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IMPERIALISM, WAR, AND EMIGRATION IN ENRICO CORRADINI AND THE IDEOLOGY OF ITALIAN NATIONALISM (1896-1912)

Nationalism, which became one of the leading political movements in Italy in the first two decades of the twentieth century, has not to date been widely considered in Polish historiography.¹ Little attention has been paid to the development of its doctrine and to the political thought of its main proponents. It cannot be denied that the ideological programme of Italian nationalism evolved gradually. Its first premises were formulated in the first decade of the twentieth century, mainly as a result of the exchanges between three literary magazines: *Leonardo*, *Il Marzocco* and *Il Regno* published between 1903 and 1906. The first attempt to give a thorough presentation of the ideology of the movement was undertaken during the first Nationalist Congress which took place in Florence from 6 to 9 December 1910.² A major role in this initial, 'doctrinal' phase of the development of Italian nationalism was played by the Florentine novelist, theatre reviewer, playwright and journalist, Enrico Corradini (1865-1931).³ Not

¹ The rise and development of Italian nationalism is mentioned by Polish historians who deal with Italy's history such as J. Gierowski and M. Żywczyński, and by researchers who study Italian fascism and Italian political thought: S. Sierpowski, M. Waldenberg, W. Kozub-Ciembroniewicz.

² Historian Franco Gaeta has distinguished three phases in the development of Italian nationalism: 1) the period up to the Congress in Florence in 1910; 2) the years 1910-1914; 3) and from the Milan Congress until the fusion with fascism in February 1923. The first stage – the years 1903-1910 is often described as 'the phase of a mythological Italian nationalism', 'the phase of ideological incubation' or as rhetorical or literary nationalism. Cf. F. Gaeta, *Il nazionalismo italiano*, ESI, Naples 1965, p. 89; B. Croce, *Storia d'Italia dal 1871 al 1915*, Laterza, Rome-Bari 1985, pp. 250-252; G. De Rosa, *La crisi dello stato liberale in Italia*, Studium, Rome 1964, p. 166 and E. Gentile, 'Origini e sviluppo del nazionalismo' in R. De Felice (ed.), *Storia dell'Italia contemporanea*, Lucarini, Rome 1984, Vol. 2, p. 175.

³ Corradini's works included the two dramas *Giacomo Vettori* (1901) and *Giulio Cesare* (1902) and the novels *La patria lontana* (1910), *La guerra lontana* (1911) and *La marcia dei produttori* (1915).

only was he the author of the political programme of the new movement, but he was also one of the main organisers of the establishment of the Italian Nationalist Society (Associazione Nazionalista Italiana) in 1910 and subsequently a leading thinker of the daily newspaper *L'Idea Nazionale*.⁴

This article presents the main political concepts of Corradini that significantly influenced the character of the ideology of nationalism. It focuses especially on his conception of imperialism, the myth of victorious war and the problem of emigration from Italy. For Corradini, as well as for other theorists of Italian nationalism, such as Luigi Federzoni, Roberto Forges Davanzati, Giovanni Papini, Giuseppe Prezzolini, Giuseppe Antonio Borghese and Giorgio Pini,⁵ foreign policy was considered to be more important than anything else. They presented an ambitious strategy in the international sphere that was based on imperialism and military annexations; it was hoped that this would provide a solution to Italy's domestic problems, particularly the economic backwardness of the South (Questione Meridionale), Italy's high level of unemployment and, as a consequence of this, the problem of emigration.

These early theorists of nationalism criticized both the government's ineffective foreign policy, which they regarded as unsuitable for Italy, and the mistaken approach towards domestic affairs, which they viewed as being appropriate for a 'lower-middle class democracy'. They shared anti-liberal, anti-democratic and anti-socialist ideas as well as an aversion to the parliamentary system and popular elections. They despised the lower-middle class, which they believed were intoxicated with the ideas of pacifism and humanitarianism, and were dissatisfied with contemporary politics and culture, and they were particularly worried about Italy's abysmal military performance at the end of the nineteenth century.⁶

My analysis covers the period from Italy's defeat at the battle of Adua in 1896, which for nationalists had a symbolic meaning and was the catalyst for the formation

In 1922 he published his last book *L'Unità e la potenza delle Nazioni*, which was a collection of his articles and political speeches.

⁴ This first, so-called doctrinal phase in the development of nationalism ended in 1910 along with the establishment of the ANI. After the creation of the nationalist party and the outbreak of the First World War, the leading figures in the movement were Alfredo Rocco and Luigi Federzoni. After Mussolini's March on Rome, Corradini belonged to a group of nationalists who supported joining the NPF (National Fascist Party). In 1923 he was appointed a senator and played an important role in the liquidation of the institutions of the liberal state and the establishment of a corporate state. He was not, however, a supporter of Mussolini and at the end of his life he was excluded from political activity. See G. Petrillo, *Nazionalismo*, Bibliografica, Milan 1995, pp. 70-71, *Storia dei Movimenti e delle idee*, Vol. 10.

⁵ These first ideologists of the new movement, mainly writers, were connected with the literary journals mentioned above. They were described by Scipio Sighele as doctrinaires (dottrinari). See F. Leoni, *Origini del nazionalismo italiano*, Morano Ed., Naples 1970, p. 14.

⁶ The newly unified Italian State suffered a number of military defeats in the second half of the nineteenth century which had a harmful effect on the psyche of Italian society, especially the defeats at Custoza (24 June 1866), Lissa (20 July 1866), and Dogali in 1887 (25-26 January 1877). The Adua defeat of 1896 only added further to their misery.

of their movement, to the year 1912 and the end of the Italian-Turkish war in Libya. The conquest of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica proved to be an undeniable success for the nationalist stance over the neutral policy of Giovanni Giolitti's government. As historian Francesco Perfetti has noted, the propaganda campaign of the magazine *Idea Nazionale*, in particular, which supported the Trypolitan expedition, was the first attempt to test in practice the ideas and concepts of Italian nationalism, and was also motivated by a desire to avenge the Adua defeat.⁷

THE BATTLE OF ADUA (1896)

The defeat at Adua in Abyssinia which took place on 1 March 1896 was widely discussed in Italy and led to the dismissal of Francesco Crispi's government, whose ambitious foreign policy had proved to be a failure.⁸ The historian Francesco Leoni has also noted that it brought about the birth of the nationalist movement and, judging by frequent references to that event among its main theorists and sympathizers, it had a great influence on the younger generation of intellectuals who between 1903 and 1910 created the movement.⁹

Just a few days after the Adua defeat and the dismissal of Crispi's government (5 March 1896) Enrico Corradini, then an almost unknown young political commentator, published in *Il Marzocco* an article entitled 'Abba Garima' (8 March 1896)¹⁰ which expressed deep disappointment over the antics of the socialists in the Parliament. At the same time, Corradini expressed his faith in the people who, having in mind the interests of the state, became embroiled in a difficult and thankless political struggle. This article, which described the feeling of disorientation that engulfed Italian society after the defeat, is regarded as the first nationalist manifesto and a document which provided the ideological foundations for the new movement: 'At the time when our spirit was high, we, the young who thought that we had forgotten so many things, being possessed by fervour and the eagerness of individual yearnings and aspirations, we could suddenly feel this inner-bond with the spirit of

⁷ F. Perfetti, *Il nazionalismo italiano dalle origini alla fusione col fascismo*, Cappelli, Bologna 1977, p. 44.

⁸ The next premier, Antonio Starabba di Rudinì, retained the Italian colony in Eritrea, but the problematic protectorate over Ethiopia was abandoned, and a year later Cassala was handed over to Great Britain.

⁹ The first issue of 'L'Idea Nazionale', the official organ of the ANI was deliberately published on 1 March 1911, on the fifteenth anniversary of the Adua defeat. The plot of Corradini's novel *La guerra lontana*, which was also published in 1911 is set during the African war. One of the first decisions taken by the Central Committee of the ANI founded at the Congress in Florence in 1910 was a commemoration of the Adua defeat on 11 March in Rome's theatre, Teatro Argentina.

¹⁰ The title of the article refers to the name Abba Garima near Adua where the battle actually took place. Although the article was published anonymously, it is believed to have been written by Corradini. See R.S. Cunsolo, 'Enrico Corradini e la teoria del nazionalismo proletario', *Rassegna storica del risorgimento*, fasc. III, July-September 1978, p. 341.

our fatherland', wrote Corradini.¹¹ Similarly, a literary critic and journalist Giovanni Papini in his article 'Passato remoto' wrote: 'These dark and sour feelings led my generation to a rebellion against the cowardice of the bourgeoisie, and strengthened our faith in a new "Risorgimento."' ¹² A similar picture of the spirit of Italian society and especially of the young generation is depicted by another nationalist, Giorgio Pini, who many years later recalled: 'The harm which was done to us at that period was enormous. The legend of the Italians who were made to flee by a few Abyssinians was spread all over Europe and the world. It completely affected our politics, the conduct of the representatives of other nations and our emigrants who faced contempt and mockery from foreigners.'¹³

The Adua defeat also impinged upon the nationalists' stance towards the socialist movement, which was growing in strength at the end of the 19th century. Francesco Leoni believed that the nationalists' animosity towards socialism was due to the socialists' stance after the African defeat. During the session of the Chamber of Deputies on 5 March 1896, the members of the PSI [Partito Socialista Italiano – Italian Socialist Party] not only criticised the African campaign of Francesco Crispi, forcing his government to resign, but they also decided that there was no need to fortify the Italian garrison in Africa¹⁴ or to increase government spending on the military. 'The Socialists' activities, which are so different from the attitude of nationalists', Leoni declared, 'became a symbol of everything that nationalists despised.'¹⁵

Antisocialist declarations emerged with some other symptoms of a new nationalist ideology, such as a critique of the government's inept approach to international affairs and disgruntlement with the inadequate military training of Italian troops. Luigi Federzoni (1878-1967), one of the founders of the ANI [Associazione Nazionale Italiana], a writer and a journalist and later on an MP of the ANI, averred in his article 'Duty to remember' (*Il dovere di ricordare*) which was published on the anniversary of the Battle of Adua on 1 March 1911, that the defeat was caused by 'the immaturity of political thought and national identity among the top members of the intelligentsia.'¹⁶

Similarly, a few years later, in his speech *Commemorazione della battaglia di Adua* (commemoration of the Battle of Adua) delivered at the Bologna Teatro del Corso and published on 1 March 1914, Enrico Corradini alleged that 'inner, destructive

¹¹ E. Corradini, 'Abba Garima', *Il Marzocco*, 8 March 1896. Quoted in E. De Andreis, 'U źródeł nacjonalizmu włoskiego', *Mysł Narodowa* (Warszawa), Vol. 1, 24 April 1926, p. 260.

¹² Cf. F. Leoni, *Origini...*, p. 10.

¹³ G. Pini, *La vittoria fascista in Italia*, Rome 1924, p. 10.

¹⁴ Socialists sparked off an anti-war campaign throughout Italy; they shouted in the streets: 'Viva Menelik', 'Go from Africa', 'Go from Crispi', and blocked trains which were to take soldiers to the front. Quoted in F. Leoni, *Origini...*, p. 59. Similarly, Egisto De Andreis has noted: 'Political aberration reached its limits. The military propaganda of socialism supported and encouraged by the leftist democracy has killed the sense of national honour among the parliamentary representation and the nation.' E. De Andreis, 'U źródeł nacjonalizmu...', p. 260.

¹⁵ F. Leoni, *Origini...*, p. 60.

¹⁶ L. Federzoni, 'Il dovere di ricordare', *L'Idea Nazionale*, 1 March 1911.

and anti-national factions' (these included liberals and conservatives) as well as 'anti-constitutional groups' (democrats, republicans and especially the socialists who were under French patronage) had united in the Italian parliament against 'real Italians', and the politics of Francesco Crispi.¹⁷

In his attempt to depict the spirit of Italian society eighteen years after the Adua defeat, Corradini stated: 'There was a time when Italians felt that they had been deprived of nationality, Italy faced national nihilism, when thirty five million Italians found themselves lost within the frontiers of their own territory.'¹⁸ In the very same text he created a 'myth of those who were killed fighting for a just cause.' This was later used by Gabriele D'Annunzio during the Fiume period (1919-1920), as well as by fascist propaganda and also Francesco Crispi, the author of 'the third epoch in Italian history and the predecessor of Italian empire.'

Imperialism and colonial expansion from around 1903 became central to the agenda of Italian nationalism. That year Corradini along with a group of Florentine writers – Giovanni Papini, Giuseppe Prezzolini and Giuseppe Antonio Borghese – founded the magazine *Il Regno* which, unlike some other literary journals of the time (*Leonardo*, *Marzocco*, *Hermes*) had a political character and was considered to be the first official organ of the nationalist movement.¹⁹ In the opening article written by Corradini, the memory of the African defeat was still very vivid: 'Through the foundation of this journal my friends and I have one goal, we want to speak for all those who are troubled by and angry with the cowardice of today's Italy.' And he added proudly: 'The Italian nation, that is the majority which comprises the real Italian nation, has shown that it has already recovered from its stupor [...] The foundations for the nation's well-being have been laid and they will become the base upon which future glory will be built.'²⁰

Another event that contributed to the growth of imperialist tendencies within the nationalist circle was the Bosnia crisis of 1909. After Bosnia and Herzegovina were incorporated into the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the intellectuals of the nationalist movement condemned the government's conciliatory policy towards the Triple Alliance, describing it bluntly as being 'suitable for eunuchs.'²¹ Giorgio Pini, who

¹⁷ E. Corradini, 'Commemorazione della battaglia di Adua', 1 March 1914, in E. Corradini, *Il nazionalismo italiano*, Treves, Milan 1914, p. 243.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 255.

¹⁹ It was published until February 1905. The editors of the journals used to call themselves 'political realists'. F. Leoni, *Origini...*, p. 77.

²⁰ Quoted in F. Leoni, *Origini...*, p. 77.

²¹ It also led to an explosion of nationalist journals. In March 1909 the first issue of 'Il Caroccio' was published and among its authors were: Vincenzo Picardi, Ercole Rivalta, Gualtiero Castellini, Luigi Federzoni, Tommaso Monicelli, Maurizio Maraviglia. In April 1909 'Il Tricolore' was established in Turin under the management of Mario Viana, Riego Girola, Giovanni Michelotti, and in Milan 'La Grande Italia' of Dino Alfieri, Paolo Arcari, Michele Pericle Negrotto, Arturo Colautti and Giovanni Borelli. In June 1909 the first issue of 'La Preparazione', was published in Rome and its head was an economist Enrico Barone. 'La Nave' was published in Naples from October, 'Il Mare Nostro' was published in Venice from December 1910, and 'La Prora' was established in Florence in June 1910.

complained about the unprepared state of the army and navy which, in his view, was particularly dangerous given Italy's geopolitical situation, emphasised that 'Italy's foreign policy is practically passive. Memories of the African defeat are slowly fading away, but there is still a manifest aversion towards any form of military operation.'²²

The annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina led to irredentist tendencies becoming more pronounced within the nationalist movement. The reason for that was a feeling of disquiet on the part of Italy over Austria's actions, which even its 1882 alliance did not allay, as well as dissatisfaction with the conciliatory policy of the prime minister, Giovanni Giolitti, which did not protect sufficiently Italian interests in the Balkans. Another reason was the fact that some Italian territories that had once belonged to Italy – the Trident region, south Tyrol and Trieste – were within Austro-Hungarian borders.²³ These tendencies were clearly expressed by Giorgio Pini who wrote: 'After the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the antagonism between Italy and Austria became more and more pronounced in the Balkans – an area in which Austria strived for total supremacy and tried to eliminate any trace of our influence within the region. Conversely, Austria was waiting for the right moment to confront us. Thus one of the major problems of Italy's foreign policy was to avoid any move that would give Austria a pretext to provoke a confrontation.'²⁴

IMPERIALISM

The concept of imperialism in international relations that developed in the second half of the nineteenth century²⁵ was a novelty in Italian political culture. As Giovanni Papini and Giuseppe Prezzolini declared, the nationalist movement was born 'as

²² G. Pini, *La vittoria fascista...*, p. 39.

²³ The nationalists were aware of the clash of interests between Italy and the Balkan policy of Austria, and they also knew the strength of the irredentist and anti-Austrian feelings in Italian society. As early as 1904, the journal 'Il Regno' conducted a survey on the relationship between Italy and Austria, which included contributions from eminent representatives of the contemporary cultural and political spheres, e.g. the poet Gabriele D'Annunzio. Its results were published in nine subsequent issues in 1904. And at the First Congress in Florence in 1910 Scipio Sighele and Luigi Federzoni discussed the question of a possible war against Austria which would provide an opportunity to reclaim the irredenta territory. Federzoni, however, defended the Triple Alliance, and wanted to postpone the war against the Habsburg Empire until such a time when Italy was strong enough to face it. Yet Federzoni's view was not satisfactory for all the sympathisers of nationalism. After the Second Congress of Nationalists, on 20-22 December 1912 Scipio Sighele and Paolo Arcari, the proponents of irredentism and democratic rules left the party. G. Sabbatucci, 'Il problema dell'irredentismo e le origini del movimento nazionalista in Italia', *Storia contemporanea*, No. 3 (September 1970), pp. 467-502.

²⁴ G. Pini, *La vittoria fascista...*, p. 39.

²⁵ The first premises of imperialist nationalism were expressed by G. Durando in his book *Della nazionalità italiana*, published in Lausanne in 1846. His theory was based upon a conviction that a nationality had to possess geo-strategic value, which depended on topography and its military capacity. S. Zeppi, 'Il pensiero politico di D'Annunzio nell'Ottocento (1879-1900)', *Filosofia politica*, No. 1 (April 1999), p. 112.

a fruit of the pain and torment caused by a limited foreign policy which is suitable for a small nation.²⁶ A similar position was taken by those nationalists connected with the magazine *‘Il Regno’* who criticised the lack of a vigorous international policy.²⁷ Corradini in his article ‘Principii del nazionalismo,’ published in the volume *Ombre della vita* in 1908, stated that imperialism was a natural consequence of nationalism.²⁸

Corradini was a proponent of a colonial imperialism,²⁹ and the magazine *Il Regno* became a true adherent of colonial expansion. In his article *Qualche altra parola*, Corradini declared that ‘the best way to solve both small and serious domestic dilemmas was to ‘step out’ at the first possible opportunity.’³⁰ Expansionism was supposed to be a remedy that would allow the bourgeoisie, who were the principal recipients of the nationalist message, to defeat socialism whilst simultaneously excluding the so-called lower social strata from the class conflict. Such a goal could not be achieved by peaceful expansion through trade, because the scarcity of natural resources within Italy made such a venture unaffordable. Military expansion was viewed as being more practical. Colonialism was viewed in the context of the problem of emigration,

²⁶ G. Papini, G. Prezzolini, *Vecchio e nuovo nazionalismo*, Studio Editoriale Lombardo, Milan 1914, p. X.

²⁷ After the Associazione Nazionalista Italiana was established, there was no shortage of misunderstandings between ‘imperialists’ and ‘ordinary nationalists’ (‘nazionalisti puri’). A group connected with the journal ‘Il Tricolore’, edited by Mario Viana, insisted on a discussion during the First Congress, as to whether the adjective ‘Imperialist’ should be added to the name of the Nationalist Association. But because the democrats objected to this the participants decided that they would use the whole name, Italian Nationalist Association (Associazione Nazionalista Italiana). Cf. F. Perfetti (ed.), *Il nazionalismo italiano*, Edizioni del Borghese, Milan 1969, p. 22.

²⁸ Benedetto Croce in his *Storia d’Italia dal 1871 al 1915* (Bari 1959, p. 173) said that Italian nationalism is derived from French nationalism, but this thesis has been refuted by contemporary historians and political scientists who have dealt with the subject and who emphasise both the ideological and social differences between the two movements. It cannot, however, be denied that both French and Italian nationalism had an imperialist character, but, as Francesco Leoni has noted, Italian imperialism had different roots. Unlike French imperialism, which was supposed to establish and strengthen the power of France, Italian imperialism was to win for Italy a suitable position among the colonial powers. F. Leoni, *Origini...*, p. 8-9.

²⁹ Federico Curato, an Italian historian, has shown that there were two living currents within nationalism: 1) the irredentist nationalism, connected with the tradition of Risorgimento, and guided by Scipio Sighele, Gualtiero Castellini and Paolo Arcari, which aimed to re-conquer the ‘irredenta territories’; that is the land under the Austrian rule which possessed Italian traditions and culture; 2) colonial nationalism whose spiritual leader was Francesco Crispi and was anti-French, anti-English and slightly pro-German. See F. Curato, ‘Aspetti nazionalistici della politica estera italiana dal 1870 al 1914’ in R. Lill, F. Valsecchi (eds.), *Il nazionalismo in Italia e in Germania fino alla Prima guerra mondiale*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1983, p. 45.

³⁰ The slogans of expansionism, which had already appeared in articles published by ‘Il Regno’ (‘We are not those sensible and careful expansionists of the past who claimed “Italy needs to solve its problems at home first”. No, we think that the best remedy to solve both small and serious problems at home is to step out at the first possible opportunity’), were presented forcefully during the Florence Congress in December 1910. See E. Corradini, ‘Qualche altra parola’ in idem, *Il nazionalismo italiano*, p. 453.

which the nationalists regarded as being pivotal. New territories were to provide Italian emigrants with comfortable living and working conditions under 'a paternal government and would thus ensure that there would be no danger that they would suffer distress, persecution and restrictions which foreigners typically face in other countries. They would not lose their language and nationality either.' Colonies were also needed in order to provide the natural resources and products that Italy then had to import; they were also supposed to open up new markets for Italian products.³¹

Corradini's view was shared by his co-authors at *Il Regno*, especially Giuseppe Prezzolini³² and Giovanni Papini, who in his speech 'Programma nazionalista' characterised the programme of the movement: 'Expansionism is a necessary corollary of all nationalism. None of the contemporary nations can stay locked within their frontiers. Colonial expansion as well as the expansion of people is a necessary condition for the existence of the great nations in the world. So far Italy has achieved a rapid expansion of people and a much smaller expansion of goods; we have no colonies to use and inhabit or to export our capital to. Our attempts at colonialism were indecisive and unsatisfactory.'³³

THE CONCEPT OF WAR

The nationalists shared the opinion that the best way of acquiring an empire was through war. They did not view it as being a necessary evil but instead regarded it as the essence of progress.³⁴ Militaristic concepts were developed in Italy during the second half of the nineteenth century, and were advocated by, among others, the predecessors of nationalism such as Rocco De Zerbi,³⁵ Pasquale Turiello³⁶ and Alfredo Oriani³⁷. They associated military success with the revival of Italy and hoped that it would rebuild the prestige of the country in the international arena, and that the nation would regain its self-respect. Militaristic ideas spread as the notion that Italians did not have a 'war spirit' gained ground, which gained credence after the defeats at Custoza, Lissa and Adua. Interestingly, this view was strengthened by the belief that national reputation was synonymous with the country's war reputation. This no-

³¹ Delia Frigessi has proved that in 1901-1905 the medium yearly emigration was 554050 units. Quoted in D. Frigessi (ed.), *La cultura italiana del '900 attraverso le riviste*, Vol. 1: *Leonardo, Hermes, Il Regno*, Einaudi, Turin 1960, p. 63.

³² Cf. articles by Giuseppe Prezzolini, *Come fare l'espansionismo* and *Le cosiddette spese improduttive*, published in the journal *Il Regno*.

³³ Cf. 'Nacjonalizm stary i nowy Giuseppe Prezzoliniego i Giovanniego Papiniego', trans. and introduction by J. Sondel-Cedarmas, *Politeja*, No. 8 (2008), p. 592.

³⁴ In this respect nationalists came close to the thesis of futurists who claimed that 'war is the only hygiene of the world'.

³⁵ R. De Zerbi, *Difendetevel!*, De Angelis, Naples 1882.

³⁶ P. Turiello, *Governo e governati in Italia*, Zanichelli, Bologna 1889.

³⁷ A. Oriani, *La rivolta ideale*, Laterza, Bari 1918.

tion had been present in Italian society since the Napoleonic era and lasted until the *Risorgimento*. The fact that the region of Trieste and Trento were under a foreign rule and not within Italy's frontiers contributed to this gloomy atmosphere.

Another source of the concept of war can be located in Darwinist ideas, which developed in Europe during the period of positivism. Nationalists claimed that the human species and everything that comes from it is warlike. Just as struggle leads to the selection of the strongest, war creates and selects the strongest states. At the same time they praised the very nature of war as a moral and aesthetic value. On their reading war was 'a contemporary lesson of vigour and heroism,' and they contrasted it with utopian humanitarian, the democratic and pacifist ideals of the socialists and the governing liberal bourgeoisie. For Corradini war was an aesthetic activity which through its cruelty reveals human nature in its deepest and truest form.³⁸ War uncovers the true nature of man, the power of race and nation. Thus war was not seen as the last resort but as an aesthetic and spiritual idea and 'the highest manifestation of national vigour.'³⁹ In the article *Principii del nazionalismo*, mentioned above, Corradini stated: 'There are two principles which simultaneously keep alive the power of association (a unity of related elements for common protection) and the power of struggle. If you suppress one of them you will suppress life [...] A nation is the best of what a people torn between the instinct for association and the instinct for struggle have created.'⁴⁰

Corradini, who was convinced that the true ideal is the greatness of one's own nation, had criticised both internationalism – a false doctrine which he viewed as 'the dogma of the new secular humanitarian religion,' and pacifism. His novel *La patria lontana* praises war and its moral superiority over pacifism and also presents a critique of the Italian bourgeoisie with its humanitarian and philanthropic attitude, its humanist cultural background as well as its support for the conciliatory policy of Giovanni Giolitti. Corradini believed that only war creates virtues and allows a civilization to progress since it is only during military conflict that a nation can strengthen its unity and society is able to strive for national greatness instead of pursuing egoistic interests.

It needs to be emphasised Corradini's conception of war had nothing to do with ethics, it only looked at the 'historical interests' of a given state. War was viewed as a way of allowing the stronger nations to dominate and as a means of influencing other nations; this would enable them to determine the development of world civilizations. This is why Corradini asserted that war becomes a necessity for nations which aspire to establish their own empires, and that it is practically a part of the history of humanity.

Nationalists who belonged to the circle of 'Il Regno' kept a close eye on international developments, beginning with the Russo-Japanese war of 1904. Corradini

³⁸ Cf. *La cultura italiana del '900 attraverso le riviste*, Vol. 1, p. 483.

³⁹ G. Bedeschi, *La fabbrica delle ideologie. Il pensiero politico nell'Italia del Novecento*, Laterza, Rome–Bari 2002, p. 48.

⁴⁰ E. Corradini, *La patria lontana*, Vecchiarelli, Rome 1989, p. 12.

did not deny his admiration for the heroic deeds and patriotism of the Japanese soldiers and declared that the war ‘dispelled the feelings of humanitarianism, inflated sentimentalism and other claims of pacifist ideology.’ Another nationalist thinker, M. Maffi wrote: ‘The Russo-Japanese war indicated the rise of a new epoch in history, which as a result of great effort brought about the development and the power of modern nationalisms in their unexpected form. Internationalism proved to be a terrifying utopia which had to be avoided, especially by Italians [...] “Il Regno” declared that the life of nations rests on a terrible struggle in which the factors undermined by Marxism are vitally important: national sentiment, authority of the state, vigour of race, awareness of the past in service of the future, military training, and cultural superiority. Therefore Italy had to abandon German doctrines, learn a lesson from the tradition of ancient Rome, wipe out the disgrace of Adua and to get ready, by accepting its faith courage, and obstinacy, to face the challenges that the nearest future will bring.’⁴¹

Referring to this idea, Corradini noted that war would wake up the latent forces of the nation, and would lead to its moral revival and would rebuild the sense of unity in society. He believed that only through military confrontation Italians would be able to become a true nation, to overcome internal conflicts and, above all, to overthrow the ‘governing clique’ which was neither capable of wielding power nor of solving the economic and demographic problems that Italy faced. In Corradini’s view, however, colonial expansion, depended on the existence of a strong state. Thus in the doctrine of the ‘father of nationalism’ the concept of imperialism was related to the problem of emigration. Corradini expressed this view as early as December 1910 during the First Congress of Nationalists in Florence and subsequently developed this notion in his work *The Unity and Power of Nations* where, among other things, he stated that ‘an empire is the outcome of the conquests of chosen states, it is the result of a few states competing for survival in a war of nations, in expansion, and in the conquest of the world.’⁴² According to this nationalist logic, strong nations had the right to attack weaker nations for their own gain. In response to opponents who emphasised that there were no longer any new territories to conquer, Corradini stated that ‘there had never been free territories, even the territories which now belong to the vast empires of France or Britain had not been free [...] strong and developing nations do not capture new territories but those which were occupied by declining nations.’ Therefore the striving for an empire was considered to be the highest goal of a nation. This view was later developed by Alfredo Rocco,⁴³ a lawyer

⁴¹ M. Maffi, ‘Corradini e il “Regno”’, *Il Marzocco*, 20 December 1931. Quoted in *I nazionalisti*, introduction by A. Orsi, Feltrinelli, Milan 1981, p. 24.

⁴² E. Corradini, *Jedność i potęga narodów*, trans. by J. Zdzitowiecki, Poznań 1937, p. 117.

⁴³ Alfredo Rocco (1875-1935), professor of economics, lawyer, diplomat and politician, one of the main ideologists of Italian nationalism. He was responsible for turning the irrational and elitist ideology of nationalism into a complex, rational political and economic theory. In 1913 he left Assosazione Liberale and in 1914 he established in Padua a daily newspaper *Il Dovere nazionale*, which became one of the most important nationalist newspapers. He was one of the main par-

and a professor of political economy at the University of Padua, and also the leading ideologist of Italian nationalism after Corradini, who stated that the interests of every nation can never be reconciled with those of other nations, and thus mutual relations can only be marked by 'hostility, conflict and open struggle.' According to this view, socialism with its pacifist and humanitarian ideology was an enemy of its own nation and had contributed to the destruction of its own race.

Corradini's view of war subsequently evolved. During the First Nationalist Congress he gave a paper entitled *Classi proletarie: socialismo, nazioni proletarie: nazionalismo*,⁴⁴ in which he explained his theory that class conflict had shifted onto the international level, where it produced conflicts between various nations. It led to his conception of 'a winning war.' His analysis of international relations and the application of the Marxist conception of class conflict to this realm resulted in an idea of conflict between proletarian and rich (capitalist) nations. Assuming that each state has its own goals and can only rely on its own resources when attempting to achieve them, Corradini claimed that relations between states are not based on mutual cooperation but solely on conflict and competition: 'the law of international justice is realised in the formula: each according to its power.'⁴⁵ Every nation's power is composed not only of material factors, such as demography, wealth, armaments, but also its 'spiritual energy' – that is, its willingness to sacrifice, its internal cohesion, discipline, intellectual superiority in science, arts and technology, its ability to understand the spirit of other nations, as well as relativism, opportunism and a critical awareness of one's capabilities. These factors were the essence of political wisdom, which, according to Corradini, 'was a necessary characteristic of nations who aspire to establish an empire.'⁴⁶ He believed that international equilibrium based on force was a dynamic and progressive equilibrium; when a new political or historical situation led to a gap between political and military stability, the equilibrium would almost inevitably be restored by war. Corradini emphasised at the same time that war is not always necessary for 'it may happen that the weaker party will retreat in the face of the stronger without fighting'. This thesis was later referred to by a journalist and a politician, Francesco Coppola, who wrote: 'Owing to this "regime of free

ticipants of the ANI Congress in Milan (16-18 May 1914). In December 1918 with Francesco Coppola he founded a magazine 'Politica'. He was strongly in favour of merging the ANI with the NFP (National Fascist Party) and subsequently became a leading figure of the fascist regime. In 1922-1924 he was minister for pensions and in 1925-1932 a secretary of justice. Rocco was a proponent of 'leggi eccezionali', which from 1925 to 1928 radically changed the state. In 1932 he left the government and became vice-chancellor of the University of Padua. See P. Ungari, *Alfredo Rocco e l'ideologia giuridica del fascismo*, Morcelliana, Brescia 1963, pp. 13-22 and W. Kozub-Ciembroniewicz, 'Nacjonalizm a faszyzm we Włoszech. Ewolucja idei państwa i narodu', *Przegląd Zachodni*, No. 2 (1986), p. 57.

⁴⁴ This article was described by the leader Franco Gaeta as 'the first ideological-political document of Italian nationalism'. F. Gaeta, *Il nazionalismo italiano*, p. 119.

⁴⁵ 'Manifesto', *Politica*, December 1918. See F. Gaeta (ed.) *La stampa nazionalista*, Cappelli, Bologna 1965, p. 17.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

war,” which he compared to the laws of life, nature and history, ‘the hierarchy of nations is determined and it can be justified by the fact that it is a subject to “constant evolution.”’⁴⁷

THE PROBLEM OF EMIGRATION

The question of emigration was linked to the slightly more complicated issue of Italy’s economic policy at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and was closely related to the problem of unemployment, the economic backwardness of the South (the so-called *questione meridionale*), bad investments and the policies of economic liberalism.

Nationalists saw the problem of emigration as socially humiliating and, from the economic point of view, dangerous. They were convinced that emigration, which was especially high at the beginning of the twentieth century, led to a flow of labour out of the country that should be used at home. While the great powers aimed to strengthen their colonies, which were not only a source of prestige but also an instrument of political and economic mastery, Italy’s uncertain colonial position contributed to its weakness. The nationalists claimed that a more daring foreign policy would provide a solution to various political, economic and social problems. For example, it would allow Italy to join the so-called ‘great powers’ and to pursue a more consistent economic policy. It would also help to ward off the danger posed by Austria whose position, especially after the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, seemed to pose a major risk to Italy’s interests in Europe. For these reasons, as noted by Lucia Strappini, the nationalists did not want to look at the problem of emigration solely from the perspective of Italy’s domestic difficulties; they did, however, think that the emigration of labour was clear evidence of the government’s ineffectiveness, especially of its inability to solve the problem of unemployment or to deal with other economic difficulties. On the whole, they were not overly concerned with the problem of the South’s backwardness (the *questione meridionale*),⁴⁸ but were trying instead to solve the issue of emigration by means of military expansion.

The problem of emigration was widely discussed by Corradini who in 1908 had the opportunity to learn about the living conditions of Italian emigrants in North Africa and in the following year of those in Argentina and Brazil. As noted by Lucia Strappini, who has written an introduction to Corradini’s writings, these contacts with Italian emigrants had, along with the Adua defeat, a strong influence on Corradini’s

⁴⁷ F. Coppola, *La pace coatta*, Treves, Milan 1929, p. 14.

⁴⁸ In a paper given to the I Nationalist Congress, Corradini stated that ‘The problem of the Italian South was to a large extent an external matter.’ (E. Corradini, *Il nazionalismo italiano*, pp. 61-63). In general, the nationalists advocated a protectionist policy which was believed to be in the interests of the industry in the North. This view was expressed for example in M. Morasso’s article, ‘Nord contro Sud’ published in *Il Regno*. See E. Corradini, *Scritti e discorsi: 1901-1914*, ed. by L. Strappini, Einaudi, Turin 1980, p. 64.

intellectual development and on his political ideas.⁴⁹ The experiences he brought from South America were reflected in a talk which he gave during the First Nationalist Congress in Florence in December 1910 (where he said, among other things, that 'emigrants were the forerunners of imperialists'⁵⁰), as well as in his novel *La patria lontana*, which was published in the same year. As Anna Storti Abate has noted, the political message of the novel obscures its literary value: 'In what way have I as an Italian contributed through my effort and my work to this great entity – Italy? By no means is Italy here! This is a different country, a very noble country which deserves praise for being in one of the top positions in the world, but this is not Italy. I would prefer to live among Eskimos and to be able to say: My Fatherland rules here!'⁵¹

Similar to other nationalists, Corradini believed that ambitious and effective imperialist policies would solve Italy's domestic problems and would lead to a 'moral revival' of the nation. In his opinion, an imperialist policy would solve the problem of emigration, because Italy would acquire colonial territories where workers would be able to move to.

It is important to note that for Corradini a nation was merely an association of individuals united by geographical, historical and cultural bonds of blood. This unity was also based upon common economic interests. In his conception of the nation Corradini emphasised not only a sense of national belonging but also such factors as space and topography. He claimed that national solidarity was in reality a topographical solidarity which he described as the solidarity of a 'concentration camp' ('campo di concentramento'). Thus, according to this theory, the territories where Italians lived and worked should be Italian in order to protect emigrants against the danger of losing their nationality. The best expression of such a view can be found in the introduction to the novel *La guerra lontana*: 'In an ideal model of my novel war and emigration play the role of a hero and an anti-hero. Emigration is a problem for contemporary Italy which scatters Italians around the world and turns them into slaves in a foreign land; and war which today is far away from Italy and which it shrinks from, but which will one day allow it to become a real power.'⁵² The analysis of emigration also contributed to Corradini's conception of proletarian nations which was mentioned above: 'There are proletarian nations as there are proletarian classes,' he wrote. 'Italy is a proletarian nation. Out of all the arguments that can be used to

⁴⁹ The impressions he gained from his journey to Africa were expressed in the articles 'Lettere dell'Africa romana' published in 1908, in *Marzocco*, and subsequently in a volume *Il volere d'Italia*. An important article 'Emigranti' was published on 22 February 1902 in *Marzocco*. During a conference in Naples, on 17 April 1909, Corradini gave a paper on Italian emigration to South America, 'L'emigrazione italiana dell'America del sud', which was subsequently published in the volume *Il volere d'Italia*, Parrella, Naples 1911. He also published articles on the same subject in 1908 and 1909 in *Il Corriere della Sera* and in *Giornale d'Italia*.

⁵⁰ Quoted in G. Bedeschi, *La fabbrica delle ideologie...*, p. 52.

⁵¹ E. Corradini, *La patria lontana*, p. 76.

⁵² Quoted in P.L. Occhini, 'Enrico Corradini africanista', *Nuova Antologia*, January-February 1936, p. 203.

support this thesis one should suffice, emigration. Nationalism claims that Italians must pursue nationalist politics the same way as socialism claims that a working class must pursue class politics. Nationalism regenerates and becomes the socialism of the nation.⁵³ The concept of proletarian nations is strongly influenced by the ideology of revolutionary socialism, especially by Sorel's thought.⁵⁴ In the same way as socialism tried to teach the proletariat what the significance of class conflict is, nationalism should teach Italy the real significance of international conflict. According to Ronald S. Cunsolo, Corradini depicted Italy as 'a proletarian nation from a material and a moral point of view' and therefore in his conception, Italian nationalism was seen as 'the way to liberate Italy from the French, the English, the Germans and the Americans' who were seen as the 'contemporary bourgeoisie.'⁵⁵ In the light of this theory, war was not perceived in terms of actual combat or in terms of 'political naivety', but it was seen as 'a moral order' and 'a means to achieve national revival.'

In his article *Sindacalismo, nazionalismo, imperialismo* published in 1909, Corradini tried to prove that there is a convergence between syndicalism, nationalism and imperialism.⁵⁶ His main thesis was that Italy's revival can be achieved not only by the means of a victorious war, but also in the period beforehand, when preparations for military conflict were being made. That is because preparation for war involves training the military as well as moral training. It is a school of inner-discipline that concerns all parts of the nation. 'We need to make sure that Italians know that the objective of these preparations is war, just as syndicalists know that their aim is to prepare the proletariat for a major strike.'⁵⁷ According to Salvatore Valitutti, the roots of this conception can be found in the personal experience of Corradini's research on the working conditions of Italian emigrants as well as in his reading of Sorel, especially his polemics against socialism and the democratic system.⁵⁸ Sorel's concept of a proletarian class became in Corradini's thought a concept of a proletarian nation, while the idea of a war undertaken by a proletarian nation replaced the idea of a general strike.

THE LIBYAN WAR (1912)

The Italian-Turkish war in Libya (1911-1912), which was strongly supported by the nationalists, was at the heart of the imperialist programme that was drawn up after the Adua defeat. In his article 'L'ora di Tripoli' written in September 1911,

⁵³ E. Corradini, *Il volere d'Italia*, p. 205.

⁵⁴ A reference to Sorel's conception can be discerned in Corradini's theses that the proletarian class becomes a proletarian nation and that the general strike of the proletariat becomes a war of the proletarian nation. See E. Corradini, *Il volere d'Italia*, p. 117.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 208. Quoted in R.S. Cunsolo, 'Enrico Corradini...', p. 342.

⁵⁶ Cf. E. Corradini, 'Sindacalismo, nazionalismo, imperialismo' in *idem*, *Il volere d'Italia*.

⁵⁷ *Idem*, *Il nazionalismo italiano*.

⁵⁸ S. Valitutti, 'Origini e presupposti culturali del nazionalismo in Italia' in R. Lill, F. Valsecchi (eds.), *Il nazionalismo in Italia...*, p. 117.

Corradini described 'the Libyan problem' as 'a fundamental issue which needed to be solved in order to change reality.' He went on to say: 'For Italy Tripoli was above all a spontaneous reaction against a specific historical reality. Fifteen years without a foreign policy meant for a nation the end of its natural function. Italy's decision to start the current war means a return to the country's natural function; having been defeated in the discussion over a colonial programme, Italy is resuming its colonial role; having been suppressed by a coalition of internal bourgeois, socialist, electoral and ministerial interests, the country is resuming its programme of Mediterranean expansion.'⁵⁹

The successful Libyan war made the dreams of a new Italian empire come true and also had a symbolic meaning, for it ended the period of Italian malaise that had been caused by the African defeat in 1896. Corradini wrote: 'Glory to all those who were killed at Adua, glory to all those who were killed during the victorious war in Libya, because these two wars can be seen as two phases in one and the same war, the war for the creation of an Italian empire.'⁶⁰

The Italian forces' subsequent military successes during the campaign revived the memory of a glorious Italian tradition of war. When the Italian army seized the Dodekanes in April and May 1912, the nationalists praised this episode in their writings, referring to the tradition of the old sea republics.

Corradini was concerned not only with the prestige that would be attained through the fulfilment of the myth of empire, but also viewed the Libyan war in terms of potential economic gains for Italy. He saw, in particular, the opportunity to solve the problem of the South's backwardness; and because he was convinced that the South of the country was closer to Africa while the North was within the European sphere of influence, he claimed: 'In order to get rich and to fulfil its duties towards the South, which is a small and a purely agricultural region that lacks natural resources, Italy needs to travel to Africa, which not only is a vast land, but is also rich in terms of agriculture and mining. The South will never be able to contribute to Italy's wealth.'⁶¹ In Corradini's view, the war was advantageous for all social groups and for the political elites. It could bring profits to the industrial bourgeoisie through the creation of new markets and new territories for industrial expansion, it could benefit socialists 'because where there is a flourishing bourgeoisie, socialism can thrive and be powerful', and it could also be beneficial for the government and the poorest groups of society. Corradini also claimed that the colonization of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica would be 'a proletarian occupation,' unlike the French occupation of Tunis which had a typically capitalist character, because Italy was not only a poor country but was also small with a large proletariat and had a small and not very wealthy bourgeoisie. In the new national-economic system, industry was supposed to bring affluence to the Italian bourgeoisie and to provide the proletariat

⁵⁹ E. Corradini, *L'ora di Tripoli*, Treves, Milan 1911, p. IX-X.

⁶⁰ Idem, 'Commemorazione della battaglia...', p. 263.

⁶¹ Idem, 'A tutti è utile l'occupazione di Tripoli' in idem, *L'ora di Tripoli*, p. 230.

with jobs, higher wages, and a bigger territory where it could live peacefully and contribute to the greatness of the nation.

The war, which ended in 1912, did not fulfil all the expectations of the nationalists, but it strengthened the belief that Italy was capable of securing military victories and it revived the cult of aggression. The war also contributed to closer relations between the nationalists and the revolutionary syndicalists.⁶² Angelo Olivetti, the head of the syndicalist organ 'Pagine Libere,' in a series of articles expressed his support for the Libyan war and emphasised the common views shared by the nationalists and revolutionary syndicalism, such as 'the vigorous and voluntarist' character of both doctrines, a common goal of 'the revival of national identity understood as the unique character of one's race and the aspiration to restore the cult of heroism among small shopkeepers and speculators.'⁶³ Apart from their common critique of the bourgeoisie and parliamentary democracy, both movements rejected liberalism and reformist socialism which supported the neutral and conciliatory politics of prime minister Giovanni Giolitti. They also had common philosophical and cultural roots, such as pragmatism, anti-positivism, and the works of Nietzsche, Bergson and Schopenhauer.⁶⁴

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The First Nationalist Congress of 1910 and the Libyan war of 1912 were the high-point of the first phase of the development of Italian nationalism that resulted in the crystallisation of its political programme. The main arguments of the doctrine of nationalism, which to a large extent Enrico Corradini shaped, can be summarized in the following points:

1. The primacy of a foreign policy, which could be used as a means of solving all domestic problems and of leading to a moral revival of the nation.
2. A critique of socialism which, due to its conception of class conflict, and its pacifist and international character, posed a danger to national unity and to the concept of a strong state.
3. Imperialism.
4. The problem of emigration which was supposed to be solved by the politics of expansionism.
5. The idea of war as a moral fact.
6. A conception of Italy as a proletarian nation which, owing to its condition, was forced to be at war with 'richer nations.'

Such an ideology was not completely accepted even by some of the members of the movement. At the Second Congress organized in Rome in 1912 the politi-

⁶² Italian revolutionary syndicalism and nationalism began to converge after the Balkan crisis of 1908. This process, which was strongly supported by Corradini, was advocated after the outbreak of the Libyan war in 1911 on the pages of the daily *Il Tricolore* edited by Mario Viana.

⁶³ A.O. Olivetti, 'Sindacalismo e nazionalismo', *Pagine Libere*, 15 February 1911; 'L'altra campana', *Pagine Libere*, 15 November 1911.

⁶⁴ See F. Perfetti (ed.), *Il nazionalismo italiano*, p. 25.

cal programme of the Association of Nationalists (ANI) was finalised; as a result the Association became divided when liberals, democrats and republicans left the movement. Nationalism assumed a much more rightist character; its incompatibility with democratic rules was emphasised and the movement declared that it would fight against the masonry. The imperialist and reactionary elements within the doctrine became stronger.

Giuseppe Prezzolini and Giovanni Papini, the writers who were very active during the first period of the nationalist movement, established in 1908 their own journal 'La Voce' where they bitterly contested the political concepts put forward by 'the father of Italian nationalism,' criticising the pompous and not very tangible character of his political programme. It was Prezzolini who wrote: 'From whatever perspective one looks at Corradini's nationalism it proves to be empty and abstract. He does not know whether emigration is good or bad because he does not study emigration. He does not know whether economic policy should be free market oriented or protectionist because he does not deal with this issue. He does not know anything about real and specific problems. For him nationalism is just an empty word.'⁶⁵

Despite Prezzolini's criticism, we need to emphasise that there is no doubt when it comes to Corradini's role in shaping the nationalist ideology of Italy. After the Libyan war and the Second Congress of Nationalists, the ANI evolved from a free association into an organized political party which started to play an important role in Italy's political life. Another stage in the development of the nationalist doctrine took place during the Third Congress organized in Milan in 1914 where the most important role was played by a lawyer, Alfredo Rocco.

Translated by Dorota Pietrzyk-Reeves

⁶⁵ G. Bedeschi, *La fabbrica delle ideologie...*, p. 54.

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