers who had paid into the welfare system found themselves perpetually waitlisted for subsidized housing, waiting years to receive what architectural historian Paolo Nicoloso has deemed "little more than a demagogic promise."[541]

While much attention has been devoted to the role of welfare organizations as tools of both propaganda and pacification, Fascist welfare organizations are equally noteworthy not just for what they promised to the masses, but also for what they took from them.[542] Organizations like the INFPS demanded participation in the welfare system through the contribution of wages. These programs not only formalized the ties between workers and the state, but did so by compelling workers to hand over a portion of their earnings to the government in exchange for the promise of state support.[543] As a requirement for participation in the INFPS, a percentage ranging from ten to twenty percent of wages would be deducted directly from workers' paychecks.[544] In exchange, workers were promised a wide array of protections and benefits, some immediately tangible—like summer childcare—and others theoretical promises for the future—like pensions and subsidized housing. These mandatory contributions from workers helped to fund some of the short-term benefits provided by the INFPS. But they also left the institute with a large collective cash supply, a portion of which could be used for lending and speculation.[545] In this way, the INFPS presented a new mechanism for fiscal redistribution by allowing the government to stockpile public contributions, which it could then reallocate for capitalist investments.

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[538] Palmiro Togliatti's speech during a meeting in the Soviet Union, where he fled following Mussolini's rise to power. Quoted in Giorgio Ciucci, *Gli architetti e il fascismo: architettura e città 1922-1944*, page 4.

[539] Roberto Gabetti e Carlo Olmo, "Cultura edilizia e professione dell'architetto: Torino anni '20-'30," *Torino 1920-1936: società e cultura tra sviluppo industriale e capitalismo*, p. 29.

[540] Paolo Nicoloso, *Mussolini architetto: propaganda e paesaggio urbano nell'Italia fascista*, p. 22.

[541] See Corner p. 346. For Nicoloso, the regime's commitment to public housing was "di fatto una promessa demagogica," see *Mussolini architetto*, p. 22.

[542] Histories of the INFPS and other welfare organizations operated by the Fascist government have centered mostly on the coercion-consent debate. See for example, Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il duce: Gli anni del consenso*, 1974 and Vittoria De Grazia, *The Culture of Consent: Mass Organization of Leisure in Fascist Italy*, 1982.

[543] Corner, "Italian Fascism: Whatever Happened to Dictatorship", p. 347.

[544] See Corner, p. 341 and p. 347.

[545] The Azienda Nazionale Idrogenazione Combustibili (Anic), for example, a chemical power company created by the state in 1936 in coordination with the privately-owned chemical company Montecatini, was financed primarily using funds from the INFPS. See Castronovo, *Storia dell'IRI*, p. 44.

The resulting welfare system created a double exploitation of the workforce: first as a propagandistic scheme to make austerity measures and corporatist restrictions more palatable to Italian citizens, and second, as a channel for pooling cash reserves for the government at a moment when traditional financial institutions were no longer viable. Thus, in order to understand the role of the INFPS under Fascism and its role in shaping the built environment, it is essential to examine not simply the construction of public housing and recreational facilities, but also the institution's vast financial reserves that were used to fund government loans and for-profit real estate development. Like the IRI, the INFPS was an autonomously-operated, but government-owned entity.[546] As such, it could circumvent spending and lending restrictions imposed in the 1920s that had limited the government's ability to use long-term Treasury bonds for funding.[547] Without access to traditional means of borrowing, the government financed its operations, "not by paying for them out of current revenue, and not by borrowing from the public," in the form of bonds, but instead by taking on extended debts, sometimes on the order of several decades.[548] The INFPS, along with other social welfare organizations, was among these creditors, which were allowed to operate without the same constraints placed on the banks. More importantly, unlike private creditors, these organs of the state operated without the concerns over risk of repayment, using collective reserves to fund the government's impulsive spending without ever needing to deliver on their promises to Italian citizens.[549] In this way, the institute began to function as a financial organ of the state, filling the credit void where both the central bank and commercial banks had failed.

As the regime continued to expand its building projects through the 1930s, it found new ways to fund its constructions either by deferring its debt by several decades or finding unconventional creditors outside the banking system—specifically, through public welfare organizations that mandated fiscal contributions from workers. Yet, even as the regime developed a reliable mechanism for siphoning off collective savings through the elaboration of state-run social organizations, it did so in conjunction with traditional methods of capitalist exploitation. In other words, while the government found new sources of revenue through the redistribution of collective contributions, it continued to rely heavily tried-and-true methods for ensuring profitability, primarily by passing the financial burden onto average citizens through wage cuts for workers who held little bargaining power under the corporatist system. Thus, while the regime embraced its newfound methods of financial extraction, it used these methods in support of conventional capitalist strategies, which remained largely untouched by the regime's interventions. These complementary strategies not only tied the public's political participation to a financial outcome, but also provided the state with stable financial resources in a time of economic volatility. As a result, the state could engage in large-scale building projects using collective capital to buffer itself from the outsized financial risks of the unpredictable economic conditions.

Architecture and Construction Under a Changed Economy

[546] "La storia dell'INPS," Istituto Nazionale della Previdenza Sociale, Direzione centrale Organizzazione e Comunicazione, www.inps.it/docallegatiNP/Mig/Istituto/La_storia_INPS_2021.pdf. Accessed 23 March 2023.
[547] Gaetano Salvemini, "Twelve Years of Fascist Finance." *Foreign Affairs*, April, 1935, Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 473-482. Council on Foreign Relations. www.jstor.org/stable/20030685. Accessed 23 March 2023. See also chapter 2 of this dissertation on the limitations imposed by the *prestito del littorio*.
[548] Gaetano Salvemini, "Twelve Years of Fascist Finance." *Foreign Affairs*, p. 478.
[549] Also among the State's creditors was the *Cassa Depositi e Prestiti*, which collected savings through the post office. While this is not in the scope of my dissertation, the same line of inquiry could be followed to examine the Fascist government's seemingly endless appetite for the construction of post offices.

In addition to serving as a lender for the government, the INFPS was able to direct a portion of its collections towards real estate development. This was particularly convenient during the second stage of the reconstruction of Via Roma because the INFPS was able to fund the construction of three city blocks. Once planning was underway for the second section, the municipality rushed to secure financing, as the original regulatory plan legalizing the project had determined an eight-year time horizon. This meant that all construction work had to be completed by 1938.[550] The INFPS, with its vast resources of collective capital, was a willing financier, even adding in the summer of 1935, a third block to its original two-block agreement.[551] The INFPS's development included new offices for the institute. However, the office space was limited to the lower floors of just one building. The rest of the development—the upper floors of the first building and the entirety of the remaining two blocks—were devoted to luxury apartments and shops.[552]

Like the INFPS, which had large reserves of capital from collective contributions, private insurance companies had served as useful financial resources in the first stretch of Via Roma's redevelopment at a moment when the credit shortage had made it more difficult for established real estate developers to participate in the street's construction.[553] The use of such resources also came into play in the second section with the participation of the privately held insurance company, Assicurazioni Generali Trieste, which constructed one block. The Assicurazioni Generali's new development would house both its Turinese headquarters and luxury apartments that could be rented or sold for a profit. Still, the INFPS remained the second largest real estate developer involved in the entire project, responsible for funding three blocks of the new road.[554] The scale of the institution's involvement is particularly noteworthy, considering the fact that it was one of the few public organizations that participated in Via Roma's reconstruction.

The only investor responsible for more buildings than the INFPS was Fiat, the privately held automotive manufacturer, which funded the construction of six blocks of the second section under its real estate development firm the Società Anonima Edilizia Piemontese.[555] Unlike many of its peers, especially those in shipbuilding and metal manufacturing, Fiat had remained out of the government's reach. The company had not required bank loans and was therefore not involved in the industry-banking crisis that led to IRI's takeover of a quarter of Italy's industrial production. Even so, the IRI played an indirect role in the formation of the second section. The establishment

[550] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici: Via Roma – Miscellanea, 1931-1934, cart. 9, fasc. 4, ogg. 91.
[551] "Via Roma", *La Stampa*, 3 August 1935, p. 6. http://www.archiviolastampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,6/articleid,1138_01_1935_0185_0006_24911977/. Accessed 23 March 2023.
[552] Marcello Piacentini, "La ricostruzione del secondo tratto di Via Roma a Torino," *Architettura*, n. 6, 1939. digitale.bnc.roma.sbn.it/tecadigitale/visore/#/main/viewer?idMetadato=20278914&type=bncr. Accessed 23 March 2023.
[553] See Chapter Two of this dissertation. See also Rocco Curto's "Rapporti tra capitale industriale e capitale immobiliare a Torino durante il fascismo" in *Torino tra le due guerre* (1978). Financiers from the insurance sector that participated in the first stage of reconstruction included the Società Reale Mutua, which had funded the construction of the Torre Littoria, and the Istituto Nazionale Assicurazione, which had funded one block of the first section. See Alberto Stefano Massaia, "Gli interventi di ristrutturazione urbanistica del centro storico di Torino", p. 502 in *Studi Piemontesi*, December 2009, v. 38.
[554] "Il Concorso per il Piano Regolatore del Secondo Tratto di Via Roma", *Architettura*, May 1934, v.5, p. 346. digitale.bnc.roma.sbn.it/tecadigitale/visore/#/main/viewer?idMetadato=20275874&type=bncr. Accessed 23 March 2023.
[555] "Il Concorso per il Piano Regolatore del Secondo Tratto di Via Roma", *Architettura*, May 1934, v.5, p. 346.

of the IRI in 1933 had shifted major industrial holdings to the state, moving market incentives towards broader national interests.[556]

What's more, by the end of 1935, just as the emergency operations of the IRI were coming to an end, the possibility of an Italian assault on Ethiopia loomed closer than ever before.[557] For years, the potential conquest had held political and ideological significance for the Fascist state, but now with the government's firm control of a large portion of industrial production, war was more economically viable than ever before.[558] Officials had come to realize that they could exploit the state's position of authority over industrial production in order to more effectively manage wartime manufacturing.[559] The steel and shipping industries, which were now definitively under the state's control were particularly suited to military needs, leading to the obvious conclusion that this unprecedented state power could be used to the regime's advantage.[560] It was decided, therefore, just three years after the formation of the IRI that instead of following through with the organization's planned dissolution, the regime would extend its temporary power over production indefinitely.[561]

The regime's decision to convert the IRI from a temporary holding company into a long-term government body offered two primary advantages. First, was Mussolini's conviction that wartime demand would boost industrial production and therefore reduce unemployment for working-class citizens.[562] Until this point, the construction of new roads and buildings had helped provide temporary employment for jobseekers, in particular as factory closures put laborers out of work. But the number of jobs created were not nearly enough to make up for widespread labor cuts.[563] If Italy were to launch a colonial conquest, however, the state would have greater demands for ammunition and other wartime goods—demands substantial enough to ensure the creation of new factory jobs for thousands of unemployed Italians. Second, it was expected that the anticipated increase in production of state-held industries would also provide a boost to the remaining privately held enterprises. Government contracts for all kinds of manufactured goods would provide months if not years of stable revenue for owners of industry. The possibility of greater state spending in the industrial sector, therefore, would help ease the concerns of industrial elite

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[556] Harold James and Kevin H. O'Rourke, "Italy and the First Age of Globalization, 1861–1940", *The Oxford Handbook of the Italian Economy Since Unification*, ed. Gianni Toniolo, 2013. DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199936694.013.0002. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[557] After establishing a semblance of stability in the industrial sector and after having exhausted its financial reserves, the end of 1935 signaled the logical moment for the IRI to disband by putting its industrial holdings on the market.

[558] Castronovo, *Storia dell'IRI: Dalle origini al dopoguerra,* p. 31.

[559] As historian Valerio Castronovo puts it, the state made the "decision not to deprive itself of the contribution of an instrument such as the IRI." *Storia dell'IRI: Dalle origini al dopoguerra*, p. 32.

[560] Castronovo, *Storia dell'IRI: Dalle origini al dopoguerra*, p. 32.

[561] The decision to postpone the IRI's dissolution eventually led to its legalization as a permanent entity in June of 1937 with the *legge n. 905*. At this point, this IRI was granted an initial endowment of one billion lire from the State Treasury, an amount that was increased to two billion lire in 1941. See *Istituto per la ricostruzione industriale*. IRI. Rome, 1956, p. 9 and p. 29. After the war, the IRI became a crucial component of the government's postwar economic recovery program. With the conclusion of the war and the associated production of weapons and machinery, the IRI's holdings, in particular those in shipbuilding and metallurgy, required significant capital injections to ride out the changing conditions. The IRI provided financial support to cover the losses in these sectors, and later as the government expanded its postwar economic interventions into the 1950s, the IRI brought even more commercial sectors into its domain, notably telecommunications and airlines. See Saraceno, especially pp. 203-214.

[562] Castronovo, *Storia dell'IRI: Dalle origini al dopoguerra*, p. 32.

[563] At most, a few thousand laborers could be put to work on the road's construction. Luciano Re and Giovanni Sessa, *Torino Via Roma*, p. 44.

who had historically resisted the state's economic interventions.[564] Global economic conditions had already decreased the value of Italy's currency, disincentivizing foreign trade in several sectors. Now, with the permanent formation of the IRI, the conditions for autarky were ripe.[565] Consequently, the years following the IRI's formation were marked by a closer alignment of Italy's economy with big industrialists' interests, and further away from a transcendent system of economic self-governance of the pure corporatist dream.

With the high costs of imports and the ever-growing state controls over industrial production, real estate developers in the second stretch of Via Roma were no longer incentivized, as they were in the first phase of construction, to use imported materials.[566] As the country reshuffled its industrial priorities and ramped up its reserves for Italy's invasion of Ethiopia, the sourcing and availability of materials for the reconstruction of Via Roma became a central focus of the project.[567] The local woodworkers' syndicate, the Sindacato Lavoranti in Legno, expressed concern that Via Roma's developers might choose Milanese companies to supply the doors and windows of the new buildings along the second track.[568] Publicity for the finished street suggested that planners took these questions of sourcing and labor into great consideration. However, they were ultimately most concerned with incorporating national, but not necessarily local, products. Materials for the new street included domestically-sourced stone—marble from Valle Strona and Verona, travertine, and granite from Baveno—as well as domestically produced industrial materials, including linoleum and *litoceramico*, a lightweight Italian brick modeled after Dutch klinker bricks.[569] Under the new economic conditions, low-cost, domestically produced industrial materials were touted as symbols of modernity, hygiene, and national pride.[570]

The IRI's assumption of control over a large portion of the industrial sector meant that a revised balance of imports to exports was now in the state's interest. At the same time, the nationalist spirit of Italian manufacturing was not limited to the companies under the IRI's purview; privately-held manufacturing businesses also embraced the state's shift towards nationalist protections. After all, the tariffs and quotas implemented in order to restore profitability to IRI's holdings would also benefit private owners of domestic production. These shared interests made for a logical partnership between industrial power players and the state. The result, as Valerio Castronovo describes it, was "an increasingly dense interweaving [of state-owned industry] with the development of large private groups."[571] In other words, the consolidation of ailing industrial businesses under state controls had effectively transformed the IRI into a member of the industrial oligarchy, linking the state's broader economic strategy with private interest groups. Advertisements for "autarkic" building materials quickly filled the pages of architectural publications like *Casabella* and *L'Architettura Italiana*, a mark of the regime's efforts "to reduce

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[564] Castronovo, *Storia dell'IRI: Dalle origini al dopoguerra*, p. 32.
[565] James and O'Rourke, "Italy and the First Age of Globalization, 1861–1940", *The Oxford Handbook of the Italian Economy Since Unification*, ed. Gianni Toniolo.
[566] Investors were accused of illegally incorporating German-made glass in the construction of the San Federico gallery. See chapter two of this dissertation or ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici: Via Roma – Miscellanea, 1931-1932, cart. 16, fasc. 2.
[567] James and O'Rourke, "Italy and the First Age of Globalization, 1861–1940", *The Oxford Handbook of the Italian Economy Since Unification*, ed. Gianni Toniolo.
[568] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici: Via Roma – Miscellanea, 1931-1932, ogg. 58, cart. 16, fasc. 2. n°150.
[569] Armando Melis, "La ricostruzione del secondo tratto di Via Roma a Torino," *L'architettura italiana periodico mensile di costruzione e di architettura pratica*, dicembre 1938, n. 12. Torino: Crudo & Lattuada. p. 379.
[570] Ibid., p. 371. See also D. Medina Lasansky, "Efficient Linoleum," in *The Routledge Companion to Fascist Architecture*, ed. Kay Bea Jones and Stephanie Pilat. Routledge, 2020
[571] Valerio Castronovo, *Giovanni Agnelli*. Unione Tipografico-Ed. Torinese, 1971, p. 521.

to a minimum the use of structural steel and iron in the building trades, to increase the use of new synthetic products," which could be manufactured using raw materials available within Italy's borders.[572;573] A 1936 advertisement for linoleum, for example, touted the synthetic material as "the most Italian of pavements for modern constructions."[574] Advertisers deemed an array of Italian-produced synthetic materials "autarkic," while the Pirelli company went so far as to name their rubber flooring product "Italia."[575]

On the heels of Italy's invasion of Ethiopia, the threat of sanctions further invigorated the state's economic interventions. Although the sanctions themselves were short-lived—they were imposed in the fall of 1935 and lifted several months later in the summer of 1936—the threat of being cut out of international markets was enough to push Fascist Italy more definitively towards a wartime economy. In place of consumer goods, large-scale manufacturing for national products was promoted. National interest took precedence over individual needs, and austerity measures were imposed to curb consumer spending.[576] Ordinary citizens were asked to make material sacrifices for the greater good of the country. Famously, the regime created the "day of the wedding ring," in 1936 when citizens were asked to donate their gold rings to the state.[577] While the sanctions imposed by the League of Nations were not strictly enforced, the possibility of being excluded from international markets was enough to push the Italian state to cut back on coal imports from the rest of Europe.[578] As historian Philip Morgan argues, "[t]he basic economic choice made by Mussolini in 1936 was the basic political choice of fascism: it was autarky, for war, not international trade, for peace."[579] For the regime, this choice was the logical result of the economic and social structures already in place. After all, Italy was hardly alone in its attempts to promote its own national economy. Many of the most economically powerful countries in the world had already implemented protectionist tariffs in an effort to reduce imports.[580]

Yet Italy was unique in its corporatist approach. The Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale (Institute for the Study of International Politics), a government research organization established under the regime, argued that the corporatist system gave Italy the singular ability to thrive under these constrained economic circumstances because the components of Italy's partially realized corporatist system could be easily mobilized in service of the state and adapted to wartime demands. According to the institute, when sanctions were imposed on the corporatist economy, "[t]he Italian people became a compact unit striving to attain the goal set by the Duce. This spiritual mobilisation was above all a result of Fascist action in the economic and

[572] See, for example the 1938 collections of *L'Architettura Italiana*, which includes frequent advertisements by Società Anonima Fabbriche Fiammiferi ed Affini for "Materiali autarchici per la moderna edilizia".
[573] Quoted text from *Autarchy*, Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale, 1938, p. 47.
[574] D. Medina Lasansky, "Efficient Linoleum," in *The Routledge Companion to Fascist Architecture*, ed. Kay Bea Jones and Stephanie Pilat. Routledge, 2020, p. 391.
[575] Advertisement by Società Italiana Pirelli in *L'Architettura Italiana*, 1938.
[576] The state sought "a radical modification of consumers' tastes" to align with domestic production rather than imported goods. See *Autarchy*, Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale, 1938, p. 47.
[577] James and O'Rourke, "Italy and the First Age of Globalization, 1861–1940", *The Oxford Handbook of the Italian Economy Since Unification*, ed. Gianni Toniolo.
[578] Philip Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, p. 154 and Alberto Aquarone, "Italy: The Crisis and Corporative Economy", p. 45.
[579] Morgan, p. 155.
[580] *Autarchy*, Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale, 1938, especially pp. 10-18, and Alessio Gagliardi, "The Corporatism of Fascist Italy Between Words and Reality", in *Estudios Ibero-Americanos*, v. 42, n. 2, p. 423.

Fig. 9. The Grande Albergo Principi di Piemonte. Image taken by the author.

social sectors. Sanctions thus produced a reaction which precipitated latent tendencies toward political and economic independence. The process was a strictly logical one."[581] Fittingly, beginning in 1936 Italy's corporatist economy took on a distinctly autarkic character.

The sanctions prompted restrictions of the use of iron and steel, which were incompatible with Italy's autarkic plans not only because they were made from materials that were in short supply, but also because the energy-intensive manufacturing process required large quantities of coal, which Italy lacked.[582] To comply with the government's new autarkic policies, builders had to submit requests for an allocation of iron to the war commission whenever they planned to use the metal for the construction of a building.[583] Requests for these metals were sometimes granted in full, or in part, but they could also be denied outright. For the reconstruction of Via Roma's second section, the restrictions forced designers to adapt their buildings "in compliance with the autarkic regulations."[584] Under the new constraints, the construction of a steel-frame building like the Torre Littoria would be impossible. But even for less steel-intensive structures, like those constructed from reinforced concrete, the restrictions resulted in adaptations to designs. In some cases, load-bearing walls originally designed as reinforced concrete would instead be made of brick.[585] As a result of these changes, the buildings in the second section of Via Roma took on a heavier construction style compared to the spindly steel-frame Torre Littoria celebrated just a few years prior for its innovative use of industrial metal framing.

Of course, the material restrictions were consistently weighed against the government's desire to appease the financial elite. In order to increase the profitability of the second section, Turinese officials had raised the height restrictions from five stories above street level in Phase One to seven in Phase Two for the buildings directly lining the main street.[586] Even greater leniency was granted for buildings in the expanded reconstruction zone surrounding Via Roma. This was the case for the Grande Albergo Principi di Piemonte, which was located one block behind the Via Roma facades and soared ten stories above street level (fig. 9).[587] The towering hotel was the crown jewel of Fiat's six-block compound. Fiat's leader Edoardo Agnelli himself had insisted on the hotel's construction, believing that the absence of high-end accommodations in Turin had resulted in limited tourism in the city, making the Piedmontese capital into more of a pitstop for travels rather than a destination.[588] He hoped that the Grande Albergo with its lavish accommodations and grand event spaces would help to expand the tourist economy in the city.[589] No expenses were spared in the creation of the multi-million-lire construction, which included a rooftop garden and lavish, modern interiors. The developers insisted on the most high-tech conveniences, even banning staircases for the hotel's guests, who would instead use elevators to move between floors.[590] In all, the tower comprised 900 square meters in volume, rising to a height

[581] *Autarchy*, Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale, 1938, p. 21.
[582] P.M.H. Bell, *The origins of the Second World War in Europe*, 3rd ed. Routledge, 2013, p. 157.
[583] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma Miscellanea, cart. 16, fasc. 3. ogg. 364.
[584] Armando Melis, "La ricostruzione del secondo tratto di Via Roma a Torino," p. 402.
[585] Armando Melis, "La ricostruzione del secondo tratto di Via Roma a Torino," p. 402.
[586] "Via Roma – Allargamento – Risanamento dei Quartieri Adiacenti – Approvazione del piano – Modalità per la ricostruzione", *Torino*, N.1 May 1926, p. 43, Art. 4, 5, and 6.
[587] "Il grande albergo di Via Roma", *La Stampa*, 11 August 1935, p. 7.
[588] Luciano Re and Giovanni Sessa, *Torino Via Roma*, pp. 73-74.
[589] Armando Melis, "La ricostruzione del secondo tratto di Via Roma a Torino," p. 381.
[590] As reported by *La Stampa*, the hotel contained "twenty elevators, and no stairs." In reality, service stairs were constructed for staff, as well as any stairs mandated by building codes. However, guests were only given access to the modern conveniences of elevators. See Re and Sessa, *Torino Via Roma*, pp. 74-75 and "Il grande albergo di Via Roma", *La Stampa*, 11 August 1935, p. 7. www.archiviolastampa.it/. Accessed 23 March 2023.

Fig. 10. The porticoes of the second section of Via Roma. Image taken by the author.

of 35 meters.[591] But unlike its 87-meter sister skyscraper the Torre Littoria, which was just several blocks away at end of Via Roma, the Grande Albergo Principi di Piemonte was built from reinforced concrete, not a modern steel frame.

In order to maintain continuity with the first section, the tallest volumes were set back from the street and clad in natural stone.[592] Other changes in the design also allowed for greater *sfruttamento* of the second stretch. The original area designated for redevelopment was expanded, making enough space to accommodate the new hotel. As a result, the "public" areas of the project were also expanded, with more streets added to form new blocks and to allow for better traffic circulation and more natural light in the new buildings. The additional "public" space also served to justify the city's hefty investment. It spent roughly seventy million lire upfront and, after recovering a good portion of these costs with the sale of expropriated lands, the city netted roughly thirty million lire in total costs, a sum it funded on its own, without support from state.[593] In a similar effort to maintain stylistic continuity, both sections of the street incorporated stone pillars.[594] But apart from the incorporation of stone columns and the arcades they supported, the newer stretch of Via Roma (fig. 10) stood in stark contrast to the section built just a few years prior. The porticoed sidewalks were broadened from 5.8 meters to 6.2 meters, and the arcades were raised to a lofty height of 7.5 meters, giving the newer section a monumental scale.[595] Gone were the efforts to "harmonize" the buildings with their baroque surroundings. Unlike the buildings in the first phase of reconstruction, which were adorned with elaborate ornamentation and decorative columns, the buildings in the second section were a celebration of national materials and simple construction.

Several engineers and architects questioned the effectiveness of the war office's limitations on the use of iron, arguing that the constraints on metals would only lead to the use of less efficient materials, ultimately resulting in even greater costs for the national economy. One study conducted by a commission from the Milanese Syndicate of Engineers investigated the construction of four buildings erected in Milan in 1936.[596] The commission found that transporting materials within the peninsula and producing materials like brick and cement domestically had resulted in greater costs in the construction of the buildings than would have been incurred by simply importing the materials.[597] The findings were addressed in a 1937 publication of *Rassegna di Architettura*, arguing that "the problem of autarky, at least as far as construction is concerned, is very complex and upon careful examination, susceptible to solutions in clear contrast with those that are the easiest and most commonly accepted ideas."[598] In other words, while the restriction of imports appeared to be an obvious solution to promote the national economy, researchers found that in reality this strategy made the acquisition of materials far less efficient and more expensive.[599]

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[591] "Il grande albergo di Via Roma", *La Stampa*, 11 August 1935, p. 7. Accessed 23 March 2023.
[592] Armando Melis, "La ricostruzione del secondo tratto di Via Roma a Torino," pp. 371-372.
[593] Ibid., p. 409.
[594] The columns along Via Roma's second stretch were made from *serizzo* from Val Antigorio. See Armando Melis, "La ricostruzione del secondo tratto di Via Roma a Torino," p. 367.
[595] Armando Melis, "La ricostruzione del secondo tratto di Via Roma a Torino," p. 367.
[596] Ignazio Bartoli, "Orientamenti autarchici per l'edilizia", *Il Popolo d'Italia*, 7 November 1937. Bartoli's study was also discussed in Luigi Dodi, "Aspetti del problema dell'autarchia nel campo edile", *Rassegna di Architettura*, n. 12 (1937), pp. 476-477, following the study's publication in *Il Popolo d'Italia*.
[597] Ignazio Bartoli, "Orientamenti autarchici per l'edilizia", *Il Popolo d'Italia*, 7 November 1937.
[598] Dodi, "Aspetti del problema dell'autarchia nel campo edile," *Rassegna di Architettura*, n. 12 (1937), pp. 476-477.
[599] Ignazio Bartoli, "Orientamenti autarchici per l'edilizia", *Il Popolo d'Italia*, 7 November 1937.

Conclusion

Nevertheless, the "autarkic" designs of the new buildings along Via Roma were praised for their sturdiness and efficiency. Although construction was not officially completed until the summer of 1938, the second stretch of the renewed Via Roma was reopened on October 31, 1937, aligning the street's inauguration once again with the celebrations of the anniversary of the March on Rome.[600] Critics lauded the Phase Two design, arguing that architects' ability to work under the new material constraints had only improved the overall result. According to Armando Melis, the architect of the soaring Torre Littoria at the opposite end of Via Roma, the material and structural limitations on the second section of the street had brought "a dignity of materials and shapes that reveal the experimental, solid and sure taste of Marcello Piacentini. The severity of the plain and straight facades gives an impression of Roman monumentality which nevertheless fits this serious and noble Piedmontese capital."[601] For Melis, the wartime constraints had produced a design that simultaneously "confirms the traditions of refinement and elegance of the city of Turin" and links the city to Italy's Roman past. Similarly, while officials had originally pointed to the baroque aesthetic of the first section as a celebration of Piedmontese heritage, under the new economic and political circumstances, the heaviness and severity of the structures in the second stretch—clad in national materials of concrete, brick, and stone—were admired as references to both the Roman Empire and the Kingdom of Italy.

The insistence on the national character of the new street supports architectural historian D. Medina Lasansky's claim that the sanctions against Italy served as a propagandistic pretext "to reclaim Italian culture from foreign curation."[602] From this perspective, the "autarky" of the architecture in the second section of Via Roma can be understood as the result of both economic and artistic constraints. Beginning in 1936, Italian architects were forced to make do with national materials—either mined or manufactured—and to operate within a system that incentivized their cooperation under the state's authority. What's more, the regime's austerity measures had pushed the state to develop elaborate welfare programs that brought the masses into the state's institutional orbit. These organizations, specifically the INFPS, also served as a new tool for the regime to build collectively-sourced cash reserves, which it could then reinvest in capitalist ventures. Finally, the restrictions on banking and lending meant that only the wealthiest private and public investors had the means to serve as architectural patrons, reinforcing an oligarchic financial system in which the state operated as a capitalist investor alongside a handful of powerful monopolists. "Only in a fascist climate was it possible to conceive such an imposing design," declared a *La Stampa* article celebrating the Grande Albergo, "In other times, its realization would have encountered who knows how many and what sorts of insurmountable obstacles. The Regime has given the strength and the means to remove any contrarian impediment."[603] Indeed, the distinctive, imposing style of the second stretch of Via Roma was the direct result of the regime's legal, social, and fiscal policies.

After years of squabbles over how the nation's architects might create a proprietary Italian aesthetic—that is, without importing stylistic influences from other countries—the critical acclaim surrounding Via Roma's second section suggested that the architects had finally achieved their

[600] Luciano Re and Giovanni Sessa, *Torino Via Roma*, p. 75.
[601] Armando Melis, "La ricostruzione del secondo tratto di Via Roma a Torino," p. 407.
[602] D. Medina Lasansky, "Efficient Linoleum," in *The Routledge Companion to Fascist Architecture*, ed. Kay Bea Jones and Stephanie Pilat. Routledge, 2020, p. 388.
[603] "Il grande albergo di Via Roma", *La Stampa*, 11 August 1935, p. 7.

goal. The unadorned facades in natural stone and reinforced concrete would be touted as the materialization of a distinctive aesthetic of the regime—an architecture of *italianità* made possible by the Fascist economic program.

CHAPTER FIVE
Conclusion
The End of Via Roma's Reconstruction
1938

> If words are fortunate when they circulate widely, then few words have been as fortunate as 'autarky', but if their fortune consists in being used to designate with accuracy the thing or phenomenon referred to, then indeed few words have been so unfortunate.
> — Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale, 1938[604]

The two phases of Via Roma's reconstruction were successfully carried out over the roughly eight-year period from 1931 to 1938, as stipulated in the project's declaration of public utility.[605] One portion of the planned construction, however, was never finished. Below the street level of both the first and second sections of Via Roma, workers had excavated an extensive tunnel in preparation for a state-of-the-art tramline that would run underground from the Porta Nuova train station to the heart of the city.[606] But as the threat of a global conflict mounted, concerns over civilian protections and the scarcity of raw materials began to outweigh questions of traffic congestion and public transit in the city center. With the Via Roma tramline still unbuilt by the time the second section was reopened, the architect Marcello Piacentini claimed that the subway was, in fact, "already effectively constructed."[607] Yet Piacentini's statement contradicted the obvious reality that years earlier, construction of the underground transit system had come to a halt.[608] In service of the government's autarkic ambitions, essential supplies of iron and steel had been significantly limited in the construction sector; imports of foreign metals were curtailed and domestic supplies were redirected for the production of weapons and military equipment. And so, while the designers of the new Via Roma could often work around these material constraints for the buildings aboveground, the technical requirements of the underground tunnel presented engineers with few alternatives. Furthermore, the utility of an urban transit system—once viewed as an essential component of the city's *risanamento*—was now called into question as planners considered the city's uncertain fate. As an industrial hub, Turin was understood as a likely target for aerial attacks and it therefore made little sense to continue with the planned transit project if

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[604] *Autarchy*, Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale, 1938, p. 3.
[605] "R.D.L. 3 luglio 1930, n. 976", *Normattiva.it*, www.normattiva.it/atto/caricaDettaglioAtto?atto.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=1930-07-25&atto.codiceRedazionale=030U0976&atto.articolo.numero=0&atto.articolo.sottoArticolo=1&atto.articolo.sottoArticolo1=10&qId=&tabID=0.8416234020442876&title=lbl.dettaglioAtto. Accessed 23 March 2023.
[606] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Galleria Sotterranea, cart. 13. fasc. 2, ogg. 1, "Deliberazioni del Podestà, 4 Aprile 1932", Verbale n. 14.
[607] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Galleria Sotterranea, cart. 13. fasc. 2, ogg. 44. See also: Marcello Piacentini, "La ricostruzione del secondo tratto di Via Roma a Torino," *Architettura*, n. 6, 1939, p. 344. digitale.bnc.roma.sbn.it/tecadigitale/visore/#/main/viewer?idMetadato=20278914&type=bncr. Accessed 23 March 2023.
[608] The decision to halt construction of the subway came in two phases: first with a temporary solution to use the space for exhibitions in 1937, and later in 1939 a permanent conversion of the space into parking. See"Sistemazione Via Roma sotterranea ad uso mostra ed esposizioni", ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Galleria Sotterranea, cart. 13. fasc. 3, ogg. 89 and ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Pratica Generale, cart. 17, ogg, "Utilizzazione del 2° tratto della Via Roma sotterranea come auto-rimessa."

the space could be used for more urgent concerns of emergency shelter.[609] Consequently, it would prove impossible to complete the Via Roma tramway under wartime conditions.

In late 1935, city officials began discussing a practical alternative for the underground tunnel: to use the empty subway system as a temporary bomb shelter in the case of an enemy airstrike.[610] Yet the tunnel's capacity to withstand the impact of aerial bombings was uncertain. Engineers questioned the strength of the first section that had already been constructed in the years between 1931 and 1933, without any consideration of aerial attacks. The existing tunnel was only a few feet thick, and fortifying it to withstand the force of a bomb would impose a significant financial burden on the city.[611] Even so, officials believed that the tunnels could provide protection for several thousand citizens.[612] The Central Committee for Aerial Protection, however, estimated that only one thousand people would find refuge below Via Roma in the case of an aerial attack.[613] To make matters worse, builders struggled under the state's autarkic program to acquire iron, steel, and zinc.[614] The tunnel's shell would need to be fortified with these industrial metals and lined with pillars of reinforced concrete; it would not be safe to use without this system of supports.[615] Over the course of 1936 and 1937, builders and city officials engaged in many months of mostly futile correspondence with the General Commission for War Production in the hopes of being granted the essential materials. They explained that without the requested metals, the tunnel would not be structurally sound.[616] They insisted that because the project had been designated as a work of public utility, it should not be constrained by the same restrictions imposed on other types of construction projects.[617] The General Commission for War Production, on the other hand, maintained that the national supply of the metals was insufficient to meet construction demands.[618]

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[609] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Galleria Sotterranea, cart. 13. fasc. 2, ogg. 36.

[610] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Galleria Sotterranea, cart. 13. fasc. 2, ogg. 78, Letter from the Ministry of War, 14 February 1937 referring to the original communication from 5 December 1935 about plans for the tunnel's conversion into a bomb shelter. See also the 14 November 1935 letter from the Ministry of War regarding the conversion, see ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Galleria Sotterranea, cart. 13. fasc. 2, ogg. 36.

[611] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Galleria Sotterranea, cart. 13. fasc. 2, ogg. 35.

[612] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Galleria Sotterranea, cart. 13. fasc. 2, ogg. 42.

[613] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Galleria Sotterranea, cart. 13. fasc. 3, ogg. 267.

[614] In the hopes of completing the project by the planned inauguration in October of 1937, the prefect extended working days through the weekend, but ultimately this had little effect on the project's viability, which was hindered by the onerous process of requesting ferrous materials from the General Commission for War Production (Commissariato Generale per Fabbricazioni di Guerra). See ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Galleria Sotterranea, cart. 13. fasc. 2, ogg. 66 & 67 for work suspensions as a result of iron and steel restrictions in 1936. See ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma, cart. 17, fasc. 1. ogg. 512, ogg. 543, ogg. 552, and ogg. 555 for various attempts to overcome these material delays by extending work days.

[615] On safety: ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Galleria Sotterranea, cart. 13. fasc. 3, ogg. 100. While steel and iron would provide structural support, zinc was used to protect the tunnel from moisture. See ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Galleria Sotterranea, cart. 13. fasc. 3, ogg. 150.

[616] Marcello Piacentini, "La ricostruzione del secondo tratto di Via Roma a Torino", *Architettura*, n. 6, 1939, p. 344. Much of the tunnel's construction was carried out by Imprese Edili Antonio Comoglio and Impresa Rusconi, a specialist in reinforced concrete.

[617] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Galleria Sotterranea, cart. 13. fasc. 2 contains dozens of exchanges between the tunnel builders, city officials, and the General Commission for War Production regarding the urgent need for ferrous materials in order to complete the project.

[618]ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Galleria Sotterranea, cart. 13. fasc. 3, ogg. 102. A telegram sent 7 April 1937 insisted that the General Commission for War Production did not have sufficient reserves to supply the project.

As the date of Via Roma's inauguration approached, the acquisition of iron and steel became an urgent concern.[619] Officials feared that if the national government continued to reject requests for the necessary materials, the entire second section would remain closed indefinitely.[620] It became increasingly clear that if the state would not approve the basic allocation for the tunnel's structural supports, it was unlikely to approve the additional materials required for a new urban rail system. Accordingly, in the spring of 1937, city planners changed course. They abandoned the plan for a subterranean tramline and opted instead to adapt the vacant underground tunnel into an exhibition space for a series of demonstrations in support of the regime.[621] With the decision to convert the tunnel into a space for exhibitions "of a national character," developers argued that further material delays would result in "grave material and moral damages," for the project.[622] This argument appeared to persuade the General Commission for War Production, which finally granted the requested quantities of metal for structural reinforcements in the summer of 1937.[623]

With a new purpose for the subterranean section of Via Roma, and with their material requests granted, builders could finally get to work. After reinforcing the structure with the allocations from the General Commission for War Production, they raced to convert the underground space from an unfinished tramway into a gleaming exhibition center. They adapted the subway shaft using domestically sourced materials—cladding the stairwells with marble and constructing benches and wall coverings in wood.[624] As an exhibition center, the *galleria sotterranea* would house a series of propagandistic shows, beginning with the VI Mostra Nazionale della Meccanica e Metallurgia (Sixth National Exhibition of Mechanics and Metallurgy), which was slated to open in October of 1937.[625] This exhibition would coincide with the inauguration of the second section of the new Via Roma, giving the impression of the successful completion of the entire Via Roma reconstruction project, despite the reality that the original plans for the tunnel had never come to fruition.[626]

The Mostra Nazionale della Meccanica e Metallurgia promoted Italian products and industrial innovations, including the latest models of automobiles, small appliances, and office

[619] Exchanges with the General Commission for War Production in this period were marked with the word "*urgente*" in red ink. See ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Galleria Sotterranea, cart. 13. fasc. 3.
[620] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Galleria Sotterranea, cart. 13. fasc. 3, ogg. 95, ogg. 97.
[621] "Sistemazione Via Roma sotterranea ad uso mostra ed esposizioni", ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Galleria Sotterranea, cart. 13. fasc. 3, ogg. 89.
[622] Builders insisted on the project's national importance, highlighting both the "national character" of the exhibition and reminding authorities that the events were scheduled on the national calendar and were therefore not just a local concern. ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Galleria Sotterranea, cart. 13. fasc. 3, ogg. 111.
[623] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Galleria Sotterranea, cart. 13, fasc. 3 ogg. 118.
[624] ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Galleria Sotterranea, cart. 13, fasc. 3 ogg. 148, 30 Aug. 1937; ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Galleria Sotterranea, cart. 13, fasc. 3 ogg. 149.
[625] The five preceding iterations of the exhibit of mechanics and metallurgy did not emphasize national production, and therefore did not contain "national" in their titles. Before 1937, the show was known simply as the "Mostra della Meccanica e Metallurgia" (Exhibition of Mechanics and Metallurgy).
[626] November 1939, the city's public works office proposed using the underground areas as a parking garage "for a rational solution to the problem", ASCT, Affari Lavori Pubblici, Via Roma – Pratica Generale, cart. 17, ogg, "Utilizzazione del 2° tratto della Via Roma sotterranea come auto-rimessa." The tunnel was used for parking into the 1960s, eventually falling into disuse until 1995 when at was reopened once again as a parking garage, a function it continues to serve today. "La Città Sotterranea", *Torino Sette*, 7 April 1995, p. 27 www.archiviolastampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,27/articleid,0701_08_1995_0349_0027_10291556/.

gadgets.[627] Notably, a portion of the exhibit was dedicated to the Italian production of iron and steel. The same metals that had delayed the tunnel's construction, and whose scarcity had led to the tunnel's reinvention as an exhibition space were now being touted as evidence of national industrial success. One display was dedicated to Italy's "exceedingly modern steel mines [*modernissime acciaierie*]" that used "incredible transformations [*mirabili trasformazioni*]" to draw small quantities of metal alloys from the soil.[628] The difficult acquisition of these materials from within Italy's borders was described not as a sign of the nation's limited resources but as evidence of Italian determination and achievement—qualities that had enabled the extraordinary feat of "pilfer[ing] iron ore from the highest mine in Europe." [629] The automobile manufacturing giant Fiat also participated in the metallurgy section of the exhibit. The company had several factories that specialized in the recycling of scrap metal, specifically iron and steel.[630] Fiat had also become involved in the mining of metal alloys to produce other alternative materials like nickel and manganese, which theoretically could be more easily produced than steel or iron using Italy's raw materials.[631] Fiat had obtained 11,000 hectares of land in Piedmont in the hopes of resurrecting long-abandoned mining operations in the mountains.[632] In the end, though, the mineral quantities extracted from the old mines did little to support Italy's efforts to become a self-sufficient producer of metals.[633]

While Turinese industrialists had initially benefitted from the protectionist measures implemented under the state's autarkic program, they quickly grew weary of the restrictions. Domestic producers believed that the extended policies against imports of raw materials had imposed unnecessary constraints on production. This frustration became particularly pronounced in 1937, as the sanctions imposed by the League of Nations had already been lifted for some time. In the same year, Italy's invasion of Ethiopia had tilted in the favor of the aggressor, leading to Italy's assumption of colonial controls—another signal to domestic producers that autarkic restrictions were no longer necessary for the country's success.[634] The year was also met with a 15% increase in the industrial production of military goods and a 9.1% increase in national GDP.[635] With Italian industry expanding, and the economy showing signs of recovery, industrialists hoped that the regime's stringent autarkic stance would soon be replaced with a more open trade system. National supplies of raw materials were rapidly depleting, and it was clear that manufacturers would need better access to affordable imports if they hoped to continue expanding production.

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[627] The exhibit included a chainsaw, a musical keyboard, a proto-fax machine described as a "teleprinter [*telescrivente*]", and wide array of machines ranging from automobiles to manufacturing tools. See S. Saldini Rovetino's report "La VI[a] Rassegna Nazionale" in *Torino: rassegna mensile*. Municipio di Torino. October 1938, n.10. Museo Torino, www.museotorino.it/resources/pdf/books/534/. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[628] Rovetino, p. 23.

[629] Ibid., p. 23.

[630] Valerio Castronovo, *Giovanni Agnelli*. Unione Tipografico-Ed. Torinese, 1971, p. 518.

[631] Ibid. p. 568; Rovetino, p. 23.

[632] Castronovo, *Giovanni Agnelli*, p. 568.

[633] Some of the minerals extracted could be used to produce cast iron, but the quantities hardly added to Italy's metal reserves, leaving miners and engineers on a futile quest to dig continuously deeper in the hopes of finding sufficient mineral quantities. Castronovo, p. 568.

[634] See Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller's *Italian Colonialism*, 2008. In particular, Alberto Sbacchi's chapter on Italy's use of chemical weapons leading up to its formal seizure of Ethiopia, "Poison Gas and Atrocities in the Italo-Ethiopian War (1935-1946)", pp. 47-56 and Haile Larebo's chapter "Empire building and its limitations: Ethiopia (1935-1941)", pp. 83-94.

[635] Harold James and Kevin H. O'Rourke, "Italy and the First Age of Globalization, 1861–1940," *The Oxford Handbook of the Italian Economy Since Unification*, ed. Gianni Toniolo, 2013. DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199936694.013.0002. Accessed 23 March 2023.

Instead, the regime resisted suggestions to reopen the economy to international trade—a decision that led to massive cutbacks in Turinese production. In late 1938, Fiat reduced employment by setting the workweek below forty hours per employee and laying off 1,500 workers. The situation left tens of thousands more workers in precarious positions, and the fate of the national economy uncertain.[636] Once again, the regime was confronted with the unintended consequences of its economic policies. Seeking to balance private interests with political convictions, the government had become engaged in a seemingly endless cycle of political and financial compromise, complicated by shortsighted experimentation and frequent concessions to capitalist processes. These strategies had developed over the course of the 1930s from a paradoxical blend of political ideals and real-world constraints. But as the decade came to a close, the contradictions within the regime's economic system left it without a clear path forward. Efforts to establish a self-regulating fascist-corporate economy had brought about the creation of scattered corporatist laws and superfluous government bodies that amounted to an elaborate but incomplete corporatist system. As the possibility of a global conflict grew closer, the question of national economic self-sufficiency eclipsed debates surrounding the implementation of corporatism in Italy. Accordingly, corporatist structures were reconceptualized as state-led rather than autonomous organizations, and they were reoriented towards autarkic goals.

At the same time, the desire for predictability and profits meant that familiar capitalist practices continued to prevail despite the state's declarations of a total economic revolution. The resulting economic system, therefore, was neither the pure corporatist model that Fascist politicians had initially imagined, nor was it an entirely state-run corporatist nation based on economic autarky. Instead the Fascist government had developed a sort of political capitalism, in which it offered incentives to a small group of financial elites and transformed political organs of the state into private capitalist enterprises. In this system, profit-oriented government bodies were used to extract economic value from workers through political mechanisms—by requiring participation in exchange for social benefits and employment opportunities—and through direct financial interventions that mandated financial contributions and regulated wages. Similarly, private owners of industry benefitted from the system of low-cost labor and legislative maneuvers that incentivized private investment in public works.

From this perspective, the stylistic incongruity of the entire Via Roma project can be understood as the product of the regime's fragmented economic program. In order to fund Via Roma's reconstruction, the regime relied initially on private financiers, and later, as it became increasingly centralized, it made use of profit-oriented government bodies like the INFPS, which served not only as a social welfare organization, but also as a financial lender and real estate developer. In terms of the regulation and organization of labor, the regime took varying approaches, at times pushing for blue-collar job creation through construction work and at others insisting on political participation among white-collar professionals—most notably, from architects and engineers who could only win government contracts through formal enrollment in the state's professional syndicates. As the economic conditions shifted over the course of the 1930s and the Fascist government's financial program evolved, economic controls were increasingly consolidated under the state's authority. Nevertheless, the regime continued to operate within the bounds of a capitalist logic that used politics as both a means of, and an end to, increasing profits.

Propelled by an urgent need to recover from the 1929 economic crisis, the 1930s were characterized by the regime's efforts to respond to unprecedented economic challenges through experimental and often improvised strategies. The three distinct stages of Via Roma's

[636] Castronovo, *Giovanni Agnelli*, pp. 566-67.

reconstruction serve as a useful case study of this improvised approach, as the project was developed with a variety of aesthetics over the course of the tumultuous decade. In the first section, architects designed an assortment of heavily ornamented buildings inspired by seventeenth-century baroque design. While the blocks conformed to a loose set of technical standards, the aesthetic restrictions were largely left open to interpretation. What's more, in order to secure funding for the reconstruction, the city had segmented the project into separate city blocks, each financed by different investors and therefore designed by different architects. As a result, the first section of Via Roma was unified only in the sense that each block was lined with porticoes and styled in a neo-baroque aesthetic. But on the whole, developers and architects had been left to their own devices for determining the design of each building. The regime had supported the project by authorizing it as a public work—making for swift expropriations and better tax incentives for investors—but beyond approving the project's legal status, the Fascist state had little involvement in the design and planning of the new street. Accordingly, the eclectic aesthetic of the first section of Via Roma can be understood as a product of the regime's general approach to architectural and economic interventions at the beginning of the 1930s—that is, to co-opt evidence of progress while failing to provide any strategic oversight.

With the subsequent construction of the Torre Littoria from 1933 to 1934, developers hoped that the latest material innovations would help to alleviate Italy's continued economic strife in the aftermath of the global economic crisis. Advances in welding techniques presented developers with the opportunity to construct the first steel-frame skyscraper in Italy. This offered the obvious advantage of maximizing returns because the steel structure would allow for greater height and therefore increased rentable space. The incorporation of industrial materials also appealed to developers because they could save on labor costs by assembling the building from ready-made components instead of using more traditional labor-intensive methods of construction. At the same time, the concept of the *torre littoria* gave architects the opportunity to experiment with a new building typology—in this case, both a habitable tower and an emblem of Fascism. Steel construction technology presented architects with "new advantages and new possibilities of expression," unencumbered by heavy load-bearing walls and vertical limitations.[637] The final design for the Torre Littoria in Turin was a striking example of modernist architecture that featured distinctly Italian details reimagined for the modern era, such as luminous glass balconies, and brick and travertine cladding over the structure's eighty-seven-meter steel skeleton.

While the building was touted as a symbol of Italian greatness, its construction brought to light a fundamental contradiction in the regime's economic strategy: on the one hand, the government relied on private funding, which it secured by guaranteeing a high rate of return on investments, but on the other, it sought to appease the economic concerns of the masses by creating jobs through large-scale public works. The use of steel for the tower's construction meant that developers saw greater returns—a necessary precondition of the project—but it also meant that relatively few jobs would be created and far greater imports would be required to meet the material demands of steel-frame construction. These concerns coupled with the harsh criticism aimed at the baroque-inspired style of the first section prompted the government to launch a design competition for the second section of the street in the hopes finding a resolution for the various competing interests.

The final section of the new Via Roma, built between the years of 1935 and 1937, was shaped by the regime's increasingly centralized controls over labor and production. Unlike the aesthetics of the first section, which had been left open to individual developers and their

[637] Giuseppe Pagano, "L'estetica delle costruzioni in acciaio", *Casabella*, August/September 1933, pp. 66-69.

architects, the second section was a master-planned project informed by dozens of designs submitted for consideration. While none of these submissions was granted the top prize, innovations from various architectural teams were extracted and then repurposed in a master plan under the supervision of the architect Marcello Piacentini. This strategy lent a consistent architectural aesthetic to the entire second section. Like the first section, the second section of the new street was funded by several different investors. However, the Piacentinian portion of the new Via Roma was not a piecemeal composition. Instead, by the mid-1930s, with more consolidation of wealth in the hands of a small number of elites and centralized government bodies, the project could be funded in larger multi-block compounds. Fiat, for example, financed six blocks of the reconstruction, while the government's social security organization, the INFPS, financed three blocks. The state's elaborate welfare system had evolved in recent years to compensate for the austerity conditions and low pay imposed by the regime. By mandating worker contributions, these systems had also given the state a new mechanism for redirecting funds from the pockets of the masses and into a centralized savings pool, which it could then invest in for-profit ventures. In the case of Via Roma, this meant that the INFPS—an organization created to support the nation's neediest citizens—could operate as a real estate developer for the construction of luxury apartments and high-end shops.

Importantly, the second phase of Via Roma's reconstruction was characterized by Piacentini's signature aesthetic: a heavy and imposing architectural style that was particularly well-suited to the material constraints of the second half of the 1930s. When sanctions were imposed on Italy following the country's invasion of Ethiopia, national self-sufficiency became a critical economic concern. As Italy attempted to liberate itself from foreign imports, Piacentini's architectural style was a logical choice because it relied on traditional building techniques and domestically-sourced materials like stone and concrete. Conversely, while the steel-frame construction of the Torre Littoria had pleased investors for its high-yield verticality, it also required substantial imports of raw materials. Crucially, Italy lacked the necessary metal and coal reserves to adopt steel-frame construction on a wider scale. Piacentini's style, however, represented a compromise between the two aesthetic solutions exhibited in the first phase of Via Roma's reconstruction. The heavy structures typical of the Piacentinian *stile littorio* could be built from stone columns and concrete, allowing for greater verticality than the baroque style of the first section, but without requiring the large quantities of imported materials entailed in a steel-frame tower like the Torre Littoria. Similarly, the simplicity of Piacentini's style allowed for rapid, low-skill construction, especially when compared to the ornate neo-baroque aesthetic adopted in the first section. In this regard, Piacentinian aesthetics made sense not only for the symbolic emphasis on national rather than local heritage, but also for economic reasons of providing work for the job-seeking masses.

Architects, meanwhile, had moved away from bitter stylistic critiques of years earlier as their professional sphere had become increasingly organized through the National Fascist Architects' Syndicate, which was centralized under the state's authority. With the government's shift towards autarky, an architect's ability to collaborate on large commissions—especially those that emphasized domestic production—was preferred over a philosophical defense of a specific style—in particular if that style required imported materials. The autarkic conditions of the late 1930s had severely limited the stylistic and technical possibilities of architecture and construction. As a result, architects were forced to make compromises in both their designs and their debates. In the early 1930s, for example, Piacentini was drawn into a contentious and extended debate with the traditionalist Ugo Ojetti concerning the incorporation of arches and columns in Italian

architecture.[638] By 1938, however, their heated exchange had cooled, as questions of materials and economic viability took over. Ojetti, it seems, was finally convinced by Piacentini's "precise data and calculations to reduce the use of iron and also of imported timber in construction, to practically re-use our stones and marbles." [639] These materials, he agreed, "are precious because they come from a master of vast authority and experience and follow point-by-point the needs of autarky."[640] Indeed, for Piacentini, the incorporation of national materials and traditional methods of construction was not so much an aesthetic choice, but an economic philosophy. For Piacentini, it was only "[b]y returning architecture to the spiritual sources of [Italian] tradition that the means of winning the economic battle will be found."[641]

Piacentini's assertion substantiates the central argument of this dissertation: that the economic conditions and policies of Italy's Fascist government played a fundamental role in determining architectural aesthetics in the 1930s. In other words, the stylistic variability of public buildings in the Fascist period can be explained, at least in part, through an investigation of the shifting financial constraints, opportunities, and negotiations of the regime. In this case study of the reconstruction of Via Roma, I argue that patrons, politicians, and professionals were all forced to consider—at varying times and to varying degrees—the practical question of the project's financial viability. They were preoccupied not only by what they would build, but also by how it would be paid for, and crucially, whether or not it would be profitable. To be sure, ideological debates informed architectural design in the Fascist period. However, these arguments were continuously weighed against considerations of practical implementation. In this sense, the architecture of the regime can be understood as an architecture of compromise; the result of an economic reality as well as a political construct.

[638] The debates between Piacentini and Ojetti on the incorporation of arches and columns were carried out in a series of publications over the course of 1933. The correspondence between the architectural adversaries is collected and reprinted in Luciano Patetta, *L'architettura Italiana, 1919-1943: Le polemiche*, "Polemica Ojetti-Piacentini sul tema *le colonne e gli archi*", pp. 313-333.

[639] Ugo Ojetti, "Piacentini ha ragione", February 1938, which appeared in a collection of essays, *In Italia, l'arte ha da essere italiana?* Milan 1942. Reprinted in Patetta, 1972, pp. 378-383.

[640] Ibid., p. 378.

[641] Marcello Piacentini's 1938 article for *Il Giornale d'Italia*, quoted in Ugo Ojetti's response "Piacentini ha ragione". Reprinted in Luciano Patetta, *L'architettura Italiana, 1919-1943: Le polemiche*. Cooperativa Libreria Universitaria del Politecnico, 1972, pp. 378-383.

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