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Michael R. Ebner

Excerpt

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Introduction

The Fascist Archipelago

In the Mediterranean and Adriatic seas lie several archipelagos of small Italian islands, some measuring only a few hundred meters across: the Pontine Islands, southwest of Rome; the Aeolian Islands, north of Messina; the Aegadian Islands, west of Sicily; the Pelagie archipelago, some two hundred miles south of Sicily, closer to the shores of Tunisia; and, finally, the Tremiti Islands, off the coast of northern Puglia in the Adriatic.¹ A handful of these islands – Ponza, Ventotene, Lipari, Ustica, Favignana, Pantelleria, Lampedusa, San Domino, and San Nicola – have served as sites of confinement, exile, and punishment for thousands of years. In the time of the Roman Empire, most of them hosted political exiles, often bothersome family members of the emperor.² Throughout the nineteenth century, the Italian peninsula's various kingdoms used them as penal colonies. After Italy's Unification in 1860, the islands continued to serve as sites of punishment, exile, and, during times of war, internment.³ Although today these places are beautiful, sun-drenched

¹ There are several useful local histories of these islands: Giovanni Maria De Rossi, *Ventotene e S. Stefano* (Rome, 1999); Silvio Corvisieri, *All'Isola di Ponza. Regno borbonico e Italia nella storia di un'isola, 1734–1984* (Rome, 1985); Enzo Mancini, *Isole Tremiti: Sassi di Diomede. Natura, storia, arte, turismo* (Milan, 1979).

² Xavier Lafon, "Les îles de la mer Tyrrhénienne: entre palais et prisons sous les Julio-Claudiens," in *Carcer: Prison et privation de liberté dans l'antiquité classique. Actes du colloque de Strasbourg, 5 e 6 décembre 1997*, ed. Cécil Bertrand-Dagenbach, Alain Chauvot, Michel Matter, and Jean-Marie Salamito (Paris, 1999), 149–62.

³ For the history of these practices, see Davide Petrini, *La prevenzione inutile: illegittimità delle misure praeter delictum* (Naples, 1996); Leonardo Musci, *Il confino fascista di polizia. L'apparato statale di fronte al dissenso politico e sociale* (Milan, 1983); Richard Bach Jensen, *Liberty and Order: The Theory and Practice of Italian Public Security*

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tourist destinations, at the beginning of the twentieth century most were desolate, desiccated, wind-swept rocks. Their coasts – high, jagged cliffs – rendered them virtual prisons amid vast expanses of rolling sea.

Between 1926 and 1943, Benito Mussolini's Fascist regime arrested and deported tens of thousands of Italians to these islands.⁴ In the 1930s, when the island “confinement colonies” became too full, the regime exiled “less dangerous” detainees to small, isolated villages in the Mezzogiorno, Italy's impoverished south.⁵ By the end of the decade, there were more exiles on the mainland than detainees on the islands. Placing a half-dozen anti-Fascists in one village, a few Jehovah's Witnesses in another, a homosexual here, a *mafioso* there, and so on, the Fascists implanted across southern Italy a vast, man-made archipelago: hundreds of islands of exile inhabited by the regime's political and social outcasts. Over the course of the dictatorship, institutions of punishment and confinement proliferated. By the time of Italy's involvement in the Second World War, there were concentration camps, political prisons, work houses, confinement colonies, and sites of internment scattered throughout the entire Italian peninsula.⁶ This archipelago of repression was not only geographic but also social: the Fascist regime carefully focused state-backed violence and repression on select communities, classes, and public and private spaces. Within the sea of “normal” society, there were thus myriad islands of repression.

This book began as a history of the Fascist system of political confinement (*confino politico*) told through the experiences of political

Policy, 1848 to the Crisis of the 1890s (New York, 1991); John A. Davis, *Conflict and Control: Law and Order in Nineteenth Century Italy* (Basingstoke, 1988); Guido Corso, *L'ordine pubblico* (Bologna, 1979); and Franco Molfese, *Storia del brigantaggio dopo l'Unità* (Milan, 1964), 344–60.

⁴ The regime sentenced 15,000 Italians to *confino politico* (political confinement) and between 25,000 and 50,000 to “common” *confino*. See Michael Ebner, “Dalla repressione dell'antifascismo al controllo sociale. Il confino di polizia, 1926–1943,” *Storia e problemi contemporanei* 43 (2006): 81–104; Adriano Dal Pont and Simonetta Carolini, eds., *L'Italia al confino: le ordinanze di assegnazione al confino emesse dalle Commissioni provinciali dal novembre 1926 al luglio 1943*, 4 vols. (Milan, 1983).

⁵ There are many works on aspects of the Fascist *confino di polizia* system. Among the most useful are Ebner, “Dalla repressione dell'antifascismo”; Silverio Corvisieri, *La villeggiatura di Mussolini: Il confino da Bocchini a Berlusconi* (Milan, 2004); Alessandra Pagano, *Il confino politico a Lipari, 1926–1933* (Milan, 2003); Musci, *Il confino fascista di polizia*; and Celso Ghini and Adriano Dal Pont, *Gli antifascisti al confino, 1926–1943* (Rome, 1971).

⁶ See Carlo Spartaco Capogreco, *I campi del Duce: l'internamento civile nell'Italia fascista, 1940–43* (Turin, 2004); and the essays in Costantino di Sante, ed., *I campi di concentramento in Italia* (Milan, 2001).

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detainees.⁷ However, the files state authorities kept on these people – which contain police reports, correspondence between state agencies, denunciations, letters written by detainees and their families, medical records, and other documents – revealed to me the history of more than just one institution of repression.⁸ Individually and collectively, these sources told the stories of ordinary people, families, and communities living under a violent Fascist dictatorship.⁹ By telling the history of the Fascist archipelago, this book seeks to establish that the Mussolini dictatorship ruled Italy through violence. I use the term *violence* in two, closely related senses. The first is “the exercise of physical force in order to injure, control, or intimidate others,” typically by persons who were “acting illegally.”¹⁰ Fascists and police, according to official sources, regularly “killed,” “beat,” “clubbed,” “punched,” “slapped,” “kicked,” “hit,” and otherwise used spontaneous “force” and “acts of violence” against citizens. Police reports also often used euphemisms for these types of violence and other methods of torture.¹¹ The second, broader meaning of *violence* in this book refers to state practices which, although technically legal, were so broadly defined in the legislation and applied with such executive discretion that they can hardly be said to have been bound

⁷ Although this book draws primarily on the files of political detainees, both the “political” and “common” branches of the *confino* system are relevant (and are dealt with extensively, particularly in ch. 4).

⁸ Excerpts of these sources have been published in Donatella Carbone, *Il popolo al confino: la persecuzione fascista in Basilicata* (Rome, 1994); Katia Massara, *Il popolo al confino: la persecuzione fascista in Puglia* (Rome, 1991); Rosa Spadafora, *Il popolo al confino: la persecuzione fascista in Campania*, 2 vols. (Naples, 1989); Salvatore Carbone and Laura Grimaldi, *Il popolo al confino: la persecuzione fascista in Sicilia* (Rome, 1989); and Salvatore Carbone, *Il popolo al confino: la persecuzione fascista in Calabria* (Cosenza, 1977).

⁹ Much of the research for this study is based on a sample I conducted on the personal files (*fascicoli personali*) of political detainees (*confinati politici*) at the State Central Archive in Rome. The sample consisted of 549 files, or almost 4% of the personal files. I requested every fifth or sixth box (I had to increase the box interval because the sample was taking too long). The number of files in each box was divided by three, and the resulting quotient constituted the interval. I then chose three files at that interval. For each box, I took a new starting point to select the first file and counted the interval from there (i.e., starting with the first file in the first box, the second file in the second box, and so forth). Therefore, as much as possible, considering the restrictions of time (twelve months), the structure of the archive, and archival regulations, this sample was random and representative of the archival series in general. From each file, I collected roughly 100 pieces of quantifiable data and recorded a mass of qualitative research on each case.

¹⁰ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., sv. “violence,” n. (1a) and “violent,” adv. (3a).

¹¹ Mauro Canali, *Le spie del regime* (Bologna, 2004), 77–8.

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by the law: the summary removal of people from their homes in the middle of the night; confinement in dirty, vermin-infested jails and prisons, without explanation or access to law courts; the thirst, hunger, and disease that were rife within the island confinement colonies; the trauma of poverty, which the police state knowingly and sometimes deliberately inflicted on wives and children of detainees; the revocation of business permits for political motives; the intimidation of living under a one-party regime whose supporters shared in the state's monopoly on violence and truth; and the political discrimination practiced by Fascists in distributing employment, welfare, and other state assistance.¹² The regime used these two types of violence – one illegal, the other legal – to punish Italians or coerce them into conforming to certain standards of political and social behavior. In select cases, public-security authorities, Fascists, or militiamen applied legal measures in conjunction with physical assaults and criminal behavior. Broadly and ambiguously defined police powers often begot abuse, mistreatment, and torture, so that Fascists and police operated in a “gray zone” between legality and illegality. Finally, in word and deed, the Fascist regime constantly reminded Italians that although it did not engage in physical or lethal violence on a *mass* scale, it claimed the right to beat, torture, and kill *select* enemies with impunity. For the intended audience, this threat meant that one truly never knew what to expect from a knock on the door. The fear of punishment unfettered by the rule of law was, for many Italians, a form of terror. The twentieth century – the century of genocide, concentration camps, ethnic cleansing, and extreme evil – has perhaps obscured how little it takes to frighten large numbers of ordinary people. Violence, albeit an ordinary kind of violence, was central to the policies and institutions of Fascist rule.

This regime of ordinary violence profoundly affected the minutiae of everyday life under Fascism. Although only fifteen thousand Italians experienced political confinement, the fearful and traumatic episodes that preceded these sentences were familiar to vastly broader sections of Italian society: tense run-ins with feared Fascists; house searches conducted by police or Fascist militiamen; the arrests and interrogations of neighbors, family members, co-workers, and other witnesses in the wake of some trifling offense to Mussolini; the pressure to conform, to nod silently while angrily disagreeing; the fear of reprisals, repercussions, and discrimination, based on one's past behavior; and the economic decline of a

¹² Paul Corner, “Italian Fascism: Whatever Happened to Dictatorship?” *Journal of Modern History* 74 (June 2002): 325–51.

political suspect and his family, witnessed by friends, family, and neighbors. The case files of Fascism's political detainees reveal patterns of physical attacks, threats, intimidation, and discrimination that were so mundane, banal, and similar, that they can only have occurred repeatedly literally *ad infinitum*, hundreds of thousands, even millions, of times over the course of two decades. Consequently, public and private spaces – particularly the iconic spaces of public life (e.g., the bar or the piazza) – were transformed into sites of fear and intimidation.¹³ State policies established parameters for coercive action wherever there were highly charged spaces of social conflict: bars and taverns, piazzas and streets, train stations, trams, courtyards, public dormitories, jails, factories and work sites of manual laborers, and sometimes family homes. Politicized social conflict almost always involved a member of one of Fascism's constituencies (e.g., Fascists and militiamen, white-collar workers, professionals, state employees, and bar and small shop owners) initiating processes that led to the punishment of a member of a vulnerable group (e.g., political suspects, citizens “indifferent” to the regime, and a whole host of “social outsiders,” including the poor, the unemployed, alcoholics, ex-convicts, and the mentally ill).¹⁴ Granting citizens coercive power – whether they used it in good political faith or not – created a mechanism that bound many Italians, particularly Fascists, to the regime. Once Fascists and others became accustomed to calling on the state to resolve mundane conflicts in their favor, there was no turning back. Anyone who attained power, wealth, status, satisfaction, or revenge by exercising authoritarianism became heavily and irreversibly invested in the system. Therefore, political confinement, formal proceedings, and imprisonment might have been inflicted on relatively small numbers of people, but political conflict, arrests, interrogations, intimidation, threats, and silent sufferings were quotidian – they were hyperordinary.

The Era of Extraordinary Violence

In addition to exposing the centrality of “ordinary violence” to Fascist rule, this book aspires to position the case of Fascist Italy within the

¹³ On the significance of the piazza and other public spaces, see Mario Isnenghi, *L'Italia in piazza: I luoghi della vita pubblica dal 1848 ai giorni nostri* (Bologna, 2004).

¹⁴ On “fascist constituencies,” see Michael Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge, 2004), 25–7; Canali, *Le spie*; Mimmo Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra: agenti, collaborator e vittime della polizia politica fascista* (Turin, 1999); and Franzinelli, *Delatori: spie e confidenti anonimi: l'arma segreta del regime fascista* (Milan, 2001).

scholarly literature on political violence and totalitarian terror, fields of study from which the Italian case is too often excluded.¹⁵ In the period after the First World War, European states, Italy first among them, constructed legal and institutional apparatuses for punishing and confining unprecedentedly large numbers of political prisoners.¹⁶ More than a dozen authoritarian regimes established special courts, executive tribunals, secret police, and new institutions of confinement and punishment. Governments segregated these institutions from the regular judicial and prison systems in order to tightly control the prosecution of political crime. In most cases, with the exception of the Soviet Union, these new apparatuses of political repression primarily targeted the Marxist left and its affiliated organizations. Over time, however, many governments introduced increasingly broad definitions of “crimes against the state.” Political prison sentences and other sanctions were meted out to people for merely holding Socialist or “antinational” ideas. Introduced in most cases to defend the established capitalist order, these novel practices of mass political repression marked a radical break with

¹⁵ In comparative studies of political violence and terror, the absence of the case of Fascist Italy and the undervaluing of the role that repression played in the dictatorship probably owe more to the lack of research by historians of Italy than any predisposition among historians of modern Europe. Nevertheless, Hannah Arendt, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, 1994), argued that Fascist Italy was not totalitarian because, she alleged, it lacked a system of mass repression. The study of “denunciatory” regimes usually excludes Fascist Italy; see, e.g., Robert Gellately and Sheila Fitzpatrick, eds., *Accusatory Practices: Denunciation in Modern European History, 1789–1989* (Chicago, 1997). Too often facile generalizations of Fascist Italy are used to underscore the monstrosity of other regimes. In the introduction to *The Black Book of Communism* (Cambridge, MA, 1999), Stéphane Courtois dismisses repression under Italian Fascism, noting that in the “1930s Italy had a few hundred political prisoners and several hundred *confinati*, placed under house arrest on the country’s coastal islands” (14). Courtois misstates the numbers of political prisoners (a few thousand political prisoners and a few thousand *confinati* would be more accurate) and misrepresents the conditions in which some detainees lived (often in crude, squalid barracks). The introduction to a new comparative volume notes that Italian Fascism “remained largely a concentrated drive to stylize social life that more often than not refrained from cutting into the flesh of its own subjects.” See Amir Weiner, “Landscaping the Human Garden,” in *Landscaping the Human Garden: Twentieth Century Population Management in a Comparative Framework*, ed. Amir Weiner (Stanford, 2003), 266n46.

¹⁶ On the primacy of Fascist terror as a “model of activist mass politics” that “depended heavily on the formative and coercive use of violence in defiance of conventional rules of political or social conduct,” see Aristotle A. Kallis, “Fascism, Violence and Terror,” in *Terror: From Tyrannicide to Terrorism*, ed. Brett Bowden and Michael T. Davis (St. Lucia, 2008), 190–204.

nineteenth-century liberal models of constitutional rule and criminal justice.¹⁷

A few interwar regimes – notably Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, and, I argue, Fascist Italy – set themselves apart by heavily involving militarized political parties and ordinary citizens in the implementation of coercive policies intended to effect a utopian social transformation. Unlike conservative, military, or monarchical authoritarian regimes, these states – which scholars often compare using “totalitarian” or “fascist” paradigms – sought not to repress mass society but instead to mobilize their populations through propaganda, party-controlled participatory organizations, and police-state terror.¹⁸ Although the utility of the totalitarian model as a comparative tool appears to be waning, connecting the case of Fascist violence to the literature on totalitarian violence – or, specifically, National Socialist and Soviet terror – highlights several important features of the Fascist repressive apparatus.¹⁹ The Mussolini regime’s police, party, prisons, and propaganda, together with the real and metaphorical archipelagos described in the preceding text, performed most of the same core functions as the terror apparatuses of the Nazi and Soviet regimes.²⁰ The police state crushed the political opposition and stifled dissent, and then went on to target “objective enemies” whose behaviors, tendencies, and inherent traits Fascists deemed inimical to the

¹⁷ For an excellent overview of interwar institutions of political repression, see Polymeris Voglis, *Becoming a Subject: Political Prisoners during the Greek Civil War* (New York, 2002), 22–30.

¹⁸ The literature on totalitarianism is massive, beginning with the earliest works by Arendt, Jacob Talmon, Carl Friedrich, and Zbigniew Brzezinski, not all of whom considered Italy truly “totalitarian.” My point here is not to argue that Mussolini’s dictatorship was “totalitarian” (for this argument, see Emilio Gentile, *La via italiana al totalitarismo* [Rome, 2005]) but simply to compare Fascist Italy to National Socialist Germany and the Soviet Union by asking the very useful questions presented by the totalitarian, and also fascist, paradigms. A good comparison of Mussolini’s dictatorship with traditional, authoritarian regimes can be found in Stanley Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914–1945* (Madison, 1995), esp. 3–19. See also Edward Malefakis, “La dictadura de Franco en una perspectiva comparada,” in *Franquismo: El juicio de la storia*, ed. José Luis García Delgado (Madrid: Temas de hoy, 2000), 11–68.

¹⁹ See Michael Geyer and Sheila Fitzpatrick, eds., *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared* (Cambridge, 2009).

²⁰ Recent examinations of Fascist repression and violence in comparative perspective include, Sven Reichardt and Armin Nolzen, eds., *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Nationalsozialismus*, vol. 21: *Faschismus in Italien und Deutschland: Studien zu Transfer und Vergleich* (Göttingen: 2005); and Gerhard Besier et al., eds., *Fascism, Communism, and the Consolidation of Democracy* (Berlin, 2006).

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regime.²¹ The Nazi and Fascist regimes in particular operated in strikingly similar fashions, first “cleansing” the nation of Communists and anti-Fascists, then stepping up their campaigns against ethnic and religious minorities, homosexuals, alcoholics, common criminals, and other categories of enemies and “social outsiders.”²² Upon a few select groups, both regimes imposed suffocating surveillance and control.²³ By persecuting these groups, and spreading fear among others, both aspired to advance their projects of social transformation, forcing people to adapt their behaviors to the expectations of the national government and its ideology. Moreover, in order to penetrate society more deeply, these regimes involved the party, paramilitary organizations – in Italy, the National Fascist Party (PNF) and the Fascist Militia (MVSN) – and ordinary citizens in the implementation of repression and coercion through policing, spying, informing, and other denunciatory practices.²⁴ Consequently, as in Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union, contending with political repression and state-backed violence constituted a way of life for many people in Fascist Italy. How people acted in public, at work, and even at home were in part conditioned by their understandings of the regime’s policies and the ever-present potential for violence and punishment.

Italian Fascists by no means ruled more violently than the National Socialists, the Bolsheviks, or even Franco’s Nationalists, all of whom adopted more formalized systems of repression, more clearly defined utopias, and incalculably more brutal strategies of rule.²⁵ Nevertheless, more so than any of these regimes, violence was central to the ideology and practice of Fascism. The Fascists viewed violence as a vital force capable of bringing about a moral and physical regeneration, or “reclamation”

²¹ Arendt, *Origins*, 421–6.

²² Mann, *Fascists*, 2; Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford, 2001); Robert Gellately and Nathan Stoltzfus, eds., *Social Outsiders in Nazi Germany* (Princeton, 2001).

²³ Eric A. Johnson, *Nazi Terror: The Gestapo, Jews, and Ordinary Germans* (New York, 1999); Franzinelli, *I tentacoli*; Giorgio Rochat, *Regime fascista e chiese evangeliche: direttive e articolazioni del controllo e della repressione* (Turin, 1990).

²⁴ On Germany, see Klaus-Michael Mallmann and Gerhard Paul, eds., *Die Gestapo: Mythos und Realität* (Darmstadt, 1995); Robert Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society: Enforcing Racial Policy, 1933–1945* (Oxford and New York, 1990); Robert Gellately, “Aspects of Self-Policing in the Third Reich and the German Democratic Republic,” *Journal of Modern History* 68 (1996): 931–67. On Italy, see Canali, *Le Spie*; Franzinelli, *Delatori*; Franzinelli, *I tentacoli*.

²⁵ On Spain, see Michael Richards, *A Time of Silence: Civil War and the Culture of Repression in Franco's Spain, 1936–1945* (Cambridge, 1998).

(*bonifica*), of the organic nation.²⁶ Violence, for Fascists, was not merely a strategy or technique for achieving political goals, but also a “‘positive’ formative experience in its own right.”²⁷ In many ways, Fascists compensated for their relative ideological and programmatic vacuity by ascribing immense transformative power to interpersonal and military violence. The biographies of the regime’s hierarchs (*gerarchi*) or Ras (bosses) underscore the specificity of Fascist attitudes toward political and military violence. Virtually all of the Ras had orchestrated terror, murdered people in Italy, or committed war crimes abroad.²⁸ Italo Balbo, the Ras of Ferrara, pioneered the tactics of agrarian *squadrisimo* (squad violence): selective murder, beatings, force-feeding of castor oil to political opponents, ritual humiliation, and arson.²⁹ In the two years before Mussolini became prime minister in 1922, the Ras led squads of Black Shirts, who carried out a campaign of political terror throughout northern Italy that killed several thousand people, wounded tens of thousands, and forced tens of thousands of others to leave their communities or Italy altogether.³⁰ Fascists murdered prominent political opponents – Giacomo Matteotti most famously – and used interpersonal violence in their everyday lives.³¹ Following the consolidation of Mussolini’s power and the suppression of *squadrisimo*, Fascists were deprived of domestic arenas for large-scale paramilitary violence. However, with the outbreak of war in Ethiopia, most Fascist bosses eagerly rushed to East Africa. Giuseppe Bottai, who held several important ministries under the regime, recalled that Fascists regularly committed small-scale, “bestial” war crimes, and

²⁶ On the term *bonifica* (reclamation or improvement) and Fascism’s overarching social and cultural objectives, see Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922–45* (Berkeley, 2004).

²⁷ Kallis, “Fascism, Violence and Terror,” 190.

²⁸ R. J. B. Bosworth, *Mussolini’s Italy: Life under the Fascist Dictatorship, 1915–1945* (New York, 2005), 7.

²⁹ On Balbo’s exploits, see Paul Corner, *Fascism in Ferrara, 1915–1925* (London, 1975), esp. 37, 259, 263–6.

³⁰ Sven Reichardt, *Faschistische Kampfbünde: Gewalt und Gemeinschaft im italienischen Squadrisimus und der deutschen SA* (Cologne, 2002); Angelo Tasca, *The Rise of Italian Fascism*, trans. Peter and Dorothy Wait (New York, 1965), originally published in French in 1938; Mimmo Franzinelli, *Squadristi* (Milan, 2003); Adrian Lyttelton, “Fascism and Violence in Postwar Italy: Political Strategy and Social Conflict” and Jens Petersen, “Violence in Italian Fascism, 1919–1925,” both in *Social Protest, Violence and Terror in 19th and 20th Century Europe*, ed. W. Mommsen and G. Hirschfeld (New York, 1982). On anti-Fascist exiles, see Aldo Garosci, *Storia dei fuorusciti* (Bari, 1953).

³¹ See Paolo Nello, *Dino Grandi: La formazione di un leader fascista* (Bologna, 1987), 126; Harry Fornari, *Mussolini’s Gadfly: Roberto Farinacci* (Nashville, 1971), 18–19; and Bosworth, *Mussolini’s Italy*, 126–8.

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that, “naturally, even if one did not speak about them, everyone gossiped about them.”³² For Ras and rank-and-file Fascists alike, squad violence, political violence, and military violence were inextricably linked and had forged their very identities as Fascists.³³ For Bottai, Fascism provided the opportunity to profit from his desire, awakened by the Great War, “to live war in the depth of [his] consciousness.” Bottai recalled, “war, this fact dominated my life after 1914. Twenty years and more of life inside war.”³⁴

Despite the special valence of violence for Fascists, several factors imposed restraint, at least domestically, relative to other interwar regimes. Fascism harbored no ideological or programmatic imperative to kill its own citizens. In Germany and the Soviet Union, the guiding political ideologies, extreme in their utopianism, explicitly demanded the liquidation of entire groups of people.³⁵ Even in Spain, the Franco regime displayed a powerful, singular determination to extirpate the “anti-Spain.”³⁶ Mussolini’s “revolution” also brought no changes to the class structure and did not effectively break down the parochialisms of Italian society, in part because Mussolini eventually tempered repressive violence, most notably by suppressing *squadristo*. Moreover, Italy did not experience a true civil war, which certainly contributed to the escalation of killing in Russia and Spain. Finally, Moscow, and later Berlin, presided over vast, land-based empires, in which most populations viewed the Germans and the Soviets as hostile, occupying powers.³⁷ These immense spaces, far removed from the *metropole* and populated by ethnic “others,” created fields of operation without moral limits.³⁸

It should be noted, however, that when Fascist Italy acted outside of its borders – for example, in Libya, Ethiopia, Yugoslavia, and Greece – the military committed horrible, genocidal atrocities, fueled in part by

³² E.g., Giuseppe Bottai alleged that Achille Starace, the *squadrist* leader who served as the Fascist Party secretary for most of the 1930s, when summarily executing prisoners of war in Ethiopia, shot his victims in the testicles first so that they might suffer more. Bottai, *Diario, 1935–1944* (Milan, 1982), 102.

³³ Reichardt, *Faschistische Kampfbünde*, esp. 696.

³⁴ Quoted in Alexander De Grand, “Mussolini’s Follies: Fascism in Its Imperial and Racist Phase, 1935–1940,” *Contemporary European History* 13:2 (2004): 137; Bottai, *Diario*, entry for December 4, 1935, 62.

³⁵ Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Ippermann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933–1945* (Cambridge, 2007).

³⁶ Richards, *Time of Silence*.

³⁷ See Mark Mazower, *Hitler’s Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe* (New York, 2008), and Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia’s Continuum of Crisis, 1914–1921* (Cambridge, MA, 2002).

³⁸ See Geyer and Fitzpatrick, *Beyond Totalitarianism*.