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**Italy's secular martyrs: the construction, role  
and maintenance of secular martyrdom in  
Italy from the twentieth century to the  
present day**

**Amy King**

A thesis submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements for award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the construction, maintenance and role of secular martyrdom in Italy throughout the twentieth-century and into the present day. It uses two case studies – the Primavalle Arson (1973), and the kidnap and assassination of Giacomo Matteotti (1924) – to examine the role of martyrdom in the construction of collective identity in Italy. It will analyse commemoration of both tragedies from the time of the events through to the contemporary age, and trace how memory has evolved according to Italy's changing socio-political context. I will ask why some individuals emerge as martyrs for the nation, while others are remembered only at the level of the socio-political group; whether the boundaries of the nation state contain martyr memory; and if the turn away from monumental memory to the cosmopolitan mode of remembering within national history narratives has had an impact on the martyr paradigm. Using methodologies including oral history interviews, analysis of media discourse, observation of commemoration ceremonies, and by analysing the iconography and text on monuments, the thesis will address the role of the secular martyr in the construction of collective identity within a country that has proved unable to unite behind the umbrella of the nation state at various social and political turning points in its recent history. Martyrs have played a key role in the construction of Italian national identity, especially in the wake of national violence, making these stories crucial for our understanding of how the nation and its subjects understand their history and identity.

*For my grannies*

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**Author's declaration**

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: ..... DATE:.....

## Table of Contents

<b>List of abbreviations</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>List of figures</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Chapter 1. A Nation of Martyrs</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Memory, justice and violence .....	10
Monumental memory: narrating triumph.....	13
Cosmopolitan memory: the turn to the victim .....	15
The origins of martyrdom.....	17
Methodologies, sources and thesis structure.....	27
<b>Chapter 2. Rome’s Contested Martyrs: Memory of the Primavalle Arson</b> .....	<b>36</b>
Martyrdom and the Years of Lead .....	39
Activism in Rome’s poorest suburb .....	43
The Primavalle Arson .....	45
A brief history of the Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI).....	50
‘La morte in diretta’ .....	53
<b>Chapter 3. Antagonistic Martyrdom and the Far Right</b> .....	<b>59</b>
Casting death as sacrifice.....	60
A mother for the party: representation of Anna Mattei.....	65
Historicising sacrifice, creating heritage .....	69
Vernacular claims to memory in public space .....	74
Performing political identity through commemoration.....	80
Conclusion: constructed martyrs for the radical right .....	86
<b>Chapter 4. Contesting the Appropriation of Memory</b> .....	<b>89</b>
Anchoring memory in public space.....	93
Social media, social memory .....	98
Reclaiming memory through commemoration .....	101
Analysing engagement with memory in oral history .....	103
Conclusion: an uphill battle.....	113
<b>Chapter 5. The Making of a National Martyr</b> .....	<b>118</b>
A brief biography.....	118
Murder on the banks of the Tiber .....	122
Existing literature and aims of my research .....	125
The Aventine Secession and the dawn of dictatorship.....	127
Injustice in the ‘camomile town’ .....	129
Suppressing memory in public space.....	132
The legend of confrontation and the missing body.....	137
The funeral in Fratta Polesine .....	140
Memory in domestic spaces .....	147
Conclusion: public protest, private resistance .....	151
<b>Chapter 6. The Global Response to Matteotti’s Martyrdom</b> .....	<b>154</b>
The theoretical framework.....	156
Extending solidarity through multidirectional memory .....	157
Iconographical representations of sacrifice .....	159
A martyr for the international workers’ movement.....	161
Memory as a foundation of international anti-fascism .....	170
Conclusion: “un simbolo, e non soltanto in Italia.” .....	179
<b>Chapter 7. Matteotti’s Memory in Italian Communities of the United States</b> .....	<b>182</b>
The development of Italian American antifascism .....	186
Characteristics of Italian American commemoration .....	191
Competing martyrdoms: Matteotti, Sacco and Vanzetti .....	203

Conclusion: a transnational martyr.....	206
<b>Chapter 8. A Martyr Returns to Italy.....</b>	<b>211</b>
A martyr for liberty in free Italy .....	213
Building consensus through commemoration .....	218
Incorporating memory into the new Republic .....	223
Consolidating memory in the 1950s-60s .....	227
A return to the level of the group.....	231
Conclusion: poised for revival.....	247
<b>Chapter 9. Conclusion: A Martyred Nation.....</b>	<b>249</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>262</b>
Reference list of archival material .....	284
<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>287</b>
List of libraries and archives consulted for research.....	287
Matteotti memory timeline (1924-2017) .....	289
Oral history documentation .....	290



## **List of abbreviations**

**AC** – Assemblée Costituyente  
**ACLU** – American Civil Liberties Union  
**AFANA** – Antifascist Alliance of North America  
**AFM** – Associazione Fratelli Mattei  
**ACWA** – Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America  
**AN** – Alleanza Nazionale  
**AN** – Avanguardia Nazionale  
**ANFIM** - Associazione Nazionale Famiglie Italiane Martiri Caduti per la Libertà della Patria  
**AO** – Autonomia Operaia  
**BR** – Brigate Rosse  
**Cgil** - Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro  
**Cisl** - Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori  
**CLN** – Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale  
**CLNAI** – Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale Alta Italia  
**DC** – Democrazia Cristiana  
**DN** – Democrazia Nazionale  
**FdG** – Fronte della Gioventù  
**FSI/SPA** - Federazione Socialista Italiana of the Socialist Party of America  
**G&L** – Giustizia e Libertà  
**IL** – Italia Libera  
**LC** - Lotta Continua  
**LSI** – Labour and Socialist International  
**MSI** - Movimento Sociale Italiano  
**NAP** – Nuclei Armati Proletari  
**NAR** – Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari  
**ON** – Ordine Nuovo  
**PCI** – Partito Comunista Italiano  
**PO** – Potere Operario  
**PNF** – Partito Nazionale Fascista  
**PPI** – Partito Popolare Italiano  
**PSDI** – Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano  
**PSI** – Partito Socialista Italiano  
**PSU** – Partito Socialista Unitario  
**PSIUP** – Partito Socialista di Unità Proletaria  
**RSI** – Repubblica di Salò  
**TP** – Terza Posizione  
**Uil** - Unione Italiana del Lavoro  
**WIMC** – Women’s International Matteotti Committee

## List of figures

Figure 1: The Mausoleo dei Martiri Fascisti .....	70
Figure 2: Inside the Mausoleo dei Martiri Fascisti .....	71
Figure 3: The plaque honouring the Fascist dead of spring 1945 .....	73
Figure 4: via Bibbiena, Google Street View from 2008 .....	76
Figure 5: via Bibbiena, Google Street View from 2012 .....	77
Figure 6: via Bibbiena, Google Street View from 2014 .....	78
Figure 7: via Bibbiena, Google Street View from 2015 .....	79
Figure 8: via Bibbiena, second Google Street View from 2015 .....	79
Figure 9: Publicity for the grassroots commemoration in Primavalle, 2018 .....	85
Figure 10: A plaque dedicated to the Mattei brothers in a local park in Primavalle.	96
Figure 11: Matteotti with two of his children.....	120
Figure 12: Mourners lay flowers at the site of Matteotti's kidnap .....	134
Figure 13: Mourners beside the train carrying Matteotti's body .....	141
Figure 14: The funeral procession carries Matteotti's body through Fratta .....	145
Figure 15: Matteotti's casket is carried into the cemetery.....	145
Figure 16: Mourners kneel (left) as the coffin is carried into Fratta cemetery.....	146
Figure 17: Parliamentary portrait of Giacomo Matteotti .....	148
Figure 18: A commemorative postcard produced in Paris and sent to New York...	149
Figure 19: De Notenkraaker.....	160
Figure 20: Scalarini's cartoon.....	162
Figure 21: Mario Petrucci's design for a monument in Matteottihof .....	167
Figure 22: the opening of Matteottihof .....	169
Figure 23: Matteottihof, Vienna, and a close-up of the relief, 2017.....	169
Figure 24: Language classes offered by the Matteotti League in New York .....	172
Figure 25: The Matteotti Club, Melbourne.....	174
Figure 26: Publicity for a commemoration event in New York, undated but likely 1926 .....	188
Figure 27: Giacomo Matteotti by the cartoonist Fort Velona.....	190
Figure 28: Girolamo Valenti in his office .....	198
Figure 29: A 1926 commemoration at Cooper Union Hall, New York .....	204
Figure 30: A Staten Island demonstration against Mussolini's declaration of war .	207
Figure 31: A Google Ngram search for 'Giacomo Matteotti'.....	217
Figure 32: The monument on the Arnaldo da Brescia.....	233
Figure 33: Matteotti's name in public space around the world.....	240
Figure 34: Matteotti's name in public space in northern Italy.....	241
Figure 35: Matteotti's name in public space in southern Italy.....	241

## Chapter 1

### A Nation of Martyrs

A visitor to any Italian city will quickly be confronted by names including Giuseppe Garibaldi, Giuseppe Mazzini, Giacomo Matteotti, and Antonio Gramsci on street signs or in monuments, honouring the memory of important historical martyrs. There are numerous *via dei martiri* throughout the country, each suffixed by the name of the place in which martyrdom occurred. Sometimes these street names commemorate specific groups – usually those who died during the Risorgimento or the Resistance – but often the simple term *via martiri della libertà* is used, applicable to those who died in either of these important national battles. Secular martyrs dominate modern Italy's *lieux de mémoire*. These sites of memory, defined by historian Pierre Nora as places where memory 'crystallizes and secretes itself', tell us much about Italian national identity and whose memory is prioritised.<sup>1</sup>

Secular martyrs lie at the nation's epicentre. The Altare della Patria, a great monumental structure known informally as The Wedding Cake, dominates one part of central Rome. Built to honour the first king of unified Italy, this monument to the nation also honours the memory of secular martyrs, and symbolically positions them at the heart of the capital.<sup>2</sup> Garibaldi's bullet-holed boot is preserved in the Risorgimento museum beneath the monument. A relic of a founding father's heroism within a shrine to national sacrifice, it is also a reminder of civil war, reflecting the complicated memorial dynamics that so often surround Italy's national martyrs, many of whom died after violence on Italian soil.<sup>3</sup> The monument also houses the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, which commemorates the vast number of World War I dead through the abstract symbolism of an unknown body. This is also the stage upon which national rituals of commemoration are performed. On 4 November each year, the Festa delle Forze Armate e dell'Unità d'Italia commemorates the end

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<sup>1</sup> Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire', *Representations*, 26.1 (1989), 7–24 (p. 7).

<sup>2</sup> The monument's official name is the Monumento Nazionale a Vittorio Emanuele II, or Il Vittoriano. For more on its iconography and design, see: David Atkinson and Denis Cosgrove, 'Urban Rhetoric and Embodied Identities: City, Nation, and Empire at the Vittorio Emanuele II Monument in Rome, 1870-1945', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 88.1 (1998), 28–49.

<sup>3</sup> Ironically, Garibaldi was shot in Aspromonte during an anti-papal crusade that was opposed by Vittorio Emanuele II, the very king the Altare della Patria was built to honour.

of World War I at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and celebrates Italian unification at the symbolic Altare della Patria. Eight days later, on 12 November, soldiers line the steps (standing between two large Tricolore flags), while state and military officials lay wreaths and give speeches to honour the civilians and soldiers who died in international missions.

The rituals, rhetoric and iconography of martyrdom are a familiar part of Italian culture. To an outsider, the frequent use of the term might seem peculiar, even antiquated, but its regularity in commemoration is striking. In Italy, the dead are often labelled as martyrs when elsewhere they might be victims. But why are some individuals described as martyrs rather than victims (or simply the dead), and what are the implications of the term? Oral historian Alessandro Portelli writes of the difficult distinction between martyr and victim: ‘They are not mutually exclusive terms, but rather the polarities in a continuum that includes a number of in-between figures, roles, and subjectivities.’<sup>4</sup> The important thing to recognise is that both terms are applied with a broad range of associated meanings.

There are some key differences between the two terms. To label someone a ‘martyr’ can give death a posthumous purpose. Martyrdom is future facing – the term tends to ascribe a legacy to the dead that extends into the future, suggesting death was not in vain. It can contextualise death within a broader conflict (real or imagined), and represents the death as having contributed to the pursuit of an end goal.<sup>5</sup> To call the Risorgimento dead martyrs, for example, is to imply that their deaths marked a period of suffering that led to renewal. Martyrs exert power from the grave. Broadly speaking, victimhood draws its symbolic power from its emphasis on the futility of the death. The many victims’ associations that campaign for justice for those who died during Italy’s Years of Lead – the term given to the period of domestic terrorism addressed in detail in the first case study – have drawn attention to the innocence of the dead.<sup>6</sup> More often than not, these individuals lost their lives during a lawful protest, or going about their daily lives. The term ‘victim’ has

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<sup>4</sup> Alessandro Portelli, *The Order Has Been Carried Out: History, Memory, and Meaning of a Nazi Massacre in Rome* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 197.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Middleton, *Martyrdom: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T & T Clark, 2011) p. 29.

<sup>6</sup> According to Ruth Glynn, these associations have contributed to ‘victim-centred narratives’ of the period. See: Ruth Glynn, ‘The “Turn to the Victim” in Italian Culture: Victim-Centred Narratives of the Anni Di Piombo’, *Modern Italy*, 18.4 (2013), 373–90.

emphasised this innocence.<sup>7</sup> ‘Martyr’, on the other hand, could suggest a conscious transgression of a norm or law in the name of a staunchly held belief, and thus imply self-sacrifice.<sup>8</sup> It gives the dead agency regardless of whether it was a feature of their death in reality. This will be clear in the first case study, which examines the memory of the Mattei brothers who died in the Primavalle Arson of 1973 in the first attack on a domestic space during Italy’s Years of Lead. However, the term martyr also means the dead share the spotlight with the perpetrator. As Portelli argues, the suggestion of sacrifice indicates the presence of a sacrificer.<sup>9</sup> While victims may die in an accident where nobody is culpable, the concept of martyrdom accentuates sacrifice without diminishing the role of a perpetrator.

Martyrdom has implications for how we apportion blame and suffering, and many difficult memories have been rehabilitated in national narratives through the concept. Consider briefly the wording on the various plaques around the Fosse Ardeatine memorial. Known as the Sacrario delle Fosse Ardeatine, underlining the sacralisation of memory evident throughout the memorial, this series of commemorative structures remembers the 335 people killed by occupying Nazi forces in Rome on 24 March 1944. This was a reprisal. The previous day, a partisan attack in via Rasella had immediately killed 30 military policemen from the Bolzen regimen of the German army (three more died later). In response, Nazi officers executed 10 people for every German killed. They were rounded up from homes in via Rasella, or the street itself, and from nearby prisons. Just three of the prisoners included in the round-up had been condemned to death for Resistance activity; the majority had no involvement in the Resistance at all.<sup>10</sup>

I visited the monument in 2017 and was struck by the rhetoric of martyrdom.<sup>11</sup> The inscription on the plaque next to the *fosse* in which the victims

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<sup>7</sup> Giovanni De Luna has identified the ‘trionfo delle vittime’ in Italy. He argues that the use of the word ‘victim’ in Italian legislation pertaining to memorial initiatives like Memory Days unites Italy’s dead – from the Resistance to the Repubblica di Salò – through acknowledgement of shared suffering. The concept of victimhood allows for the incorporation of more troublesome memories into national narratives, he argues. See: Giovanni De Luna, *La repubblica del dolore: le memorie di un’Italia divisa* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2011), pp. 82-83.

<sup>8</sup> Portelli, *The Order Has Been Carried Out*, p. 197.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>10</sup> John Foot, ‘Via Rasella, 1944: Memory, Truth, and History’, *The Historical Journal*, 43.4 (2000), 1173–1181.

<sup>11</sup> The religious language of sacrifice in relation to the Fosse originated in 1944 when *Osservatore Romano* described the victims as “persons sacrificed”. A decade

were killed (and their corpses left) makes reference to collective sacrifice for national liberty, and expresses hope that bloodshed might be a seed of the generations to come. The covered burial ground is comprised of rows of caskets containing the victims' bodies. The first casket is dedicated AI MARTIRI D'ITALIA. A nearby plaque declares this casket empty - a symbol of the communal sacrifice of the tens of thousands who died to redeem the country from 'internal tyranny and external enslavement' during the Resistance. According to historian Rebecca Clifford, 'The Fosse Ardeatine memorial thus had a dual symbolic function: it celebrated the Resistance as the moral foundation of the post-war republic, and it unified the victims as martyrs to the Resistance.'<sup>12</sup> The language and iconography of martyrdom, which are addressed later in this chapter, was an important part of this process.<sup>13</sup>

Portelli has written extensively on the memory of the Fosse. He has addressed the use of words like 'martyr' and 'sacrifice' to describe a thorny, divisive memory.<sup>14</sup> Emphasis on sacrifice and national rebirth through the language of martyrdom was significant, and obscured many of the difficult elements of this memory by stressing Italian suffering (we will see the same process occur in the construction of national narratives in postwar Italy in the second case study, which examines the memory of Giacomo Matteotti – the first prominent antifascist martyr). However, the concept of martyrdom also draws attention to the agency of the killer, in this case Nazi occupiers, and makes them 'the principal actor' of the event.<sup>15</sup> The evil of the perpetrators is thus one of the central components of the martyrological narrative. Given the pervasive – and entirely false – memory

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later, it had permeated the judicial sphere. On 5 May 1954, the Rome Court of Appeals delivered its verdict on the culpability of the partisans committing an act in via Rasella that led to the Fosse Ardeatine reprisals; the partisans were absolved, and declared not 'culprits on one hand, but fighters; not mere victims of a harmful act on the other, but martyrs fallen for the homeland.' See: Portelli, *The Order Has Been Carried Out*, p. 194.

<sup>12</sup> Rebecca Clifford, *Commemorating the Holocaust: The Dilemmas of Remembrance in France and Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p.97.

<sup>13</sup> However, this unifying narrative of national martyrdom was unstable; in the 1990s, the monument came to be associated with Italy's Holocaust and thus one particular ethnic group, complicating how the martyrological narrative related to the nation. See: Rebecca Clifford, 'The Limits of National Memory: Anti-Fascism, the Holocaust and the Fosse Ardeatine Memorial in 1990s Italy', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 44.2 (2008).

<sup>14</sup> Portelli, *The Order Has Been Carried Out*, pp. 195-196.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196

addressed by Portelli that the partisans implicated in via Rasella should have, or even could have, handed themselves in and thus prevented the Nazi reprisals, the language of martyrdom was useful. It underscored Italian victimhood and the violence of the foreign occupier, and suggested death was an inevitable part of national renewal.

The term martyr and its cognates are part of the Italian cultural lexicon. Italy is a relatively young country, but its religious history is long and politics and religion have frequently been conflated. This has occurred historically (given the enormous power of the Church), during Mussolini's dictatorship, and in postwar democracy by the Christian Democrats, for example. Within this environment, the language of secular martyrdom has flourished. The term is often applied to individuals and groups, but Italian media has also used it to describe war-torn cities. When the body of three-year-old Alan Kurdi washed up on a Turkish beach in 2015, prompting debate on how to better manage the Syrian humanitarian crisis, Italian media labelled his hometown Kobanî as a 'città martire' of the conflict in response to the huge number of civilian deaths at the hands of Islamic State militants.<sup>16</sup>

Stories of secular martyrdom have flourished at significant junctures in Italian history including, for example, the Risorgimento, the Resistance, and the foundation of the new Republic, as a latter part of this chapter will explain. Some of the martyr stories that have emerged from these historical turning points are remembered by the wider nation, and they have shaped national identity, defined as both the state's understanding of its identity and the way a nation's citizens understand themselves as a people. These stories are part of a nation's foundational myths, as we will see in my analysis of the way the memory of Giacomo Matteotti – Italy's first prominent antifascist martyr, and the subject of the second case study – was used during the construction of the new Republic to emphasise Italy's latent antifascism. If nations are to be thought of as 'social fictions', as Dickie asserts, I contend that a nation's martyr stories are among the narratives that help to

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<sup>16</sup>Adriano Sofri, 'Nella città martire dei curdi l'addio al bambino morto per vivere', *La Repubblica*, 5 September 2015  
<[http://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2015/09/05/news/nella\\_citta\\_martire\\_dei\\_curdi\\_l\\_addio\\_al\\_bambino\\_morto\\_per\\_vivere-122242544/](http://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2015/09/05/news/nella_citta_martire_dei_curdi_l_addio_al_bambino_morto_per_vivere-122242544/)> [accessed 4 July 2018].

construct these fictions.<sup>17</sup> They are, to echo the title of Samuel and Thompson's 1990 book, among the myths we live by.<sup>18</sup>

Why though does the state choose to uphold the memory of certain individuals, and create national martyrs? As we will see in the overview of religious martyrdom later in this chapter, martyrs are the result of moral or physical conflict. It is therefore likely that martyrs will be contested.<sup>19</sup> Yet some martyrs enjoy the full endorsement of institutions, achieving almost untouchable status in national narratives. Matteotti is one such example. But consider also more recent martyrs such as the anti-Mafia magistrates Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino, murdered on Mafia orders in 1992. They were mourned nationally – giving their names to prominent public spaces including Palermo airport – and internationally. The judges were part of *Time Magazine's* list of heroes of the last 60 years in 2006 and the European Commission recently re-named one of its meeting rooms after the pair.<sup>20</sup> The individuals cited here all died on Italian soil, but their memory was upheld as an example of the values the state wished to project (antifascism, non-violence, anti-Mafia). It therefore lent its support to commemorative initiatives like monument-building, or days of memory.<sup>21</sup>

The primary motivation of the thesis is to understand the frequent use of the language, rituals and iconography of martyrdom in Italy, and the impact of that

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<sup>17</sup> John Dickie, 'Imagined Italies', in *Italian Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, ed. by David Forgacs and Robert Lumley (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 19–33 (p.20).

<sup>18</sup> *The Myths We Live By*, ed. by Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson, History Workshop Series (London: New York: Routledge, 1990).

<sup>19</sup> Indeed, many of the First World War secular martyrs were contested. Enrico Toti, the one-legged former railway worker, is one example. Injured at the age of 24, Toti cycled through Europe and further afield prior to the breakout of war. Having tried to volunteer for the army and been rejected, he cycled to the frontline and served as a civilian volunteer, before being sent home once again. He returned to the frontline, and unofficially joined a battalion. Toti was fatally wounded in battle, and was said to have thrown his crutch at the approaching enemy. Posthumously awarded the Gold Medal of Military Valor, Toti's legend continues to divide opinion: was he a valiant soldier that deserves a crutch-wielding statue and public spaces named in his honour, or simply a national myth?

<sup>20</sup> Catherine Mayer, '60 Years Of Heroes', *Time*, 5 November 2006 <<http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1555026,00.html>> [accessed 2 July 2018].

<sup>21</sup> Diego Gavini has analysed the way Falcone's physical and emotional suffering contributed towards his 'symbolic martyrdom' and embodiment of the values of an 'ideal state.' See: Diego Gavini, 'Funerals of Mafia Victims, 1963-2012: The Construction of a New Civil Religion', *Modern Italy*, 23.3 (2018), 253–67 (p. 262).



usage on identity. It is structured around two extensive case studies – the Primavalle Arson (1973), and the kidnap and assassination of Giacomo Matteotti (1924). This structure allows for a direct comparison between martyrs commemorated by the nation, and those who are remembered only by a particular socio-political group. I use the term ‘socio-political group’ because of its broad meaning. It can refer to a group that is bound by location, for example, denoting those individuals living in a particular urban community like the social housing units in Primavalle, northwest Rome – the location of my first case study. But it could also refer to a group bound by a shared political belief or aim, such as antifascists – one of the primary communities of mourning for Matteotti during the Fascist *ventennio*.

I will also seek to understand if the national martyr paradigm has evolved from the monumental mode of remembering, which privileges tales of heroism, to fall in line with the more victim-focused cosmopolitan mode of memory (these theories are presented in the coming pages of this chapter). By examining the martyrs the Italian nation has privileged (or side-lined), and how that martyrological hierarchy has been articulated and challenged, we will begin to understand the importance of martyrdom in the construction of Italian identity, and the way it shapes how citizens understand their relationship with the state. This study also takes an international approach, looking beyond Italy’s borders to examine global commemoration of martyrs to understand the construction of Italian identity outside of Italy itself. It will therefore consider the role of the diaspora in the transmission of memory, and the creation of transnational communities of memory.

In order to get to the heart of these issues, the following questions will be addressed:

- Who becomes a national martyr, and who remains at the level of the socio-political group? Can a martyr for the group become a martyr for the nation, and vice versa?
- What role does martyr memory play after violence within the nation?
- Does an individual need to die for a belief to be remembered as a martyr?
- Do the borders of the nation state contain the memory of the martyr, or can martyrdom extend internationally? Does the Italian diaspora play a role in transmitting martyrdom beyond Italy, creating transnational memory?

- Has there been a shift from the monumental mode of remembering to the cosmopolitan mode within martyr memory? If so, why? And what are the implications of that shift?

The individuals studied in this thesis were all killed by violence on Italian soil. I contend that the commemoration of national martyrs has a legitimating function for the state after violence from within, and I will demonstrate that the symbolic power of this category of martyr is most frequently leveraged in the wake of violence on national soil. I will also show that this domestic quality of violence shapes the narratives of martyrdom. Broadly speaking, martyrs produced through internal conflict will typically be commemorated with reference to renewal, rebirth and regeneration – a break with the past - while the martyrological narrative relating to those who died through war with another country (or in clashes with occupying foreign forces) typically focuses on the continuation of national values. I will show that the first category is more relevant to the Italian case than the second.

If we are to understand the role of martyrdom after violence, it is essential to consider the importance of memory more broadly in the delivery of justice after national trauma. This is the subject of the next section. I will then introduce the aforementioned theories of monumental and cosmopolitan memory that form the framework for the analysis in this thesis. This chapter will then outline the religious roots of martyrdom, examine how martyrdom found meaning in the secular sphere in Italy, and explain how the concept of martyrdom relates to civil religion - a term introduced by Jean-Jacques Rousseau to denote the importance of rituals, iconography and symbols in creating a sense of civic duty and belonging.<sup>22</sup> Finally, I will present the methodologies and sources I use to interrogate the above research questions, and provide a short overview of the thesis structure.

### **Memory, justice and violence**

Memory has played an important role in the delivery of justice after violence within the nation in many countries around the world. Within conflict resolution, justice generally involves the recognition of suffering, and the subsequent issuing of punishment. During the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, for example, it was a

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<sup>22</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'The Social Contract or Principles of Political Right. Book IV Chapter VIII. Civil Religion', in *Social Contract & Discourses*, trans. by G. D. H. Cole (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1913).

discernible priority, as exemplified by the creation of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, which aimed to promote reconciliation among this group of nations.<sup>23</sup> In post apartheid South Africa, however, punishment was the primary motivation behind the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (though it was heavily criticised for granting amnesty to those perpetrators who gave testimony). Other nations have focused on education in their management of difficult legacies; in Northern Ireland, the state has promoted the sharing of narratives of political violence, which features in school curriculums.<sup>24</sup>

The Spanish case is particularly interesting for the role of memory in the resolution of conflict after civil war. Spain's transition to democracy was smoothed by a shared sense of responsibility. According to historian Carolyn P. Boyd, common slogans including 'never again' and 'we were all guilty' cast civil war as fratricide, and minimised political divisions in the national narrative. The institutionally endorsed pact of silence – codified in the Amnesty Law of 1977 – created the space needed for national recovery, and enabled institutions to closely manage the narratives of the past in the hope of reducing ideological discord and promoting pacification. By the 1990s, Boyd writes, the memories of 'forgotten victims' emerged, boosting reconciliation and helping to 'close the chasm that during the dictatorship divided individuals memories from official memory.'<sup>25</sup>

Italy's management of its own violent legacies has been more hybrid than clear-cut. Take the case of Italy's years of domestic terrorism – the subject of the first case study. According to historians Anna Cento Bull and Philip Cooke, a hazy strategy has led to 'Italy's partial and incomplete process of ending terrorism.'<sup>26</sup> Though *pentitismo* is widely held to have catalysed the end of terrorism and

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<sup>23</sup> See: Aleksandar Fatić, *Reconciliation via the War Crimes Tribunal?* (Aldershot, Hants, England; Brookfield, Vt: Ashgate, 2000).

<sup>24</sup> Keith C. Barton and Alan McCully, 'History Teaching and the Perpetuation of Memories: The Northern Ireland Experience', in *The Role of Memory in Ethnic Conflict* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 107–24.

<sup>25</sup> Carolyn P. Boyd, 'The Politics of History and Memory in Democratic Spain', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 617 (2008), 133–48 (pp. 139–141).

<sup>26</sup> Anna Cento Bull and Philip E. Cooke, *Ending Terrorism in Italy*, Routledge Studies in Extremism and Democracy, 18 (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), p. 103.

dissociation among former perpetrators,<sup>27</sup> the legislation was criticised for bringing about uneven treatment of equal crimes and the early release of convicts.<sup>28</sup> Many questioned these strategies of reconciliation, and this has had a significant impact on the vigour with which martyrs from the period are remembered, as chapters 2-5 will show.<sup>29</sup> The state has introduced a national day of memory for the victims of terrorism, which might suggest recognition of shared experiences. However, the choice of date - the anniversary of the discovery of Aldo Moro's body - shows the privileging of those who were killed by those on the far left in national narratives, and positions the period as one of violence against the state, not one of state violence.

A symbol of recognition, a piece of evidence or part of education, memory plays an important role in the delivery of justice globally. In his study of the memory of Aldo Moro, social scientist Baldassare Scolari discusses the role of what he terms 'state martyrs' in 'opening a civil religious space'.<sup>30</sup> Their celebration encourages individuals to identify with the nation, and to celebrate and adhere to its foundations. This thesis will show that with justice so often absent in cases of Italian violence, the promotion of national martyrs has become part of the state's recognition of the broader suffering of the Italian people after national trauma. National martyrs are part of the state's transition process. Though the individuals studied in this thesis did not live in crusading societies like the early religious

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<sup>27</sup> *Pentitismo* is a media-invented term to describe the process by which perpetrators were encouraged to turn state's evidence in exchange for a reduced sentence. See: Cento Bull and Cooke, *Ending Terrorism in Italy*, pp. 33-35.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>29</sup> Language is also reflective of state attitudes towards legacies of violence. During the transition to peace in Greece, the preceding tumultuous period in Greek history was officially named a civil war, rather than a bandit war (the term that had been employed by the victors in the immediate aftermath). Subsequently, individuals who had fought in the communist army were recognised (and no longer labelled as 'bandits'). By contrast, O'Leary reads the ubiquitous label 'anni di piombo' in Italy, with its metaphorical links to the bullet, as symbolic of the common characterisation of the period as one of left-wing violence since bombs were the primary means of right-wing attack. Furthermore, a lack of judicial truth and punishment is a defining characteristic of the period, with countless cases left unsolved and victims marginalised. See: Peter Siani Davies and Stefanos Katsikas, 'National Reconciliation After Civil War: The Case of Greece', *Journal of Peace Research*, 46 (2009), 559-75 (p. 562); Alan O'Leary, 'Italian Cinema and the "Anni di Piombo"', *Journal of European Studies*, 40 (2010), 243-57 (p. 244).

<sup>30</sup> Baldassare Scolari. 'State Martyrs: Aesthetics and Performativity of a Contemporary Political Discourse', *Journal of Religion in Europe*, 10 (2017), 71-106 (p. 71).

martyrs addressed later in this chapter, they did lose their lives through conflict within Italy, a fact that has shaped how their deaths have been remembered in the nation's history. In the next section, I will present the theories that I use as a framework for my analysis of the Italian martyr paradigm in national narratives.

### **Monumental memory: narrating triumph**

The relationship between collective memory and national identity has long been the subject of scholarly interest. It was the subject of Pierre Nora's influential work on *les lieux de mémoire* – external mnemotechnical devices that prompt memory – which showed that memory is used selectively within national narratives.<sup>31</sup> Nora argued that the construction of national narratives 'implies a large task of suppression and denial of incongruous or undesirable elements'; it is thus memory that 'underpins and undermines the national narrative.'<sup>32</sup> His work has shown that difficulties arise when a nation undergoes a significant change of regime, as differing regimes will favour different national narratives of the past. Evidence of this process of selection and rejection can be found in chapter 8, which shows that with the fall of Fascism those martyrs who had been honoured throughout the Fascist *ventennio* were promptly rejected, as part of a sustained effort to re-write an antifascist historical narrative with Giacomo Matteotti as its figurehead.

Written in 1874 in the wake of the Franco-Prussian war, Nietzsche's work on monumental history addressed the construction of these cohesive national narratives.<sup>33</sup> Monumental history, he wrote, emphasises the great past victories of the nation - in battle or culture - and uses these victories as a glorious foundation for the future, suggesting that if greatness has been achieved in the past, it can be attained again. Monumental history connects society across the ages. However, he argued, this approach to history obscures the events leading up to great victories, privileging the outcome over the cause. Unlike the antiquarian approach to history, which is backwards-looking and focused on the preservation of the past, and the critical approach, which fosters a critical analysis of history in order to break with the past, monumental history is inspirational and aspirational.

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<sup>31</sup> See: Nora, 'Between Memory and History'.

<sup>32</sup> Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 170.

<sup>33</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life* (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co, 1980).

If monumental history is ‘a selection of the great achievements from the past’, it is interesting to analyse which figures emerge as national martyrs.<sup>34</sup> Martyrs within the monumental framework have tended to be male war figures, like those remembered after WWI, and founding fathers of the nation such as Garibaldi, Mazzini and Cavour.<sup>35</sup> This narrow canon of martyrs has privileged heroic individuals who fought oppressors, led troops, or liberated the nation. We will see this recurring military trope in commemoration of Matteotti, who was remembered by some as a soldier-like figure (despite his known anti-war position). This mode of memory has generally focussed on individual tales of heroism and celebrated cohesive narratives of triumph. It is a hierarchical mode of remembering.<sup>36</sup>

In Italy as in other countries, the monumental mode of memory has traditionally dominated collective remembrance, with implications for who is commemorated as a national martyr. In his work on collective remembrance, historian Joseph Theodoor Leerssen addresses ‘state-sanctioned public commemoration’, which is mediated, geared towards social harmony and canonises individuals in one official history.<sup>37</sup> However, Leerssen argues, grassroots memory is often discordant with the national narratives promoted by institutions. In other words, ‘community remembrancing’, which is ‘carried largely by local or small-scale communities rather than by the elites of nations-at-large’ often ‘evinces a different sense of history, one which sees history from the point of view of the losers, the bereaved, the victims.’<sup>38</sup> We will see this tension clearly in the first case study, which considers the memorial initiatives organised by a relative of two individuals who are not commemorated by the nation to integrate their memory within broader national narratives. In the next section, I will address this turn to the victim, a turn that is

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<sup>34</sup> Joep Leerssen, ‘Monument and Trauma: Varieties of Remembrance’, in *History and Memory in Modern Ireland*, ed. by Ian McBride (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 204-222 (p. 207).

<sup>35</sup> Following Italian unification, Giuseppe Garibaldi and Giuseppe Mazzini were celebrated on the day of their onomastico, the celebration day linked to San Giuseppe. Thus not only were they celebrated as martyrs, but also linked to sainthood. See: Roberto Mancini, *Il martire necessario: guerra e sacrificio nell’Italia contemporanea* (Pisa: Pacini editore, 2015), p. 23.

<sup>36</sup> According to Giesen, however, the cult of the unknown soldier as commemorated at war memorials throughout the twentieth century democratised this trend. See: Bernhard Giesen and S. N. Aizenshtadt, *Triumph and Trauma* (Boulder, Colo.: Paradigm, 2004), p. 24.

<sup>37</sup> Leerssen, p. 215.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

reflected in cosmopolitan memory theory, which will be used alongside the monumental mode of remembering as a framework for analysis within this thesis.

### **Cosmopolitan memory: the turn to the victim**

National identity has traditionally been based upon heroic memory of grand battles and great men, but the mid-twentieth century marked a turning point in the relationship between memory and the nation, with consequences for who is remembered as a martyr.<sup>39</sup> As Western citizens have increasingly identified with supranational causes and institutions, their collective memories have shifted, and global issues have become part of everyday life. Levy and Sznajder suggest that although the traditional concept of collective memory was confined to the boundaries of the nation, the 'decoupling of collective memory and national history' has seen memory break out of national boundaries in the third millennium where it can be shared by international mnemonic communities.<sup>40</sup> Though it is digested locally, memory is shared supranationally, creating a multi-layered dynamic.

Levy and Sznajder identify the Holocaust as the 'formative event' that provides 'the foundations for a new cosmopolitan memory, a memory transcending ethnic and national boundaries.'<sup>41</sup> They write of the abstract nature of Holocaust representation as good against evil, and its role as 'the civilization break of modernity and the dividing line to barbarity'.<sup>42</sup> Holocaust memory has, they argue, been incorporated into European cultural memory, becoming 'a founding moment for the idea of European civilization in the wake of the Cold War.'<sup>43</sup> As European nations became increasingly self-reflexive - facing responsibility for the parts they played in the genocide - the memory of the 'other', in this case the 'victim', emerges.<sup>44</sup> They suggest that the belated recognition of memories of the Holocaust, and the amount of memory work dedicated to the event, has led to the creation of

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<sup>39</sup> Daniel Levy and Natan Sznajder, 'Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5.1 (2002), 87-106.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

‘transnational memory cultures’ with the potential to act as ‘the cultural foundation for global human rights politics’ that places the memory of the victim at its centre.<sup>45</sup>

Crucially, cosmopolitan memory is future-facing: ‘It is not a memory that is solely looking toward the past to produce a new formative myth. Discussions about post-national collectivities are mostly focused on the future.’<sup>46</sup> This future-facing element of cosmopolitan memory is important for this thesis, and marks a stark distinction with the past-looking nature of the monumental memory culture that prevailed during nineteenth century nation-building, with heroic martyrs at its heart. After this turn to cosmopolitan memory, those that had once been considered heroes were cast as perpetrators. In a sense the martyr paradigm had returned to echo that of the early Christian period, where human suffering was emphasised.

In placing the victim at its heart, cosmopolitan memory has serious implications for who is remembered by the Italian nation. The question of whether a turn to the cosmopolitan mode of memory is reflected in the Italian martyr paradigm will be examined closely in the first case study. I will show that the monumental mode of remembering has endured in Italy, and the national pantheon is still dominated by heroic, male martyrs, as a latter part of this chapter will demonstrate. For those mourners who mobilise to remember their dead when the wider nation does not, commemoration has become a political act and memory remains tightly tethered to a particular group. Consequently, they have often been commemorated within the antagonistic mode of remembering, an exclusionary and divisive mode of memory that ‘privileges emotions in order to cement a sense of belonging to a particularistic community, focusing on the suffering inflicted by the ‘evil’ enemies upon this same community.’<sup>47</sup> This antagonistic nature of martyr memory, and its role in keeping conflict between opposing groups in Italy alive, will be analysed closely in chapter 3, but is a constant theme of this thesis. In these instances, the construction and commemoration of martyrdom has played a symbolic role in the many internal conflicts that have taken place in Italy. Put another way, often martyrdom is not only the result of conflict, but part of the conflict itself.

Martyrdom in Italy has often moved beyond the confines of the religious realm and found meaning in the secular sphere, bringing together memory, ideology

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>47</sup> Anna Cento Bull and H. L. Hansen, ‘On Agonistic Memory’, *Memory Studies*, 9.4 (2016), 390–404 (p. 398).



and national identity. The link between martyr stories and political identity is not only true of Italy. Consider, briefly, the centrality of martyrs to the Chinese Communist Party's efforts to foster nationalism. The party introduced a Martyrs' Memorial Day and built a national cemetery to honour the enormous human cost of establishing the People's Republic of China.<sup>48</sup> According to historian Chang-tai Hung, the cult of martyrs served to deflect focus from wartime destruction, legitimise armed conflict, comfort those who lost loved ones, and to inspire the living, thus turning 'wartime sacrifice into political gains.'<sup>49</sup> This example makes clear the way ideology affects martyr memory. I define ideology here as the system of ideas (and ideals) that inform political and cultural beliefs. Martyr stories can be used to inspire people to emulate the life of a political figurehead and commit to the political group. As we will see in chapter 6, international socialist communities borrowed the rhetoric and iconography of the church in their commemoration of Matteotti in order to claim him as their martyr and encourage commitment to socialism. Ideology shaped the martyrological narrative, particularly during times of transition or conflict. The next section will demonstrate the historical association between martyrdom and conflict since the time of the early Christian martyrs.

### **The origins of martyrdom**

From the Greek μάρτυς, the term 'martyr' stems from the root *smēr*, meaning 'to bear in mind', 'to remember', and 'to consider, deliberate, hesitate.'<sup>50</sup> The noun was defined as the 'one who remembers, who has knowledge of something by recollection, and who can thus tell about it', or 'the witness'.<sup>51</sup> The term was originally bound to the courtroom, a space for an individual to provide truthful testimony. It was associated with a contested situation in which a witness was called to elucidate a truth and provide empirical facts. It was not a question of beliefs. In its original context, the martyr was a witness for the prosecution and was framed by competing narratives within the dynamics of dominance and submission. However, the term also had a use outside of the legal realm, and its meaning broadened to include the declaration of views or beliefs held true by the individual. In this way, it

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<sup>48</sup> Chang-tai Hung, 'The Cult of the Red Martyr: Politics of Commemoration in China', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 43.2 (2008), 279–304.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 282.

<sup>50</sup> Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1964), p. 475.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

became associated with truths in the more personal sense of belief or moral judgement.<sup>52</sup>

It was with the early Christian application of the term, with the crucifixion of Jesus as the model of the witness, that the more commonly held definition emerged of the martyr as an individual who embodies dedication to a truth in death. First associated with the Apostles, who bore witness to Christ's life and resurrection, the term was later linked to the persecution of early Christians. Throughout the sixteenth century, around 5,000 people were killed in Europe in the name of religion, and many were considered as martyrs.<sup>53</sup> Their deaths were preceded by a prolonged period of torture and suffering, and 'infused religious disputes with human urgency.'<sup>54</sup> Christians of different creeds memorialised their martyrs, but excluded others (this process of selection and rejection is a key theme of this thesis). According to historian Brad S. Gregory, martyrdom 'amplified pre-existing dissonance over Christian truth; martyrs' willingness to die for specific doctrines fostered confessionalization and antagonism', and 'public executions became a powerful arena for evangelization.'<sup>55</sup> Social behaviour was shaped by what took place on the execution stage. Vincent Viaene has analysed the way martyrdom evolved as models of religious life shifted. This evolution, he argues, 'greatly facilitated the integration of crucial new developments such as the growing role of lay elites, of congregations with simple vows and of women – in the traditional structures of the Church.'<sup>56</sup> It is this evolving quality and its impact on social structures that Viaene calls the 'essential elasticity' of martyrdom.<sup>57</sup>

According to historian Lacey Baldwin Smith, martyrs were the result of 'unbalanced and unstable societies experiencing a process of cultural, economic, and political restructuring', often produced in 'expanding and crusading societies' where individuals were indoctrinated to 'die for their faith, for their nation state, or for a

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 478.

<sup>53</sup> Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, Mass; London: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 6.

<sup>54</sup> Kittel et al., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, p. 6.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>56</sup> Vincent Viaene, 'Gladiators of Expiation: The Cult of the Martyrs in the Catholic Revival of the Nineteenth Century', *Studies in Church History*, 40 (2004), 301–16 (p. 304).

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 304.

political-social ideal.<sup>58</sup> Martyrdom, writes Schudson, 'is a role that is assigned for present needs,' 'when people may need a symbolic object to define, explain, or galvanise a course of action.'<sup>59</sup> They are powerful, multifaceted symbols, able to 'elicit devotional zeal and encourage affiliation with a cause.'<sup>60</sup> Martyrs arose most frequently in 'a society in conflict *with itself*' [my emphasis], and the same can be said for the application of the term 'martyr' in a secular sense in Italy, as this thesis will show.<sup>61</sup>

Clayton Fordahl has argued that a historical examination of the figure of the martyr from the early Christian context to the present day can help us to trace the development of sovereignty, which he defines as 'that intersection of power and authority which aspires to ultimate social control and forms the pre-contractual basis of a society'.<sup>62</sup> Fordahl examines the case of Christians during the Roman Empire, who refused to participate in pagan rituals that honoured the Gods and the emperor. He argues that these stories 'not only forged a new Christian understanding of salvation through suffering, it also fortified communal bonds and leveraged a critique of imperial authority and culture.'<sup>63</sup> Since the Roman Empire then, martyrdom has told us something about the relationship between the people and the ruling power. During the Medieval age, which was plagued by conflict between the church and the court, the relationship between martyrdom and sovereignty evolved once again. Fordahl addresses the martyrdom of Thomas Becket (who was both Lord Chancellor and Archbishop of Canterbury), stating that his death was understood as a 'limit on sovereign power.'<sup>64</sup> Suffering and salvation were closely intertwined, and Becket was commemorated around Europe, suggesting 'a hegemonic sacrificial order, around which the faithful gathered and the powerful tussled.'<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Lacey Baldwin Smith, *Fools, Martyrs, Traitors: The Story of Martyrdom in the Western World* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1999), p. 18.

<sup>59</sup> Michael Schudson, 'How Culture Works: Perspectives from Media Studies on the Efficacy of Symbols', *Theory and Society*, 18.2 (1989), 153–80 (p. 159).

<sup>60</sup> Michaela DeSoucey et al., 'Memory and Sacrifice: An Embodied Theory of Martyrdom', *Cultural Sociology*, 2.1 (2008), 99–121 (p. 105).

<sup>61</sup> Smith, *Fools, Martyrs, Traitors*, p. 19.

<sup>62</sup> Clayton Fordahl, 'Sovereignty and Martyrdom: A Sociological Sketch', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 2017, 1–17 (p. 2).

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

This relationship between martyrdom and the ruling power is particularly interesting in the context of the modern nation state. Fordahl uses the example of the Irish revolutionaries of the Easter Rising, who fought to liberate Ireland from British rule. Their failure was celebrated as ‘noble sacrifice’ and the battles were commemorated as ‘a conflict between an unjust and capricious state oppressor and tragically mistreated soldiers.’<sup>66</sup> The martyrological narrative therefore had implications for how individuals understood their relationship with the state. Martyrdom became a means to protest institutional violence and pursue national sovereignty. Fordahl argues: ‘where the martyrs’ sacrifice once opened access to a higher good and degraded the violence of earthly sovereignty, here the higher good becomes sovereignty itself.’<sup>67</sup>

However, Fordahl’s assertion that martyrdom is tied to sovereignty is challenged by my analysis in chapters 6 and 7, which examine international memory of Giacomo Matteotti, the socialist politician murdered by men linked to Mussolini’s regime. These chapters address the incorporation of the memory of an Italian martyr into local experience around the world during the *ventennio*, and analyse the role of the diaspora in that transmission. I will show that memory was not bound by the borders of the nation state, and therefore not primarily related to national sovereignty during Fascist rule. Michael Rothberg’s theory of multidirectional memory, ‘which is meant to draw attention to the dynamic transfers that take place between diverse places and times during the act of remembrance’, is important here.<sup>68</sup> This thesis includes a number of examples that show the construction of an international memory community through shared experiences of martyrdom. Though Rothberg’s theory focuses on the overlapping of memories that are not directly comparable, such as the Holocaust and colonialism, I nonetheless believe that the results of multidirectional memory are evident in international commemoration of Matteotti. Martyrdom was a means to celebrate (and protect) the universal values of liberty and democracy, rather than celebrate national sovereignty.

So what makes a secular martyr? It is a difficult term to define, fraught with ambiguities. Broadly speaking, however, martyrdom requires the sacrifice of a life

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2009) p. 3.

and a period of suffering. According to Weiner and Weiner's sociological study, the ideal martyrdom includes the following elements: 'the martyrological confrontation, a structured situation in which the martyr confronts his or her persecutor; the martyr's motive - a disposition on the part of the martyr to self sacrifice for conviction; and the martyrological narrative - a literary tradition that immortalises the martyr's story.'<sup>69</sup> I will show that an individual does not need to die for a belief to be labelled a martyr; conviction can be ascribed posthumously. Not everyone who is mourned as a martyr intended to be cast as such. They did not walk knowingly towards martyrdom in the way of Mahatma Gandhi, for example, in his adherence to Satyagraha or non-violent protest. Indeed, it is often true that the martyred individual exerts more influence through re-interpretation of their life than during the life itself, as the first case study will make clear.

Clearly though not all martyrs are accidental; martyrdom for a cause is the original paradigm. In 2010, Tunisian street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in protest against police harassment and state corruption. Reminiscent of acts of martyrdom from the early Christian period, his self-sacrifice sparked the Tunisian Revolution and the region's Arab Spring. Throughout history, individuals have expressed their conviction in full awareness of the dangers that might lie ahead. As we will see in the second case study, Matteotti knew his life was in danger when he denounced Fascist corruption in the Italian parliament. Nevertheless, Weiner and Weiner's study suggests that it is the martyrological narrative, rather than a propensity for self-sacrifice, that creates the martyr. They write: 'Martyrdom becomes influential through the narratives that celebrate it [...] It is the viability of the narrative's transmission, which becomes the measure of the martyr's significance.'<sup>70</sup> Martyrdom is, the theologian Elizabeth Castelli argues, 'rhetorically constituted and discursively sustained.'<sup>71</sup> It *needs* some form of collective memory to survive; without it, the individual's legacy is restricted to friends and family, which is temporally limited. In the early Christian context, how hagiographers interpreted and perpetuated the martyr's memory was what dictated the legend of the martyr, and the same is true of secular martyrs. The next section will give an overview of

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<sup>69</sup> Eugene Weiner and Anita Weiner, *The Martyr's Conviction: A Sociological Analysis* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), p. 10.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>71</sup> Elizabeth A. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 173.

the secular martyr paradigm in Italy, and assess its importance in the construction of civil religion.

### **The Italian martyr paradigm and civil religion**

The notion of civil religion, where the sacrality of traditional religion is transferred to the nation through symbols and rituals, is central to any explanation of secular martyrdom. In the penultimate chapter of Book Four of the 1762 *The Social Contract*, Rousseau addressed the concept of civil religion. He argued that the state needed its citizens to believe in a civil religion that would incite them to do their duties. This religion is based upon: ‘The existence of a mighty, intelligent and beneficent Divinity, possessed of foresight and providence, the life to come, the happiness of the just, the punishment of the wicked, the sanctity of the social contract and the laws: these are its positive dogmas.’<sup>72</sup> All other forms of worship that do not interfere with this central tenet of civil religion are tolerated and are not the concern of the state. In promoting the ideas of duty and obedience, religion was upheld as useful to society.<sup>73</sup> His study did not try to undermine Christianity, but rather to separate the Christian religion from politics and define the necessary belief that is required to build a community.

The French Revolution is acknowledged as an early example of the creation of civil religion, as a result of Robespierre’s development of the Cult of the Supreme Being following revolutionaries’ rejection of Catholicism. With its encouragement of loyalty to the notions of liberty and democracy, this early civil religion fused elements of early Christianity, like belief in one god and the afterlife of the human soul, with elements of civic virtue. Exemplifying what the historian Emilio Gentile labels ‘the sacralization of the nation’, which spread across Europe and saw politics and the sacred merge, the civil religion of the French Revolution ‘made politics religious and gave an educational mission to the state’ - that of schooling its citizens in democratic virtues and morality.<sup>74</sup>

A historical examination of the martyr paradigm since Italian unification makes clear the importance of martyrdom to civil religion in Italy. In her article ‘Martyr Cults in Nineteenth Century Italy’, historian Lucy Riall presents the

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<sup>72</sup> Rousseau, *The Social Contract or Principles of Political Right*, paragraph 33.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, paragraph 35.

<sup>74</sup> Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics*, p. 2.

common ground shared by the Catholic Church and the Italian nationalist movement during the Risorgimento by analysing the importance of martyrdom to both.<sup>75</sup> Nationalist groups reframed death and military loss as a sanctifying sacrifice for the nation, and martyrdom became proof ‘of an Italian valor that transcended death, defeat, and political decline.’<sup>76</sup> The movement provides a clear example of the ‘transposition of religious vocabularies onto the nation’.<sup>77</sup> This transposition is a central tenet of civil religion. However, Riall questions the status of nationalism as a precursor to civil religion because of the inherent assumption ‘of a church that was passive or at least largely helpless in the face of nationalist encroachments.’<sup>78</sup> This was not the case; indeed, the Catholic Church also tried to harness the symbolic power of martyrdom in its fight against nationalism, creating two ‘rival cults’ that were ‘at once bitterly hostile and intimately related.’<sup>79</sup>

Riall analyses the attempts of the republican Giuseppe Mazzini to reframe tragic losses of life within the battle for unification as revolutionary heroism, and his promotion of martyrs that ‘were a fusion of the romantic idea of the free individual [...] with the more dolorous image of Catholic suffering.’<sup>80</sup> She writes: ‘For Mazzini, the martyred revolutionary not only sanctified the nation: he also embodied it as a cause worth joining and for which it was worth fighting and dying.’<sup>81</sup> Martyrdom was used as a nationalist call to arms. With the dawn of Liberal Italy after unification, civil religion played a crucial role in the process of unifying disparate cultures and histories into one nation. According to Gentile: ‘the Italian revolution wrapped the idea of the nation in a sacred aura, raising it to the status of the supreme collective entity to which a citizen owed dedication and obedience - to the point of sacrificing his own life on its behalf.’<sup>82</sup> Gentile describes this period as marking ‘the first universal, liturgical manifestation of the sacralization of politics in the twentieth century.’<sup>83</sup> Within this context, the martyr emerged as an important unit in the construction of nationhood.

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<sup>75</sup> Lucy Riall, ‘Martyr Cults in 19th-Century Italy’, *Journal of Modern History*, 82.2 (2010), 255–87.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 259.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 260.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 268.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics*, p. 1.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

The army and education establishments were tasked with perpetuating the new civil religion, instilling the moral values of the state in its citizens - be they soldiers or students - and finally attempting to make Italians. Stories of suffering in the name of the nation were taught in Italian schools, in an attempt to build national identity and encourage dedication to the national project by linking suffering to glory.<sup>84</sup> The media also played its part, publishing accounts of glorious battles or heroic defeats.<sup>85</sup> Efforts were also made to infuse the civic calendar with a 'memorial liturgy' linked to the state, through rituals, feasts and commemorative practices to honour the monarchy and founding fathers.<sup>86</sup> But the tone was too sombre. According to Gentile: 'sorrow dominated, and nostalgia, and rue for the loss of the "fathers of the nation," the "good and generous King," or the other avatars of the new state, Cavour or Garibaldi. It was not the sort of liturgy calculated to make people enthusiastic for a "patriotic religion."' <sup>87</sup> The movement lacked vibrancy, and 'a communal myth of regeneration and rebirth through the sacrifice of life.'<sup>88</sup> Civil religion needed acts of martyrdom as testament to the sanctity of the nation and symbols of renewal.

It was not until the First World War that the strongest context for the commemoration of martyrs by the unified nation arose, and martyrdom became a foundation of civil religion. National commemoration of the military dead was not confined to Italy. As historian George Mosse has argued, images of fallen soldiers in the arms of Christ were ubiquitous, and 'projected the traditional belief in martyrdom and resurrection onto the nation as an all-encompassing civic religion.'<sup>89</sup> However, this was a particularly important period in terms of the fusion between war and Italian national identity, marking the first time Italy had embarked upon a military campaign as a single nation after unification in 1871. The mass loss of life created the context in which sacrifice could be celebrated in the name of the nation. Fighting for king and country, their deaths could be framed within the wider context of violent battle for national liberty and values. Identifying the early stages of a sacralization of politics that reached a climax under Fascism, Gentile writes:

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<sup>84</sup> Mancini, p. 28.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>86</sup> Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics*, p. 10.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 7.



‘The Christian symbolism of death and resurrection, dedication to the nation, the mystical connotations of blood and sacrifice, the “communion” of comradeship - all these became ingredients for a new “patriotic religion.”’<sup>90</sup> Martyrdom and the nation state were tightly bound, and this thesis will show that the martyr paradigm that emerged during WW1 has endured into the present day.

Much like a traditional religion, Fascism relied upon cults, symbols, and ritual to stir emotions and inspire loyalty in its followers, and martyrs played an important part.<sup>91</sup> Under Mussolini’s rule the families of the dead received war pensions, and monuments were erected in their honour. According to historian John Foot: ‘This myth was not simply a way to exploit the past for political ends, but also part of an attempt to eliminate all other memories from the post-war period.’<sup>92</sup> Monuments to the fascist dead were constructed in civic space throughout the country; the *Sacrario dei Martiri Fascisti*, a public memorial built in a crypt underneath the Santa Croce church in Florence, for example, emerged as ‘an elaborate site of religion that was already designed as an Italian Pantheon of heroes.’<sup>93</sup> Chapter 7 will show that the regime also commemorated martyrs in the United States, adding a transnational element to Fascist memory. After his death at the hands of partisans, Mussolini’s body and final resting place became a source of contention as antifascists explored how to prevent his ascension to martyrdom.<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, in most cases Fascist martyrdom proved transient as sites of memory were destroyed or amended after the fall of the regime, symptomatic of the often-divisive nature of martyrdom.

Historian Stephen Gundle has examined another use of martyrdom as a component of civil religion in modern Italy, in relation to the Resistance.<sup>95</sup> Addressing the accepted origins of the Republic that had been maintained by the

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<sup>90</sup> Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics*, p. 17.

<sup>91</sup> Redesign of the city was another important component. By rewriting the landscape, creating topographical continuity with ancient Rome and empire, Fascism was able to position itself as a logical next step in the country’s political development and remind its citizens of past glory, with the inherent suggestion that Italy could be great once again. In a similar attempt to dictate collective memory, the regime introduced a new calendar that saw 1922 introduced as year zero of the Fascist era, and this was incorporated into the façade of some buildings.

<sup>92</sup> John Foot, *Italy’s Divided Memory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 56.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>94</sup> Sergio Luzzatto, *The Body of Il Duce* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006).

<sup>95</sup> Stephen Gundle, ‘The “Civic Religion” of the Resistance in Post-War Italy’, *Modern Italy*, 5.2 (2000), 113–32.

political and cultural élite, he explores the breakdown of the Resistance tradition as a founding myth. He states that unlike the preceding civic religion under Fascism, for the first 15 years of its existence, the civic religion of the Resistance enjoyed limited support at an institutional level (though significant efforts were made by surviving partisans to honour the fallen in written narratives, visual codes and social action). The nation's government chose instead to 'adopt a view of continuity of the state in which as little as possible was made of both Fascism and the Resistance.'<sup>96</sup> This thesis will argue that Matteotti's martyrdom was part of the civil religion of the new Republic before institutional support for the memory of the Resistance fully emerged, in the immediate aftermath of the fall of Fascism.

Part of this process involved the removal of monuments that honoured Mussolini and the Fascist martyrs, and a number of monuments were constructed to honour fallen partisans.<sup>97</sup> In areas of left-wing rule, the partisan figure was accentuated in monuments, influenced by the classical tradition of the military figure but also 'images of the partisan diffused since the Spanish civil war. These clearly portrayed an irregular soldier, a fact signalled by the absence of helmet and uniform, and the presence of a beard and rough, informal clothing.'<sup>98</sup> Photographs were also published in newspapers, magazines, books and exhibitions, which were 'important in establishing the individuality of the partisan martyr, who could not be summed up in an abstraction of the 'unknown soldier' type.'<sup>99</sup> Resistance martyrs were, by and large, citizen-soldiers.<sup>100</sup> However, such images of martyrdom did not extend across Italy as a whole, remaining anchored instead in the regions in which the fallen lived or died. In the immediate aftermath of the Resistance, commemoration of its martyrs was site-specific.

The evolution of the Italian national martyr paradigm will be examined throughout this thesis. However, in order to analyse the construction of martyrdom and its role in collective identity, this thesis takes a methodological approach that reflects the wide scope of memory studies work and combines ethnographical and art

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> The case of the Cervi brothers, seven sons from an anti-fascist family that were killed by fascists, is typical of the positive representation of Resistance martyrs. See: Gundle, 'The "Civic Religion" of the Resistance in Post-War Italy', p. 125.

historical methods with sociological approaches. The final part of this chapter will outline these methodologies.

### **Methodologies, sources and thesis structure**

As my research questions reflect, this thesis will compare the memory of a martyr who is commemorated across the nation and two individuals who are tied to a particular socio-political group. Consequently, my methodologies must allow me to address individual, group and institutional commemoration. Oral history interviews and direct observation of commemoration ceremonies will help me to understand the construction of martyr memory at the level of the individual and the group. My methodological approach must also allow for the study of institutional formats of memory, which I will address through discourse analysis in media coverage, and by reading monuments, flags and memorials – Nora’s *lieux de mémoire*, which act as ‘defence-systems against [...] general oblivion’.<sup>101</sup> This will allow me to interrogate the role of martyrdom in the construction of national identity. Indeed, the second case study will show that those *lieux de mémoire* dedicated to Matteotti that were constructed in postwar Italy played an important unifying role during the creation of the new Republic, and their iconography and design reflected the monumental mode of memory that privileges individual heroism. The following sections provide an overview of my methodologies, and the key theories that have guided my approach.

#### *1. Reading monuments: iconography and discourse*

For the purposes of this study, monuments, memorials and plaques will be read in two ways: historical and art historical. While discourse analysis will uncover the meanings encoded in the text written on plaques and monuments, further iconographical analysis will highlight the qualities selected for entry into the pantheon of collective memory. This approach will be particularly useful in helping to establish if a martyr is commemorated in line with a monumental mode of remembering, with the relevant iconographical signifiers, or as a unit of

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<sup>101</sup> Aleida Assmann, 'Four Formats of Memory: From Individual to Collective Constructions of the Past', in *Cultural Memory and Historical Consciousness in the German-Speaking World Since 1500: Papers from the Conference "The Fragile Tradition"*, ed. by Christian Emden and David R. Midgley (Oxford; New York: Peter Lang, 2004), pp. 19-38 (p. 31).

cosmopolitan memory. The location of memorials will also help to address this point, as proximity to a city's centre of power typically signifies institutional endorsement of memory.

The classic art historical approach reads the iconography of the monument as indicative of a wider meaning. Consider the example of Italian monuments commemorating the First World War, many of which were built under Fascism and sought to promulgate the cult of the fallen soldier. Several monuments depict soldiers with muscular, semi-nude torsos and defiant poses, pointing to the classical tradition, with masculine strength and camaraderie portrayed as central to the war effort.<sup>102</sup> Due to the multitude of political regimes that have governed the nation and sought to re-write the national narrative Italy offers a particularly rich landscape for the historical reading of memoryscapes. I use this term to mean the monuments, memorials and other physical sites of memory, but also the 'complex and vibrant plane upon which memories emerge, are contested, transform, encounter other memories, mutate, and multiply'.<sup>103</sup> The debates around these spaces are as interesting as the sites themselves. Unlike the monuments linked to Spain's dictatorship, many of which were only removed in 2007 as part of Zapatero's Historical Memory Law, or indeed the thorough process of denazification, which served to rid post-war Germany of the memoryscapes of National Socialism, Italian memory has often been expressed in national and local monuments, and 'exploded at times into full-scale monument wars' following periods of upheaval in Italian history including after the fall of Fascism and during Italy's *anni di piombo*, where left- and right-wing activists sought expressions of political rhetoric in the urban space, many of which still exist today.<sup>104</sup>

Italy's landscapes are palimpsestic in their displays of various narratives of memory, and fertile ground for analysis. Though many structures are political from the outset - they are constructed with a particular message and thus have selected which narrative to favour from a hierarchy of memory - some physical sites of memory are politicised by context. According to Robert Bevan, these structures are afforded a 'totemic quality' and 'are attacked not because they are in the path of a

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<sup>102</sup> Mosse, pp. 104–5.

<sup>103</sup> Kendall Phillips and G. Mitchell Reyes, 'Surveying global memoryscapes: The shifting terrain of public memory studies', in *Global Memoryscapes: Contesting Remembrance in a Transnational Age*, ed. By Kendall Phillips and G. Mitchell Reyes (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press), pp. 1–26 (p. 14).

<sup>104</sup> Foot, *Italy's Divided Memory*, p. 196.

military objective: to their destroyers they *are* the objective.’<sup>105</sup> The interrelationship between monuments and external factors is a theme of this thesis, which will consider both attacks on physical structures but also the construction of physical sites in order to influence the socio-political environment.<sup>106</sup> Throughout this thesis, monuments will therefore be analysed in themselves, but also within their cultural, social and geographical contexts. My analysis will also include monuments that are no longer in existence, or were planned but never built. Finally, I will also consider the debates around the construction and form of monuments, as well as the commemorative activities that take place around them.

## 2. *Oral history interviews*

I conducted oral history interviews to trace the memory of martyrdom, though this methodological approach was only possible for the first case study, which lies on the near side of the ‘floating gap’ - those events recent enough for witnesses to still be alive. Oral history testimony has given an insight into the co-existence of (or tension between) public and private memory, which will be addressed in chapter 4.<sup>107</sup> Oral history is not usually reliable for historical fact; memory, as we have seen, is constructed and experienced in the present. However, writes Portelli, ‘the diversity of oral history consists in the fact that ‘wrong’ statements are still psychologically ‘true’ and that this truth may be equally as important as factually reliable accounts.’<sup>108</sup> Oral history interviews create a space in which to explore and analyse the discrepancies between historical fact and personal memory. Though traditional historians may highlight the factual inaccuracy inherent in oral history testimony, for the oral historian it is that very discrepancy that creates value.

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<sup>105</sup> Robert Bevan, *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War* (London: Reaktion, 2006), p. 9.

<sup>106</sup> The insertion of Matteotti’s name into the urban landscape during the construction of the new Republic is an example of this. See chapter 8 of this thesis.

<sup>107</sup> Lutz Niethammer, ‘Diesseits des »Floating Gap«. Das kollektive Gedächtnis und die Konstruktion von Identität im wissenschaftlichen Diskurs’, in *Generation und Gedächtnis*, ed. by Kristin Platt and Mihran Dabag (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 1995), pp. 25–50.

<sup>108</sup> Alessandro Portelli, ‘What makes oral history different’, in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, 2nd ed (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 63–74 (p. 68).

### 3. *Mediated martyrdom: discourse analysis*

In order to survive, memory must be mediated. For individual memory to be shared, or indeed to become social memory, it must be communicated through orality, literacy, photography and the mass media. On the level of collective memory, in order for biographical memory to be shared in the public realm it must be mediated through mass media, internet, architecture, and other means of externalisation. It is important to remember that the 'inherent mediality of memory' means that 'media do not simply reflect reality, but instead offer constructions of the past.'<sup>109</sup> In other words, the externalisation of information initially requires individual interpretation, which is then - literally - mediated. Today's mass media has a privileged role in the creation of shared memory in the developed world due to its widespread diffusion. A double mediation of collective memory occurs within mass media; it is the media, more specifically the journalist, that interprets an event, and the media that diffuses that interpretation through newspapers, broadcast and the internet. It is often through mass media that events enter the public domain, acting as the interface between individual and collective memory. The media plays an active role in the construction of memory - selecting which stories to tell, and which to exclude - setting the agenda for collective memory.

This dynamic is key in the construction of martyrdom. In her analysis of the parallels between the early Christian martyrdom and that of Cassie Bernall, a victim of the Columbine killings in 1999, Castelli traces 'what happens to stories and traditions as they are transmitted, repackaged, and deployed into new situations, making meaning as they go', highlighting Bernall's martyrdom as 'a product of discourse rather than a matter of unmediated experience.'<sup>110</sup> Amplifying the echoes of early Christian martyrdom in Bernall's story, Castelli suggests that it was only through such narratives that 'the monstrous took on meaning.'<sup>111</sup> Parallels were drawn with the early Christian martyr Perpetua in many major newspaper articles.<sup>112</sup> Having initially perpetuated the story of Bernall's final seconds - whereby one of the gunmen asked if she believed in God, to which she replied "Yes", before

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<sup>109</sup> Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 114.

<sup>110</sup> Castelli, p. 173.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174.

being shot - when counter-narratives emerged that denied Bernall her pious final moment, the media began to question what really happened.<sup>113</sup> Nevertheless, it is the original narrative that has continued to dominate, turning Bernall into the sole martyr among the 13 that lost their lives. Central to this process is the role of the media in constructing the narrative around death that is needed to ensure martyrdom. However, the mediatisation of memory can also block martyrdom, as the first case study will show.

#### 4. *Social media, social memory*

The vernacular expression of counter-memory will be of interest to this study, which will use social media as a means of understanding the divided memory of a martyr. Representing counter-hegemonic *cadres sociaux*, to borrow the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs' term,<sup>114</sup> social media creates a space for individual expression that can challenge established cultural memory.<sup>115</sup> Erll's distinction between 'production-side functionalization' and 'reception-side functionalization' is useful here.<sup>116</sup> The former relates to intentional mnemonic offerings 'in which messages for posterity are encoded', such as monuments and memorials for example.<sup>117</sup> The latter designates that which is 'retrospectively assigned the status of 'medium of memory' through its analysis as such.<sup>118</sup> Erll uses the example of Samuel Pepys' diaries, which

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>115</sup> Sosa's work on the memory of those that disappeared during the 1976-1983 dictatorship in Argentina shows the role of social media as a challenger to institutionally endorsed memory. In 2010, many Argentines removed their Facebook profile pictures and reinstated the social network's default, shadowed silhouette. Sosa draws parallels between the Siluetazo project in the 1980s, which saw silhouettes appear on walls across downtown Buenos Aires in an attempt to draw attention to the disappearances, and the removal of Facebook profile pictures in 2010. By staging an act of counter-memory, able to challenge the amnesiac version of history put forward by institutional mnemonic agents, social media became a canvas for collective ethics. See: Cecilia Sosa, 'Viral Affiliations: Facebook, Queer Kinship, and the Memory of the Disappeared in Contemporary Argentina', in *Silence, Screen, and Spectacle: Rethinking Social Memory in the Age of Information*, ed. by Lindsey A Freeman, Benjamin Nienass, and Rachel Daniell (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2014), pp. 77-94.

<sup>116</sup> Erll, *Memory in Culture*, pp. 124-25.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

were not written for release into the public realm but have since become units of cultural memory. Similarly, text and image on social media may not be shared with posterity in mind, but can later be received as representative of collective memory of a particular group, exemplifying Erll's 'reception-side functionalization.' As we shall see, there is a Facebook group dedicated to the memory of the Mattei brothers – the subjects of the first case study. Operating as a digital memorial of sorts, it enables the discussion of memory within an 'affective community' to borrow Halbwachs' term.<sup>119</sup> Chapter 4 will show the efforts on social media to campaign for justice for the Mattei brothers, challenging the judicial silence on the part of the Italian state. Where martyr memory remains contentious, social media can act as a space of counter-memory.

### 5. *Reading visual documents*

The image will be considered a document and thus a source of analysis in this study. Reading the semiotics and iconography encoded in the image will give me insight into how collective memory of each martyr is both sculpted and expressed, and whether this representation follows a monumental or cosmopolitan mode of remembering. Religious iconography has long been borrowed in the art world in the depiction of secular martyrs. David's painting *The Death of Marat* exemplifies the construction of the secular martyr through portraiture that displays elements of religious iconography. A radical journalist and politician during the French Revolution, Marat was murdered while taking a bath. His long, lifeless limbs and dripping blood are reminiscent of Michelangelo's *Pietà*, framing his death as sacrifice and creating a secular martyr for the Revolution.<sup>120</sup>

The image will also be analysed within the context of 'postmemory', defined by Hirsch as 'distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history

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<sup>119</sup> See: Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*.

<sup>120</sup> Portelli's work on the public memory of the death of carabinieri Salvo

D'Acquisto, executed by the Germans in 1943, offers another art historical reading of iconography. In his analysis of the myth of D'Acquisto's death, Portelli analyses the martyr's portraiture and its reframing of his death as sacrifice. He writes: 'the image of his bloodied face jibes with the iconography of Christ's passion and crown of thorns.' See: Alessandro Portelli, 'Myth and Morality in the History of the Italian Resistance: The Hero of Palidoro', *History Workshop Journal*, 74.1 (2012), 211–23 (p. 220).



by a deep personal connection.’<sup>121</sup> Necessarily mediated, the term can be used to describe ‘second-generation memories of cultural or collective traumatic events and experiences.’<sup>122</sup> As we will see in chapter four, the recurring photograph of the Mattei children burning to death on the balcony of their apartment has emerged as a unit of postmemory for young Romans.

#### 6. *Direct observation of commemoration ceremonies*

‘If there is such a thing as social memory, [...] we are like to find it at commemorative ceremonies,’ Paul Connerton wrote in *How Societies Remember*.<sup>123</sup> Connerton’s work addresses the transmission of memory at commemorative events, where individuals without direct biographical experience of an event are able to learn about a group’s history. ‘Social groups are made up of a system, or systems, of communication’ he adds, which often operate at commemorative ceremonies and through the associated rites and rituals.<sup>124</sup> Consequently, people resist taking part in commemorative ceremonies ‘incompatible with their own vision of the ‘truth’, because to enact a rite is always, in some sense, to assent to its meaning.’<sup>125</sup>

The direct observation of commemoration ceremonies will allow me to understand the meaning of martyr memory for a particular community of mourning. In both case studies, that community is primarily bound by shared political beliefs. Moreover, comparing commemoration ceremonies over time will offer insight into the ebbs and flows of martyr memory and meaning. This will be an important component of my analysis in chapter 8, which addresses the evolution of Matteotti’s memory in Italy from the liberation to the present day. This methodological approach will also be an important part of the first case study, where I will compare the grassroots, neofascist commemoration of the Mattei brothers with the official ceremony organised by state institutions and the victims’ surviving brother, and how both ceremonies have changed over time. Given the sensitive nature of the two case studies, however, I will observe (rather than take part) in the rituals.

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<sup>121</sup> Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2012), p. 22.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 4.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p.38.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

### *Thesis structure*

This thesis is divided into two extensive case studies, which will enable a comparative analysis of what makes a martyr for the nation, and which martyrs remain at the level of the socio-political group. The first case study is that of Stefano and Virgilio Mattei, the sons of a local leader of the neofascist party the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (Italian Social Movement, MSI, a brief history of which is provided on page 50). The brothers died when left-wing extremists set fire to the family home in 1973, during Italy's Years of Lead. In chapter 2, I provide a historical overview of the Years of Lead and the development of the MSI, outline the socio-economic context of the suburb in which the Mattei family lived, and analyse the immediate reaction to the brothers' deaths. In chapter 3, I address the immediate incorporation of the brothers' memory into MSI history, and analyse the subsequent claiming of memory by neofascist groups up until the present day. The focus of this chapter is the way martyr memory can be used to reinforce the boundaries of group identity and, simultaneously, condemn the enemy. To put this in a Memory Studies framework, this chapter will analyse the commemoration of the brothers within the antagonistic mode of remembering; an exclusionary and divisive mode of memory that 'privileges emotions in order to cement a sense of belonging to a particularistic community, focusing on the suffering inflicted by the 'evil' enemies upon this same community.'<sup>126</sup> The final chapter in the case study will address the attempts of the victims' surviving brother, Giampaolo Mattei, to encourage commemoration of his brothers within the cosmopolitan mode of remembering outlined earlier in this chapter. I will address his efforts to protect memory from appropriation by contemporary neofascist groups, and analyse oral history testimonies to assess to what extent the broad, bipartisan community has engaged with his brothers' memory.

Though the second case study took place prior to the first, it is essential to establish the dynamics of competing memory communities and the role of memory within political struggle early in the thesis if we are to understand the transition of memory from the grassroots to institutional level. Consequently, the Mattei brothers case study is addressed first in the thesis. This case study builds the

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<sup>126</sup> See: Cento Bull and Hansen, 'On Agonistic Memory'.

theoretical framework needed to then analyse the global spread of Matteotti's memory and the evolution of memory in the Italian Republic. On a historical level, the first case study will outline the development (and environment) of Italy's Years of Lead, which is relevant again in chapter 8 in the context of Matteotti's memory in the 1970s. In chapter 5, I give an overview of Matteotti's life and political work, outline the events leading to his assassination, and present the initial characteristics of Matteotti's memory under the watchful eye of Fascism. As such, it will consider the emergence of an antifascist martyr during a dictatorial regime. Chapter 6 will document the global spread of Matteotti's memory during the Fascist period, and its incorporation into an international canon of martyrs. This chapter will address a significant gap in recent scholarship, which has focused entirely on commemoration of Matteotti within Italy and therefore significantly underestimated the role of his memory in the construction of the global antifascist movement. Cosmopolitan memory theory is an essential part of this chapter, which will address to what extent global concerns – in this case, the assassination of an antifascist leader - were incorporated into local life beyond the borders of the nation state. This is also a theme of chapter 7, which takes the United States as a case study to examine the incorporation of Matteotti's memory into the fascist-antifascist fight that took place on American turf. The final chapter in the case study, chapter 8, will document the return of Matteotti's memory to Italy during the Resistance, address the use of Matteotti's memory as a foundation of the new Republic, and analyse the evolution of his memory throughout the decades from Italian liberation to the present day. The thesis will conclude with a chapter summarising its findings and presenting some definitions of secular martyrdom.

## Chapter 2

### Rome's Contested Martyrs: Memory of the Primavalle Arson

On 12 December 1969, a bomb exploded in the Banca Nazionale dell'Agricoltura (National Agricultural Bank) in Piazza Fontana, Milan. The explosion immediately killed 16 (another died a year later) and injured 88, and, in Italian collective memory, marked the beginning of a flood of civil violence known as the *anni di piombo* (the Years of Lead) that would submerge Italy throughout the 1970s. The state reacted hastily, arresting large numbers of left-wing activists including anarchist Giuseppe Pinelli, who spent 48 hours in police custody before falling to his death from the fourth floor office belonging to policeman Luigi Calabresi. Official discourse reported Pinelli's suicide, sidestepping accusations of murder at the hands of the police. A lack of judicial truth surrounding the case, which returned to the forefront of collective memory in 1972 after Calabresi's murder, has ensured that memory of Pinelli's death remains divided today.<sup>1</sup> One explanation that took root after the Piazza Fontana bomb placed the episode within a wider 'strategy of tension', which aimed:

to demonstrate the 'validity' of the might-is-right thesis, and to point to the need for repressive action on the part of the state to control civil unrest. The longer term objective was to destabilize Italian democracy [...] whereby a fear of terrorism would encourage the civilian population to opt spontaneously for the relinquishment of certain freedoms in exchange for the physical security provided by a military dictatorship.<sup>2</sup>

Given the increasing success of the left, this narrative neatly explained the efforts of the right to weaken their political adversaries.

Despite its prominence in collective memory, this was not the first instance of terrorism in Italy that year. In April, explosions had occurred at the FIAT stand during a trade fair, with several bombs planted on trains and in law courts during

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<sup>1</sup> Foot considers the coexistence of two memorial plaques, each providing a distinct narrative of events, as symptomatic of this divided memory. See: Foot, *Italy's Divided Memory*, pp. 185-208.

<sup>2</sup> Leonard Weinberg and William Lee Eubank, *The Rise and Fall of Italian Terrorism* (Boulder; London: Westview, 1987), p. 59.

the summer. According to Cento Bull and Cooke, these events are eclipsed in collective memory by the ‘exceptional nature of Piazza Fontana, but they are worth recalling as they help to establish that Piazza Fontana was not an isolated, one-off, event, but part of a series of planned co-ordinated attacks.’<sup>3</sup> Indeed for Hajek, the attack should be considered (and taught) as part of a much wider chain of events; the shortcomings of secondary school history books have meant that Piazza Fontana is rarely considered within the context of ‘other, predating expressions of an obscure, anti-communist project that seems to have been set in motion shortly after World War II.’<sup>4</sup>

As in many European countries, revolutionary fervour was endemic in Italy in the late 1960s. Revolutionary student groups perceived the missed opportunity for revolution in France, blaming organizational ineptitude and a lack of coordination. According to the historian Paul Ginsborg: ‘It was important for Italian revolutionaries not to make the same mistake. What was needed was organization, ideology, discipline and revolutionary strategy. Thus, from the autumn of 1968 onwards, the Italian new left was born.’<sup>5</sup> Groups of left-wing activists sprang up across Italy, propagating their (at times esoteric and excessively theoretical) revolutionary ideas through newspapers and periodicals. Students originally constituted the majority of these groups, their enthusiasm kindled by developments abroad including the Vietnam War and European revolutionary activity, as well as a general dissatisfaction with the state of higher education in Italy.<sup>6</sup> Dissatisfied workers soon bolstered the membership base. Jamieson describes Italian society as:

undergoing a constant process of self-discovery, experimenting with the freedom that economic prosperity had brought, yet still linked [...] to the antiquated power structures of the past [...] The poor, the young, and the educated were excluded from the corridors of power and, not surprisingly, resented it.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Cento Bull and Cooke, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Andrea Hajek, ‘Teaching the History of Terrorism in Italy: The Political Strategies of Memory Obstruction’, *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*, 2.3 (2010), 198–216 (p. 211).

<sup>5</sup> Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943-1988* (London, England; New York, N.Y., USA: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 312.

<sup>6</sup> Weinberg and Eubank, p. 31.

<sup>7</sup> Alison Jamieson, *The Heart Attacked: Terrorism and Conflict in the Italian State* (London: Boyars, 1988), pp. 46–47.

A sharp increase in the price of oil in 1973, stagnation, mass unemployment and the economic crash of 1974 led to the simultaneous antagonistic progress of transformation and crisis, which exacerbated already acute societal divisions. While it is fair to say that revolutionary movements of the late 1960s partly inspired the creation of the left-wing group the Brigade Rosse (Red Brigades, BR) in 1970, the most prominent left-wing group in the history of the Years of Lead, the philosophies behind the movements were fundamentally opposed. Revolutionary groups aimed to mobilize mass support for their cause, while the BR resorted to clandestinity and sporadic attack. They attempted to shorten the path to revolution, making bloody departures from the trajectory set out by the groups of the late 1960s through 'illegal and violent action, which would sharpen the contradictions in Italian capitalism and make inevitable a civil war between the exploiters and the exploited.'<sup>8</sup> However, according to Robert Lumley: 'it was the very radicalness – the total nature of the Red Brigades' opposition to the dominant order – which made them regressive.'<sup>9</sup>

In 1973, the leader of the Partito Comunista Italiano (Italian Communist Party, PCI) Enrico Berlinguer introduced the 'historic compromise', which called for increased collaboration between the three major political parties – the PCI, the Democrazia Cristiana (Christian Democrats, DC) and the Partito Socialista Italiano (Italian Socialist Party, PSI) – in order to avoid repetition of events in Chile where Allende's government had been overthrown by a coup.<sup>10</sup> Berlinguer's approach, conceived to counteract the strategy of tension (which had been designed to instil popular desire for authoritarianism), was itself authoritarian and built upon hierarchy. Left-wing terrorist groups were dissatisfied with what they perceived as a betraying embrace of traditional politics. To their disappointment, the general election results in 1976 confirmed the permanency of the DC presence in government. The revolutionary movement was pushed further underground and violence increased, culminating in the brutal kidnap and murder of Aldo Moro, president of the DC, in 1978. Moro was Prime Minister between 1963 and 1968 and again between 1974 and 1976. At the time of the historic compromise, he was

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<sup>8</sup> Ginsborg, p. 361.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Lumley, *States of Emergency: Cultures of Revolt in Italy from 1968 to 1978* (London: Verso, 1990), p. 279.

<sup>10</sup> Ginsborg, p. 355.

president of the DC and played a crucial role in the formation of the pact of national solidarity. The BR kidnaped Moro while he was on his way to the House of Representatives for a discussion regarding a vote of confidence in the new government of national solidarity. As one of the founding fathers of the new government, the kidnap was heavily symbolic. It also created the period's most prolific martyr.<sup>11</sup>

While left-wing terrorism remained outside the institutional realm in its staunch anti-authoritarianism, many right-wing terrorists were proven to have had links with the Italian state. Weinberg and Eubank divide their analysis of right-wing terrorism into two temporal stages, each with differing objectives. The first wave aimed to incite military intervention and a coup d'état, facilitated by institutional connections. Protagonists of the second wave including the Nuclei Armati Proletari (Armed Proletarian Nucleus, NAP) and Terza Posizione (Third Position, TP) sought to express their discontent with Italian society, following their realisation of the unlikely chance of a coup d'état and the dissolution of many connections with state representatives.<sup>12</sup> However, a line of continuity remained between the two periods, drawn by the shared background of many prominent right-wing terrorists, most of whom had experienced constitutional politics through their support of the MSI, but had been disappointed and taken matters into their own hands. Following the terrorism of the late 1960s, Giorgio Almirante - the then leader of the MSI - called for the restoration of authority and patriotism, appealing to a country unsettled by recent terrorism. In the 1972 elections, the MSI received nearly double the votes it had in 1968.<sup>13</sup> But success in constitutional politics did not satisfy neofascist activists. In 1974, two significant right-wing terrorist attacks took place: one in Brescia, which killed 8 and wounded 42, and another on the Italicus Express train as it passed through the San Benedetto Val di Sambro tunnel under the Appennines, which killed 12 and wounded 48. This was a violent period in Italian history, and many martyrs were created as a result.

### **Martyrdom and the Years of Lead**

In their study of the legacy of the period, Cento Bull and Cooke summarise Italian terrorism as: 'a series of bomb attacks and an 'armed struggle' carried out by diverse

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<sup>11</sup> See: Scolari, 'State Martyrs'.

<sup>12</sup> Weinberg and Eubank, pp. 49–50.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

groups inspired by extreme ideologies, some of whom operated in connivance with, and/or were manipulated by, domestic state actors and external agencies in the context of the Cold War.<sup>14</sup> Their analysis of the dissociation laws and Gozzini law, part of a programme of prison reform that enabled prisoners to obtain day release for work (which was often provided by the Catholic church), shows that though widely accepted as an innovative way of precipitating the decline of terrorism, these factors that curtailed political violence saw more attention given to the perpetrators than victims.<sup>15</sup> They write:

political terrorism has left an enduring legacy, with persistent feelings of mistrust towards the state among the victims and many citizens, as well as partisan and contrasting representations of the past. The victims, in particular, were left out entirely from state measures aimed at overcoming political violence, and their needs and requests have only recently started to be met.<sup>16</sup>

Ironically, in its commitment to creating alternatives to harsh prison sentences (and its failure to answer suspicions of state collusion through the judicial system), the Italian state did exactly what it set out to avoid and created an atmosphere of injustice that sustained martyrdom. The state's management of the period failed to satisfy the victims' search for justice and forced socio-political groups to become memory communities, creating the conditions for martyrdom along the way. Martyrs can uphold civil religion; they can also undermine it.

Throughout the Years of Lead, an attack on an individual was intended as a threat to the collective and targets were selected as representative of the whole. Take, for example, the case of Moro, who was kidnapped and killed by left-wing extremists in 1978. His kidnap (and its location) was planned as a symbolic attack at the heart of the political establishment. The period can be understood as a period of 'semiotic guerrilla warfare', to use Umberto Eco's term.<sup>17</sup> This extrapolation of collective meaning from individual death transferred into commemorative practices, too. As explained in the thesis introduction, martyrs are created through memory.

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<sup>14</sup> Cento Bull and Cooke, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 71

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>17</sup> Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington; London: Indiana University Press, 1976), p. 150.



During the Years of Lead, the dead were commemorated as an example of ideological commitment and sacrifice for the group to follow, becoming martyrs through the process of commemoration. This transformative process relied upon rhetorical strategy and commemorative rituals to give individual deaths collective meaning, as we will see.

For the left, that often meant re-representing their dead as fallen partisans, positioning their struggle as a continuation of the sacrifices made for Italy's liberation from Fascism during the Resistance (which itself drew on the Risorgimento martyr paradigm). Consider the case of Valerio Verbano. On 22 February 1980, three men shot Verbano in the family home in front of his parents, provoking a fatal haemorrhage. He belonged to the extreme left group *Autonomia Operaia* (Workers' Autonomy, AO). After the attack, AO produced a poster declaring: 'a partisan is dead. 100 more will be born from this.'<sup>18</sup> Underneath the image of three armed young men in everyday clothing, the poster read: 'His life, his image, does not need explanation, retelling. He is within us all and within the revolutionary movement. Not a name upon a street, but upon all streets, all piazzas. Communists will not forget. 100 black lowlifes will not be enough.' The ambiguous reference to the 'revolutionary movement' places Verbano's activity within a wider temporal framework of revolution, which saw its precedent in the Resistance. Indeed, the everyday clothing worn by the men in the photograph echoed photographic representation of Resistance fighters as armed civilians, each partisan distinct from the next.<sup>19</sup> Verbano's activity was positioned as a continuation of the 'betrayed revolution' addressed by Cooke.<sup>20</sup> The text is so deeply rooted in the communist-fascist binary of the Resistance era that it would be difficult to date based upon text alone. Nevertheless, it makes clear the emotive power of martyr memory as propaganda, the extreme left's placement of violence in the context of a continued national struggle for liberation from Fascism (thus justifying violence), and the implementation of an existing martyr paradigm.

While the left tended to draw on Resistance memory, the extreme right used the religious language of sacrifice and rebirth - the classic religious martyr paradigm - to commemorate their dead, as this case study will show. Martyrs were

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<sup>18</sup> Luca Telese, *Cuori neri* (Sperling & Kupfer, 2006), inset.

<sup>19</sup> Gundle, 'The "Civic Religion" of the Resistance in Post-War Italy', p. 121.

<sup>20</sup> Philip Cooke, 'The Resistance Continues: A Social Movement in the 1970s', *Modern Italy*, 5.2 (2000), 161-73.

not only the result of the political violence of the Years of Lead, but part of the fight itself. This chapter will analyse the category of the 'constructed martyr', commemorated as a result of contemporary needs and not because of a life led. Of course, the agents of memory that guarantee remembrance construct all martyrdom posthumously; martyrdom is sustained by memory.<sup>21</sup> However, in the case of Moro, his public role left him exposed to the risk of violence in the name of political sacrifice.<sup>22</sup> In contrast, though Virgilio Mattei – one of the two individuals who form the focus of this case study – was a known militant of Volontari Nazionali, an arm of the MSI, he was killed within the family home and not in a public or political space. Stefano, his 10-year-old brother, cannot be said to have lived his short life in the name of politics. Sacrifice was not a feature of the brothers' deaths. Their status as martyrs for the MSI and contemporary neofascist groups – the focus of the next chapter – is entirely constructed. The impact of ideology on the martyrological narrative is clear.

So what symbolic role did the commemoration of martyrs play during the Years of Lead? Martyrdom creates binaries – the 'good' victim, and the 'evil' perpetrator – and for both the left and the right, commemoration of their dead as martyrs was one element in the construction of political identity. Commemoration was also an act of condemnation. Groups at both ends of the ideological spectrum would commemorate their martyrs to vilify their enemies and, consequently, opposing groups would contest the commemoration of their enemy's dead. In the thesis introduction, I explained that the suggestion of sacrifice implies the presence of a sacrificer. Martyrdom shines a spotlight on the oppressor. Mouffe has argued that collective identities are based upon the notion of we/they, and therefore these binaries can evolve into 'a friend/enemy confrontation' becoming 'the locus of antagonism.'<sup>23</sup> It is my contention that commemoration of martyrs during the period occurred within the antagonistic mode of remembering, examined by scholars including Cento Bull and Hansen,<sup>24</sup> Erll,<sup>25</sup> and Leerssen.<sup>26</sup> The mode is

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<sup>21</sup> See: Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*.

<sup>22</sup> See: Scolari, 'State Martyrs'.

<sup>23</sup> Chantal Mouffe, 'An Agonistic Approach to the Future of Europe', *New Literary History*, 43.4 (2012), 629–40 (p. 632).

<sup>24</sup> See: Cento Bull and Hansen, 'On Agonistic Memory'.

<sup>25</sup> Astrid Erll, 'Traumatic Pasts, Literary Afterlives, and Transcultural Memory: New Directions of Literary and Media Memory Studies', *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture*, 3.0 (2011); Astrid Erll, 'Wars We Have Seen: Literature as a Medium of Collective Memory in the "Age of Extremes"', in *Memories and Representations of War*:

exclusionary and divisive; it 'privileges emotions in order to cement a sense of belonging to a particularistic community, focusing on the suffering inflicted by the 'evil' enemies upon this same community.'<sup>27</sup> Memory acts as a foundational stone of one group, and cements opposition to another.

My examination of the Primavalle Arson in the following chapters will not focus closely on the event itself, or the trials that followed. Instead, I will analyse the activities of competing memory communities linked to the tragedy, and present the various components in the construction of martyrdom, showing that the martyrological narrative is shaped by the socio-political context. The next chapter will analyse the memorial initiatives organised by radical right political communities, which have repeatedly appropriated the memory of the brothers in an attempt to validate their political identity through hagiographical heritage. It will show that during the Years of Lead, the right drew on the martyr paradigms established under Fascism. In chapter 4, I will analyse the memorial work of Giampaolo Mattei, the victims' surviving brother, who seeks to represent his brothers as martyrs for the nation (with some support from Italian institutions). First, though, I will begin with an overview of the suburb in which the attack took place.

### **Activism in Rome's poorest suburb**

Located outside the perimeter of the old city walls, Primavalle was built to house those displaced after Mussolini ordered significant demolition within the historical centre of Rome. According to the sociologist Ferro Trabalzi, 'the first inhabitants of the 91 acres borgata of Primavalle came from the Spina di Borgo, the medieval neighbourhood cleared to create Via della Conciliazione between the Mausoleum of Hadrian and St. Peter's Square, and from the working-class neighborhood of San Lorenzo.'<sup>28</sup> Inaugurated by Mussolini in 1939, just 515 of the planned 1497 units within the *case popolari* (social housing units) were ever constructed, the promised social services (like shops and laundrettes) were not delivered, and public transportation was left undeveloped because the social housing programme was

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*The Case of World War I and World War II*, ed. by Elena Lamberti and Vita Fortunati (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), pp. 27–44.

<sup>26</sup> See: Leerssen, 'Monument and Trauma'.

<sup>27</sup> Cento Bull and Hansen, p. 398.

<sup>28</sup> Ferro Trabalzi, 'Rethinking Design for Social Housing: Space Appropriation at the Periphery of Rome', *Journal of Urbanism: International Research on Placemaking and Urban Sustainability*, 3.2 (2010), 131–44 (p. 136).

curtailed by the end of the war.<sup>29</sup> In the 1950s, many social housing units in Primavalle had neither running water nor sanitation, with just 25 toilets available for the suburb's population of 5,000.<sup>30</sup> One large building was even used for the illegal disposal of waste.<sup>31</sup> By 1973, Primavalle was the poorest of the Roman suburbs.<sup>32</sup> Further social housing units were built in the late 1960s, though only around 40% of inhabitants were able meet rent payments. Telese suggests Primavalle may even have had the lowest income per capita in Italy, lower than in Calabria (then the poorest region).<sup>33</sup> Unemployment stood at 20% and the area was home to Rome's only public shelter for the homeless at the time.<sup>34</sup>

Primavalle had a long history of engagement in political activism. Fed up of being isolated from the city and the lack of green spaces, its inhabitants had built a road from the suburb to the Pineta Sacchetti Park in the 1950s.<sup>35</sup> A reflection of the suburb's realisation that if any improvements would be made it would be through the hard graft of its inhabitants, the construction of the road was an early example of protest in the community, and protests against local conditions, unemployment and poverty occurred frequently. One such event involved Giuseppe Tanas, a

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 138

<sup>30</sup> Biblioteca Itis A. Einstein, *Mostra sul quartiere di Primavalle* (Rome, Italy, 2007) <<http://www.itis-einstein.roma.it/biblioteca/06-07/mostra.pdf>> [accessed 16 March 2018]

<sup>31</sup> Franca Bossalino et al., *Ipotesi di ristrutturazione della borgata di Primavalle a Roma* (Roma: Centenari, 1975), p. 17.

<sup>32</sup> Telese, p. 66.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> See: Biblioteca Itis A. Einstein, *Mostra sul quartiere di Primavalle*.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. The suburb also made the headlines for other reasons during the 1950s. In 1950, 12-year-old Annarella Bracci lived in Primavalle with her mother and siblings. On 18 February, she was sent out to buy coal and never returned. The police only began to investigate her disappearance many days later, following protests in the area. Her body was found in a nearby well on 3 March, when her grandfather told the police he had dreamt of his granddaughter's body there. Lionello Egidi, a friend of the Bracci family, admitted to killing Anna; the autopsy concluded that her death followed an attempted rape. Dubbed 'il mostro di Primavalle' by *Corriere della Sera*, in 1952 Egidi was declared not guilty due to a lack of evidence. Furthermore, the validity of his admission of guilt, which his defence team argued was extracted under pressure from the police, was fiercely debated; a decade later, it was finally declared inadmissible by magistrates in Florence's court of appeal. Nevertheless, Egidi remained the focus of much media attention, and, in 1961 he was sentenced to 8 years' imprisonment for attacking a nine-year-old boy. The highest-ranking members of the police force, government representatives, and a large number of Romans attended Anna's funeral, which was funded by the local council. See: 'Il mostro di Primavalle', *Corriere della Sera*, 11 March 1950, p. 5; 'La confessione dell'Egidi fu estorta e non è attendibile', *Corriere della Sera*, 24 January 1960, p. 11.

Sardinian and former partisan living in Primavalle, was a member of the workers' union Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (Italian General Confederation of Labour, Cgil). He took part in a strike against hunger on 5 December 1947. Having walked through the city, protestors rallied outside the local police station in Primavalle. Clashes with the police ensued, resulting in the shooting of Tanas. Nobody was ever prosecuted for his death. However, 25 years after the bullet was fired, Tanas's memory was re-evoked in the context of the Primavalle Arson; a note found at the scene of the crime read: 'Brigata Tanas – guerra di classe – Morte ai fascisti.' Martyr memory was used as provocation.

### **The Primavalle Arson**

Primavalle was a predominantly left-wing working class suburb, with an island of right-wing support comprised of citizens loyal to the post-fascist party the Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI). In 1972, the party had achieved its highest ever proportion of votes in the general election taking 8.7% (almost double the 4.4% returned in the previous election of 1969).<sup>36</sup> Political unrest was rife in Primavalle. In 1972, violent clashes took place between the police and 500 students, the majority of whom belonged to left-wing extra-parliamentary groups that had occupied the Istituto Tecnico Genovesi a day ahead of a planned demonstration to mark the anniversary of Piazza Fontana.<sup>37</sup> The confrontation began in the school, before spreading into the nearby streets. A month earlier, students had occupied the nearby Liceo Castelnuovo to protest against the arrest of four of their classmates. Then, in January 1973, the local MSI party headquarters was devastated when a rudimentary explosive device was set off four days before the party conference began in Rome.<sup>38</sup>

In 1973 the Mattei family occupied the third floor flat at via Bernardo da Bibbiena 33 in Primavalle. On the night of 16 April, three members of the extreme left group Potere Operaio (Workers' Power, PO) climbed up to the third floor, and poured a flammable mix of chemicals under the door to the flat. Mario, his wife Anna, and their two youngest children Antonella, 9, and Giampaolo, 4, escaped. His older daughters Silvia, 19, and Lucia, 15, also escaped the fire, climbing with their

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<sup>36</sup> Antonis A. Ellinas, *The Media and the Far Right in Western Europe: Playing the Nationalist Card* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 14.

<sup>37</sup> 'Armi da fuoco, spranghe e «molotov» a Primavalle', *Corriere della Sera*, 12 December 1972, p. 10.

<sup>38</sup> 'Clima teso a Roma per il congresso del MSI', *Corriere della Sera*, 16 January 1973, p. 2.

father from the window onto the balcony below. Newspaper reports suggested Mario Mattei, standing on the balcony on the second floor, caught his daughter Lucia as she dropped from the window above.<sup>39</sup> Mattei's sons Virgilio, 22, and Stefano, 10, died in front of the crowd outside the building in a tragedy that came to be known as the Rogo di Primavalle (Primavalle Arson). The attack was the first on a private home during Italy's Years of Lead.

On 18 April, PO activists Achille Lollo, Manlio Grillo and Mario Clavo were arrested for manslaughter. Clavo and Grillo went into hiding, with Lollo alone detained by the police. Many influential left-wing intellectuals, including Franca Rame and Alberto Moravia, publicly protested the innocence of Lollo, Grillo and Clavo. The newspaper *Il Messaggero*, Rome's best-read paper at the time, launched a staunch campaign against the accusation of manslaughter, shifting the blame onto the MSI itself. This is perhaps unsurprising given that the editor, Alessandro Perrone, was the father of Diana Perrone, later revealed to have been involved in the arson.

Rumours began to circulate, which were codified in the book *Primavalle, incendio a porte chiuse* (Primavalle, the arson behind closed doors).<sup>40</sup> It was published in 1974 with a band wrapped around it that read 'Achille Lollo è innocente. ECCO LE PROVE', and opened with a note from the editor explaining that it was based upon research conducted by PO members:

L'editore, per rispettare l'impostazione documentaria e controinformativa del volume e, su questa base, sottolineare come la battaglia in difesa di Achille Lollo e degli altri compagni ingiustamente accusati debba avere un carattere unitario, ha ritenuto opportuno pubblicare il documento politico di «Potere Operaio» in un opuscolo separato.<sup>41</sup>

A second letter, this one penned by the book's (unnamed) authors, claimed that magistrates and the police had conspired to frame the far left and restore the credibility of the right in the wake of the bomb let off by MSI demonstrators on 12 April 1973, which had caused the death of 22-year-old policeman Antonio Marino

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<sup>39</sup> For a timeline of events that night see: Bruno Poggio, 'Mattei supplicava i due figli di salvarsi gettandosi dalla finestra', *Il Messaggero*, 19 April 1973, p. 5.

<sup>40</sup> Potere Operaio, *Primavalle, incendio a porte chiuse* (Rome: Giulio Savelli Editore, 1974).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

(an event that will be addressed more closely in chapter 3). The authors said MSI members were responsible for the arson, which was the result of internal party division and a power struggle between members with different ideological stances within the historic militant groups Ordine Nuovo (New Order, ON) and Avanguardia Nazionale (National Vanguard, AN), against more moderate members – like Mario Mattei – who supported Almirante. Narratives relating to this radical-moderate split would come to play an important part in the attribution of blame for the Primavalle Arson, as this case study will show. These accusations of rife internal party divisions were compounded in the appendix, which included transcripts of intercepted calls made by party extremists that went against Almirante’s ideology, and therefore were opposed to Mattei’s moderate approach, suggesting collusion with the police. This section of the book concretised the notion that right-wing radicals had attacked the Mattei home in order to frame the left, counting on the support of the local police force in a small-scale strategy of tension.<sup>42</sup>

The authors then addressed the recent attacks on the party’s headquarters in Primavalle:

Ce n’è dunque a sufficienza per affermare che la sede fascista di Primavalle è stata, da molto tempo a questa parte, una delle meno tranquille, ed anzi dilaniata da lotte interne sempre più accese. Ed anche per credere che alcuni di questi attentati, davvero troppo «strani», altro non erano se non l’ultimo atto di una violenta faida interna. L’ultimo atto? O non l’ultimo?<sup>43</sup>

The book contained photographs of the evidence used by the police, every piece of which was meticulously refuted, and every discrepancy in witness testimonies identified. It also described each adult member of the Mattei family, with particularly damning characterisations of Anna and Virgilio.<sup>44</sup> The book included

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 247.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>44</sup> Anna was presented as a formidable member of the family, more concerned with politics than the wellbeing of her family: ‘a Primavalle passa come l’elemento più arrabbiata della famiglia. È stata l’ultima ad essere ricoverata all’ospedale (alle 5,45) e, dopo essersi messa in salvo (poco dopo le tre) si aggira nel cortile urlando: «avete visto il cartello? I comunisti, i comunisti...»’ Virgilio was presented as unpredictable and dangerous: ‘22 anni, segretario giovanile della sezione Giarabub di via Svampa. Definito un «feroce anticomunista disposto a tutto per contestare l’avanzata del comunismo». Faceva parte del servizio d’ordine del MSI di Roma.’

photographs of the aftermath of the tragedy, detailed floor plans of the flat, reproductions of police evidence and analysis of newspaper articles. Particular focus was given to an interview with MSI activist Anna Schiavoncin published in *Il Messaggero* in which she discussed internal party divisions, spies and traitors, and introduces the possibility of the arson having been the work of party extremists.<sup>45</sup> The authors questioned the visits of various MSI members to the local police station in the week before the arson, quoting police interview transcripts that showed members anticipated a bomb attack on the party headquarters.

A police interview with MSI member Francesco Spallone six days after the arson suggested that Mattei already had information about a planned attack on his family, but had not given the name of the expected aggressor, MSI member Angelo Lampis, whom Mattei had allegedly confronted regarding a recent attack on MSI headquarters.<sup>46</sup> Further suspicion was cast on the Mattei family when the book stated the first emergency call was made at 3.27, almost half an hour after the fire began (according to eyewitnesses) and only once the fire had spread. A neighbour living on the floor below reported hearing loud noises upstairs (some minutes before 3am), as though objects were falling to the floor.<sup>47</sup> The authors also questioned the swift arrival of the emergency services, which were on the scene by 3.35 despite the journey typically taking 15 minutes (the book fails to consider that one of the many eyewitnesses may have called for help before the Matteis). The suggestion throughout is that the Mattei family, the party, and even the emergency services had been warned of the attack but failed to act, intending to frame the far left instead.

However, the central argument against the Mattei family revolved around the container that held the flammable mix of petrol and kerosene found at the scene. The book's authors said the container was found *inside* the apartment, near the door to Stefano and Virgilio's bedroom.<sup>48</sup> This vital evidence was not only ignored by magistrates as it undermined the accusation that left-wing militants had poured petrol under the front door from the outside, but it was actually moved to the outside of the apartment during investigations, the authors claimed. The authors conceded that the container of petrol was the source of the fire, but it was a fire lit from within the apartment. This argument gave the book its title.

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See: *Potere Operaio*, pp. 35-36.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223.



Given the vast number of unresolved discrepancies in witness testimony, it is clear to see how such well-documented work could influence public opinion and, subsequently, memory. These conflicting narratives spread immediately. The day after the arson, *Lotta Continua*, the newspaper of the eponymous extreme leftist group, published an article titled: 'La provocazione fascista oltre ogni limite: è arrivata al punto di assassinare i suoi figli!'<sup>49</sup> It suggested that Mario Mattei had set his own family home alight in order to frame communist terrorists in a small-scale strategy of tension. The left-wing newspaper *Il Manifesto* reported on these competing narratives, and further spread the rumour that the Mattei family set fire to their own home:

Questa dunque l'ipotesi più consistente: la famiglia Mattei sarebbe stata oggetto di un così brutale attentato per rissa interna al Msi [...] Ma c'è un'ipotesi ancora più crudele [...] che circola: i fascisti avrebbero deciso di bruciare viva la famiglia Mattei [...] per lasciar credere che sono stati vittime dei comunisti. E se si pensa alla lunga tradizione che le squadre fascisti hanno in questo campo, non si stenta a crederlo.<sup>50</sup>

The first trial began on 24 February 1975, almost two years after the tragedy. On 5 June 1975, the accused were acquitted on the grounds of insufficient evidence. Violent political protests accompanied the trial, one of which led to the death of Mikis Mantakas, a Greek right-wing student living in Italy who was shot outside the MSI headquarters in Primavalle. While living in Switzerland, Alvaro Lojacono, member of PO and later the BR, was sentenced in absentia to 16 years' imprisonment for the murder of Mantakas. Despite later being sentenced to life imprisonment for involvement in the Moro affair, he avoided extradition to Italy due to Swiss law. All three defendants in the Primavalle trial left Italy and were subsequently judged guilty in absentia during the second trial, which concluded in December 1986. Lollo (who later moved to Brazil), Clavo (in hiding in Nicaragua) and Grillo (who remained untraceable) were sentenced to 18 years' imprisonment for arson and involuntary manslaughter. There were no ambiguities; the three had been

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<sup>49</sup> 'La provocazione fascista oltre ogni limite: è arrivata al punto di assassinare i suoi figli!', *Lotta Continua*, 17 April 1973, p. 1.

<sup>50</sup> G. Ferretti, 'Delitto Nazista a Roma dopo Milano', *Il Manifesto*, 17 April 1973, p. 1.

judged guilty of starting the fire that caused the deaths. Despite the sentencing, none spent any subsequent time in jail.

In 2005 the sentence lapsed, restoring freedom to the convicted. Had the accused been sentenced for *omicidio di strage* (mass murder) rather than manslaughter, this lapse would not have happened. Certain of his freedom while living in Brazil, which had granted him political refugee status, and safe in the knowledge that he could no longer be prosecuted for the Primavalle attack, Lollo gave an interview to *Corriere della Sera* in 2005 in which he admitted responsibility for the tragedy and gave the names of five others involved, including those who had helped the arsonists to escape the scene.<sup>51</sup> In 2011, he returned to Italy where he was summoned to a Roman police station, but he refused to give further details regarding the arson. Bar the two years Lollo spent in custody prior to the first trial, none of the arsonists responsible for the deaths have spent any time in jail. The campaign of misinformation that began in 1973 was disproved, but its effects would linger in collective memory. Commemoration of the Mattei brothers has largely been confined to the far right (until the left-wing mayor of Rome Walter Veltroni began to design memorial initiatives with the Mattei family in 2004). Since political identity and the memory of the Arson have been so tightly intertwined since the day of the tragedy itself, it is essential to trace the development of Italy's institutional radical right – the subject of the next section – if we are to understand the importance of the arson to contemporary neofascist identity.

### **A brief history of the Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI)**

Founded in 1946 for those that still identified with the Fascist regime, the MSI had the dual aim of reviving (and rethinking) Fascism, and fighting communism. The party was ideologically split. Originating in the north of Italy, which had experienced Mussolini's Repubblica Sociale Italiana (Italian Social Republic, RSI, the puppet state set up by Mussolini during the final stages of World War II) and the subsequent civil war, the first group was committed to a return to the ideology of the Fascist regime. The party's initial leaders were mostly drawn from this group. Located mainly in the south of Italy, the second group – the party's main electoral

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<sup>51</sup> Rocco Cotroneo, 'A Primavalle eravamo in sei', *Corriere della Sera*, 10 February 2005  
<[http://www.corriere.it/Primo\\_Piano/Cronache/2005/02\\_Febbraio/10/primavalle.shtml](http://www.corriere.it/Primo_Piano/Cronache/2005/02_Febbraio/10/primavalle.shtml)> [accessed 11 September 2015].

base - had a lower level of ideological conviction, favouring a more moderate, conservative approach.<sup>52</sup> As my analysis of *Primavalle, incendio a porte chiuse* in the previous section showed, this radical-moderate split played an important part in the left's attribution of blame for the Primavalle Arson.

In 1950, Almirante was replaced by the more moderate figure of Augusto De Marsanich, which resulted in improved election results. Having initially taken a non-participatory approach to Italian post-war democracy, the party returned to the constitutional fold when it lent its support to the ruling DC in the 1950s, supporting its fight against communism. In 1954, Arturo Michelini replaced De Marsanich at the helm. By the late 1950s the party had become Italy's fourth largest, though it failed to garner more than 5-6% of votes in general elections until 1972, when it reached a high point of 8.7%.<sup>53</sup> The early 1970s was an important era for the MSI, and marked the reintegration of Pino Rauti's radical branch of the party, ON, which had long opposed the more moderate leanings of leader Giorgio Almirante and his supporters. Almirante, once again leader of the party after the death of Michelini in 1969, re-strengthened ties with militant groups – as shown in his granting of a seat on the Central Committee to Pino Rauti, who was suspected of involvement in the Piazza Fontana massacre – and joined forces with the Monarchists to create the party MSI-Destra Nazionale.<sup>54</sup> But parliamentary success was not great enough to tempt the DC to open up to the right, and mass movements remained fragmented compared to the left.<sup>55</sup> In 1976, some conservative members left the MSI to form Democrazia Nazionale (National Democracy, DN). Although more than half of the MSI's senators and deputies left to join the new party, it dissolved three years later. During the 1970s, the party slowly edged into mainstream politics against a backdrop of radical left-wing terrorism.

At the party congress in Sorrento in 1987, Gianfranco Fini called for a 'Fascism for the year 2000' – a call that rejected any break with the country's Fascist heritage. In 1992, shortly after returning to the secretariat after Rauti's short spell at the helm (which began in 1990 and ended after fifteen months due to his turn to the left), Fini celebrated the seventieth anniversary of the Fascist seizure of power

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<sup>52</sup> Franco Ferraresi, *Threats to Democracy: The Radical Right in Italy after the War* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 79.

<sup>53</sup> Richard Bessel, *Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany: Comparisons and Contrasts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 188.

<sup>54</sup> Ferraresi, p.86.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

with a grand parade.<sup>56</sup> Ferraresi identifies the collapse of Italy's right wing in 1994 as a result of the *Tangentopoli* scandal, which brought about the dissolution of the DC and the shifting to the left of its heir, the Partito Popolare Italiano (Italian Popular Party, PPI):

In such a climate the previous years' exclusion of the MSI became a badge of honor, allowing the party to portray itself (with some justification) as the only party untouched by a system of corruption that had caused the inglorious end of all the others. That also sharply reduced the significance of antifascism as a discriminating value. Quite apart from its rhetoric and rituals, antifascism had proved incapable of keeping the crooks out of the "constitutional arch".<sup>57</sup>

Public appetite for something new in Italian politics, a party that would not succumb to corruption (as established parties had), meant that Fini could:

"sell," as a significant novelty, the group he led [...] which in fact was nothing more than the old MSI. Until its refounding congress at the end of January 1995, AN had no structure, no organization, no funds, no headquarters, and no staff of its own, and more than 90 percent of those elected to its ranks were old MSI cadres and former MPs.<sup>58</sup>

The institutionalisation of the right continued in 1994, when AN formed an alliance with Berlusconi's government. Led by Fini, AN enjoyed great success in parliamentary elections, taking 13.5% of the vote (and 27% in Rome).<sup>59</sup> However, the official foundation of AN as a political party, which marked the end of the MSI, only came in 1995 at the Fiuggi congress. In an attempt to move further to the right, radicals led by Rauti formed a splinter party, Movimento Sociale – Fiamma Tricolore. This had implications for how the Mattei brothers were commemorated, as the next chapter will discuss. In 1995, the commemoration ceremony for the Primavalle Arson turned violent, and frustrated radicals used commemoration as an opportunity to perform the rituals and symbols of Fascism that they felt had been

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p.198.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Jonathan Dunnage, *Twentieth Century Italy: A Social History* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 223.

discarded in Fiuggi. In the 1996 general election, AN took 15.7% of votes and continued to support Berlusconi's government in the 2001 elections, when Fini undertook the role of deputy prime minister.<sup>60</sup> In a final shift towards the conservative centre right, Fini stepped down in 2008 and the following year the party merged into the centre-right Popolo Della Libertà.

### **'La morte in diretta'**

This chapter has outlined the social and political context of the arson, provided an overview of the failed judicial process, and addressed the campaign of misinformation. I will conclude by analysing a photograph taken in the aftermath of the arson, which was printed by media outlets across the country and has become a unit of cultural memory relating to the tragedy. Taken by photojournalist Antonio Monteforte, who was working for the national news agency Ansa, the photograph shows the burnt corpse of Virgilio Mattei at his bedroom window. Virgilio's younger brother Stefano, who lay gripping the legs of his older brother, is obscured from view. The photograph appeared in the newspaper *Il Messaggero* the morning after the tragedy, and was immediately picked up by other media. Monteforte's image captured the victim's proximity to death, much like Eddie Adams' historical photograph *Saigon execution: Murder of a Vietcong by Saigon Police Chief, 1968*.<sup>61</sup>

In June 2016, I interviewed Francesco Lepri, who began working at the newspaper *Il Messaggero* in 1962 and worked on the paper at the time of the Arson. He later became head of the photography department and, eventually, a director of the paper. He identified the impact of Monteforte's photograph.<sup>62</sup> According to Lepri, the power of the photograph lies in its very representation of the family's innocence. They were attacked in their home, and not while taking part in potentially dangerous political protests. The image encapsulated what set the attack apart from those that had come before: its domestic setting, and child victim.

In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes writes: 'the photograph is literally an emanation of the referent.'<sup>63</sup> The light emitted by the referent marks the film that chronicles its

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<sup>60</sup> Pippa Norris, *Radical Right. Voters and Parties in the Electoral Market* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) p. 64.

<sup>61</sup> Eddie Adams, *Saigon Execution: Murder of a Vietcong by Saigon Police Chief, 1968*, 1968.

<sup>62</sup> Francesco Lepri, interviewed by Amy King, 26 May 2016.

<sup>63</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (London: Vintage, 2000), p. 80.

presence, creating ‘a sort of umbilical cord [which] links the body of the photographed thing to my gaze: light, though impalpable, is here a carnal medium.’<sup>64</sup> However, since the reality recorded in the photograph is necessarily anchored in the past, ‘the photograph suggests that it is already dead.’<sup>65</sup> The presence of death in the photograph, which Barthes says is an inherent quality, is rarely as explicit as in the case of the photograph of Stefano and Virgilio Mattei. In *La notte brucia ancora*, his book about the attack on his family, Giampaolo Mattei writes:

Nella nostra memoria (la mia, quella di mia madre e delle mie sorelle) c’è un buco nero, un riquadro che non possiamo riempire. È la foto scattata dal fotografo Antonio Monteforte e che ritrae Virgilio affacciato, nell’estremo tentativo di sfuggire alle fiamme [...] non è una foto da poco, è una foto da sparare a tutta pagina. Come fanno ancora oggi. L’hanno chiamata “la morte in diretta”, l’istante che fotografa l’orrore, il dolore che trasfigura il viso. È Virgilio alla finestra. [...] Una foto che restituisce anche le urla di quella notte: “Virgilio, buttati, buttati”.<sup>66</sup>

Barthes describes the *studium* and the *punctum* of the photograph, respectively the detail that generally draws us to the photograph and the particular detail that captures our attention. The *studium* originates in the individual, while the *punctum* springs from the photograph. He writes about the *punctum*, the ‘element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me [...] A photograph’s *punctum* is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me).’<sup>67</sup> In the case of this particular photograph, it is the proximity of death that forms the *punctum*; it ‘pricks’ the viewer and prompts the realisation of the horrific nature of murderous political rhetoric, which transformed individuals into metonyms. The metonymic status of the victim of political terrorism is revealed in its full cruelty. This cruel, public death, and its shocking photographic evidence, has sustained the extreme right’s appropriation of the brothers as martyrs because it draws attention to the sacrificer. As I have already argued, commemoration of the martyr puts a

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>66</sup> Giampaolo Mattei, *La notte brucia ancora. Primavalle: il rogo che ha distrutto la mia famiglia* (Milan: Sperling & Kupfer, 2008), p. 17.

<sup>67</sup> Barthes, pp. 26–27.

spotlight on the oppressor. It is difficult to imagine more piercing proof of evil than the suffering face of a boy burning to death.

The strength of this image in collective memory was evident in the oral history interviews I conducted in Primavalle, which I will analyse further in chapter 4. Many participants had seen the Matteis' bodies at the window; the corpses remained in place for the whole of the following day while investigations were carried out. By 6 o'clock that evening, crowds had swelled to 5,000, and a local priest conducted a ceremony to bless the dead.<sup>68</sup> The image of Virgilio at the window featured in the testimony of Enzo Salesi, a friend of Virgilio's and a life-long resident of Primavalle. He explained how he first heard about the tragedy, pausing at the mention of his friend's body at the window and, unable to describe the image, quickly moving on:

La mattina quando stavo in ospedale non mi ricordi chi ma chiamarono, mi sembra il commissariato di Primavalle che mi conoscevano e venne qui a vedere, a vedere quella questa—situazione. Con Virgilio che stava ancora attaccato alla—c'erano anche altri che erano stati avvisati.<sup>69</sup>

In his twenty-first year of retirement, Claudio Baldini had worked at Fiumicino airport for 27 years. I asked him about the night of the arson. Elements of the epic were evident in his testimony. He quoted himself and his wife, and focused on sensory experiences like hearing sirens and seeing smoke. The image of a corpse at the window quickly featured in his memory, too:

CLAUDIO: Io abito qua. Un po' più avanti, nella prima palazzina. L'incidente è accaduto qui, però queste sirene si sentivano che passavano sotto casa, e si sentiva che si fermavano dopo aver fatto 200-300 metri. La prima volta. Poi, la seconda volta abbiamo sentito le autoambulanze, che anche quelle facevano quel solito tragitto e si fermavano. Ero dentro con mia moglie e io le dissi: "Possibile che le autoambulanze e i pompieri si fermano?", perché le sirene sono diverse, tra quelle delle autoambulanze e quelle dei vigili del fuoco. Ci siamo vestiti e siamo scesi. Infatti qui era pieno di luci, lampeggiavano le macchine, pieno di carabinieri, vigili urbani, polizia, e noi ci fermammo qui, proprio la

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<sup>68</sup> Giuseppe di Dio, 'Le reazioni: gli abitanti', *Il Messaggero*, 17 aprile 1973, p. 5.

<sup>69</sup> Enzo Salesi, interviewed by Amy King, 21 May 2016.

seconda entrata dell'USL, oltre non potevamo andare. Si vedeva il fumo, e io chiesi a qualcuno che più o meno era arrivato prima di me che cosa era accaduto, e dissero: "Va a fuoco la casa dei Mattei", che i Mattei erano—non è che io li conoscevo—i Mattei il genitore era il presidente della sezione che si trova qua in Via Svampa—però non è che io li conoscevo, io lavoravo, non è che stavo in contatto con questa gente. E non sapevo neanche che erano del Movimento Sociale Italiano. Dopodichè, dopo un po' di tempo che la gente si allargava, io e mia moglie riuscimmo ad arrivare giù, perché la via rimane sulla destra, e vidi fuori dalla finestra il più piccolo dei figli—

AMY: Stefano?

CLAUDIO: —che era fuori dal davanzale, metà corpo dentro e metà fuori. Era nero... era affumicato, proprio nero, nero, nero... Poi il giorno dopo non si sentì niente, fino a verso le 4 della mattina, quando poi furono portati via, e ci furono tante polemiche sul fatto che erano fascisti e che poi c'è stato un gruppo eversivo... non lo sapevano neanche loro.<sup>70</sup>

Claudio remembered the body as that of Stefano, not Virgilio. He insisted that it was that of the 10-year old child. He paused after his description of the charred body for some time, as though he was seeing the image again in his mind's eye. It was clear that for Claudio, a right-wing supporter, the image of a murdered child (rather than young adult) conveys the trauma and injustice of the arson. Whether that is factually correct is beside the point. In a similar vein to Lepri, who expressed the horror of the attack on the family home, the combination of the domestic setting and the young victim made the tragedy particularly poignant.

Giampaolo Mattei acknowledges the place of the photograph in Roman collective memory, writing:

Lo so che per i giornalisti, per gli storici, è la foto della memoria, che racconta gli anni di piombo meglio di molti discorsi. Al pari di quella dell'autonomo con la pistola spianata in una strada di Milano, del bagagliaio della Renault 5 con il cadavere di Aldo Moro, dell'orologio fermo sulle 10.25 nella stazione di Bologna. Una foto che è diventata un simbolo.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Claudio Baldini, interviewed by Amy King, 24 May 2016.

<sup>71</sup> Mattei, p. 17.



This is a unit of public, not family, memory. Mattei wrote that several newspaper articles about the tragedy that were collected by the family now have a large hole cut out of them. Monteforte's photograph was once printed in their place. Desperate to save their mother from viewing the horrifying image of her children, the Mattei sisters would remove it. Similarly, when it appeared on television programmes, one of the children would quickly stand between the television and their mother.<sup>72</sup> The image can be described as a traumatic *lieu de mémoire*, to use Nora's term. These are places 'where memory crystallizes and secretes itself', becoming 'a turning point where consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn - but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists.'<sup>73</sup> Giampaolo Mattei's assertion that the photograph brings back the cries of that night supports the idea of a traumatic *lieu de mémoire*.<sup>74</sup> It is out of respect for the Mattei family's wishes not to further disseminate the image that I have decided not to print the photograph in this thesis.<sup>75</sup>

The historian Norman Klein has identified the enduring, historical quality of a particular photograph, describing such an image as an 'imago'. In his analysis of the role of the photograph in the construction of collective memory of the war in Vietnam, in which he references the aforementioned image taken by Eddie Adams, Klein writes:

We see in our mind's eye the war in Vietnam primarily as two photographs: a general shooting a man in the head; a naked girl running toward the camera after being napalmed. [...] The imagos are preserved inside a mental cameo frame [...] [The imago] remains where we put it, but the details around it get lost [...] They are the rumors that seems haunted with memory, so satisfying that it keeps us from looking beyond it.<sup>76</sup>

This same quality is evident in the photo of Virgilio at the window.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> The image is easily accessible online, should readers wish to view it.

<sup>76</sup> Norman M. Klein, *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory* (London: Verso, 2008), p. 4.

On the thirtieth anniversary of the arson, in an article for *Il Messaggero*, Roberto Martinelli wrote:

La foto di quella finestra bruciata che trent'anni fa documentò uno degli episodi più raccapriccianti dell'odio e dell'intolleranza politica avrebbe dovuto essere di monito e d'insegnamento a tutti. L'obiettivo impietoso del reporter immortalò i corpi di un bimbo di otto anni e di un ragazzo di ventidue, arsi dal fuoco e colpevoli solo di essere i figli del segretario di una sezione del movimento sociale.<sup>77</sup>

The continued discussion of the photograph in the media, and the frequency with which it features in personal recollections of the arson, supports the description given by both Telese, and my interviewee Francesco Lepri, of the photo as 'la foto-simbolo della violenza negli anni di piombo.'<sup>78</sup> While the iconic photograph of a left-wing activist in Milan aiming a gun at the police may challenge this assertion, it is fair to suggest that the photograph of the Mattei brothers' bodies summarises the Years of Lead for a *Roman* audience. Its visceral quality captures injustice, death and trauma. The photograph has become a traumatic place of memory. What is striking, however, is that despite the undeniable horror of the attack, collective memory of the tragedy continues to be framed in relation to the political beliefs of the family. In his study of the memory of Carlo Giuliani, the G8 protestor killed in 2001, Duncan McDonnell argues that the pervasiveness of the image of Giuliani being shot has left him 'trapped in a photograph' and obscured more nuanced interpretations his death.<sup>79</sup> The opposite is true of the Matteis. In spite of the photograph that so clearly shows suffering, the politicisation of memory that occurred immediately after the arson has blocked the ascension of the arson to the level of national collective memory. Consequently, the boys' martyrdom has remained at the level of the political group and been open to appropriation. The following chapter will address this appropriation of memory by the far right, from the time of the tragedy to the present day.

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<sup>77</sup> Roberto Martinelli, 'I nostalgici dell'odio', *Il Messaggero*, 17 April 2003, p. 1

<sup>78</sup> Telese, inset.

<sup>79</sup> Duncan McDonnell, 'The Genoa G8 and the Death of Carlo Giuliani', in *Assassinations and Murder in Modern Italy*, ed. by S. Gundle and L. Rinaldi (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 73-85 (p.82).

## Chapter 3

### Antagonistic Martyrdom and the Far Right

“Dal rogo dell’odio la fiamma del martirio, la luce della giustizia.”<sup>1</sup>

Giorgio Almirante, 18 April 1973

Throughout the Years of Lead, groups at both ends of the ideological spectrum would commemorate their martyrs in order to vilify their enemies, and opposing groups would regularly contest the commemoration of their adversaries’ dead. The construction of martyrological narratives (and counter-narratives) was part of the symbolic violence of the period. As stated in the previous chapter, referencing the work of scholars including Cento Bull and Hansen,<sup>2</sup> Erll<sup>3</sup> and Leerssen, it is my contention that commemoration of left- and right-wing martyrs during the period occurred within the antagonistic mode of remembering.<sup>4</sup> This exclusionary and divisive mode of memory ‘privileges emotions in order to cement a sense of belonging to a particularistic community, focusing on the suffering inflicted by the ‘evil’ enemies upon this same community.’<sup>5</sup> Memory was used as a foundation of group identity and a means of vilifying the opposition; the application of the term ‘martyr’ to the dead was central to this dynamic.

This chapter examines the appropriation of the Mattei brothers’ memory by far right communities from the 1970s to the present day, who have used memory as a means of reinforcing collective identity and, therefore, the boundaries of the group. Even today, contemporary neofascist groups use the term ‘martyr’ during commemoration of the brothers. This is no accident. As historian Jay Winter argues: ‘Using the language of martyrology is, I believe, a charged matter. It has consequences.’<sup>6</sup> This language ‘perpetuates the conflicts which led to the bloodletting in the first place.’<sup>7</sup> Commemoration by historic and contemporary neofascist groups is as much (if not more) about demonising political opponents as it

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<sup>1</sup> Mattei, *La notte brucia ancora*, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> See: Cento Bull and Hansen, ‘On Agonistic Memory’.

<sup>3</sup> Erll, *Memory in Culture*; Erll, ‘Wars we have seen’.

<sup>4</sup> See: Leerssen, ‘Monument and Trauma’.

<sup>5</sup> Cento Bull and Hansen, p. 398.

<sup>6</sup> Jay Winter, *War beyond Words: Languages of Memory from the Great War to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 128.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

is about remembering the brothers. The next section will show the importance of the notion of sacrifice in the creation, and strengthening, of political identity during a period of acute political binaries. It will also show the power of martyrs as units of political capital, at a time when the reputation of the MSI – and its leader – had been undermined by another political killing. I will begin by looking at the first application of the term ‘martyrdom’, which occurred immediately after the arson.

### **Casting death as sacrifice**

Giorgio Almirante, the leader of the MSI party and friend of the Mattei family, was the first to apply concepts of martyrdom to the Mattei brothers’ deaths. On 18 April 1973, crowds gathered outside the local federation headquarters of the MSI on Via Alessandria. Inside the building lay the bodies of Stefano and Virgilio Mattei. The leader of the local federation had held a 24-hour vigil to honour the brothers, which was attended by local councillors and right-wing deputies.<sup>8</sup> At 16.30 the two caskets were carried out of the building by the MSI youth division (the FdG), and they were met by crowds holding tricolour wreaths, white flowers and black flags, who silently stretched their arms in the Roman salute.

The funeral procession began its slow pace towards Piazza Salerno and the Chiesa dei Sette Santi Salvatori. Giulio Caradonna, a MSI deputy, walked ahead of the caskets. Almirante, founder of the party, walked beside the boys’ mother, along with their paternal uncles, Virgilio’s girlfriend Rosalba, and other political figures belonging to the right. Gianfranco Fini and Maurizio Gasparri are said to have met for the first time among the crowds of mourners; both went on to be important figures in the history of the MSI and its successor party AN.<sup>9</sup> A *Corriere* article highlighted the notable presence of Teodoro Cutolo, head of the liberals in the Consiglio Regionale, whose appearance stood out among a sea of MSI members.<sup>10</sup> Described as ‘una presenza massiccia del «vertice» del msi’ in an article published the following day, the attendance of such significant figures within the party was

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<sup>8</sup> ‘Momenti di estrema tensione durante i funerali delle vittime’, *Corriere della Sera*, 19 April 1973, p. 2

<sup>9</sup> Andrea Garibaldi, ‘«Gianfranco non lo sento più. E non mi dispiace»’, *Corriere della Sera*, 18 April 2010 <[http://www.corriere.it/politica/10\\_aprile\\_18/gasparri-non-sento-gianfranco\\_bc4714b6-4aa1-11df-b267-00144f02aabe.shtml](http://www.corriere.it/politica/10_aprile_18/gasparri-non-sento-gianfranco_bc4714b6-4aa1-11df-b267-00144f02aabe.shtml)> [accessed 7 March 2016].

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

striking.<sup>11</sup> It revealed acute awareness of the political capital of martyrdom at a time when the MSI had been undermined by its response to the recent killing of a policeman.

Five days before the funeral, on 12 April, policeman Antonio Marino was killed when an explosion occurred during a MSI party demonstration against “red violence” in Milan. Having originally authorised the demonstration, the Milanese prefecture imposed a last minute ban on all public demonstrations (with the exception of the Liberation Day celebrations on 25 April) for reasons of public order. On 12 April, members of extreme right-wing groups including ON and AN gathered regardless, and marched towards the police station to protest against the seemingly arbitrary imposition of the ban. Clashes between the police and demonstrators ensued; protestors threw two grenades, one of which killed Marino immediately.

Reaction among left-wing communities was strong. The following day, three workers unions - Cgil, Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori (Cisl) and Unione Italiana del Lavoro (Uil) – declared an hour-long strike in protest against ‘la provocazione fascista’, and several political groups and parties, including the student movement and the Italian Socialist Party, issued statements condemning the violence.<sup>12</sup> Franco Servello, Almirante’s party deputy, issued a statement that criticised the ban (named the ‘decreto Mazza’ after the Milan prefect Libero Mazza), which he perceived as a direct and wrongful action taken against the MSI in the face of pressure from the left. He called for Mazza’s resignation.<sup>13</sup>

In an attempt to distance the party from the killing, the MSI offered five million lire to anyone able to identify the culprits. Police investigations quickly focused on two demonstrators from Reggio Calabria, the same city as Senator Ciccio Franco, a Calabrian senator who was due to speak at the event. The perpetrators were thought to have travelled to Milan with senator Franco – a claim the latter swiftly denied.<sup>14</sup> Sandro Pertini, president of the Chamber of Deputies, had denounced MSI violence in parliament on 13 April, and compared it to the Fascist

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<sup>11</sup> Fabrizio Carbone, ‘I funerali dei due fratelli morti, tra camicie nere e saluti romani’, *La Stampa*, 19 April 1973, pp. 1–2

<sup>12</sup> ‘Dolorosa eco in tutta la città’, *Corriere della Sera*, 13 April 1973, p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> ‘I killer da Reggio’, *Corriere della Sera*, 13 April 1973, pp. 1–2.

hooliganism of the 1920s.<sup>15</sup> The event had cast the party in a negative light, and prompted comparisons between Mussolini and Almirante, who was at that point under investigation for the crime of ‘reconstitution of the Fascist party’.<sup>16</sup>

Thousands attended Marino’s funeral on 14 April in Milan including Prime Minister Andreotti, Interior Minister Mariano Rumor and Efsio Zanda Loy, then head of the police. An article published in *La Stampa* drew parallels with the funeral of another police martyr mentioned in the thesis introduction: ‘Il percorso che segue il corteo è quello, un po’ ridotto, che fu seguito per i funerali di Calabresi.’<sup>17</sup> Standing on the steps of San Marco church, Monsignor Maggioni, the priest officiating the funeral ceremony, focused on the sacrificial nature of martyrdom: “Affidiamo al Signore il sacrificio di questo giovane perchè ci siano donati tempi di più serena pace.”<sup>18</sup>

By the 16 April, the date of the Primavalle Arson, the names of the four culprits involved in the grenade attack were published in media. All four were fully paid members of the MSI. The story ran directly beside reports of the Primavalle Arson in many national newspapers. Given the MSI’s recent association with the murder of an Italian policeman in an event named “la marcia su Milano” by *Corriere della Sera* – a clear reference to Mussolini’s March on Rome – its public denouncement of the attackers, and the subsequent revelation that they were in fact members of the party, the presence of important party figures at the Mattei funeral is unsurprising.<sup>19</sup> It signified that the right, too, was under attack.

After around an hour of walking, the Mattei funeral procession reached Piazza Salerno where large crowds waited. The ceremony began in the nearby Chiesa dei Sette Santi Salvatori, which had been decorated with flowers sent by the President of the Republic, Giovanni Leone, government members and the local council. The young classmates of Stefano Mattei laid a wreath by his casket, and a message sent by Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Villot on behalf of the Pope was read to mourners. The ceremony concluded with an emotive speech given by

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<sup>15</sup> Eugenio Melani, ‘Il MSI sotto accusa alla Camera’, *Corriere della Sera*, 14 April 1973, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Gianfranco Piazzesi, ‘I fascisti smascherati’, *Corriere della Sera*, 14 April 1973, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Migliaia di persone seguono a Milano i funerali dell’agente ucciso dai fascisti’, *La Stampa*, 15 April 1973, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> ‘La situazione’, *Corriere della Sera*, 14 April 1973, p. 1.

Almirante to crowds of mourners as he stood on the steps of the church. He focused on the notion of sacrifice:

Virgilio e Stefano Mattei. Voi siete la Roma a noi più cara, la Roma umile e alta, la Roma proletaria e nazionale delle borgate; dalle dolci borgate romane che si aggrappano alla città sacra e imperiale come tu, Stefano, ti aggrappasti a Virgilio: per non soffocare, per non morire, per respirare. Primavera è diventata davvero prima linea, come dicemmo tanti anni fa, quando nacque la nostra sezione. Le prime linee del martirio sono sempre le prime linee del riscatto in nome della civiltà.<sup>20</sup>

Almirante's words were reminiscent of the nostalgia for empire and the revered status of the city of Rome that defined rhetoric during the Fascist period. His comparison of the boys' fight for survival with that of imperial Rome is striking. In the absence of any reference to the wider nation, there was no doubt as to which city the boys belonged. "Dal rogo dell'odio la fiamma del martirio, la luce della giustizia," he added, emphasising the concepts of sacrifice and rebirth that are central to the classic, Christian martyr paradigm through imagery of the fires of hatred and the light of justice.<sup>21</sup> Almirante's words, which were later included on the boys' tomb in the Verano cemetery, marked the first public application of the term 'martyrdom' to the brothers' deaths. He then called for the return of the death penalty, emphasising the gravity of the tragedy for the MSI. He was interrupted as a group of motorcyclists drove into the piazza, throwing bottles at gathered mourners. Some members of the crowd reacted, but the bikers fled and the police stepped in.<sup>22</sup> In the wake of Marino's death, and the consequent public focus on the MSI's violent behaviour and continued evocation of its Fascist heritage, the Mattei brothers were mourned as martyrs for the party.

Journalist Fabrizio Carbone was struck by Almirante's speech and his explicit references to martyrdom: 'Parole di circostanza, dettate dal momento, che invitavano alla calma e puntavano sul «martirio» dei fratelli Mattei.'<sup>23</sup> Carbone thought Almirante's speech was a way of calming tensions. However, I contend that

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<sup>20</sup> Mattei, *La notte brucia ancora*, p. 23.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Fabrizio Carbone, 'I funerali dei due fratelli morti, tra camicie nere e saluti romani', *La Stampa*, 19 April 1973, pp. 1–2.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

the use of the term martyr was more calculated than Carbone suggested. It counterbalanced the narratives of sacrifice used in relation to the death of Antonio Marino just a few days earlier, during commemoration of a killing that had cast the MSI in a negative light. Furthermore, on April 7, a bomb had prematurely exploded on a Genoa-Ventimiglia express train and wounded the perpetrator, Nico Azzi, who was linked to the radical right group ON. Had the explosion occurred where it was planned, earlier in a tunnel, it would have wounded a significant number of people.<sup>24</sup> Almirante's use of martyrdom, with its inherent suggestion of suffering, was particularly relevant at a time when the MSI party had been cast as violent *squadristi*.

It is also important to consider public perception of Almirante, who, in 1973, was under investigation for 'reconstitution of the Fascist party' and, as already mentioned, had been compared to Mussolini by the media. His moderate ideology had long alienated the more radical members of the MSI, leading to Rauti leaving the party in 1969 to form the radical extra-parliamentary group ON. This divide was reflected at a local level in Primavalle, where Mario Mattei – a supporter of Almirante - had clashed with the more extreme members of the local party with regards to his more moderate approach. Almirante's role in the construction of the Mattei brothers – the sons of a moderate local leader - as martyrs for the party came at a time where his leadership had been undermined by the violence of radical party members and a judicial investigation. By promoting them as the party's martyrs, he underlined his moderate ideology while still emphasising the violence suffered by the far right at the hands of the far left.

The words sent by Cardinal Villot on behalf of the Pope strengthened this emerging hagiographic framework, which included the explicit references to the boys' martyrdom made by Almirante and the formalised rituals of mourning enacted by the MSI community. This combination of Catholic figures and religious rituals of mourning (the overnight vigil, the Pope's words, and the burial in Rome's Verano cemetery) with the heavy political presence and iconography of the right wing during the funeral, positioned the boys not as victims of murder but as sacrificial martyrs of the party. This depiction was reinforced in 2010 when Giampaolo Mattei told me about a young man he had met, whose father – a former MSI member – had recounted the story of the Mattei brothers to him every night

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<sup>24</sup> Ferraresi, p.127



before going to bed throughout his childhood.<sup>25</sup> Their story was part of far right heritage. This positioning of the *Rogo* within a political, rather than private, sphere was cemented by media representation of the boys' mother, Anna Mattei, the subject of the next section.

### **A mother for the party: representation of Anna Mattei**

In the decades since the loss of her sons, Anna Mattei featured in several newspaper articles until her death in 2013. Media coverage simultaneously emphasised her maternal grief and her staunch and active political beliefs, with the effect of continuously presenting the arson as a right-wing (and therefore neither private, nor pan-Italian) tragedy.<sup>26</sup> These expressions of her political beliefs tied the *Rogo di Primavalle* to the now-defunct MSI, and not its successor party AN, which she firmly opposed. In this section I will examine the impact of Anna's repeated vocalisation of her political beliefs on the traditional paradigm of the grieving mother that so often features in the narratives of martyrdom, and draws on a culturally understood trope of the mourning Virgin Mary. I will question whether her representation as a maternal and political figure in the public domain strengthened the positioning of the brothers as martyrs for the historical MSI.

In a piece published in *Corriere della Sera* in 2008, journalist Andrea Garibaldi recounted an episode documented in Giampaolo Mattei's book, when he asked his mother why there were never any apples in the family home after the arson.<sup>27</sup> His mother explained that every day, on returning home from school, Stefano would stand beneath the window of the family flat in via Bibbiena and shout "Mamma, sono qui!" His mother would respond by throwing him an apple. The same article mentioned her relationship with her grandchildren and her delicious oxtail stew, and she was photographed in a domestic setting, sat on the sofa beside her daughter. Her private, domestic role was the focus of her representation in the piece, which relied upon global – and stereotypical – signifiers of motherhood. Anna's domesticity was also emphasised in a 2004 article by Fabrizio Caccia, which quoted her as saying:

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<sup>25</sup> Giampaolo Mattei, interviewed by Amy King, 7 August 2010.

<sup>26</sup> Her involvement in politics was not presented by the media as a by-product of falling in love with a politically engaged man, and forms an interesting contrast with media coverage of the female perpetrators of terrorism, as examined by Glynn. See: Ruth Glynn, *Women, Terrorism and Trauma in Italian Culture* (New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 39–69.

<sup>27</sup> Andrea Garibaldi, 'Fini-Veltroni sul Rogo Di Primavalle: «anni lontani». «No, può ripetersi»', *Corriere della Sera*, 20 May 2008, p. 20.

Io ero e sono una mamma bravissima, che ha amato sempre i suoi figli e suo marito. Quando stiravo le loro camicie, sognavo a occhi aperti. Per me era un sacrificio bellissimo. Per questo non capisco ora chi vuol pagare lo stipendio alle casalinghe. Una casalinga che si rispetti fa il suo lavoro con amore.<sup>28</sup>

Once again, her depiction was in line with the classic paradigm of motherhood promoted during Fascism, which included the idea of maternal sacrifice and nurture and equated womanhood with motherhood.

A handful of other articles mentioned that the death of her sons caused Anna Mattei to lose her religious faith, breaking the paradigm of the pious mother established in these articles. The aforementioned Caccia article quoted her as having said: 'Ero religiosa un tempo, ma dopo quella notte del 16 aprile 1973 persi la fede. Quella tragedia non me la meritavo.'<sup>29</sup> It then quotes Anna as having said that her faith will be restored when judicial punishment is delivered, but for now 'No, non può esistere Dio' - a statement that shatters the traditional Catholic depiction of the pious mother.<sup>30</sup> The article emphasized the relationship between personal identity and institutional judgement - a typical feature of the narratives given by the relatives of the victims of terrorism.

However, Anna was not portrayed as just a family figure. Her mourning, political beliefs and historical affiliation with the MSI were repeatedly intertwined in media coverage, creating a multi-dimensional portrait. A short piece in *La Stampa* titled *Fini: è tempo di evolversi* summarised her defiance of Fini's attempts to distance the MSI from its fascist heritage. As part of this process, Fini proposed the removal of the tricolour flame that had been the MSI logo since its inception. Anna responded: 'Non abbiamo nulla da rimproverarci per il passato, a differenza dei comunisti, quindi Fini ci lasci il simbolo e il nome'.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, Garibaldi's 2008 article made reference to the MSI keyring with the green, white and red flame that Anna carried.<sup>32</sup> Regarding the proposed transition to AN, Anna stated: 'Fini ci lasci quello

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<sup>28</sup> Fabrizio Caccia, '«Bel gesto di Veltroni, ma ora ci diano gli assassini»', *Corriere della Sera*, 3 September 2004, p. 52

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> 'Fini: è tempo di evolversi', *La Stampa*, 25 September 1994, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> Caccia, p. 52.

per cui abbiamo sofferto tanto’, strengthening the connections between her political and family history.

In a piece that included the arson as one of three events selected from the AN archives to summarise the history of the Italian right (alongside the killing of Sergio Ramelli and the death of Giuseppe Dimitri, founder of Terza Posizione), the Mattei family is described as ‘la famiglia simbolo dei missini romani’ – the definite article revealing the significance of the tragedy in MSI history.<sup>33</sup> The article focused on Anna’s response to Fini’s public denunciation of the Fascist regime’s racial laws and involvement in the Holocaust. This move was considered highly symbolic and part of Fini’s efforts ‘to rehabilitate the term right wing, given the previous fascist or undemocratic connotations of the term.’<sup>34</sup> Anna’s response in the article was: ‘Per come Fini parla adesso, pare che i miei ragazzi li ho uccisi io’, further conflating personal and political events.<sup>35</sup>

This merging of family and political history in the more recent media coverage analysed is an extension of a trend that began immediately after the tragedy. Several newspaper articles that covered Stefano and Virgilio’s funeral in 1973 included a photograph of the funeral procession. Anna walked at the front of the crowd, behind her sons’ caskets. Alongside her, in a place traditionally occupied by the head of the family, stood MSI founder and leader Giorgio Almirante. Indeed it was he who broke the news of her sons’ deaths to Anna. Anna was depicted as both the mother of the victims and a matriarch of the MSI. This narrative became even more explicit after her death in 2013. Broken by the right-wing paper *Il Giornale d’Italia*, the news prompted public expressions of condolence from political figures. Gianni Alemanno, former mayor of Rome for the centre-right Popolo della Libertà, posted on Facebook: ‘Addio Anna Mattei, madre coraggiosa che non ha mai smesso di chiedere giustizia per i suoi figli. Ora è di nuovo con loro, noi continueremo a portare avanti la battaglia di questa splendida famiglia.’<sup>36</sup> More striking though were the words uttered by Francesco Storace, leader of the right-wing *La Destra*, upon his visit to the chapel where Anna’s body lay. Having spoken to

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<sup>33</sup> Goffredo Buccini, ‘Rogo di Primavalle, l’accusa di mamma Mattei’, *Corriere della Sera*, 20 January 2004, p. 10.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>35</sup> Buccini, p. 10.

<sup>36</sup> Gianni Alemanno, ‘Addio Anna Mattei’ [Facebook post], 3 July 2013 <<https://www.facebook.com/Alemanno.Gianni/posts/10151688156082867>> [accessed: 7 July 2013].

the Mattei family, Storace said: 'Grazie Anna, per la tua battaglia di una vita. Fiero di averti amata come si ama una madre.'<sup>37</sup> Once again, Anna's maternal identity was intrinsically linked to the party.

This conflation of motherhood and the MSI further shows that the central community of mourning was defined along political lines, as I argued in the previous section. Media coverage suggested that the central focus of her faith was the political party. The 'family' was the party, and the sons the martyrs of the far right. To draw on Homans's work on mourning practices, in the case of the Primavalle arson the 'community that bears the burden of the loss' is the far right.<sup>38</sup> This was not a tragedy that sat within the history of the nation, but one that belonged to the extreme right and, more particularly, the now-defunct MSI party. This isolation of memory was catalysed by the far left (through the campaign of misinformation analysed earlier) and welcomed by the far right, as this chapter has shown. It would later pose a great challenge to the boys' surviving brother, Giampaolo Mattei, as the next chapter will show.

I contend that this staunch politicisation prevented the emergence of Anna Mattei as a public figure during her lifetime, and cemented the positioning of the boys' martyrdom within the history of the MSI. Through impassioned and nostalgic comments on the state of Italy's right wing, she did not fit the classic paradigm of the grieving mother figure that so often features in the commemoration of widely mourned martyrs. With the Virgin Mary as the classic model, the traditional mourning mother has been a public and pious figure that typically resonates due to a one-dimensional representation that simultaneously focuses the martyr's innocence and finds the legacy of that injustice in maternal grief. This has often turned mothers into living martyrs, whose suffering is expressed (and leveraged) in the public domain. The shattering of the traditional paradigm reinforced the representation of Anna's sons as martyrs of the far right, and *not* as martyrs for the Italian nation, making their memory inaccessible to those who do not subscribe to the party's ideology. The next section will examine a more recent example of the politicisation of the brothers' death, and analyse a monument that commemorates Stefano and Virgilio within a wider tradition of Fascist hagiography. This

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<sup>37</sup> 'Grazie Anna, per la tua battaglia di una vita', *Il Giornale d'Italia*, 4 July 2013 <<http://www.ilgiornaleditalia.org/news/cronaca/847583/-Grazie-Anna--per-la.html>>.

<sup>38</sup> Peter Homans, *Symbolic Loss: The Ambiguity of Mourning and Memory at Century's End* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), p. 4.

historicisation will highlight the importance of martyrdom in the construction and validation of political identity, which is never more important than when the original collective has ceased to exist, as in the case of the MSI.

### **Historicising sacrifice, creating heritage**

Located in Rome's monumental Verano Cemetery, the Mausoleo dei Martiri Fascisti (Figure 1) was designed for the Partito Nazionale Fascista (National Fascist Party, PNF) by the architect Vittorio Mascanzoni and sculptor Giovanni Prini.<sup>39</sup> Unveiled on 23 March 1933 to coincide with the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution opened by Mussolini a year earlier, its construction was significant in the development of Fascism's glorification of its dead because it marked the transition of shrines to the Fascist fallen out of the church and into public space (the next case study will show that reverence of the Fascist dead occurred in the United States, too).<sup>40</sup> Over the years, the party formalised this commitment to the commemoration of its martyrs, ensuring that every local PNF headquarters included a shrine at which commemorative ceremonies could be held.<sup>41</sup>

Perhaps surprisingly given the regime's usual scale of aesthetics, the mausoleum is no more imposing than the others surrounding it. Nearby tombs include that of Armando Casalini, the Fascist deputy shot dead on a tramway in retaliation for the death of Giacomo Matteotti in 1924, and Ettore Petrolini, the variety performer whose oratorical skills were thought to have influenced Mussolini.<sup>42</sup> Its façade includes several elements of Fascist iconography: a winged figure carries the fasces above the entrance, busts around the top wear a fez (part of the paramilitary uniform under Fascism), and outlines of a raised hand conducting the Roman salute are visible around the doorframe.

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<sup>39</sup> Author's own photograph, *The Mausoleo Dei Martiri Fascisti*, 2016.

<sup>40</sup> Alessandra Staderini, 'La «marcia dei martiri»: la traslazione nella cripta di Santa Croce Dei Caduti Fascisti', *Annali di storia di Firenze*, 3 (2008), 195–214 (p. 196).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>42</sup> Stephen Gundle, 'Laughter Under Fascism: Humour and Ridicule in Italy, 1922–43', *History Workshop Journal*, 79.1 (2015), 215–32 (p. 220).



**Figure 1: The Mausoleo dei Martiri Fascisti**

Also known as the Chapel of the Fallen of the Revolution, the mausoleum was built to honour those who had sacrificed their lives during Fascism's rise to power in an attempt to create some historical memory of a relatively new movement. It had space for 12 martyrs. But since only four Romans had died in the battles of 1920-22, the remit had to be widened to include those who died later through injuries sustained during the rise to power, or those killed many years later abroad. Consequently, on 23 March 1933, as part of celebrations to mark the anniversary of the foundation of the PNF, the exhumed remains of Ines Donati, the '*squadrista* heroine',<sup>43</sup> were transferred to the mausoleum upon the orders of party secretary Achille Starace.<sup>44</sup> A political activist and supporter of the PNF, Donati was attacked by an antifascist group and spent 20 days in hospital. She was one of very few women to take part in the March on Rome, where she met Mussolini, and she later requested to join the paramilitary Blackshirts. She died of tuberculosis in 1924, and in 1937 a statue was erected in her honour in San Severino Marche. Partisans later destroyed it.

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<sup>43</sup> Perry Willson, *Women in Twentieth-Century Italy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 83.

<sup>44</sup> Igino Colonnelli, *Giuseppe Moscatelli «Moschino»* (Halley Editrice, 2008), p. 493.



**Figure 2: Inside the Mausoleo dei Martiri Fascisti**

The mausoleum remains in use today. It is the site of a commemoration ceremony for the Fascist dead held on the anniversary of the March on Rome, and organised by the neofascist group National Vanguard. Inside is a dark marble altar with a torch - one of Fascism's many symbols - etched into it (Figure 2).<sup>45</sup> Above the altar, a cross-shaped window lets in a little light and underneath there is an inscription *AI MARTIRI FASCISTI*, linking the regime with religion through iconography and the language of sacrifice. There are several bunches of plastic flowers around the altar, some tricolour ribbons, and a few (battery-powered) votive candles. The first indication that this monument retains some resonance today comes from the posters and framed texts commemorating the Acca Larentia killings of 1978, which caused a significant strain in relationships between the MSI and the radical right. Beside the altar is a headstone-shaped plaque dedicated to the 'fallen

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<sup>45</sup> Author's own photograph, *Inside the Mausoleo Dei Martiri Fascisti*, 2016.

for the honour of Italy' (Figure 3).<sup>46</sup> The second line reads 'Primavera 1945', a reference to the period of Italy's liberation from Fascism and Nazi occupation, which led to the murder of many Fascists at the hands of partisans during the *resa dei conti*. At the head of the list of the fallen is Benito Mussolini. A further 17 names of fallen Blackshirts and Fascist supporters are included below, including Antonio Aversa and Alvaro Porcarelli who were among the 43 soldiers of the RSI killed in Rovetta on the night of the 27 April 1945. They are remembered in a plaque elsewhere in the cemetery, and a commemorative ceremony is held each year.

At the foot of the plaque, beneath a line that seems to demarcate a new temporal period, are the names Stefano Mattei, Virgilio Mattei, and Michele Mantakas (the Greek student killed in the clashes that took place during the Primavalle trial). The final word on the plaque - PRESENTE! - featured during many rituals organised by the Fascist regime.<sup>47</sup> The appearance of the Mattei brothers' names alongside Mussolini and his followers on a commemorative plaque within a mausoleum built to honour those who died during Fascism's rise to power is significant, and it shows the continued resonance of the Primavalle Arson for the extreme right today. No other names from after 1945 feature permanently in the mausoleum; though there are references to the Acca Larentia killings in the framed texts and posters, they are temporary.

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<sup>46</sup> Author's own photograph, *The Plaque Honouring the Fascist Dead of Spring 1945*, 2016.

<sup>47</sup> Foot highlights the 'obsessive use' of the word on the monuments dedicated to fascist martyrs across Italy, as discernible on the Sacratio in the crypt below the Santa Croce church in Florence. It also features prominently on the large World War I Military Sacratio of Redipuglia, where it is repeated along each of the 22 steps. See: Foot, *Italy's Divided Memory*, p. 56.





**Figure 3: The plaque honouring the Fascist dead of spring 1945**

It is not known who added the Mattei brothers' names to the plaque. I asked the Mattei family about it in 2018. They were entirely unaware of its existence and expressed their surprise at the incorporation of the boys' names into a plaque

commemorating the Fascist dead of 1945. Though its creators are unknown, the plaque nevertheless shows an attempt to bring Fascist memory into the modern era through the appropriation of more recent deaths associated with the neofascist right. The addition of the names of Stefano, Virgilio and Michele Mantakas - whose real name, Mikis, has been Italianised to blend into the list of Italian martyrs – is evidence of the importance of martyrology in the construction and, in this case, continuation, of political identity, as explained in the thesis introduction. The plaque is an attempt to draw continuity between the Fascist memory of the 1920s, deaths during Italy's liberation, the far right dead of the 1970s and the present day. As the extreme left groups of the 1970s appropriated the memory of Italy's partisans, here the extreme right has revived the memory of the Matteis and contextualised them within Fascist martyrology, positioning the dead as an extension of ongoing sacrifice in the name of fascism.

### **Vernacular claims to memory in public space**

I will now address a second instance of the radical right's appropriation of memory, which – unlike the closed-door mausoleum – is clearly visible in the Roman cityscape: the graffiti in via Bibbiena, on the exterior walls of the Matteis' former flat where the arson occurred. This grassroots memoryscape exists despite (or perhaps because of) the Mattei family's repeated rejection of institutional proposals to name public spaces after Stefano and Virgilio.<sup>48</sup> This debate began in 2004, when the centre-left mayor of Rome, Walter Veltroni, approached the Mattei family with a proposal to name a street after Stefano and Virgilio.<sup>49</sup> While acknowledging the

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<sup>48</sup> In her work on the memoryscape of 9/11, Joy Sather-Wagstaff addresses the graffiti discernible at Ground Zero. She writes: 'This practice is not just a series of embodied acts that literally mark the site but also one that is part of the active process of making the site historically salient in collective memories.' In via Bibbiena, the spontaneous, vernacular attempt to claim the event in collective memory is evident. Though the flat has been rebuilt and displays no traces of the arson, nor are there any fixed memorial structures such as plaques, for right-wing extremists, this is a site of right-wing memory and the wall is treated as a memorial. See: Joy Sather-Wagstaff, *Heritage That Hurts: Tourists in the Memoryscapes of September 11* (Walnut Creek, Calif: Left Coast Press, 2011) p. 120.

<sup>49</sup> During his time as mayor of Rome, Veltroni dedicated a number of public spaces to victims of terrorism from both the left and the right. In 2005, he dedicated a road running through Rome's Villa Chigi park to Paolo Di Nella, a 22-year-old member of the MSI's Fronte della Gioventù (Youth Front, FdG) who was attacked while leafleting, and died a week later.

importance of such a gesture from the left, the Mattei family rejected the offer, concerned that it was a political move ahead of upcoming mayoral elections.<sup>50</sup> The family has since rejected all subsequent offers to dedicate public spaces to Stefano and Virgilio, with the exception of a commemorative plaque in a local park. Compare the memoryscape to that of Sergio Ramelli, an 18-year-old student and active member of the MSI youth organisation the FdG, attacked in Milan by left-wing extremists in 1975. Throughout Italy, 21 streets and public gardens bear his name.<sup>51</sup> The sparse memoryscape linked to the Mattei brothers is therefore surprising, particularly since the tragedy is commonly known in collective memory as the *Rogo di Primavalle*. Place lies at the centre of the public narrative, yet is strikingly absent in its commemoration.<sup>52</sup>

In her book on the memory of Francesco Lorusso, a 25-year-old student and member of the revolutionary left shot dead by a *carabiniere* in Bologna in 1977, Hajek applies Braunstein's theory of 'possessive memory' to the left's hold over the memory of 1968.<sup>53</sup> Though Braunstein's term - and Hajek's study - relate to the possessive approach to memory shown by individuals who were directly involved in '68, what is striking in the case of the Primavalle Arson is the possessive nature of younger, right-wing radicals who had no involvement whatsoever in the period.<sup>54</sup> In order to negotiate this unfounded possessiveness over memory, contemporary neofascist groups draw on symbolic elements of Italy's Fascist heritage to claim the brothers as their martyrs. The concept of 'possessive memory' can be used to describe the relationship of the grassroots, extraparliamentary far right groups to the memory of the arson, who have consistently re-inscribed a radical right-wing

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<sup>50</sup> Fabrizio Caccia, 'Veltroni: «una via di Roma in ricordo dei fratelli Mattei» Ma la famiglia si oppone', *Corriere della Sera*, 3 September 2004 <[http://archiviostorico.corriere.it/2004/settembre/03/Veltroni\\_Una\\_via\\_Roma\\_ricordo\\_co\\_9\\_040903044.shtml](http://archiviostorico.corriere.it/2004/settembre/03/Veltroni_Una_via_Roma_ricordo_co_9_040903044.shtml)>

<sup>51</sup> For a full list, see: Vittorio Vidotto, 'Palazzi e sacrari: il declino del culto littorio', *Roma moderna e contemporanea*, Anno XI.3 (2003), 565–82 (pp. 577–8).

<sup>52</sup> This absence stands in stark contrast to the importance of the location of Mikis Mantakas' death to those fighting to protect his memory. Killed outside the MSI headquarters in Via Ottaviano, Primavalle, the building bears a portrait of Mantakas and is the site of the annual commemoration. Proposals put forward by Alleanza Nazionale to sell the site were met with fierce protests and a call from the former right-wing mayor of Rome, Alemanno, to protect this site of memory.

<sup>53</sup> Andrea Hajek, *Negotiating Memories of Protest in Western Europe: The Case of Italy* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 51.

<sup>54</sup> Braunstein, Peter, 'Possessive Memory and the Sixties Generation', *Culturefront* (Summer 1997), 66–69.

narrative on the site that echoes the polarisation of politics during the period of the tragedy itself.



**Figure 4: via Bibbiena, Google Street View from 2008**

A Google Street View dating from 2008 (Figure 4) shows the competitive memorial dynamic in Primavalle evident on the walls of the building where the arson took place.<sup>55</sup> The large slogan in red and black reads ‘Primavalle never forgets’, and calls for ‘honour for the Mattei brothers’. Perhaps more interesting is the mention of Walter Rossi (‘Walter Rossi lives on’) below.<sup>56</sup> Killed in 1977, Rossi was a member of extreme left-wing group Lotta Continua. He was shot during clashes with political opponents in the Balduina area of Rome while distributing antifascist flyers, following the shooting of comrade Elena Pacinelli in the nearby Monte Mario area the previous day. Nobody was found guilty of his murder. Balduina was a well-known MSI stronghold in the 1970s; the addition of Rossi’s name on a memorial to the sons of an MSI leader is therefore relevant. Rossi was not murdered in Primavalle. The provocative addition of his name suggests an attempt

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<sup>55</sup> Google Maps, 26 Via Bernardo da Bibbiena, Rome (2008)  
<<https://www.google.co.uk/maps/@41.9164588,12.411804,3a,75y,160.05h,89.78t/data=!3m7!1e1!3m5!1saRFsJiCkUOU0FnaqF-bemw!2e0!5s20080401T000000!7i13312!8i6656>> [10 November 2015]

<sup>56</sup> The image also shows that the ‘anti’ prefix of ‘antifascista’ has been crossed out in an attempt to re-write the slogan as ‘Primavalle è fascista’, and a white ‘antifa’, short for ‘antifascista’ has been added in superscript.

to diminish the impact of radical right martyrdom through the suggestion that the extreme left also suffered during the period. It shows the persisting political divisions within memory, which are expressed through competing martyrdoms, and the way these martyrs continue to be remembered within the antagonistic mode. The dynamic, palimpsestic and antagonistic nature of this vernacular site of memory is clear.

By 2012 (Figure 5), posters for a left-wing event to debate the centre-right president of the municipality Alfredo Milioni, who gave his resignation before retracting it and returning to power, have been placed over the area under discussion.<sup>57</sup> The red hammer and sickle is discernible on the second set of posters, which advertise a 'red celebration' event in Primavalle. The memorial role of the wall has been eclipsed, as has its link to right-wing history.

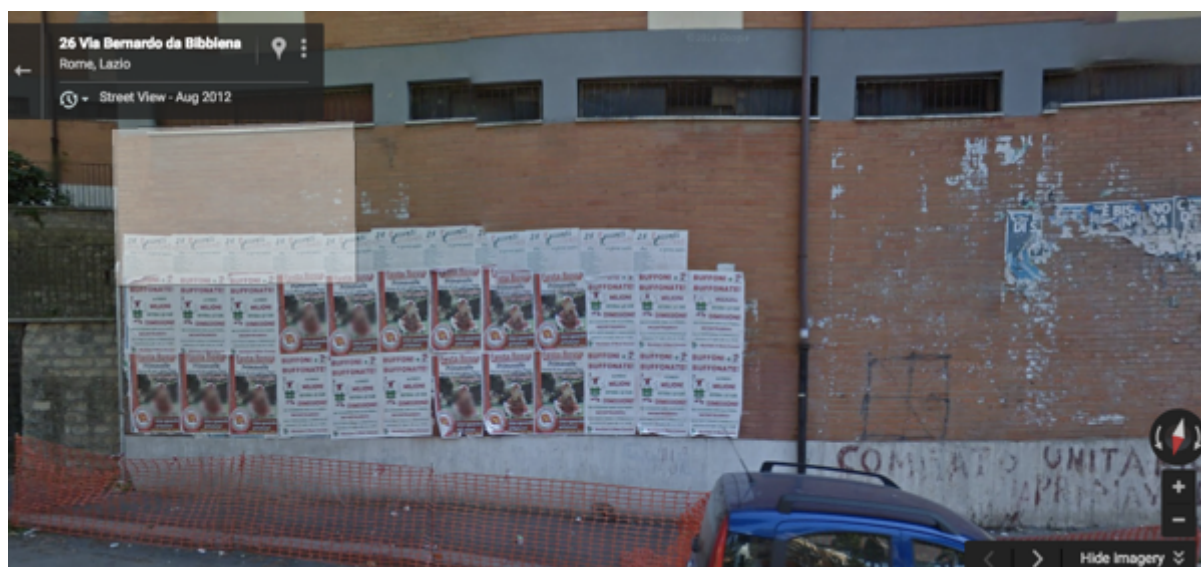


Figure 5: via Bibbiena, Google Street View from 2012

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<sup>57</sup> Google Maps, 26 Via Bernardo da Bibbiena, Rome (2012)  
<<https://www.google.co.uk/maps/@41.9164588,12.411804,3a,75y,160.05h,89.78t/data=!3m7!1e1!3m5!1slrcYCs0Wa0lMvqZFcBsvbg!2e0!5s20120801T000000!7i13312!8i6656>> [Accessed 10 November 2015]



**Figure 6: via Bibbiena, Google Street View from 2014**

However, by 2014 the extreme right has reclaimed the building (Figure 6) within its historical narrative.<sup>58</sup> Far right iconography dominates: the Celtic cross is present - a symbol typically associated with white supremacy and neo-Nazism that has been banned in Italy in political contexts (though it remains a religious symbol in some parts of northern Italy) – alongside publicity posters for a commemorative march for the Mattei brothers. This annual event is organised by a group that conducts the Roman salute as it walks and bears the iconography of the extreme right, as the next section will analyse. This claim to memory strengthens in 2015 (Figures 7, 8) when the space is entirely taken up by these posters and further appearances of the Celtic Cross, reflecting an attempt to reframe the tragedy within a wider history of right-wing struggle.<sup>59</sup> This narrowly defined political identity is particularly exclusive given the proximity of left-wing community centre Break Out, also on via Bernardo Bibbiena, with which clashes have frequently occurred during the annual grassroots ceremony.

<sup>58</sup> Google Maps, 26 Via Bernardo da Bibbiena, Rome (2014)  
 <<https://www.google.co.uk/maps/@41.9164588,12.411804,3a,75y,160.05h,89.78t/data=!3m7!1e1!3m5!1saRFsJICKUOU0FnaqF-bemw!2e0!5s20140701T000000!7i13312!8i6656>> [Accessed 10 November 2015]

<sup>59</sup> Google Maps, 26 Via Bernardo da Bibbiena, Rome (2015)  
 <<https://www.google.co.uk/maps/@41.9164584,12.4118161,3a,75y,160.05h,89.78t/data=!3m7!1e1!3m5!1sHAvEOPWOOp4q2NPwzoknfA!2e0!5s20150501T000000!7i13312!8i6656>> [Accessed 10 November 2015]

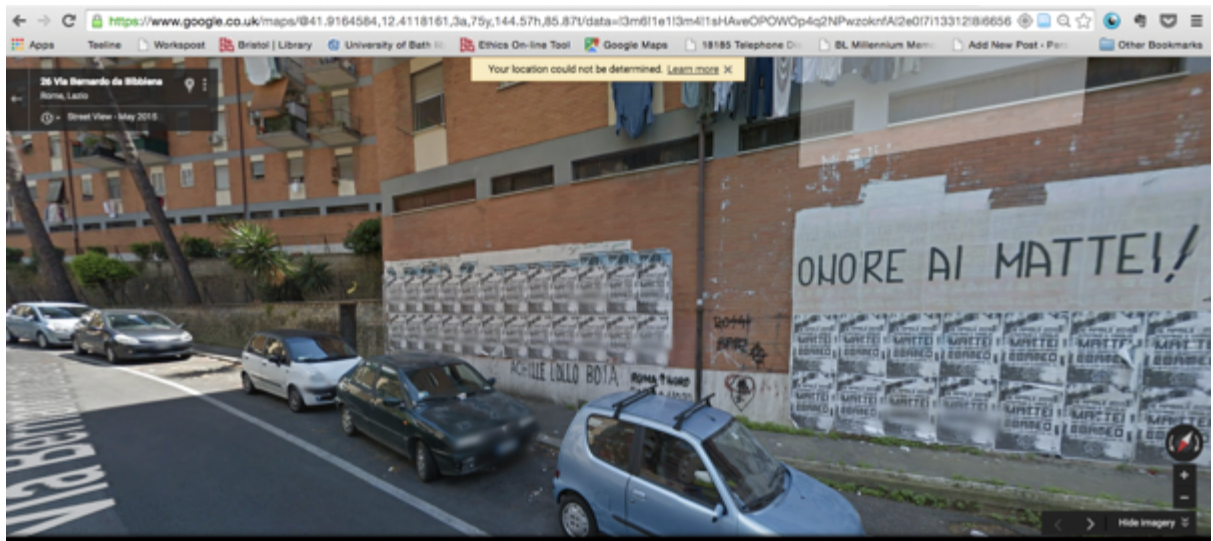


Figure 7: via Bibbiena, Google Street View from 2015



Figure 8: via Bibbiena, second Google Street View from 2015

What is clear from the case of Via Bibbiena is that sites of memory often are not constructed as such, but are claimed by possessive memory communities. Bevan's statement that some structures 'are attacked not because they are in the path of a military objective: to their destroyers they are the objective' is clear in the left's interaction with the wall in via Bibbiena.<sup>60</sup> We will see this dynamic again in the next case study; the site of Matteotti's kidnap on the Arnaldo da Brescia quickly became a place of grassroots pilgrimage until the Fascist regime banned gatherings

<sup>60</sup> Bevan, p. 9.

and removed memorial structures. To the impartial onlooker, the competing dynamics of martyrdom are visible in via Bibbiena, albeit in an informal way. From the Verano mausoleum to the graffiti in via Bibbiena, we see that the memory of the Mattei brothers continues to be appropriated by the radical right, who employ the iconography of Fascism to position the brothers as part of Fascist hagiography. This is then contested by the far left. The antagonistic mode of memory is clear here. However, this is not simply a static site of memory; it is also the focus of dynamic performances of memory that occur during the grassroots commemoration ceremony organised by local neofascist groups. This will be the subject of the next section.

### **Performing political identity through commemoration**

This section will analyse the performance of hagiographical heritage as new neofascist groups seek to validate their existence as an extension of previous ideologies. As we shall see, groups need powerful symbolic heritage in order to validate their existence and motivate members to unite and martyrs play a role in that, as the thesis introduction stated. This is particularly true of groups operating outside institutional, parliamentary frameworks (indeed, it is a quality we will see in the next case study, when antifascists used memory as a means of uniting the global movement against Fascism). In this section, I will address the work of ‘memory choreographers’, defined by Conway as ‘human actors involved in creating and propagating commemorative discourses and strategies at the small-group level’, who remember the Matteis within the exclusionary, antagonistic mode of remembering. Their mnemonic approach stands in stark contrast to the more inclusive cosmopolitan mode of remembering supported by state actors and Giampaolo Mattei, which is the subject of chapter 4.<sup>61</sup>

In the years following the tragedy, there was little media coverage of the grassroots commemoration ceremonies, which were originally organised by ON and the members of the local MSI branch. However, in 1995 several newspapers covered the commemorative march due to its violent nature. Though I have already provided a history of the MSI, it is important to reiterate the political context here, since the event in question took place the year after significant changes to the right wing of Italy’s political spectrum. In 1994 the MSI party’s debate around its heritage reached

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<sup>61</sup> Brian Conway, *Commemoration and Bloody Sunday Pathways of Memory* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 6.



a climax, and the party adopted a new name – Alleanza Nazionale – distancing itself from its Fascist history. This led to a split headed by Rauti, who protested against what he deemed a betrayal.<sup>62</sup> AN enjoyed great success in parliamentary elections taking 13.5% of the vote (and 27% in Rome).<sup>63</sup> The year also saw the disappearance of the DC, and its heir, the Partito Popolare Italiano, shifted to the left.

22 years after the arson took place, more than 100 neofascists set fire to parked cars, smashed windows and threatened the public with rudimentary weapons like iron bars. As they ran from police, they encountered a bus, which they boarded before attacking the bus driver and passengers.<sup>64</sup> Fascist symbolism featured heavily; neofascist skinheads dressed in black shirts, enacted the Roman salute and carried flags bearing the pickaxe (a symbol of Italian Fascism). As institutional politics shifted away from the far right, disappointed radicals expressed their anger and reasserted their ideological identity by incorporating the rituals and iconography of Fascism into commemoration of the Matteis. Once again, the link between martyrdom and contemporary political identity was explicit.

The long-running unofficial commemoration has been organised by groups including Azione Giovani (Youth Action), the youth group of AN, and far right political parties Forza Nuova (New Force) and the far-right coalition Alternativa Sociale (Social Alternative). More recently, the task has fallen to Roma Nord, a neofascist militant group primarily made up of young people and based in the former MSI headquarters in via Assarotti, Monte Mario. Publicity for the event draws on the idea of the duty of memory, through slogans like ‘chi ama non dimentical’ and ‘i camerati non dimenticano’. Photos of the graffiti and posters in via Bibbiena feature heavily on the group’s social media in the run-up to the event, suggesting the slogans are their work. The group also holds commemoration ceremonies for Bobby Sands and Giorgio Vale, described as ‘combattenti europei’, showing the importance of hagiographical heritage for this group’s identity. This preoccupation with memory is an integral part of neofascist identity. According to the political scientist Stéphanie Dechezelles: ‘La nostalgie est l’un des principaux

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<sup>62</sup> Ferraresi, p.199.

<sup>63</sup> Dunnage, p. 223.

<sup>64</sup> Grignetti, Francesco. “I naziskin firmano una notte di terrore”, *La Stampa*, 18 April 1995, p. 13.

ressorts de l'économie émotionnelle et mémorielle de l'« extrême droite » en Italie et des jeunes d'AN en particulier.<sup>65</sup>

The group meets in Piazza Clemente XI in central Primavalle in the early evening on 16 April, some hours after the official commemoration ceremony organised by the state (which will be analysed in chapter 4). Accompanied by a police escort, marchers walk through Primavalle behind a wide banner decorated with the Celtic cross that reads: 'Onore ai fratelli Mattei, i camerati.' Several participants wear commemorative armbands. As they march towards via Bibbiena, the group chants and sings, often with raised fists. Shouts include "Contro il sistema, la gioventù si scaglia, boia chi molla, è il grido di battaglia!" – a slogan that was used by both the *squadristi* and then the Fascist military of Mussolini's RSI, then by neofascist groups during the Years of Lead and more recently by the *ultrà* football fans of the extreme right.<sup>66</sup> The orality of the event is striking, and contrasts with the quieter official commemoration ceremony. In keeping with other protests, the chant follows the typical template of 3/3/7 syllables as highlighted by Portelli, who writes of the 'emotional community' formed at a rally or march, 'which moves and speaks collectively, and generates specific oral forms in order to synchronize these actions.'<sup>67</sup>

Throughout the commemoration ceremony the group is bound – and separated by rank – through orality. When they reach the flat in via Bibbiena, the group leader speaks a few words about the deaths of Stefano and Virgilio to attendees, who silently stand to attention in the organised lines of a military formation. A member of the group then walks through the gardens below the window where the boys died to lay a wreath, while others stand in silence. Upon his return, the leader of the group shouts "Camerati, Stefano e Virgilio Mattei!" and gets the response "presenti!" three times, with each shout accompanied by the raised arm of the Roman salute. The group is then told to stand down, and movement and chatter break unity. By mourning Stefano and Virgilio using the rituals and symbolism of Fascist period, the group reaffirms the value of sacrifice for the party

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<sup>65</sup> Stéphanie Dechezelles, 'Boia chi molla!', *Cultures & Conflicts* (2011), 101–23 (p. 107).

<sup>66</sup> In the 1970s, ideological (and generational) conflict shifted into sports arenas. This shift could be seen in slogans, songs and chants. See: Alberto Testa and Gary Armstrong, 'Words and Actions: Italian Ultras and Neo-Fascism', *Social Identities*, 14.4 (2008), 473–90.

<sup>67</sup> Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 1991), p. 177.

in a period in which it has been increasingly isolated from institutional politics. The ritualistic reverence of sacrifice encourages members to reaffirm their commitment to the group through the celebration of martyrs that came before them.

Dechezelle's work on neofascist groups after the dissolution of the MSI party in 1995, and the subsequent institutionalisation of the right through alliances with Berlusconi's government, identifies the importance of violence in the cultures created by, and for, militant right-wing groups, which she describes as both political and cultural organisations.<sup>68</sup> She highlights the nostalgia for violence that emerges as a result of the right-wing's entry into government and the subsequent rejection of violent action, which had long been exalted by Italy's neofascist party, suggesting that 'l'exhortation au combat passe désormais par la mémoration des fait d'armes des glorieux morts dont ces jeunes se disent héritiers.'<sup>69</sup> The result, she argues, is the celebration of individual sacrifice as a sign of the regeneration and purging of society – typical values of such movements. Martyrs are part of this process, with implications for group identity:

Toutes ces opérations de commémoration funèbre ainsi que la psalmodie incantatoire du « ne jamais oublier » servent autant à forger une mémoire collective à usage interne qu'à renvoyer aux adversaires une image du groupe sinon de « martyrs » du moins de « victimes » de la barbarie de ces derniers.<sup>70</sup>

Because of the location of the attack, and the ages of the victims, the Primavalle Arson serves this external function of underlining the cruelty of adversaries more so than the military figures, former militants of Italy's Years of Lead or anti-Mafia figures highlighted by Dechezelles as the focus of neofascist commemoration.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, it is worth remembering here that neofascism is an ideology of the vanquished, and its lines of community drawn around the idea of defeat. The narratives of defeat and injustice that Dechezelles posits as central to neofascist

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<sup>68</sup> Dechezelles, p. 104.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., pp. 108–9.

<sup>71</sup> Though Dechezelles uses the term 'martyr' in the citation above, she tends to use 'hero' in her work to describe this exaltation of the neofascist dead. However, I believe that the ritualistic commemorative acts embodied during such performances of homage make them akin to religious rites, and, when coupled with the emphasis on sacrifice for a higher cause – in this case the struggle and progress of the right – the term martyr is more appropriate.

identity can be found in Primavalle. Indeed, publicity posters for the grassroots commemoration event organised by neofascist groups in 2018 referred to ‘45 anni di verità negate’ (Figure 9).<sup>72</sup> This reference to 45 years of denied truth is inaccurate because the perpetrators were sentenced in 1987. There *is* judicial truth. However, it accentuates the group’s suffering at the hands of the opposition, and builds a sense of perpetual injustice behind which the group can rally. The choice of the Mattei brother as martyrs, who are revered because of the very injustice of their deaths (as opposed to a military hero, for example), sustains this element of defeat that is so central to neofascist identity. Furthermore, applying the label of martyrdom serves to legitimise the existence of the group as a continuation of its predecessors (which have not existed since 1995), and encourages the commitment of members to the progress of the group. By paying homage to hagiographical heritage, the group is able to position itself as the rebirth of what went before (prior to the institutionalization of the extreme right), and emphasise the cruelty of those responsible for killing two young sons in the family home. Group identity is therefore embodied and performed.

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<sup>72</sup> Author’s own photograph, *Publicity for the Grassroots Commemoration in Primavalle*, 2018.



**Figure 9: Publicity for the grassroots commemoration in Primavalle, 2018**

Some elements of Nietzsche's notion of monumental history are evident here, particularly the exaltation of the past and the suggestion that such greatness can be achieved again. Contemporary neofascist groups do not participate in commemoration in order to remember the specific lives of the Mattei brothers. Rather, these rituals of memory are a celebration of the MSI and indeed the Fascist regime that preceded it. Commemoration collapses these distant temporalities, and memory is the thread that connects the far right across the ages. The community of mourning is defined along political lines, which performs its identity through rituals of memory to honour the Mattei brothers. The lines between 'us' and 'them', typical of the antagonistic mode of remembering, are clear. According to Cento Bull and Hansen in their work on agonistic memory:

Across Europe, populist nationalist and/or radical right movements have developed counter-memories in a strongly antagonistic mode, re-imagined territory in exclusionary terms and constructed rigid symbolic boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’. In direct opposition to current processes of critical reflection on past conflicts and injustices, these movements promote memories which essentialize, as opposed to problematizing, a collective sense of sameness and we-ness, with accompanying sentiments of they-ness.<sup>73</sup>

The grassroots commemoration ceremony puts forward a very specific narrative; one that honours the Mattei brothers as martyrs for the MSI and celebrates the far right (past and present). Slogans defaming the left are shouted throughout the march, and songs exalting Italy’s extreme right history are sung. The lines between ‘us’ and ‘them’ are firm. The exclusionary, antagonistic mode of remembering promoted by neofascist memory choreographers reinforces the ghettoization of the memory of the Mattei brothers, who are upheld as symbols of an irretrievable and glorified ideological period.<sup>74</sup>

This memorial approach contrasts starkly with the efforts made by Giampaolo Mattei to integrate his brothers’ story within wider collective memory, which will be analysed in the next chapter. The official commemoration ceremony he participates in each year has another role beyond simple commemoration: to counteract the memorial efforts of the radical right. The continued existence of the official ceremony (despite the low number of attendees and the somewhat perfunctory rituals) is more a political act of defiance of the extreme right than a reflection of the state’s desire to commemorate the brothers, which seems likely to continue until the radical right relinquishes the memory of the Matteis as their martyrs.

### **Conclusion: constructed martyrs for the radical right**

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<sup>73</sup> Cento Bull and Hansen, p. 6.

<sup>74</sup> In opposition to this, the Roman leader of Italy’s Communist Refoundation Party called for a moment of quiet reflection on 16 April 2014, instead of the instrumentalisation of memory and stirring of hatred that he identified during the commemorative march. See: Maria Romana Barraco, ‘Commemorazione fratelli Mattei: il corteo di Roma Nord e le polemiche del PRC’, *RomaToday*, 17 April 2014 <<http://montemario.romatoday.it/primavalle/commemorazione-fratelli-mattei-il-corteo-di-roma-nord-e-le-polemiche-del-prc.html>> [accessed 1 August 2016].

As we have seen throughout this chapter, the evolution of Italy's institutional right has shaped the way the Mattei brothers are remembered. Memory has remained tied to the political group, and commemoration has taken place within the antagonistic mode of remembering, whereby memory becomes a means of fortifying the exclusionary lines of collective identity. This mode, 'privileges emotions in order to cement a sense of belonging to a particularistic community, focusing on the suffering inflicted by the 'evil' enemies upon this same community.'<sup>75</sup> From the immediate application of the term 'martyrdom' by Almirante at the boys' funeral to the radical right's celebration of the boys as neofascist martyrs today, the concept of martyrdom has allowed the radical right to continuously represent the Mattei brothers' deaths as political sacrifice and to condemn the sacrificer. With its dual suggestion of self-sacrifice for a belief and suffering inflicted by the enemy, the concept of martyrdom has been used to unite the collective and condemn the opposition. This latter function, no less important than the unifying function of martyrdom, is particularly clear on the walls in via Bibbiena, where the memorial dynamic includes the inscription of memory, opposition response (through the evocation of one of their martyrs), and the subsequent erasure of the graffiti by the local authorities. The cycle exposes the double role of martyr memory - to commemorate and to condemn.

This chapter has made the possessiveness of the primary community of mourning clear. From the time of the funeral, when Almirante walked alongside the boys' mother with important MSI figures behind them, the tragedy has been commemorated as one belonging to the party, and this isolation was exacerbated by the campaign of misinformation that prevented the arson from entering broad national narratives. Media representation of Anna Mattei continued to conflate the personal and the political, motherhood and the MSI, and contributed to this segregation of memory. It cemented the understanding of the boys' deaths as a tragedy belonging to MSI history. Contemporary neofascist groups have taken advantage of this contextualisation of the Primavalle Arson within far right history, and used commemoration as an occasion to position themselves as a continuation of this ideological tradition, drawing a line of continuity from Fascism through the Years of Lead and into the present. The addition of the boys' names to a plaque commemorating those who died during Fascism's fall from power (within a mausoleum to the Fascist dead) shows this opportunistic historicisation of martyr

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<sup>75</sup> Cento Bull and Hansen, p. 398.

memory. For some, the boys' deaths are part of a long history of sacrifice in the name of Fascism despite the fact they did not sacrifice their lives knowingly. Sacrifice has been entirely ascribed through the martyrological narrative. Throughout the decades since their deaths, the boys' status as martyrs has been entirely constructed through the actions of radical right memory agents. They are accidental martyrs.

The next chapter will address the memory work of Giampaolo Mattei, the victims' surviving brother, who has dedicated his working life to organising memorial initiatives that insert his brothers' memory within the wider collective memory of the period, and combatting the antagonistic appropriation of memory that I have addressed here. I will use cosmopolitan memory theory as a framework to analyse these memorial initiatives. The chapter will examine Mattei's opposition to the construction of sites of memory, the role of the official commemoration ceremony led by Mattei in partnership with local government, and the mnemonic labour of the association he has established. It will then conclude with some remarks on the memory of the Mattei brothers in Italy in 2018 as the formerly marginalised groups of the far right return to mainstream politics.



## Chapter 4

### Contesting the Appropriation of Memory

Giampaolo Mattei was the youngest child to survive the Primavalle Arson when he was four years old. He worked in the IT industry until 2005, when he established the Associazione Fratelli Mattei (Mattei Brothers Association, AFM), an organisation dedicated to the creation of bipartisan memory of the Years of Lead. Giampaolo is the sole member of the Mattei family to adopt a public role. He has written a book, organised commemorative events and exhibitions, and appeared at public debates. As such, he can be described as a ‘memory choreographer’.<sup>1</sup> He has battled continuous attempts to frame and re-frame his brothers as martyrs of the extreme right, seeking instead to shine a light on their biographies, and remove them from the pedestal upon which the radical right has placed them. He has refused to support the commemorative rituals of extreme right groups analysed in the previous chapter, and favours an annual bipartisan performance of memory with the backing of local institutions. Put another way, in wishing his brothers to be remembered as two among many victims of Italy’s Years of Lead, he has adopted the cosmopolitan mode of remembering (addressed in the thesis introduction), rather than the antagonistic mode favoured by far right radicals.

In their work on cosmopolitan memory addressed in the first chapter, Levy and Sznajder suggest that Holocaust memory has acted as a foundational stone of global human rights movement determined to prevent future genocide. By focusing on victimhood, memory transcends national borders and is of global concern.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Giampaolo Mattei’s work aims to relinquish memory from the grips of extreme right groups, and commemorate the victims from across the political spectrum in order to create a ‘memoria condivisa’, which he defines as the ability to have a discussion and respect one another’s opinions without resorting to explanations like internal party divisions or fascist provocation.<sup>3</sup>

To create a space for discussion, the AFM has organised several initiatives. In 2010, it established ‘Racconto la mia storia’, inviting relatives of the victims of terrorism to talk about their experiences via a web-television channel, eschewing the temporal, or political, restrictions of Italy’s mainstream broadcasters. Unlike other

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<sup>1</sup> Conway, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Levy and Sznajder, ‘Memory Unbound’, pp. 87-106.

<sup>3</sup> Giampaolo Mattei, interviewed by Amy King, 2 February 2016.

associations, the AFM does not offer membership. According to Giampaolo Mattei, since the memory of his brothers remains so firmly rooted in far right history, only individuals that identify with the right would apply to join the association, which would then become a de facto base for the very groups that he opposes.

The sociologist Anna Lisa Tota has addressed the social, cultural and historical status of the relatives of those killed in terrorist attacks, and their role within processes of civil society in her work on terrorism in Bologna.<sup>4</sup> Though her research focuses on a larger scale act of terrorism - the bombing of Bologna Central Station in 1980, which killed 85 and injured more than 200 - the dramatic quality of the Bologna attack also applies to the Primavalle Arson. Like the relatives of the victims of the Bologna bombing, Giampaolo Mattei has entered into a public relationship with state institutions. But despite this shared civic role, unlike the victims of the Bologna bombings, Stefano and Virgilio Mattei are not mourned by wider Italian society, as this chapter will show.

In her analysis of the role held by the relatives of the victims in Bologna, Tota describes:

l'assunzione da parte dei familiari delle vittime di una responsabilità politica e civile. Non si tratta di piangere in privato il proprio defunto [...] si tratta anche di chiedere giustizia e di rimettere in discussione il patto fondamentale che lega cittadino e stato. [...] Se da una parte, infatti, ciò comporta forme di riconoscimento ufficiali e forme di solidarietà diffuse assenti nel caso di lutti familiari più "comuni", dall'altra comporta anche rischi di strumentalizzazione e di espropriazione della memoria.<sup>5</sup>

Given the failings of the state in bringing the arsonists to justice – a key component of state memory-making, as addressed in the thesis introduction – Giampaolo Mattei has had to engage with civil society, assuming a role in order to defend his brothers' memory against misinformed narratives and drawing attention to injustice. This was clear on 9 May 2013 when he gave a speech in the Italian Parliament on the *Giorno della Memoria Dedicato alle Vittime del Terrorismo*, in which he described the many challenges faced by the AFM in its mission to open channels of

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<sup>4</sup> Anna Lisa Tota, *La città ferita: memoria e comunicazione pubblica della strage di Bologna, 2 agosto 1980* (Bologna: il mulino, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 127-8.

communication with political institutions and the relatives of the victims of terrorism across the political spectrum.

As was the case with Carla Verbano, the mother of the murdered far left activist Valerio Verbano, the connection between civic society and the state is of even greater importance because justice was not dealt at the time of the deaths (or ever, in the case of Verbano). Though the judiciary declared Lollo and his accomplices guilty in 1987, it was unable to enforce punishment and the convicted have not paid for their crimes. Furthermore, the longstanding and effective campaign of misinformation addressed in the previous chapter has continued to affect collective memory. Though there is no ambiguity at a judicial level, debates continue about the Mattei family's innocence. Consequently, there is a practical element to the memorial practices Mattei promotes, which anchors him to state institutions. Maintaining memory of his brothers is his priority in order to rectify misinformed collective memory and to educate younger generations. Memory has a civic function because institutional memory work, namely the judicial system, has failed.

Like Licia Rognini, the wife of Giuseppe Pinelli, Gemma Capra, the wife of Luigi Calabresi, Giampaolo has emerged as a public victim - a status that puts memory at risk of instrumentalisation, as Tota notes.<sup>6</sup> The next case study will show the extent to which Mussolini's regime sought to prevent Matteotti's wife, Velia, from becoming a public victim, aware of the importance of such figures in upholding martyr memory. The aforementioned pairing of Giampaolo Mattei and Carla Verbano is an interesting one, particularly when compared to that of Capra and Rognini. Pinelli's death was blamed on Calabresi, whose murder was later attributed to those seeking to exact revenge for his fall. Rognini and Capra's husbands represented diametrical opposites on the political spectrum, much like the murdered relatives of Verbano and Mattei, and their appearance alongside one another at commemorative events is noteworthy. This political opposition renders any instance of unity, like the handshake between Rognini and Capra at their first meeting forty years after the Pinelli case began, highly symbolic. The media reaction in 2008 to Giampaolo Mattei and Carla Verbano's embrace when invited onstage by Veltroni at an event organised by the Partito Democratico to commemorate the victims of terrorism is telling. It is worth noting though Giampaolo Mattei has only

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

been included in these bipartisan commemorative events since Lollo's definitive admission of guilt in 2005. The 2008 embrace was so significant that it was the basis for the final chapter of Giampaolo's book. He told me in an interview in 2010: "è stato un gesto molto importante che nessuno aveva mai fatto. Era sempre parlato in televisione diciamo di questa pacificazione, di questa cosa, ma nessuno aveva mai fatto un passo pratico."<sup>7</sup>

As political opposites, this juxtaposition was important and orchestrated, exemplifying the role of public victims in negotiating the relationship between civic society and the state. It also showed the risk of the instrumentalisation of memory when it enters the public arena. Giampaolo Mattei wrote of this danger:

Quando nel 1985 inaugurammo la cappella al Verano per i miei fratelli, mi venne il desiderio di fare qualcosa per loro. Non dovevano più essere solo nominati dai palchi durante i comizi e agitati come vessilli di battaglia politica. Promisi a me stesso – avevo sedici anni – che il loro ricordo sarebbe stato sottratto alle strumentalizzazioni politiche. Del resto, quelli dei due fratelli Mattei non sono gli unici nomi trasformati in esche per le urne. Ci sono intere carriere costruite su quelle morti.<sup>8</sup>

In her comparison of the collective memories of the Bologna station bombing, the Naples train explosion in 1984 and the Madrid train bombings of 2004, Tota addresses the legacies of terrorism, and the result of fragmented or silenced memory: 'part of the damage produced by terror can be the redefinition of the relationship between the citizens and the state. This variable plays such a crucial role that it can be used to create a new typology of the effects of terrorism.'<sup>9</sup> The proposed classification is, in part, 'based on the degree of change in the public representation of the state of the side effect of the terror attack and, on the other, on the number of contrasting versions of the terror event as recounted by the public.'<sup>10</sup> In the case of the Primavalle Arson, the state was unable to protect its citizens during this bloody period and was subsequently shown to be a weak

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<sup>7</sup> Giampaolo Mattei, interviewed by Amy King, 7 August 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Mattei, *La notte brucia ancora*, pp. 83-4.

<sup>9</sup> Anna Lisa Tota, 'Terrorism and Collective Memories: Comparing Bologna, Naples and Madrid 11 March', *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 46 (2005), 55-78 (p. 57).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

prosecutor of perpetrators, both in terms of judicial outcomes and willingness. The persistence of counter-memories relating to the Arson is testament to the state's failures, which have shifted agency onto the family itself. The next section will show Giampaolo Mattei's opposition to the entry of memory into the public arena. I will examine the construction of the primary memorial to the brothers in a local park, analyse the state's choice of wording on the plaque, and address public reaction to its construction. This section will therefore show the 'totemic' quality of some physical structures as analysed in the introduction to the thesis, which become either a focus of attack due to what they represent, or the site of pilgrimage.<sup>11</sup>

### **Anchoring memory in public space**

In 2003, a local park was dedicated to Stefano and Virgilio Mattei in via Battistini, Primavalle, upon the suggestion of Marco Visconti, then the head of the local authority and member of AN. Not all local authority representatives welcomed the initiative. Opposition councillors left the hall in protest when the motion was presented, revealing the enduring tensions linked to commemoration of the historic right. It is one of three attempts to anchor a narrative linked to the Primavalle arson through official memorialisation in a public space, and was erected without the consent of the Mattei family. The plaque reads:

Stefano e Virgilio Mattei  
Martiri per la libertà  
16.04.1973 16.04.2003  
30 anni dal loro sacrificio

The use of the term 'martiri per la libertà' – a term with much historical and political significance in Italy – is striking. As we have seen throughout this case study, memory of the tragedy has consistently been discussed in relation to the family's political identity. However, the memorial plaque commemorating the brothers ignores that identity, and goes as far as evoking the terminology of the left.

To understand the significance of the term 'martiri per la libertà' it is useful to trace its early usage in the Italian media. An 1879 newspaper article from *Gazzetta Piemontese* (now *La Stampa*) refers to a plaque commemorating the seven

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<sup>11</sup> Bevan, p. 9.

liberals condemned to death in 1824 following accusations of involvement in the organisation of a revolution against foreign oppression.<sup>12</sup> The article commemorates the fallen during the later Wars of Independence, naming the seven liberals as ‘i martiri precursori della libertà italiana’. An article in 1888 mentions the inauguration of a monument commemorating Tito Speri, one of the pro-independence fighters condemned to death in 1853 (who were later named the Belfiore martyrs). The piece quotes the final words of another of the Belfiore martyrs, Carlo Montanari, when he learned of their collective death sentence: “E il sangue dei martiri feconda la libertà.”<sup>13</sup> The term is again used in a 1907 article referring to the young nation as ‘Questa Italia così desiderata dai precursori e dai martiri della sua libertà e della sua indipendenza.’<sup>14</sup>

We see, then, that the idea of dying for the liberty of Italy began in the Risorgimento period with the birth of Italian nationalism. Fallen fighters were described as martyrs for liberty in the context of national struggle, as addressed in the thesis introduction, a trend that has endured throughout the decades. It was not until after the Second World War that ‘martiri per la libertà’ appeared as a standalone term (without any further qualifiers referring to the nation or *patria*). A 1960 article in *L’Unità* quotes Pietro Secchia, member of the PCI, calling for commemoration of anti-fascist figures during a speech to the Senate: ‘Cade oggi il 23° anniversario del lento assassinio perpetrato dal fascismo di Antonio Gramsci: e con lui ricordiamo Giacomo Matteotti, Don Minzoni, Giovanni Amendola, i fratelli Rosselli e tutti i mille e mille altri martiri per la libertà.’<sup>15</sup> Four years later, another *Corriere della Sera* piece documents the speech of poet and politician Emilio Argiroffi in his request to join the PCI, who referred back to the party’s martyrs: «Vi chiedo, amici miei, di concedermi la tessera del glorioso Partito Comunista Italiano, il Partito di Antonio Gramsci e delle migliaia di martiri per la libertà che hanno costruito le fondamenta dell’Italia repubblicana.»<sup>16</sup> Newspaper analysis shows that

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<sup>12</sup> ‘Corriere di Milano’, *Gazzetta Piemontese*, 5 September 1879, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> ‘Tito Speri e il suo monumento a Brescia’, *Gazzetta Piemontese*, 3 September 1888, p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> ‘L’inaugurazione del nuovo ponte Umberto I alla presenza del Re.’, *La Stampa*, 26 May 1907, p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> ‘I discorsi di Terracini e Scoccimarro al Senato’, *L’Unità*, 28 April 1960, p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> The term was often applied to the memory of fallen antifascists, which will be analysed closely in the next case study, and featured in commemorative plaques. ‘«Solo col comunismo v’è speranza di un mondo nuovo giusto e buono»’, *Corriere della Sera*, 11 March 1964, p. 2.

the term was most frequently used in postwar Italy to describe the deaths of the fifteen Resistance fighters whose corpses were displayed in Piazzale Loreto in 1944,<sup>17</sup> or the Fosse Ardeatine massacre of 335 victims carried out by German occupation troops in 1944 in retaliation for a partisan attack the previous day. Several other articles that use the term relate to the Associazione Nazionale Famiglie Italiane Martiri Caduti per la Libertà della Patria (ANFIM), which was initially launched to commemorate the Ardeatine dead, but now remembers all those who died during Italian occupation and the RSI, and has absorbed martyrs for liberty into its name.

To summarise, media analysis uncovers two distinct uses of the term martyr for liberty: after the Risorgimento, when the idea of dying for the nation became pertinent, and in postwar Italy, when martyrs including Matteotti formed an essential part of the new Republic's identity, as chapter 8 will show. In the case of Risorgimento, the label was rarely applied without reference to the wider nation. The simple term 'martiri per la libertà' only became part of Italy's national narrative in postwar Italy when the vocabulary of hagiography was employed to commemorate fallen partisans, victims of occupational atrocity, or prominent antifascist figures, as we will see.

The term on the plaque commemorating the Mattei brothers is therefore loaded with political and historical significance. The label is tied to the liberal left. Its use suggests that in order for the brothers to be commemorated in public space, any acknowledgement of the family's ties to the right must be ignored. Furthermore, the idea of sacrifice is explicit in the text, with reference to the time elapsed between the arson and the inauguration of the plaque, and implicit through the reference to martyrdom. But unlike the pro-independence fighters of the Risorgimento, murdered antifascists or the fallen partisans of Italy's much venerated Resistance, neither Stefano nor Virgilio died in defence of a belief. The concept of martyrdom obscures the fact that they were the unsuspecting victims of a political attack on their household. Though this narrative could reflect the human need to find purpose in tragedy, it seems more likely that the hagiographical lexicon traditionally associated with the left was used in order to minimise the contentiousness of publically commemorating a tragedy that had been so closely associated with, and mourned by, the right.

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<sup>17</sup> '10 AGOSTO 1944 Una data segnata col sangue di quindici martiri per la libertà', *Corriere della Sera*, 11 August 1946, p. 2.

During the unveiling of the plaque, Giampaolo Mattei was interviewed by broadcaster Giovanni Minoli, known for his support of the socialist party, alongside a local councillor and former activist of Volontari Nazionali. During the interview, an elderly man came out of a shop across the street from the park and said: “Ancora con questi Mattei, ma si sono fatti tutto da soli, era una faida interna.”<sup>18</sup> Just a few hours after its unveiling, unknown vandals attacked the plaque and caused significant damage (Figure 10).<sup>19</sup> While local authorities were keen to restore the plaque, Giampaolo Mattei was not.



**Figure 10: A plaque dedicated to the Mattei brothers in a local park in Primavalle**

In its partial destruction, the plaque is an exemplary counter-monument, defined as ‘brazen, painfully self-conscious memorial spaces conceived to challenge the very premises of their being.’<sup>20</sup> The counter-monument stands in stark contrast to the traditional monument’s ‘essential stiffness’ and permanence.<sup>21</sup> Young applies this label to the ‘Monument against Fascism’ in Hamburg-Hamburg - a 12-metre,

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<sup>18</sup> Mattei, *La notte brucia ancora*, p. 59.

<sup>19</sup> Author's own photograph, *A Plaque Dedicated to the Mattei Brothers in a Local Park in Primavalle*, 2010.

<sup>20</sup> James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), p.27.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.



lead covered column by Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev erected to commemorate victims of the Holocaust. Constructed in 1986, the column was designed to sink into the ground, disappearing entirely by 1994. In reminding passers-by that monuments are formed through human design and construction, counter-monuments, Young argues, ‘might thus save our *icons* of remembrance from hardening into *idols* of remembrance.’<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Giampaolo Mattei told me in an interview in 2010: “È stato un mio volere non cambiarla perché i politici del luogo istituzionali e municipali la volevano cambiare ma io ho detto di no perché è giusto che le persone vedono ancora quanto odio dopo trent’anni c’è nei confronti di questa situazione della strage di Primavalle.”<sup>23</sup> Restoring the plaque to its original pristine state would not reflect the still divided memory surrounding the arson.

There are currently two other public spaces dedicated to Stefano and Virgilio. In 1998, the Turin city council debated the dedication of the public gardens on via Nizza in Rivoli, a town around 14 kilometres east of Turin, to the Mattei brothers. An article published in *La Stampa* on March 26 1998 reported that some attempted to vote down the motion by protesting the partisan nature of the dedication.<sup>24</sup> In response, councillor Nino Boeti of the centre-left Partito Democratico argued that it was part of a process of national reconciliation, while Valerio Calosso of AN said that it marked an important step in overcoming old political binaries.<sup>25</sup> The debate was reported to have lasted two hours, with a split in the votes of the left-wing Partito Democratico Della Sinistra enough to carry the motion, which had originally been put forward by AN. On June 14, 2009, a public garden was dedicated to the brothers on Via Lago di Garda in Tivoli – a town about thirty kilometres north east of Rome with a centre-left local government. As was the case in Rivoli, the dedication occurred without the knowledge or consent of the Mattei family. On the same day, a nearby green space was dedicated to the victims of the Brescia bombing, which hit an anti-fascist rally in Piazza della Loggia in 1974. Named ‘Giardini Martiri di Piazza della Loggia’, the gardens commemorate the victims of a far-right attack, creating a balanced local commemorative landscape of the period.

The Mattei family’s reluctance to support local government proposals to anchor memory in the urban landscape reflects their campaign to reduce the

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>23</sup> Giampaolo Mattei, interviewed by Amy King, 7 August 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Grazia Longo, ‘Il caso la storia che divide’, *La Stampa*, 26 March 1998, p. 36.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

opportunities that the radical right has to claim Stefano and Virgilio as their martyrs. This is an ongoing challenge. In 2018, the local council in Rome unanimously approved a motion to install a plaque on the building in via Bibbiena – a decision Giampaolo Mattei intends to oppose, concerned the apartment block will become a site of neofascist pilgrimage.<sup>26</sup> The family’s reluctance to anchor memory (and therefore institutionalise it) does not reflect a fear that the creation of *lieux de mémoire* will begin the path of collective amnesia, as Pierre Nora suggests, but, on the contrary, a fear that it might create further opportunities for the far right to claim memory.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, the plaque’s permanence could mean that this claim on memory is made throughout the year, and not only on 16 April (as is currently the case). Unlike the graffiti, it cannot be washed away. By withholding permission for permanent structures of memory, further misappropriation of memory is minimised.

Given this relative absence of physical sites of memory, mnemonic communities have gathered in digital spaces to commemorate the brothers. Online memory communities have been created, effectively acting as digital ‘milieux de mémoire’, to use Nora’s term.<sup>28</sup> In his study of the relationship between memory and history, Nora suggests that sites of memory (*lieux de mémoire*) exist because environments of memory (*milieux de mémoire*) do not.<sup>29</sup> In the next case study, we see a total reversal of this in relation to Matteotti, where *lieux de mémoire* are spread throughout the country but there is very little engagement with memory at a community level nowadays. Here though I will suggest that in the absence of the sites of memory that might concretise one memorial narrative, social media has become an environment of memory that allows for the sharing of counter-hegemonic memory.

### **Social media, social memory**

This section will address the creation of online memory communities. The Facebook group named ‘NOI NON DIMENTICHIAMO STEFANO E VIRGILIO MATTEI’

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<sup>26</sup> Claudio Bellumori, ‘Fratelli Mattei, c’è l’ok del consiglio: presto una targa in loro ricordo’, *Roma Today*, 13 April 2018  
<<http://montemario.romatoday.it/primavalle/fratelli-mattei-targa-ricordo.html>>  
[accessed 18 April 2018].

<sup>27</sup> See: Nora, ‘Between Memory and History’.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

is the most active online site of memory.<sup>30</sup> The group is closed, so anybody wishing to join must be approved by its owner - Giampaolo Mattei. The 443-strong membership is almost entirely Italian, 82% male, 15% female and 3% comprised of profiles belonging to local groups and associations. Judging from the profile pictures, the majority of members are too young to have lived through this tumultuous period in Italian history.

The most frequent comment from among the group's members is the emotive call: "Onore a Stefano e Virgilio Mattei!" A more simple interjection of "Presente!" (the shout usually accompanied by the raised arm of the Roman salute) is frequently posted; once again, the boys' memory is claimed as part of far right heritage. Members also share images of other right-wing victims of the period, with Sergio Ramelli the most commonly referenced. Though there have been a small number of posts from individuals who identify as left wing, the overall political identity of the group's membership is clear. Giampaolo told me in an interview in 2016 that he took over the group, which had been set up by another Facebook user, in order to filter out the radical right members that had originally formed the group's core. He said that he had not liked this appropriation of his brothers' memory by this radical group, and so set about taking it over in order to oversee its membership and create a more moderate memory community.<sup>31</sup>

The tone of the group is supportive, with very few disagreements - a rare thing in discussions of the Primavalle Arson. It is a space for individuals to share their memories of the period and find out about the memorial initiatives that commemorate Stefano and Virgilio Mattei. Several individuals belonging to the Facebook group represent what Ashuri names 'the (moral) mnemonic agent', who 'recall their memories about past events by which others have suffered, and in that act of witnessing make the suffering visible and hence difficult to marginalize and deny.'<sup>32</sup> Having had little control over the memorial narrative of the Primavalle Arson, those that have continued to mourn and commemorate Stefano and Virgilio (many of whom are too young to have had direct biographical experience of the

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<sup>30</sup> 'NOI NON DIMENTICHIAMO STEFANO E VIRGILIO MATTEI'  
<<https://it-it.facebook.com/groups/36361354513/>> [accessed 5 July 2018].

<sup>31</sup> Giampaolo Mattei, interviewed by Amy King, 21 May 2016.

<sup>32</sup> Tamar Ashuri, 'Joint Memory: ICT and the Rise of Moral Mnemonic Agents', in *On Media Memory: Collective Memory in a New Media Age*, ed. by Motti Neiger, Oren Meyers, and Eyal Zandberg (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2011), pp. 104–13 (p. 109).

Arson or the period) have taken on a moral role, attempting to rectify misinformed collective memory and seeking justice. Reflecting the name of the Facebook group itself, several posts assert 'noi non dimentichiamo Stefano e Virgilio!', as though commemoration was more an act of defiance than a ritual of mourning.

Giampaolo Mattei is the most frequent contributor to the group, sharing information about his participation in upcoming events, photographs taken at commemoration ceremonies for other victims, including the dedication of a local park to the policeman killed by members of the extreme right group the Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari (Armed Revolutionary Nuclei, NAR), and newspaper articles that feature the Primavalle Arson. Highlighting his ties to government institutions, he has also posted the text he delivered in Parliament in 2013, and the letter of condolence sent to him by Nicola Zingaretti, president of Lazio, upon the death of his mother Anna Mattei in 2013. However, several of Giampaolo's posts are highly emotive and likely to incite a response due to their controversial nature or an explicit request to react. An example of the latter came in May 2015, and related to the new edition of the book *Cuori neri* by Luca Telese.<sup>33</sup> Originally published in 2006, the book tells the stories of 21 right-wing victims from the Years of Lead, including the Matteis. Its tenth reprint came in 2015, and saw the front cover re-designed to include a photograph of Massimo Carminati (his face is immediately recognisable, having lost an eye in a gunfight with *carabinieri* in 1981 while trying to cross the border to Switzerland illegally). A former member of the NAR and the criminal organisation Banda della Magliana, Carminati is a legendary figure in Italy's criminal history. Both groups have been linked to events including the murder of Aldo Moro, the Piazza della Loggia bombing and the Bologna bombing. Carminati was arrested in 2014 as part of the Mafia Capitale investigations, and charged with fraud, money laundering, embezzlement, and the bribing of public officials. The tenth edition of *Cuori neri* also included a new preface and an additional chapter covering developments in the Aldo Moro case. It also had a new subtitle: *Dal rogo di Primavalle a Mafia Capitale, storie di vittime e carnefici*.

On 20 May 2015, Giampaolo Mattei posted about the new edition, and called for the group's members to write to Sperling & Kupfer (the same house that had published Mattei's *La notte brucia ancora*) to express their indignation about the new cover, which links the 21 right-wing victims of terrorism mentioned in the book to a

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<sup>33</sup> See: Telese, *Cuori neri*.

figure of the criminal underworld and known militant.<sup>34</sup> Mattei's anger was clear in his choice of words ("disgusto senza precedenti") and tone. The re-printed book cover was withdrawn. Once again, Giampaolo's memorial efforts centre on the de-radicalisation of memory in the public sphere and the prevention of any appropriation by the extreme right.

The Facebook group is a network for the sharing of social memory, a grassroots initiative that provides a space – a *milieu de mémoire* – for comment and commemoration. It is also a place of virtual congregation for those carrying out the moral and civic act of remembering, a site for the creation of 'prosthetic' memory and pedagogical exchange. While memory of the Arson remains divided, the group acts as both a digital memorial to the brothers and a place of defiance against collective amnesia. Crucially, though, it is a space that can be curated, and Giampaolo Mattei is able to exercise a degree of control over information relating to the Arson that was denied of his family in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy. His public reclaiming of memory is the subject of the next section, which addresses the official commemoration ceremony held for the Mattei brothers at the foot of the building in via Bibbiena.

### **Reclaiming memory through commemoration**

Since the mid-2000s, Giampaolo Mattei has participated in an official commemoration ceremony organised for his brothers. It takes place a few hours before the unofficial march, and involves a short ceremony, led by officials and the laying of a large, freestanding wreath, which is placed in the small green space underneath Stefano and Virgilio's former bedroom window alongside flowers brought by the community. Organised by local government, the ceremony is also attended by members of the local community and institutional figures. In 2014, the mayor of Rome Ignazio Marino presided over the ceremony, with previous representatives including the city's former centre-right mayor Gianni Alemanno.

Neofascist supporters do not attend this ceremony. It is an act of 'state memory-making' as examined by Conway, who counts judicial enquiries among the

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<sup>34</sup> Giampaolo Mattei, 'Da ieri imperversa sui social la giusta polemica riguardo la nuova uscita del libro "CUORI NERI".' [Facebook post], 20 May 2015 <<https://www.facebook.com/groups/36361354513/permalink/10152962847969514/>> [accessed 15 July 2018]

ways in which official institutions can make memory.<sup>35</sup> Given the failure of Italy's judicial system with regards to the Mattei case, sponsorship of this occasion is the sole institutional act of memory-making. This memorial approach is inclusionary, and aims to insert the brothers' memory within the wider collective memory of the victims of the Years of Lead – a position that was denied them for decades due to the myth that Mario Mattei set fire to his home. Considered alongside the antagonistic approach to commemoration adopted by neofascists, the official ceremony takes on a secondary role to the ritual re-enactment of remembrance – counteracting the appropriation of memory by the radical right. Given the low attendance and somewhat perfunctory rituals, its role is more to defy the appropriation of memory by the extreme right than to commemorate.

Both ceremonies are embodied, ritualistic interpretations of the past that share the commemorative practices of silence and the laying of wreaths, and rely upon symbolism to convey meaning. Crucially though, the official memory community's claim to the site is temporary – the wreath laid by government officials is removed after a certain period, and the flowers cleared. There is, at present, no plaque fixed to the wall or memorial erected. The building provides a temporary backdrop for the dynamic performance of memory. It is the temporary memorial investment of those attending the ceremony that endows the building with its mnemonic quality, in stark contrast with the constant re-inscription of the narrative expressed on the canvas of the blank exterior wall. The versatility of the site of memory, with its constant re-inscriptions and performances, creates a dynamic monument to the brothers in a contested environment, where the suggestion of more permanent structures continues to incite divisions.

Neofascist supporters are not welcome at the event and have traditionally not attended. However, in 2018 that changed. On 16 April 2018, I attended the official commemoration ceremony at the foot of the building in Via Bibbiena. As occurs each year, attendees gathered while state representatives from Roma Capitale and the Lazio region prepared for the laying of the wreath. Preparations were interrupted by the arrival of Alemanno (once a member of the MSI), accompanied by Guido Zappavigna, a known leader of the Roman *ultras*, and Luigi Ciavardini – a former member of the NAR who was convicted for his involvement in the Bologna massacre

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<sup>35</sup> Conway, p. 7.

that killed 85 and injured 200 (though he has maintained his innocence).<sup>36</sup> Several members of local grassroots neofascist groups were also present.

Giampaolo Mattei immediately refused to participate in the ceremony, insisting that the two local school groups in attendance follow him away from the building. He then gave an impromptu speech about the arson, outlining his incredulity that the officiators were continuing the ceremony alongside these extreme right figures. He expressed his anger at Alemanno's "betrayal", saying that the laying of a wreath with former assassins was truly shameful. The appearance of a well-known, convicted former terrorist and members of neofascist groups at the official ceremony was unprecedented. I spent the afternoon of the 16 April with the Mattei family at the AFM. They were shocked by the attendance of the far right, and angered by Alemanno's behaviour. Later that day, around 250 people participated in the unofficial neofascist march including members of CasaPound, Roma Nord, and Forza Nuova, as well as councillors including Daniele Giannini, regional councillor for the Lega. It was the largest march for many years.<sup>37</sup>

This case study has shown that the memory of the martyr is dictated by the socio-political context in which commemoration occurs – a fact that will be clear again in the next case study. The antagonistic mode of remembering has threatened to reclaim its grip, bolstered by the resurgence of extreme right populist fringe groups and the steady reincorporation of the far right into institutional politics. The success of the far right Lega Nord and Fratelli d'Italia in the recent general election showed that the extreme right is no longer marginalised, and far right public demonstrations organised by grassroots groups like CasaPound have grown larger and more visible. Extremism has returned to the heart of the mainstream. As the formerly marginalised groups of the extreme right strengthen in Italy, so too does their claim to their heritage, and martyrdom is a significant part of it.

### **Analysing engagement with memory in oral history**

The final section in this chapter will analyse oral history testimonies, attempting to assess to what extent Giampaolo Mattei's effort to encourage engagement with his

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<sup>36</sup> Anna Cento Bull, 'The Italian Transition and National (Non)Reconciliation', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 13.3 (2008), 405–21 (p. 412).

<sup>37</sup> 'Primavalle, la destra ricorda i fratelli Mattei: saluti romani al corteo', *Il Messaggero*, 16 April 2018

<[https://www.ilmessaggero.it/roma/cronaca/fratelli\\_mattei\\_primavalle\\_saluti\\_romani-3673703.html](https://www.ilmessaggero.it/roma/cronaca/fratelli_mattei_primavalle_saluti_romani-3673703.html)> [accessed 18 April 2018].

brothers' memory at a bipartisan, community level in Primavalle has been successful. I will analyse the attribution of blame for the arson, which differs on the left and the right, and show the emotional legacy of the tragedy for the right (who perceived the arson as an attack on the party), and the relative lack of significance in collective memory for the left.

In June 2016, I visited Rome to interview six people who lived in the area in the 1970s and remain there today. Two interviewees were directly involved in extra-parliamentary groups in Primavalle in the 1970s. I have already analysed the recurrence of the image of Virgilio at the window in oral history testimonies, but there is a second recurring symbol that features in personal recollections of the arson: the *case popolari* – those social housing units that housed families like the Matteis in the suburb. Primavalle's social housing units long outlived their intended lifespan. Designed by architect Giorgio Guidi, these dwellings were constructed over a period of 31 years, beginning in 1938. The apartments were built to meet the minimum number of rooms required by regulation, as there was no law governing the minimum square footage per inhabitant in Italy at the time. Given that the poorest families tended to be the largest, these apartments were cramped and unfit for purpose.

For interviewees, these low-rise housing units are signifiers of institutional abandon and poverty. As a child, local chef Massimo Conti lived in one such building near to the Mattei family. He describes them as: “Lo zoccolo duro di Primavalle”.<sup>38</sup> Dario Mariani, a local historian, moved to the Primavalle area with his family as a child in 1954. In the 1970s, he was a member of the far left extra-parliamentary group Lotta Continua (Continuous Struggle, LC). A split in the student-worker movement of Turin in autumn 1969 saw the creation of LC, and Potere Operaio (Workers' Power, PO) – the extra-parliamentary group to which the arsonists belonged. In his interview, Dario makes a point of saying he was not part of PO, though concedes that the two groups' headquarters were 50 metres apart on Via Pietro Bembo, and they rubbed shoulders in the *osteria* that separated them. I asked him to describe Primavalle in the 1970s. His memories of the suburb prior to the 1973 arson quickly address the *case popolari*:

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<sup>38</sup> Massimo Conti, interviewed by Amy King, 26 May 2016.



Ma all'epoca veramente c'erano addirittura le casette dove stava il parco, che le chiamavano provvisorie: costruite nel '39, sono state abbattute nel '79, quindi, provvisorie... 40 anni! In alcuni di questi agglomerati, il bagno era in comune. Cioè, erano case basse, quindi diciamo che in ogni agglomerato potevano essere sei famiglie al massimo, ma col bagno in comune [ride]. Ma addirittura le stesse case popolari, quelle che ancora ci sono... ma alcune il bagno non ce l'avevano. Nel senso, l'hanno fatto poi gli inquilini per conto loro, spesso erano muratori, ma quando chi le ha assegnate il fascismo non c'era il bagno, non era previsto. O se forse c'era, c'era il balcone e la facevano fuori.<sup>39</sup>

Dario's testimony highlights the agency and activism of the community within the *case popolari*, forced to take matters into their own hands as a result of institutional abandon. A collective need to survive emerges from his memories, as the community decides its own fate in the absence of institutional support. Though Dario's focus is on housing, the actual spaces he remembers are far from private; he mentions only the public space surrounding the dwellings, as well as the shared outdoor toilets. Poverty is shared by the community, and not a burden confined to the individual or the family. This was a life lived as a collective. He told me:

C'erano le fogne scoperte, c'era il cosiddetto dormitorio pubblico, che per altro era dove ci siamo incontrati. Cioè oltre ai poveracci di Primavalle che erano stati in gran parte deportati qui quando Mussolini fece Via della Conciliazione a San Pietro, e Via dei Fori Imperiali, tra Piazza Venezia e il Colosseo, che non esistevano, c'erano due quartieri popolari... case anche abbastanza fatiscenti. Furono demolite, queste due situazioni, che si chiamavano Borgo – nel primo caso – e Monti – nell'altro – e furono tutti deportati a Primavalle. Deportati nel senso proprio per forza, non è che potevi scegliere [ride].<sup>40</sup>

Dario's use of the word 'deportation' reveals both the detachment of the area from the rest of the city, and the disempowerment of the local community in the face of the central Roman authorities. He concludes this section of his description with the sense of embarrassment attached to living in the area: "tant'è vero che molti non

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<sup>39</sup> Dario Mariani, interviewed by Amy King, 19 May 2016.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

dicevano che abitavano a Primavalle, dicevano Torvecchia perché era meno... brutto [ride].”<sup>41</sup>

Enzo Salesi has lived in Primavalle all his life. A city councillor for the Pdl, he also founded a charity to support disabled children in the area, and helps to run a local association that organises events in the community. In the 1970s, he was a member of the right-wing group Volontari Nazionali (National Volunteers, VN), along with Virgilio Mattei, a division of the MSI known for its violence. As a friend of Virgilio's, Enzo knew the Mattei family personally. I asked him, too, to describe Primavalle in the early 1970s:

Gran parte del quartiere adesso ha preso vita diciamo, ma c'erano tutte casette basse qui dietro, c'era un abbandono da parte delle istituzioni totale, avevamo ben poche cose. Adesso attività commerciali ce ne sono allora che n'erano pochissime. Esisteva le distanze tra i quartieri, cioè questo quartiere di Primavalle era isolato da Torvecchia e Monte Mario. Esisteva i campi coltivati che dividevano proprio i caseggiati.<sup>42</sup>

A spatial topography of isolation also characterises his description of the area, which once again focuses on the housing that was typical of the local landscape. His description equates the low-rise buildings with institutional abandon. The themes of dislocation, abandon and isolation emerge from the recurring symbol of the *case popolari* in these testimonies. Memory is located, as is evident from the label given to the tragedy itself in collective memory, the Rogo di *Primavalle*. The 'unidirectional gaze' identified by Forgacs in his work on Italian peripheries, whereby outlying parts of Rome such as the *borgate* were looked upon 'from an implied centre located elsewhere', is reversed in oral history accounts of the Primavalle Arson.<sup>43</sup> Memory is located, but it is located within the *borgata* and looks back towards the city, emphasising the 'deportation' and inaccessibility. This is evident in Dario's memories, where the memory is rooted and isolated in the *borgata* itself, and the gaze is cast inwards to the institutions of central Rome (and their perceived

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Salesi, interviewed by Amy King.

<sup>43</sup> David Forgacs, *Italy's Margins: Social Exclusion and Nation Formation since 1861* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 65.

abandonment).<sup>44</sup> Isolation and social degradation, not political violence, are the central contributing factors that led to the arson.

The setting for the crime takes on an almost otherworldly quality for Dario. In his analysis of the role of time in oral history, Portelli writes: ‘That a tale is a confrontation with time is implicit in the attempt to carve out a special time in which to place the tale – a time outside time, a time without time. It is the time of myth, and the time of the fairy tale (as in “once upon a time”).’<sup>45</sup> This temporal disjunction and otherworldly nature is evident in the descriptions of Primavalle in the 1970s, but as a dystopian - rather than fairy-tale - world. “Era un mondo che poi improvvisamente è cambiato, nel bene e nel male, ma è difficile anche descriverlo adesso, perché era proprio diverso, era un’altra storia,” explains Dario, who goes on to say: “Insomma, io ho più di 60 anni, sembra che sto parlando del Medioevo, ma mi rendo conto che tu non sei neanche italiana, cioè, voglio dire...”<sup>46</sup> The backdrop against which he recounts his memories of the Primavalle Arson is very specific; memory is rooted and localised. Primavalle is described as a place of poverty, abandon, and community; the suggestion is that this was not an attack that could have taken place anytime, or anywhere else.

For Dario, this socio-economic context created the conditions for the perpetrators to commit the crime, leading to what he described as ‘un tragico incidente di estrema periferia degradata’. During the interview, he remembers that three of the perpetrators – Lollo, Clavo and Grillo – had formed an armed group that took the name *Arancia Meccanica* after the famous film. He suggests the choice of name, which does not refer to either politics or ideology, was reflective of their low level of engagement with political activism. Later in the interview, he explains the circumstances that led to the attack:

Cioè, stiamo comunque veramente a parlare di personaggi che forse avevano trovato nella motivazione politica una qualche nobiltà... anche in buona fede, per carità, ma che poi in fondo in fondo erano abbastanza rappresentativi della

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<sup>44</sup> The relationship between the centre-periphery first emerged in relation to the Primavalle Arson during Almirante’s speech at the brothers’ funeral when he referenced Stefano gripping to Virgilio’s legs in the way Primavalle gripped onto the city ‘per non soffocare, per non morire, per respirare’. See: Mattei, *La notte brucia ancora*, p. 23.

<sup>45</sup> Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, p. 59.

<sup>46</sup> Mariani, interviewed by Amy King.

gioventù dell'epoca—appunto, ti ho detto, questo era un quartiere veramente ghetto, quindi con tutti gli annessi e i connessi. Insomma, Roma all'epoca, usavamo un termine, era Ladroni e Coatti: il secondo ancora si usa, ladroni non si usa più, però il significato era quello, un incidente che forse non era finito nella piccola malavita, perché grande malavita a Primavalle non c'era, era tutta piccola solo perché la politica l'aveva un attimo—però avevano portato anche una serie di comportamenti dentro la politica. Cioè, non voglio fare l'angioletto, noi la terrorizzavamo la violenza politica, ma quella non era violenza politica. Quella era, appunto, roba da... scriteriati.<sup>47</sup>

Throughout the interview, Dario drew several comparisons between Primavalle of the 1970s and the films of Pasolini:

E poi c'era veramente una povertà...insomma, voglio dire, anche piccola malavita, prostituzione, insomma, c' erano i fenomeni dei film di Pasolini. Se ne hai visto qualcuno, non siamo proprio alle baracche del borghetto Prenestino, ma molto molto vicini. Quindi era un quartiere povero, e questa storiaccia nasce anche da un degrado a mio giudizio legato a questa situazione sociale, perché comunque sono tutti personaggi che più o meno io ho anche conosciuto personalmente—io avevo 19 anni, nel ' 73, ma ti assicuro, gente alla quale io insomma non avrei dato il minimo affidamento, né agli uni né agli altri cioè, personaggi un po' pittoreschi, tipici di una situazione degradata, che possono pure diventare figure poetiche: il Chiattono di Pasolini, che non era proprio... se cerchi gli eroi, non ci stanno [ride]!<sup>48</sup>

Through his vivid descriptions of the poverty-stricken, isolated, periphery, the evocation of the films of Pasolini, and a storytelling devices (“Però, ecco, nasce veramente da una storia, nasce dentro un'osteria di Via Pietro Bembo. È una storia... beh come diceva Gadda, un altro “pasticciaccio brutto”, avvenuto per una serie di circostanze, alcune veramente diaboliche ma casuali.”),<sup>49</sup> a level of abstraction emerges from his testimony that creates distance between his present self and the

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

time period under discussion. There is a sense of Primavalle as another time, another place, another world. Dario describes a causal relationship between the socio-economic backdrop and the tragedy, which reduces the agency of the perpetrators and apportions blame equally to both the state, which failed to provide for its citizens, and the perpetrators. At no point is any blame apportioned to the far left, nor is the tragedy presented as an attack on the right because the Matteis were not targeted as a result of politics.

Though Enzo too locates the memory of the arson firmly in Primavalle in the 1970s, describing the detachment and abandon of the *case popolari*, he considers this context to be the backdrop for political, not purely sociological, unrest. He identifies the growing clout of the MSI party in the area in the early 1970s as the reason behind the attack (contrasting with Dario's description of the fascist threat as "zero"). During the interview, he discusses the violent clashes with the left – "si risolveva sempre con una scazzottato una bastonata e queste cose qua" – and the attacks that occurred on the nearby party headquarters in via Svampa.<sup>50</sup> Widening this geographical space of memory, he recounts a visit to Turin, where he joined other VN in front of the state university and Fiat to campaign on behalf of the labour force for greater involvement in management. The protest opened lines of dialogue and was considered a success. Enzo's explanation is rooted in Primavalle, but it is purely political; the Mattei family represented the growing popularity of the party in the traditionally left-wing area. As such, the attack was symbolic:

Quello che vedemmo è che il nostro modo di pensare ha fatto risvegliare tantissime coscienze. Tant'è vero da un solo iscritto alla CISNAL, allora sindacato del Movimento Sociale Italiano, negli anni settantadue settantatré riuscimmo a portarli a un centinaio e questa era una grossa soddisfazione. Questo ci garantiva diciamo la sopravvivenza nel quartiere perché questa gente viveva nel quartiere. Molto probabilmente questo ha dato fastidio. E questi scellerati, criminali e compagnia bella, il simbolo di Primavalle erano i Mattei e hanno voluto punire Mario Mattei e la sua famiglia. Questo è quanto riteniamo che sia stato, cioè quello che ritengo io. Poi chiaramente io pure avevo una famiglia, c'avevo una famiglia, rimasi così scioccato. Poi aver vissuto non dico giornalmente ma quasi, con i

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<sup>50</sup> Salesi, interviewed by Amy King.

Mattei, con Mario, con Anna, e con Virgilio, e con i ragazzini perché i ragazzini erano simpaticissimi, bravissimi, ragazzini impagabili specialmente Stefano che era proprio il cocchetto cioè a me personalmente mi ha dato una scossa negativa diciamo.<sup>51</sup>

We see that for left-wing Dario the arson is considered the result of poverty and degradation; he stated: “non credo non si possa dividere dal tessuto sociale di Primavalle dell’epoca.” Conversely, Enzo considers the attack to have been a political attempt to quash the growing popularity of the right in Primavalle.<sup>52</sup> Given the rooting of memory within the close confines of Primavalle, both explanations contrast with the narratives in newspaper articles published in the immediate aftermath of the *Rogo di Primavalle*, which contextualised the event as part of a chain of political violence throughout Italy.<sup>53</sup> The media’s positioning of the fire as an extension of existing tensions contrasts with oral history testimonies – particularly those on the left – which offer a more sociological explanation of the events that led to the Mattei brothers’ deaths which is very particular to Primavalle itself. This was a position flatly refuted by *Corriere della Sera* journalist Gianfranco Piazzesi, in his article the day after the arson:

L’episodio di Primavalle rivela una certa insondabile abisso di odio e di brutalità, concepibili soltanto in un contesto sociale come è quello delle borgate romane, ormai giunto a un limite estremo di degradazione; ma insieme esso non è dissimile da quelli che lo hanno proceduto: è un momento, solo più vistoso e allucinante di tutti gli altri, della crisi di fondo che ormai scuote il paese.

[...] Da tre anni gli estremisti di destra e quelli di sinistra sono scesi a valle, dai loro opposti versanti, ed attaccano con decisione sempre maggiore la fortezza assediata della democrazia. [...] Assistiamo a una catena di attentati,

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Mariani, interviewed by Amy King.

<sup>53</sup> *La Stampa*’s front-page article on 16 April 1973 opened with: ‘La violenza politica è esplosa anche a Roma, in modo atroce.’ *Corriere d’Informazione* also put this act in the context of a wide chain of attacks; its leading article opening with ‘L’aberrante catena della violenza non si spezza: si allunga, invece, e aggiunge angoscia ed orrore.’ See: Luca Giurato, ‘Incendiata la casa d’un missino. Morti bruciati i figli: 22 e 3 anni’, *La Stampa*, 16 April 1973, p. 1; ‘Dilaga la follia della violenza’, *Corriere d’Informazione*, 16 April 1973, p. 1.

di vendetta, di faide crudeli e talvolta atroci: una guerra civile strisciante è già in atto e nessuno sa contenerla.<sup>54</sup>

For Piazzesi, the event must not be isolated from what he deems a wider civil war that holds Italy in its grips. With the distance of time, both left- and right-wing testimonies are de-contextualised from the wider Italian nation. For the left, this narrative reduces the agency of the perpetrators, instead emphasising the social plagues of the area as a result of institutional abandon. Implicit in this almost depoliticised narrative is the suggestion that such a tragedy could not occur again, now that the circumstances have passed. Furthermore, the perpetrators of the tragedy are, to some extent, exonerated of their crimes – the product of poverty and low life criminality, rather than the result of political motives. For the right-wing interviewees, both of whom identified with the MSI, this narrative heightens the victimisation of the Mattei family as a symbol of the party.

Interviewees did, however, all say that the attack was particularly shocking since it was the first to take place in the family home during Italy's Years of Lead. Massimo Conti, who grew up living in a social housing unit near to the Mattei family, expressed this collective view: "Pensare che qualcuno avesse dato fuoco a casa... era impensabile."<sup>55</sup> For Enzo memory of the attack continues to provoke a strong emotional reaction. I asked him if he remembers the death of Mikis Mantakas, the Greek student killed during the first Primavalle trial. He quickly drew contrasts between the deaths of Mantakas and the Mattei brothers, in a strong emotional response that addresses the cowardice of the arson:

Il fatto è che gli altri, Mantakas e tutti gli altri, c'era uno scontro faccia a faccia. Io potevo avere il bastone e lui la pistola, lui mi ammazzava e io gli davo una bastonata... il fatto di ammazzare a tradimento, cioè andare dentro casa dove ci sono tutti le cose più care...mentre io sapevo che cosa rischiavo quando andavo alle manifestazioni sapevo quello che c'era dall' altra parte, lo guardavo in faccia, era più forte e prendevo le botte, rimanevo per terra come succedeva spesso ma—mentre dormi, cioè— alle tre di notte con tutta la tua famiglia non è che rischi te stesso, rischi pure loro ma a te non te ne frega niente tant' è vero che da quello che si è saputo poi

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<sup>54</sup> See: Piazzesi, 'I fascisti smascherati'.

<sup>55</sup> Conti, interviewed by Amy King.

Mario cercò di salvare il più possibile i figli e le due femmine ci riuscì. Anna prese gli altri due ragazzini, uscì fuori della porta e rischiò. Vedi, perché pensi a loro non pensi a te di quello che a te succede. È un altro discorso quando ce l'hai di fronte quello e poi vada come vada. Se io sto qua, e perché ci credo. Io cerco di imporre la mia volontà e la mia forza, tu altrettanto. Ma quando ti prendono a tradimento, ci sono di mezzo le cose più care che c'hai, è allucinante no? Apposta è una cosa che ti rimane impresso e scioccante e te la porti avanti per anni. Tant'è vero sono passati quarant'anni ma ancora ce l'hai dentro la mente e ancora quei sentimenti provi. Morire in quella maniera di notte e in tradimento, cioè io li impiccherei quei—ma non, ogni cinque minuti li allenterei la corda poi la ritirerei su un'altra volta—fargli patire quello che ha patito Mario a vedere i figli che morivano. Cioè questo—vai in manifestazione se ci vado e perché ci credo, rischio. Ma così no, no. Assolutamente. Non è accettabile.<sup>56</sup>

The emotional legacy of the act is clear in this testimony. Unlike the other deaths Enzo listed later in his interview, the Mattei brothers were not killed in support of a value system during a demonstration, for example. Instead, the arson took place during the night in the family home.

The final point that emerges from oral history interviews relates to engagement with the brothers' memory at a local level, outside of grassroots political groups. Enzo's emotional response reflects both his personal involvement in the tragedy and his perception that the tragedy represented more than just a tragic attack on a family. His interview closed with an apology for having let out his emotions ("Mi sono sfogato un pochetto. Dopo tanti anni che non parlo di queste cose—"), and he made several references to the tragedy as something he had lived through and could never forget.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, for right-wing supporter Claudio Baldini, who misremembered the corpse at the window as 10-year-old Stefano, as previously analysed, the tragedy continues to weigh heavy. During the interview, Claudio spoke of having witnessed the Palestinian terrorist attacks at Fiumicino airport, which caused the deaths of 34 people after a terminal invasion and the firebombing of Pan American World Airways flight 110 in 1973. Four years prior, he had also seen soldier Raffaele Minichiello take a policeman hostage in the airport,

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<sup>56</sup> Salesi, interviewed by Amy King.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.



having hijacked the plane from Los Angeles via New York. “Sembrava che le cose difficili le davano sempre a me,” Claudio said, before returning to his memories of the Primavalle tragedy.<sup>58</sup> It is clear that for Claudio, who told me of his admiration for the Fascist regime, the arson was of equal significance as these better-known instances of terrorism. His classification of the tragedy among other instances of political terrorism contrasts starkly with Dario’s narrative, which focused on social degradation and poverty in the periphery, eschewing political motivations.

### **Conclusion: an uphill battle**

The Primavalle Arson has remained outside of Italy’s national memory, and the act of remembering remains primarily at the level of contemporary neofascist groups. The tragedy is not remembered by the nation in the way of Aldo Moro, nor is it remembered by the city of Rome in the way Bologna commemorates its bombing, or even throughout the suburb itself, as oral history interviews show. From the outset, the boys’ deaths were memorialised within the antagonistic mode of remembering with the MSI as the primary community of mourning. This was not a tragedy belonging to the nation, nor even the city. Misinformed collective memory in the aftermath of the arson took root as a result of media reports and a publication written to deflect attention away from the perpetrators. The judicial system was unable to locate or extradite any of the arsonists and proved of little support to the Mattei family.<sup>59</sup> Given the lack of bipartisan commemoration, the Mattei family has prioritised stage-managed rites of memory over static sites, with the sole endorsed commemorative ritual the annual laying of the wreath outside Via Bibbiena. Crucially, this creates a temporary site of memory, which is soon returned to its previous state with the removal of the wreaths. The memorial narrative in public (and digital) space can be controlled and protected against political appropriation.

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<sup>58</sup> Baldini, interviewed by Amy King.

<sup>59</sup> In March 2016, there was some progress made when the Italian courts ordered Stefano and Virgilio’s three killers to pay €923,000 in compensation to Antonella Mattei, who was nine at the time of her brothers’ deaths. Antonella was simultaneously instructed to pay the court fees of the accused totalling €205,000. Though on the surface this may seem a small victory, the likelihood of recovering the €18,000 payment per person (with a supplementary €25,000 to be paid by Lollo’s former legal representatives) is small; Clavo is dead, and Grillo remains untraceable. See: ‘Fratelli Mattei, alla fine paga la sorella’, *Il Tempo*, 5 March 2016 < <https://www.iltempo.it/cronache/2016/03/05/news/fratelli-mattei-alla-fine-paga-la-sorella-1003680/> > [accessed: 17 September 2018].

Though some of the city's mayors, particularly Veltroni, have been supportive of Giampaolo Mattei's memorial initiatives, this has been more of an individual, rather than institutional, effort. The lack of sustained support from institutions has made the creation of a national narrative difficult, with any institutional drive to commemorate the brothers propelled more by the political pursuit of a pacification of memory than by the desire to remember two victims. This was evidenced in 2004 when, upon learning of the attack on the commemorative plaque dedicated to the Mattei brothers, the local council president Mario Visconti called for its immediate restoration: 'La targa sarà immediatamente risistemata, perché il ricordo di Stefano e Virgilio Mattei è un doveroso atto di pacificazione nazionale che tutti noi auspichiamo.'<sup>60</sup> The implication was that commemoration of the event is more about easing historical tensions than it is about remembering. An institutionally endorsed and truthful narrative is yet to be included in the nation's history, and therefore in its collective memory.

This reluctance to honour the right-wing dead is reflective of Italy's problematic relationship with its right-wing history. The portrayal of the Fascist *ventennio* as an aberration in Italy's long liberal history – which we will see in the obsessive commemoration of Matteotti in postwar Italy as a symbol of the country's latent antifascism – combined with the emphasis on antifascist memory, has had an effect on this troubling period. A second example reflects this difficulty. On the eve of a conference held in 2015 to commemorate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Sergio Ramelli, the 19-year old member of the MSI youth whose name has been given to 21 streets and piazzas, symbolic acts of violence typical of Italy in the 1970s took place in to Milan; the city's Ritter bookshop, which specialises in military and Fascist history, was set alight and a letter bomb let off in the headquarters of far-right party Forza Nuova on the outskirts of the city.<sup>61</sup> Commemorative initiatives linked to the far right still spark conflict.

More so than in the case of the left-wing victims of terrorism, whose families frequently take part in memorial initiatives run by the state, far right

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<sup>60</sup> 'Primavalle: Danneggiate a martellate la lapide dei fratelli Mattei', *Il Messaggero*, 6 April 2003, p. 32.

<sup>61</sup> 'Danneggiate nella notte sede di Forza Nuova e casa editrice di destra', *Corriere della Sera*, 28 April 2015, <[http://milano.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/15\\_aprile\\_28/danneggiate-notte-sedi-forza-nuova-casa-editrice-destra-54e307ae-ed84-11e4-91ba-05b8e1143468.shtml?refresh\\_ce-cp](http://milano.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/15_aprile_28/danneggiate-notte-sedi-forza-nuova-casa-editrice-destra-54e307ae-ed84-11e4-91ba-05b8e1143468.shtml?refresh_ce-cp)> [accessed: 10 March 2016].

martyrs have remained at the level of the socio-political group. In the case of the Mattei brothers, radical right-wing supporters without direct experience of the tragedy use the antagonistic mode of memory to reinforce political identity and condemn the perceived violence of their adversaries, and claim the boys as their martyrs. Contemporary neofascist groups have incorporated the tragedy into their history, using memory as a bridge connecting them to Italy's neofascist history in an attempt to legitimise their political identity. From the day of the boys' funeral, the historical appropriation has converted the brothers into symbols of the radical right, who can be appropriated, contested or rejected. This dynamic is evident in the graffiti in Via Bibbiena, as left-wing supporters attempt to undermine the strength of the tragedy with references to the lost lives of the left.

The memorial initiatives put forward by Giampaolo Mattei focus on the boys' biographies, not deaths, and their status as two among many victims of Italy's period of terrorism. A recent exhibition documented the boys' lives and included a selection of family photos and anecdotes from their lifetimes. Giampaolo expresses this desire for authentic memories in an interview with *Corriere della Sera*:

Ma solo quando, nell'85, arrivò il risarcimento e facemmo la cappella al Verano, spuntarono le foto dei miei fratelli. Prima, in casa c'erano solo due mattonelle con le loro iniziali, la V e la S. Ho cercato di saperne di più su di loro. Tutti me ne hanno sempre parlato come di martiri. Ma vorrei trovare qualcuno che mi raccontasse, almeno di Virgilio, il più grande, chi era davvero, quali "mignottate" avesse fatto. Vorrei recuperarne un ricordo vivo, autentico.<sup>62</sup>

This approach reflects a cosmopolitan mode of remembering, as identified by Levy and Sznajder, which emphasises victimhood and bases forward-looking national identity upon the protection of human rights.<sup>63</sup> In his work as a guarantor of memory, Giampaolo has continuously attempted to restore a sense of his brothers' biographies prior to the tragedy, create an apolitical community for the sharing of memories and counteract the abstraction that occurs when individuals become symbols and memory is manipulated for political ends.

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<sup>62</sup> Aldo Cazzullo, '«Giustizia per i miei fratelli, dimenticati anche da An» Il «piccolo» Mattei: da solo alla verità, per anni in famiglia mi nascosero il Rogo Di Primavalle', *Corriere della Sera*, 4 May 2008, p. 10.

<sup>63</sup> Levy and Sznajder, 'Memory Unbound', pp. 87-106.

Why, then, did this shift towards cosmopolitan memory fail? There are a number of reasons. Firstly, the MSI's immediate claiming of the boys as their martyrs meant that the primary community of mourning was drawn along political lines. Memory was further isolated by the campaign of misinformation in the wake of the arson. The immediate and enduring politicisation of memory has resulted in a divisive memorial legacy, meaning that the arson is remembered in collective memory as a far right tragedy. Today, neofascist groups have taken advantage of this ghettoization of memory and used commemoration as a way to position themselves as a continuation of Italy's far right tradition. They have continued to draw on the rhetoric of martyrdom to represent the boys' deaths as political sacrifice, as the MSI first did in 1973. Though there has been some effort at a state level to remember the brothers as two among many victims of the period, this has been driven by individuals rather than a cohesive state policy to commemorate victims from across the political spectrum. As the next case study will show, the state built a strong antifascist narrative into the new Republic after the fall of Fascism, as part of its civil religion after the fall of Fascism. This narrative has proved resilient. Consequently, the state has generally proved reluctant to commemorate those victims associated with the far right and, as this case study has shown, the memory of the Mattei brothers is firmly entrenched within far right history. A perfect storm of elements has isolated the boys' memory from national narratives.

I will conclude this case study with a final remark on martyrdom. As the previous chapter showed, the language and imagery of martyrdom was immediately employed in commemorative practices by the MSI. However, neither Stefano nor Virgilio died for a belief – a characteristic deemed essential for martyrdom; rather, it was ascribed to them posthumously by the communities that appropriated their memory. The boys were the innocent victims of an attack, and their lives have been politicised posthumously through the concept of martyrdom and the construction of martyrological narratives that attribute sacrifice. The category of the 'accidental martyr' emerges from this study of the Primavalle Arson. These martyrs exert a level of influence through the posthumous appropriation of their memory that is disproportionate to the lives they lived. As Middleton writes, 'While saints require a life', martyrs simply need a death.'<sup>64</sup> With little grounding in the Matteis'

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<sup>64</sup> Middleton, p. 26.

biographies, this artificially constructed martyrdom has converted their memory into valuable political capital.

More than other industrial nations, the radical right in Italy enjoyed popular support for a long time after the Second World War. Ferraresi attributes its success to 'fascist heritage, political blockage, and poor political performance', identifying the blocked political system that saw DC in power for so long and the PCI in opposition, with numerous coalitions and factions that made policy-making difficult.<sup>65</sup> The subsequent shift towards the centre right in institutional politics with dissolution of the MSI and the foundation of the AN meant that members of the radical right were increasingly left out of a formal political framework; as the previous chapter showed, commemoration of the Mattei brothers that year was more violent than it had been for some time, as frustrated radicals expressed their persisting loyalty to the MSI through commemoration of their martyrs. Unfortunately for Giampaolo Mattei in his pursuit of a cosmopolitan approach to memory, Italy's far right is once again enjoying popular support, with significant repercussions for the way the brothers are commemorated. Today, supporters of the far right have taken matters into their own hands and founded neofascist groups like Roma Nord and CasaPound. While they have remained outside of formal politics for many years, recent political results point to a resurgence in support for the far right. This has translated into an increasing number of public demonstrations that have incorporated the rituals and iconography of Italy's Fascist past. Commemoration of the Mattei brothers is one example. As it did in the 1970s and then the mid-1990s, the antagonistic mode of memory has come to define commemoration of the Mattei brothers in 2018.

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<sup>65</sup> Ferraresi, p. 73.

## Chapter 5

### The Making of a National Martyr

Giacomo Matteotti, the subject of this case study, is the seventh most commemorated person in Italian public space (falling behind Risorgimento and royal figures), with around 3,200 streets, bridges and piazzas in his name.<sup>1</sup> In Italy, it is traditional for many street signs to include a phrase explaining the historical relevance of the person after whom the space is named. Matteotti is labelled as *martire della libertà*, highlighting the position his memory holds in national narratives of the country's fight for freedom. In the previous case study, I analysed the origins of this term, finding that it first emerged in reference to the Risorgimento, but was most frequent in the context of the Resistance. I argued that its incongruous inclusion in the Mattei brothers' plaque in a local park in Primavalle was a means of integrating memory into the local landscape. In this case study, the same label serves an entirely different function: to position Matteotti's death as part of the fight for liberation, despite the fact he was killed two decades before the Resistance began, and tie his memory to national identity. An example of Matteotti's description as a martyr for liberty can be found in Vicenza, on the original plaque naming Piazza Matteotti. However, on its newer counterpart on the opposite side of the piazza, he is simply listed as simply 'uomo politico'. This detached language contrasts starkly with the emotive rhetoric that defined commemoration of Matteotti for decades after his murder. The example is included here to show the fluidity of martyr memory, which evolves significantly over time. This case study will analyse shifts of this sort.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part will give an overview of Matteotti's life and political career, followed by a description of his assassination. I will then outline existing Matteotti scholarship, explain how my research will fill some of the gaps in scholarship, and give an overview of this case study. The second part of the chapter will address the judicial trial for Matteotti's murder, address the regime's response to early commemoration, and analyse how it pushed memory into domestic spaces.

#### **A brief biography**

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<sup>1</sup> Foot, *Italy's Divided Memory*, p. 63.

Giacomo Matteotti was born in Fratta Polesine, Rovigo, on 22 May 1885. His paternal grandfather, Matteo, came to Fratta around 1840 with his wife, Caterina Sartori, and son, Girolamo, to work as a coppersmith. Girolamo then learned his father's trade and made enough money to open a shop. He married Isabella Garzarolo at the age of 37. Using Isabella's family money and earnings from the shop, the pair built a successful portfolio of land and property throughout the Polesine region.<sup>2</sup> They had seven children, four of whom died in childhood, leaving Giacomo, Matteo and Silvio.

Giacomo attended the Celio school in Rovigo. In 1903, he enrolled in the law faculty of the University of Bologna. He began to travel Europe, where he gathered material on local penal systems and developed his language skills, reading legal texts in German, English and French.<sup>3</sup> He was particularly interested in the phenomenon of repeat offending, writing his dissertation on the subject. In 1907 at the age of 22, he graduated with a law degree, achieving the highest possible grade. He spent the following years abroad, researching detainment systems in Europe and published his research in 1910.<sup>4</sup> After leaving university, Matteotti became the local organiser of the Polesine branch of the socialist party.<sup>5</sup> He was elected to the Rovigo regional council in 1910, and became mayor of Villamarzana in 1912 and Boara Polesine in 1914. Having spent his life in Polesine, he was dedicated to improving the lives of local workers, who struggled against poverty and hunger. Alongside his defence of workers, Matteotti quickly became known for his anti-war stance. After Italy's entry into the First World War, which he deemed 'l'ultima vergogna', Matteotti, then a local councillor, made a speech to the Rovigo council condemning war.<sup>6</sup> This led to a criminal charge. Drawing on his law training, he managed his own defence in court, arguing parliamentary immunity because his speech was made to the council. The charges were reversed.

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<sup>2</sup> Stefano Caretti, *Il delitto Matteotti: storia e memoria* (Manduria: P. Lacaita, 2004), p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Giacomo Matteotti, *La recidiva. Saggio di revisione critica con dati statistici* (Turin: Bocca, 1910).

<sup>5</sup> Silvio Manzati, *Giacomo Matteotti* (Padova: RADAR, 1969) p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> *Giacomo Matteotti, 1885-1985: riformismo e antifascismo: scritti e discorsi, testimonianze, contributi*, ed. by Claudio Modena (Rome: Ediesse, 1985), p. 51.



**Figure 11: Matteotti with two of his children**

In 1916, he married Velia Titta, with whom he would have three children: Giancarlo, Matteo and Isabella, born in 1918, 1921 and 1922 respectively (the younger two children are pictured in Figure 11).<sup>7</sup> In August 1916, and though he was disqualified from service due to the earlier charge after his anti-war speech, he was drafted into the military. He would not serve in battle, but he was nevertheless put through training and posted to an artillery regiment near Verona. Aware of his anti-war record, he was quickly moved to Sicily, eventually spending a few months interned at Campo Inglese in Messina.<sup>8</sup> He spent this period writing articles and essays, and was released in March 1919.<sup>9</sup>

Matteotti was first elected to the Chamber of Deputies for the Partito Socialista Italiano (PSI) in 1919, representing Ferrara-Rovigo. He would be re-elected in 1921 and 1924. An active deputy, he drew up a number of new laws, took part in prominent debates, participated in enquiries and proposed motions.<sup>10</sup> One of

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<sup>7</sup> Untitled Photograph of Matteotti with Two of His Children, Fondazione Nenni, Archivio Fotografico Matteotti. The image is reproduced with thanks to the Fondazione Nenni.

<sup>8</sup> Piero Gobetti, *On Liberal Revolution* (Yale University Press, 2000), p. 31.

<sup>9</sup> Caretti, *Il delitto Matteotti*, p. 24.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.



his primary focuses was protesting irregularities in the national budget and excesses in state spending.<sup>11</sup> He also continued his campaigning for local workers and, between 1919 and 1920, helped farmworkers and peasants secure the renewal of agrarian contracts.<sup>12</sup> A ‘consistent and rigorous reformer’, Matteotti saw reform as a means of overturning capitalist society and bettering the lives of workers without the need for revolutionary politics.<sup>13</sup>

Critical of the PSI’s turn towards Communism, Matteotti left the party in October 1922 (a few days before Mussolini’s March on Rome) to found the reformist Partito Socialista Unitario (PSU) with figures including Filippo Turati, Claudio Treves and Giuseppe Modigliani. At this point, the workers’ movement had split into three branches: the PSU (a reformist socialist party), the more extreme PSI, and the PCI. According to Di Scala, the PSI was a ‘defender of an empty ideological heritage’ that was divided between those who wished to converge with the PCI and more traditionalist members.<sup>14</sup> Matteotti believed that divisions in the left were caused by ‘ideological excess in argument and debate’, and wanted to pursue the workers’ cause within a new party, of which he was appointed secretary.<sup>15</sup> The PSU’s program was ‘gradualist and democratic’ and emphasised the importance of democracy in achieving social and economic progress.<sup>16</sup> It enjoyed the support of historic socialists including Turati and Claudio Treves, and the leaders of the trade union the Confederazione Generale del Lavoro; but these two wings of support were its ‘major defect’ due to the ‘latent conflict’ between the political wing of the party, which was staunchly opposed to Fascism, and the labour leaders, who had made ‘dangerous compromises with the fascists in order to protect union structures from attack.’<sup>17</sup>

Matteotti was unwaveringly antifascist. He was keenly aware of the violence endemic to Fascism having watched it develop in Polesine, and had quickly realised the PNF would endure. As such, ‘he proved to be more resolute than many others in

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>12</sup> Mauro Canali, ‘The Matteotti Murder and the Origins of Mussolini’s Totalitarian Fascist Regime in Italy’, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 14.2 (2009), 143–67 (p. 148).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Spencer M. Di Scala, *Italian Socialism: Between Politics and History* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), p. 46.

<sup>15</sup> Canali, *The Matteotti Murder*, p. 148.

<sup>16</sup> Alexander J. De Grand, *The Italian Left in the Twentieth Century: A History of the Socialist and Communist Parties* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 51.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

his efforts to heighten the awareness of the Italian Socialist movement of the importance of the battle against Fascism.<sup>18</sup> He sought to raise awareness of the regime abroad, and travelled to conferences in Europe, writing for numerous international papers.<sup>19</sup> After the 1922 March on Rome, he was among those who blocked Mussolini's attempts to incorporate labour representatives in his new government, and he (unsuccessfully) sought to build an antifascist coalition including the Catholics and PSI.<sup>20</sup> A year after the PNF came to power, he published *Un anno di dominazione fascista*, in which he used statistics and research to refute each and every claim made by the regime of its achievements in its first year.<sup>21</sup> At the time of his assassination, Matteotti was engaged in a constant battle to draw attention to the injustice of the regime. He was preparing a dossier of Fascist criminal activity, based upon evidence from Fascist sources, and translations into English and Belgian were underway.<sup>22</sup> According to Mack Smith, 'Mussolini had found a combative, resolute, and well-prepared adversary in the young Socialist deputy.'<sup>23</sup> He stood directly in the line of fire as a result.

### **Murder on the banks of the Tiber**

In July 1923, both houses of the Italian parliament agreed to a change in the electoral law that stated any party obtaining 25% of votes would be awarded two-thirds of the chamber.<sup>24</sup> To achieve the necessary votes in the 6 April 1924 election, Mussolini used 'guile but also the clear threat that parliament might also be abolished. To make doubly sure of sufficient votes, armed fascists guarded the doors of parliament during the debate and militiamen in the public galleries ostentatiously fingered their daggers and revolvers.'<sup>25</sup> Opposition meetings were interrupted, grants (which never materialised) promised to local authorities, and there was a large increase in public assaults. One socialist candidate was killed, many withdrew,

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>19</sup> In July 1924, shortly after his assassination, the Partito Socialista Unitario published a collection of his earlier journalism; the book sold 25,000 copies in a few days. See: Giacomo Matteotti, *Il fascismo della prima ora* (Rome: Tipografica Italiana, 1924).

<sup>20</sup> De Grand, p. 51.

<sup>21</sup> Giacomo Matteotti, *Un anno di dominazione fascista* (Ufficio stampa del Partito Socialista Unitario, 1924).

<sup>22</sup> Denis Mack Smith, *Mussolini* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981), p. 76.

<sup>23</sup> Canali, *The Matteotti Murder*, pp. 149–50.

<sup>24</sup> Mack Smith, p. 69.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

and several were injured.<sup>26</sup> The Fascists secured 65% of votes, taking 374 seats to the opposition's 180.

Ahead of the return of parliament, Mussolini's *ceka* - a violent force based on the Russian Cheka - was instructed to reconvene.<sup>27</sup> Amerigo Dumini led the group, tasked with intimidating antifascist leaders. Born in 1894 in St Louis, U.S.A, to an Italian father and British mother, Dumini had returned to Italy in 1913 and joined the Italian army, renouncing American citizenship in the process. He was injured twice during the First World War and had returned to Florence to recover in 1918. Augusto Malacria, Amleto Poveromo, Giuseppe Viola and Albino Volpi joined Dumini in the *ceka*. They received orders from Cesare Rossi, the head of Mussolini's press office, and Giovanni Marinelli, executive secretary of the PNF. Given their links with government, this group of five were also known as the 'Banda del Viminale'.

Emboldened by votes, Mussolini made a number of provocative requests to parliament on 30 May 1924. Firstly, he asked for blanket approval to be given to the newly elected members of the majority and to several thousand laws.<sup>28</sup> Then he asked that the many complaints about the election - around a million legal breaches were recorded - be wiped.<sup>29</sup> But Matteotti, too, was emboldened by votes. Despite the widespread fraud, the PSU was the leading opposition party in several electoral districts. The results confirmed the support of much of the urban working and middle classes to his 'intransigent opposition to the Fascist government', and renewed his resolve to 'launch an even more vigorous attack' on the regime.<sup>30</sup> On 30 May, he responded to Mussolini's demands with a courageous speech condemning the fraudulent elections. He was interrupted 100 times.

'Nessun elettore italiano si è trovato libero di decidere con la sua volontà,' he asserted, describing how Blackshirts waited inside voting booths to threaten and influence the electorate.<sup>31</sup> 'Se la Giunta delle elezioni volesse aprire i plichi e verificare i cumuli di schede che sono state votate, potrebbe trovare che molti voti di preferenza sono stati scritti sulle schede tutti dalla stessa mano, così come altri voti

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>28</sup> Canali, *The Matteotti Murder*, p. 151.

<sup>29</sup> Mack Smith, p. 76.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Giacomo Matteotti et al., *Parla l'opposizione: la battaglia parlamentare dell'opposizione* (Bologna: A. Forni, 1976), p. 15.

di lista furono cancellati o addirittura letti al contrario,' he continued.<sup>32</sup> He closed his speech calling for the annulment of the election. It was widely reported that as he exited the Chamber he instructed his colleagues to begin preparing his funeral oration.<sup>33</sup>

In the early days of June, Blackshirts assaulted several opposition deputies. This was a warning: criticism would put the critic's life in danger.<sup>34</sup> As he did every day during the period, on the afternoon of 10 June Matteotti left his home in the Flaminio area of Rome to visit the Chamber of Deputies library where he was preparing the PSU's response to the administration's budget. Five men waited in a Lancia car on the Arnaldo da Brescia embankment beside the Tiber. When they saw Matteotti approaching, they attacked him with a knife and loaded him into the car, which sped out of Rome. Matteotti was brutally assaulted, and died in the back of the car. His corpse would not be found until mid-August.

Orders for the attack were thought to have come from the highest ranks of the Fascist hierarchy, including Rossi, head of the press office. Dumini came to Mussolini's office a few hours after the attack and brought with him a piece of upholstery from the car, darkened by Matteotti's blood.<sup>35</sup> The following day, Mussolini publicly denied any knowledge of the crime and, on 12 June, gave a speech expressing his hope Matteotti would be found alive despite knowing that the police were already investigating his murder; a caretaker of an apartment near to Matteotti's home had alerted the police to the presence of a car full of people acting suspiciously on the day of Matteotti's kidnap. The same car, with the bloodstained upholstery, was quickly linked to the assassins, who denied any involvement.

There has been some debate around the exact reasons for Matteotti's murder, particularly since the release of Mauro Canali's 1997 book *Il delitto Matteotti*, which incorporated hitherto unseen documents discovered in Rome and Washington D.C. relating to the Sinclair Oil deal.<sup>36</sup> Some months before his kidnap, the government had entered an agreement with the Sinclair Oil, which gave the American business a monopoly on drilling for and exploiting oil fields in Italy.<sup>37</sup> But according to the lead

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 35–36.

<sup>33</sup> Canali, *The Matteotti Murder*, p. 151.

<sup>34</sup> Mack Smith, p. 77.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Mauro Canali, *Il delitto Matteotti: affarismo e politica nel primo governo Mussolini* (Bologna: il mulino, 1997).

<sup>37</sup> Canali, *The Matteotti Murder*, pp. 144–45.

assassin himself, Matteotti was killed because the regime knew he would soon expose a number of political and financial scandals.<sup>38</sup>

### Existing literature and aims of my research

Having described events that came to be known as *il delitto Matteotti*, I will now give an overview of existing literature on Matteotti, which be broadly divided into four camps. Historical studies of Matteotti's kidnap and murder make up the first and largest group. Mauro Canali's *Il delitto Matteotti* is among the best-known work in this category, and is known for its inclusion of the Sinclair Oil case.<sup>39</sup> Claudio Fracassi's book is notable for its breakdown into short scenes introduced by time and place, which give events a filmic quality and reflect the drama of the events as they unfolded.<sup>40</sup> Stefano Caretti is the most prominent Matteotti scholar in terms of number of publications. He has mentioned the role of commemoration in the construction of Matteotti's memory and the regime's attempt to silence memory, but neither he nor other scholars have tackled these ideas thoroughly.<sup>41</sup> In Caretti's work, commemoration is simply mentioned in order to contextualise the vast amount of archival material that dominates his books, while the final chapter of Valentino Zaghi's *Giacomo Matteotti* addresses the public exaltation of Matteotti's memory in Italy and the collective rites of mourning, but condenses twenty years of commemoration into one chapter.<sup>42</sup> In 2013, Italo Arcuri released *Il corpo di Matteotti* with Matteotti's corpse as its central motif. However, there is little analysis of the place of the body (described as 'un oggetto sacro'<sup>43</sup> and 'Come un moderno Cristo laico, il corpo di Matteotti ha patito la sua via crucis'<sup>44</sup>) in collective memory. The book is less an analysis of the sacralisation of Matteotti's body, which will be addressed in this chapter, and more a symptom of it.

Caretti's work straddles this first historical category and the second: commemorative publications. I consider this category to include collections of

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<sup>38</sup> Dumini made this claim in an account of the murder in 1932. It was sent to lawyers in America for safeguarding, and the regime made aware of its existence. See: Canali, *The Matteotti Murder*, p. 164.

<sup>39</sup> Canali, *Il delitto Matteotti*.

<sup>40</sup> Claudio Fracassi, *Matteotti e Mussolini: 1924: il delitto del Lungotevere, testimonianze fra cronaca e storia* (Milan: Mursia, 2004).

<sup>41</sup> Stefano Caretti, *Matteotti. Il mito*. (Pisa: Nistri-Lischi Editori, 1994).

<sup>42</sup> Valentino Zaghi, *Giacomo Matteotti* (Sommacampagna: Cierre, 2001).

<sup>43</sup> Italo Arcuri, *Il corpo di Matteotti*, Kindle Edition (Suraci Editore, 2013), sec. 73.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, sec. 107.

Matteotti's writings and speeches and publications written to honour him by prominent antifascists. Published on important anniversaries, many of these works are part of the broader calendar of commemoration, acting as monuments to Matteotti's political career. The Fondazione Giacomo Matteotti is a major publisher of such works, many of which date from the 1970s onwards when foundations and organisations pushed to remember the man in life as well as death, as we will see in chapter 8.<sup>45</sup> A renewed focus on his intellectual heritage was part of this shift. Some such publications have a didactic objective, and are part of a series of initiatives to educate secondary school children.<sup>46</sup> Exhibition and conference catalogues form the third category. Once again the majority were published by foundations and, like the exhibitions they document, have coincided with major anniversaries. Biographies are the final group, though these are fairly few and far between - a fact that betrays the focus on Matteotti in death rather than life.

My research will not concentrate on the kidnap and assassination itself, but instead on how Matteotti's martyrdom was commemorated and what this tells us about Italian national identity - the question at the centre of this thesis. I will break my analysis down temporally, addressing the various stages and how they influence, and are influenced, by the changing nation state. Crucially, I will expand my analysis beyond the Italian nation to consider international commemoration and attempt to realign the narrow focus of current scholarship on either clandestine commemoration in Italy during Fascism, or his public commemoration after liberation.<sup>47</sup> In chapter 6, I will show that the narratives that cemented Matteotti as a martyr for the nation did not in fact develop in Italy; rather, Italians outside of

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<sup>45</sup> Founded in 1973, the Fondazione Giacomo Matteotti promotes activities and research exploring the values of social democracy. This, along with the other foundations dedicated to the preservation of Matteotti's memory, is addressed in final chapter of this case study.

<sup>46</sup> See, for example: Fondazione Giacomo Matteotti, Fondazione di Studi Storici Filippo Turati, *Matteotti 90 nelle scuole. I giovani e la lezione civile, morale e politica di un martire per la democrazia* (Rome - Florence: Fondazione Giacomo Matteotti, Fondazione di Studi Storici Filippo Turati, 2015)

<sup>47</sup> A permanent exhibition on the top floor of the Casa Museo Giacomo Matteotti, the museum dedicated to Matteotti in his former family home in Fratta Polesine, is perhaps the closest we have come to tackling the question of the role of Matteotti's memory in the construction of the international antifascist movement, or the Italian diaspora. The exhibition brings together archival sources relating to Matteotti's commemoration in and outside of Italy. But though it successfully conveys the breadth of commemoration through the range of exhibits, the question of why memory spread around the world goes unanswered.

Italy built the memorial narratives and public rituals of memory that would establish him as a national martyr. They were then imported back into Italy after the end of the Second World War when the nation sought to reaffirm its antifascist history. This point overturns existing historical understanding of Matteotti's memory completely, and re-contextualises it within a global landscape of antifascism, eschewing the current Italy-centric approach. As such, it will provide an entirely new understanding of the memory of one of the most important historical figures in contemporary Italy, and address the role of martyrdom in the construction of national identity.

In chapter 7, I will narrow my focus further to address the role of Matteotti's memory in the day-to-day fight against Fascism in the Italian American diaspora. This is a particularly important case study given the enormous amount of resources Mussolini poured into America in his efforts to export Fascism. This transnational exchange will enable me to examine day-to-day use of Matteotti's memory within the fight against fascism in a country that enjoyed relative freedom to commemorate Matteotti. As such, it enables me to address one of the primary research questions in this thesis: whether the boundaries of the nation state contain martyr memory, or can it extend internationally.

### **The Aventine Secession and the dawn of dictatorship**

On 18 June 1924, antifascist opposition deputies boycotted parliament in protest against Matteotti's disappearance. Their protest came to be known as the Aventine Secession, named after the plebeians of ancient Rome who withdrew to the Aventine Hill in protest against patrician rule in 494BC. The regime's reputation had suffered significant damage both within Italy and abroad. International media had dedicated much column width to the kidnap and the huge public response throughout Italy. According to *The Times*, Matteotti's kidnap had 'profoundly shaken the balance of Italian politics, and so deeply moved the conscience of the nation.'<sup>48</sup> As Corner writes, the *delitto* was 'undoubtedly the most serious challenge to Mussolini's domination after the 1922 March on Rome and destined to remain the most serious' until Mussolini was eventually unseated in 1943.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> 'Matteotti Case', *The Times*, 19 June 1924, p. 13.

<sup>49</sup> Paul Corner, *The Fascist Party and Popular Opinion in Mussolini's Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 1.

However, letters written by Turati in Rome during the period betray optimism among the opposition. A few days after Matteotti's kidnap, he described the mood:

Stamane, scendendo alle 5 (come sono bravo) da Roma alta era una tal festa di cielo, di fronde, di alberi, che mi parve la celebrazione della nuova Primavera. Ma non è possibile che non sia così. Il regno di Satana muore. Si pensa già al domani: e se tu vedessi come tutto muta d'attorno. Non moriremo idrofobi. Povero Matteotti morto, lo dobbiamo a lui!<sup>50</sup>

Turati was convinced that the death would precipitate the fall of the regime.<sup>51</sup> The tone of his partner Anna Kuliscioff, a Jewish Russian revolutionary and Marxist militant, was less optimistic. She noted the rising number of public displays of Fascist support in Milan, predicting a 'proclamazione della dittatura personale sua per la difesa della sua rivoluzione con plotoni schierati nelle piazze d'Italia.'<sup>52</sup> Kuliscioff's words proved prescient, reflecting Mack Smith's claim that 'the main industrial towns [...] which, two years earlier, would have seen immense public demonstrations at such an outrage, were quiet: the squads had done their job of intimidation only too well.'<sup>53</sup> The Vatican, too, played its part in quelling any public response, urging the media and political parties to refrain from commenting on Matteotti's disappearance and allow justice to take its course.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, the Aventine Secession effectively meant the government had no opposition. Rather than being a turning point for the opposition, Mussolini emerged stronger than ever, bolstered by the support of the monarchy, industry and the Church.<sup>55</sup> His speech on 3 January 1925 was the declaration of dictatorship Kuliscioff feared. Standing in the Chamber of Deputies, he gave a speech that many have understood to be an admission of culpability for Matteotti's assassination:

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<sup>50</sup> Filippo Turati and Anna Kuliscioff, *La tragedia di Giacomo Matteotti: nelle lettere scambiate fra l'11 e il 27 giugno 1924* (Forlì: Editrice Socialista Romagnola, 1945), p. 27.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>53</sup> Mack Smith, p. 78.

<sup>54</sup> 'Matteotti Case, a Vatican Appeal', *Lincolnshire Echo*, 25 June 1924, p. 3.

<sup>55</sup> David Ward, *Piero Gobetti's New World: Antifascism, Liberalism, Writing* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), p. 91.



Assumo, io solo, la responsabilità politica, morale, storica. [...] Se il fascismo non è stato che olio di ricino e manganello, e non invece una passione superba della migliore gioventù italiana, a me la colpa! Se il fascismo è stato un'associazione a delinquere, io sono il capo di questa associazione a delinquere!<sup>56</sup>

In February 1925, Roberto Farinacci - 'the leading spokesperson of the extremists' in the Fascist party, - was appointed as party secretary.<sup>57</sup> Writing of his appointment, he said: 'Accettando la carica di segretario del partito, mi impegnai a smatteottizzare l'Italia.'<sup>58</sup> The term *smatteottizzare* was understood to mean purge the country of vociferous opponents to Fascism, and it shows the extent to which the *delitto Matteotti* had shaken the regime. Violence intensified, opposition members were attacked, and the party was purged of any members showing the slightest sign of disloyalty. December that year would seal the dictatorship. On 24 of the month, Mussolini became head of Government. In the absence of the opposition, this essentially made him answerable only to the King.<sup>59</sup> On the same day, a press law was introduced that made it illegal for any journalist not on a register (drawn up by the Fascists) to write. These changes were part of the 'leggi fascistissime', which included the outlawing of opposition parties, and marked the irreversible turn to dictatorship. The moderate period of Fascism was over.

### **Injustice in the 'camomile town'**

In 1924, Mauro Del Giudice and Umberto Tancredi, 'two capable and determined magistrates', led preliminary investigations into Matteotti's death, and developed a case 'on the basis of a theory of wilful murder.'<sup>60</sup> In addition to proving the involvement of the *ceka* in crimes prior to the assassination, their investigations led to the arrest of the perpetrators and the instigators of the crime - Rossi and Marinelli, 'the political directors of the Fascist Ceka'.<sup>61</sup> Aware of their progress, the regime gave the pair significant professional promotions, and they were forced to

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<sup>56</sup> Giovanni Borgognone, *Come nasce una dittatura: l'Italia del delitto Matteotti*, Kindle Edition (Editori Laterza).

<sup>57</sup> Mack Smith, p. 81.

<sup>58</sup> Roberto Festorazzi, *Farinacci: l'antiduce* (Rome: Il Minotauro, 2004), p. 71.

<sup>59</sup> Hamish Macdonald, *Mussolini and Italian Fascism* (Cheltenham: Nelson Thornes, 1998), p. 23.

<sup>60</sup> Canali, *The Matteotti Murder*, p. 152.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

leave the case.<sup>62</sup> Nicodemo Del Vasto and Antonio Albertini - Farinacci's brother-in-law - were their replacements, and they redirected the investigation towards a verdict of involuntary murder.

Though the trial was expected to take place in Rome, the Attorney General ordered it be moved for reasons of public security.<sup>63</sup> Showing the regime's support of the perpetrators, PNF secretary Farinacci appointed himself as Dumini's lawyer. On 16 March 1926, the trial began in the Abruzzian town Chieti, dubbed 'città della camomilla' by the journalist Alberto Mario Perbellini, correspondent for the Bologna daily *Il Resto del Carlino*, describing the excessively calm nature of the city.<sup>64</sup> Farinacci arrived in Chieti the day before, and was welcomed by public processions through the town, and receptions in the town hall. These performances of support for the regime drew to a close with the offering of a toga to wear to trial made by the Fascio Femminile – the Women's Fascist League.<sup>65</sup> The camomile city had turned black.

Antifascists were kept under strict surveillance. Foreign and domestic journalists were unable to cover the trial properly because intercepted telephone lines made communication with stenographers extremely difficult (the antifascist *Corriere degli Italiani* in Paris resorted to the use of carrier pigeons).<sup>66</sup> It was forbidden to take photographs or film proceedings in court.<sup>67</sup> Despite tight surveillance, on 19 March, a 16-page pamphlet bearing Matteotti's portrait on the front page titled *Il delitto Matteotti. Perché l'opposizione non è a Chieti* by Emanuele Giuseppe Modigliani appeared in Chieti. Modigliani was the lawyer for the Matteotti family, who had brought a simultaneous case to Chieti as civil plaintiffs. The pamphlet explained why Matteotti's family and opposition representatives were absent from the trial, calling it 'una farsa giudiziaria'.<sup>68</sup>

In his deposition, Dumini had stated that the attack was not premeditated but provoked by Matteotti's presence (he thought the deputy had played a part in the murder of his friend, and head of the Fascists in France, Nicola Bonservizi, who had recently been shot dead). Overcome with passion, Dumini said he kidnapped

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<sup>62</sup> Manzati, p. 55.

<sup>63</sup> Vincenzo Sechi, *La verità sul processo Matteotti* (Rome: Edigraf, 1945), p. 73.

<sup>64</sup> Marcello Benegiamo, *A scelta del Duce: il processo Matteotti a Chieti: 16-24 Marzo 1926* (L'Aquila: Textus, 2006), p. 19.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>67</sup> Caretti, *Il delitto Matteotti*, pp. 106–7.

<sup>68</sup> Benegiamo, p. 86.

Matteotti to find out exactly what happened to Bonservizi.<sup>69</sup> But when the group were about 10km outside of Rome, his accomplices ordered he stop the car and he looked back to see Matteotti vomiting blood. The deputy died shortly after. Not knowing what to do, he continued driving, eventually stopping in an isolated spot where they buried the body. All the tools that were submitted as evidence had only been used to bury Matteotti, he claimed.<sup>70</sup>

Dumini's version of events was rejected. The court found that though there were five people in the car - Dumini, Viola, Volpi, Poveromo and Malacria - and none could be held responsible because it was impossible to know who delivered the fatal blow.<sup>71</sup> The court declared that Matteotti's death was not premeditated, and that had the group planned to kill Matteotti they would have done so in a way that would have been easier to escape. There was no causal link between the kidnap and the killing.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, those who ordered the crime could not be punished because they did not ask for Matteotti to be killed, and could not be condemned for not having given clear orders not to kill, because past kidnaps had been executed without any loss of life. The sentence was declared: non-premeditated homicide.<sup>73</sup>

The trial ended on 24 March. It would be 21 years until a second trial took place in liberated Italy. Viola and Malacria were acquitted; Dumini, Volpi and Poveromo were sentenced to five years, 11 months and 20 days. They only served two months in jail thanks to an amnesty on political crimes introduced in 1925. Rossi, who had been accused of having organised the *delitto* as the 'true mastermind' of the Ceka, resigned as head of Mussolini's press office.<sup>74</sup> Emilio De Bono, Mussolini's head of the state police, also resigned (during his 1923-4 tenure, there were no records of any violence towards members of the parliamentary opposition).<sup>75</sup> Mussolini also resigned as Interior Minister.

The regime had survived the *delitto* by distancing itself from what it presented as violent actions of members of the unruly extremists in the *ceka*.<sup>76</sup> The

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<sup>69</sup> Sechi, pp. 41-42.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>74</sup> Canali, *The Matteotti Murder*, p. 147.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Behind the scenes, though, the regime's financial support of Matteotti's killers continued for some time. Indeed, Dumini's financial demands prompted Mussolini to send him into internal exile on the Tremiti islands in 1928. Volpi was less successful

international press bought into this idea of an uncontrollable sub-stratum of the party. Writing in *The Times* on 18 June, a correspondent wrote: 'There is no doubt that Fascismo has greatly suffered from what is happening, but I think that it may perhaps recover if it is purified from the bottom.'<sup>77</sup> A *Daily Mail* article declared: 'There appears to have been a small gang of criminals making use of Fascism for their own personal gain, and the murderers of Signor Matteotti seem to have been in close connection of this gang. Every great movement has such parasites; Socialism is certainly not free from them.'<sup>78</sup> As the title of Borgognone's study of the Matteotti murder *Come nasce una dittatura* makes clear, far from weakening the regime the murder prompted the turn to dictatorship.<sup>79</sup> Thanks to court corruption, strategic resignations, the timely introduction of new laws and an amnesty, the regime emerged stronger than ever.

### Suppressing memory in public space

I will now summarise the characteristics of commemoration in Italy after Matteotti's kidnap, showing the immediate sacralisation of memory. As scholars including Zaghi and Caretti have noted, memory was a significant part of the story in the wake of the *delitto*.<sup>80</sup> The regime's obsession with controlling memory affected its treatment of Matteotti's family. Velia was summoned to the police headquarters in Rome and ordered to abandon her mourning clothes, as the country now 'wanted

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in his financial bargaining. In 1930, his wife Asmara wrote to the Duce, asking for financial support and help in obtaining a management role in the recently opened slaughterhouse in Milan for her husband. She reminded Mussolini of her husband's dedication to the regime: 'So che Lei è tanto buono, giusto e caritatevole, e vorrà prendere a cuore la situazione Albino Volpi in merito anche a ciò è stato sempre e sarà per Lei Eccellenza e per il fascismo.' Though a job could not be arranged, he was sent L.2000. She continued to request financial assistance; a year after her husband's death Asmara Volpi wrote to Mussolini asking for his help in obtaining a place at a boarding school for her 13-year-old son. Once again, she reminded Mussolini: 'Voi conoscete certamente quanto ha fatto mio marito per la Causa Fascista e quanto egli SEMPRE vi sia stato profondamente fedele.' See: Asmaro Volpi, 'Asmaro Norchi Volpi to Benito Mussolini', 25 May 1930, Archivio centrale dello stato, Segreteria particolare del duce, Comunicato Riservato, Busta 97; Asmaro Volpi, 'A Sua Eccellenza il Capo del Governo Benito Mussolini', 1 October 1940, Archivio centrale dello stato, Segreteria particolare del duce, Comunicato Riservato, Busta 97; Caretti, *Il Delitto Matteotti*, p. 109.

<sup>77</sup> 'Matteotti Crime', *The Times*, 18 June 1924, p. 16.

<sup>78</sup> 'The Saviour of Italy', *Daily Mail*, 20 June 1924, p. 8.

<sup>79</sup> See: Borgognone, *Come nasce una dittatura*.

<sup>80</sup> Caretti, *Il delitto Matteotti*; Caretti, *Matteotti. Il mito*; Zaghi, *Giacomo Matteotti*.

to forget' her husband's death.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, a friend of her son was imprisoned after he cried out "Long live Giancarlo Matteotti!" when Giancarlo gave the correct answers to a mathematical problem.<sup>82</sup> Fearing the extent to which Matteotti's name could rouse public passion, the regime even went as far as trying to force the Matteotti family to adopt a new name.

Aware of its power, the regime would eventually push memory into domestic spaces, as a later section in this chapter will address. However, to begin with, commemoration occurred in public. Of the thousands of condolence letters sent to Matteotti's widow, many reference the spontaneous strikes and ceremonies organised by workers throughout in June 1924, particularly in the first ten days after the kidnap.<sup>83</sup> These public demonstrations were met by counter-demonstrations from Blackshirts, who cried insults and sang provocative songs as they walked past the site of Matteotti's kidnap and onwards to Velia's house near to the Arnaldo da Brescia.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Richard Pankhurst, '*An Early Anti-Fascist Organisation: The Women's International Matteotti Committee*' (Unpublished), p. 45, The Women's Library, London School of Economics and Political Science.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>83</sup> Caretti, *Matteotti. Il mito*, pp. 161–62.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.



**Figure 12: Mourners lay flowers at the site of Matteotti's kidnap**

From the day of Matteotti's disappearance, floral tributes were laid, removed, and replaced at the kidnap site on the Arnaldo da Brescia (Figure 12), echoing the same memorial dynamic in via Bibbiena I analysed in the previous case study.<sup>85</sup> The embankment had become a grassroots site of memory and included a red cross on the embankment wall. The red wreaths and single carnations laid there were a symbol of Italian antifascism, and became part of the battles around memory. They functioned as public markers of antifascist support in public space, which was increasingly being used for demonstrations of Fascist might. Flowers so dominated the popular response to Matteotti's death that they featured in Farinacci's closing speech at trial. Explaining the context in which he took the decision to represent Dumini, he said:

Fu allora, giudici popolari, quando molti avvocati rinunciavano a difendere costoro, quando le dame, per ipotecarsi la benevolenza dei vincitori del domani, si recavano con ostentazione a portare fiori al Lungotevere Arnaldo

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<sup>85</sup> Untitled Photograph of Mourners on the Arnaldo Da Brescia, 1924, Fondazione Nenni, Archivio Fotografico Matteotti. The image is reproduced with thanks to the Fondazione Nenni.

da Brescia [...] fu allora che assunsi risolutamente, in segno di legittima reazione, la difesa di questo processo.’<sup>86</sup>

The laying of flowers was, he argued, the work of female Fascist sympathisers who wanted to underline the benevolence of the regime. This implausible reasoning was part of a sustained effort to deny Matteotti’s emerging martyrdom and weaken its iconography – a campaign that culminated in a ban on public commemoration.

The 27 June was the most significant day in early public commemoration of Matteotti. The labour union Confederazione Generale di Lavoro asked workers to honour Matteotti with a ten-minute strike at 10am. At the same time, crowds gathered at the site of Matteotti’s kidnap. An article in *Western Gazette*, which incorrectly stated this commemoration took place at the same time as Matteotti’s funeral (perhaps testifying to its scale), describes the rotation of mourners seeking to pay their respects. Each group would spend five minutes kneeling in prayer before making way for the next by leaving the embankment and proceeding past Matteotti’s house silently.<sup>87</sup> Simultaneous ceremonies took place in major Italian cities. In her letter to Turati on 27 June, Kuliscioff described the event in Milan. Crowds gathered in Piazza del Duomo for the ten-minute strike, raising their hats in homage to Matteotti. Trams, buses, and carriages stopped, and uniformed officials approached cyclists to ask them to respect the strike. A barricade was placed over the entrance to the Galleria in Piazza del Duomo to encourage people to come to a standstill, but some Fascist sympathisers refused to cooperate, instead shouting ‘Viva Mussolini!’ Mourners remained silent despite the interruption.<sup>88</sup>

Concerned by the emerging public rituals of memory, the regime stated that nobody could stop to pray within 10 metres of the site, banning flowers and commemorative ribbons.<sup>89</sup> Commemoration in Montecitorio was also forbidden.<sup>90</sup> These restrictions on memory were part of what Caretti terms ‘la memoria negata’, denoting the regime’s attempt to control memory and weaken symbolic resistance.<sup>91</sup> With such tight controls, commemoration became an act of defiance, and it was met

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<sup>86</sup> Roberto Farinacci, *Il processo Matteotti alle assise di Chieti: L’arringa di Roberto Farinacci* (Cremona: Società editoriale Cremona nuova, 1926), p. 14.

<sup>87</sup> ‘Rome’s Silent Tribute’, *Western Gazette*, 4 July 1924, p. 12.

<sup>88</sup> Turati and Kuliscioff, p. 41.

<sup>89</sup> Caretti, *Matteotti. Il mito*, pp. 43–44.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

with provocation. Fascists in Rome could be heard singing ‘Con la carne di Matteotti ci faremo i salsicciotti!’ as they marched below Matteotti’s house.<sup>92</sup> Defying the bans, opposition parties returned, briefly, to Montecitorio at 4pm on 27 June to attend a ceremony led by Turati. In his speech, he said:

Noi non «commemoriamo». Noi siamo qui convenuti ad un rito, ad un rito religioso, che è il rito stesso della Patria. Il fratello, quegli ch’io non ho bisogno di nominare, perché il Suo nome è evocato in questo stesso momento da tutti gli uomini di cuore, al di qua e al di là dell’Alpe e dei mari, non è un morto, non è un vinto, non è neppure un assassinato. Egli vive, Egli è qui presente, e pugnante. Egli è un accusatore; Egli è un giudice; Egli è un vindice.

Non il nostro vindice, o colleghi. Sarebbe troppo misera e futile cosa. Egli è qui il vindice della terra nativa; il vindice della Nazione che fu depressa e soppressa; il vindice di tutte le cose grandi, che Egli amò, che noi amammo, per le quali vivemmo, per le quali oggi più che mai abbiamo, anche se stanchi e sopraffatti dal disgusto, il dovere di vivere. E il dovere di vivere è anche, e soprattutto, il dovere di morire quando l’ora comanda.’<sup>93</sup>

Turati’s speech was infused with the religious language and imagery of martyrdom, and provides a classic example of the extraction of future meaning from a martyr’s death, as analysed in the thesis introduction. The reference to eternal life after great sacrifice and the reminder of one’s duty to commit the ultimate sacrifice were a means to encourage collective commitment. The cause for which Matteotti sacrificed his life – Socialism – was upheld as the overarching force to follow. This conflation of politics and religion was reinforced by the location of the ceremony in Montecitorio. The repeated sacralisation of Socialism during Matteotti’s commemoration is a quality we will see in international commemoration too, as the following chapters will show. Commemoration was an occasion to remember Matteotti, to express devotion to Socialism and to protest against the regime.

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<sup>92</sup> *Il Becco Giallo. Dinamico di opinione pubblica. 1924/1931*, ed. by Oreste Del Buono, Lietta Tornabuoni, and Istituto Giangiacomo Feltrinelli (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1972), p. 88.

<sup>93</sup> Giacomo Matteotti et al., pp. 59–60.



## The legend of confrontation and the missing body

With its emphasis on eternal life through sacrifice, and death for a sacred belief, in many ways Matteotti's martyrdom reflected the religious martyr paradigm. However, there was one element of the *delitto Matteotti* that proved problematic in the construction of classic martyrdom (which the memory agents remembering the Mattei brothers did not encounter) – the long absence of the body. As was the case of the Mattei brothers' funeral, the ceremony in Fratta Polesine (which is addressed closely in the next section) drew on religious ritual and political iconography to both venerate and mourn sacrifice, but the absence of Matteotti's body meant the event could not occur until sixty-six days after his disappearance.<sup>94</sup> In the meantime, sporadic acts of commemoration occurred throughout the country but without the embodied proof of the martyr's physical suffering.

One such event was the nationwide commemoration on the 27 June. During his commemorative speech that day, Turati quoted the words widely held to have been Matteotti's last: "Uccidete me, ma l'idea che è in me non la ucciderete mai... La mia idea non muore... I miei bambini si glorieranno del loro padre... I lavoratori benediranno il mio cadavere... Viva il Socialismo!"<sup>95</sup> The belief that these were Matteotti's dying words emerged very quickly after the kidnap. They were reported in the media, printed on commemorative material and in books and, later, after Italy's liberation, incorporated in monuments to Matteotti. As he had with the flowers on the site of Matteotti's kidnap, Farinacci used his closing speech at trial to debunk what he deemed a myth of Matteotti's final confrontation, highlighting the extent to which the words had taken hold in the collective imagination. He identified: 'le più sfacciate menzogne e le più grande corbellerie. Tutti i testi che hanno assistito alla scena del rapimento, raccontano, che Matteotti senza nessuna resistenza fu introdotto nella automobile e che le sue parole non erano quelle di «muoio da eroe» ma erano quelli di «Aiuto! Aiuto!»'<sup>96</sup>

Though Matteotti's defiant words were publicly held to be true, in private there was some debate around their veracity. In a letter to Kuliscioff, Turati declared

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<sup>94</sup> A comparison with the long absence of Moro's body and the impact of that absence on collective memory could be an interesting avenue for future study.

<sup>95</sup> 'Filippo Turati: la commemorazione di Giacomo Matteotti del 27 giugno 1924', *Tempo Presente*, April 2014, pp. 31–36 (p. 32).

<sup>96</sup> Farinacci, pp. 12–13.

that even if Matteotti had never uttered the words that were being widely quoted in the media, they were nevertheless representative of his spirit:

E parla. E ridice le parole sante, strozzategli nella gola, che furono da uno dei sicari tramandate alle genti, che son Sue quand'anche non le avesse pronunciate, che son vere se anche non fossero realtà, perché sono l'anima Sua; le parole che si incideranno nel bronzo sulla targa che mureremo qui o sul monumento che rizzeremo sulla piazza a monito dei futuri.<sup>97</sup>

Kulisioff, however, was doubtful; she could not believe that Matteotti would have resorted to a call for revenge or referenced his children in the presence of the *ceka*.<sup>98</sup>

In their embodied theory of martyrdom, addressed in the introduction to the thesis, De Soucey et al. focus on the role of the martyr's body in the creation of meaning.<sup>99</sup> They suggest that the body 'aids those who seek to shape memory by providing a material form in which to embed moral authority.'<sup>100</sup> The long absence of Matteotti's body was problematic as the material expression of 'belief and sacrifice' was missing.<sup>101</sup> It is my contention that Matteotti's final words took on the role a body typically plays in the martyrological narrative as proof of the martyr's conviction. His words included a reference to a belief – socialism – at the time of his death. Furthermore, they made explicit reference to an attack on his life and, therefore, his self-sacrifice. The collective fixation on his final words was a means of inserting proof of self-sacrifice into the martyrological narrative. They also gave memory agents such as Turati incontrovertible proof of his conviction.

In his study of the martyrdom of Aldo Moro, Baldassare Scolari has argued that the Italian media ascribed a willingness to die for a conviction to Aldo Moro by questioning the veracity of the letters in which Moro asked the government to negotiate with terrorists and save his life. These requests undermined any suggestion of a propensity for self-sacrifice, and by denying their veracity the media was able to represent Moro as stoic and willing to sacrifice his life.<sup>102</sup> He argues that this attribution of conviction was an essential part of the martyrological narrative

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<sup>97</sup> Giacomo Matteotti et al., p. 61.

<sup>98</sup> Turati and Kulisioff, p. 22.

<sup>99</sup> DeSoucey et al., p. 99.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>102</sup> Scolari, pp. 88-100.

relating to Moro's death, which was commemorated as having occurred in the name of the state. I contend that a similar process is evident in the case of Matteotti, through the constant reference to his legendary final words. Evidence of his self-sacrifice would later be preserved in postwar Italy when his final words were incorporated into memorials and monuments across the country, as chapter 8 will show.

Cries for the body's return were frequent; at the 27 June commemoration ceremony on the site of his kidnap, mourners called for its return and this was repeated in the media. One antifascist publication wrote of the importance of the body, 'come a Maria non fu negato il corpo di Cristo', highlighting the importance of the body in the construction of martyrdom.<sup>103</sup> When Matteotti's remains were eventually discovered, dismembered and decomposing, myths about the corpse quickly emerged, spread by newspapers and word of mouth. The body was thought to have been brought to San Giacomo hospital in Rome and conserved in a refrigerated cell, taken to the Verano cemetery and incinerated, or embalmed in Santa Sabina Basilica on the Aventine hill.<sup>104</sup> Matteotti was also thought to have been fed to animals in the zoo, or had his flesh dissolved in acid and his carcass displayed in the window of an anatomy laboratory.<sup>105</sup> Further rumours emerged that, as proof of the crime, he had been castrated and his genitals had been delivered to either Mussolini, who laughed and put them in a drawer in his office, or Filippo Filippelli, head of the Fascist propaganda machine *Corriere Italiano*, who fainted.<sup>106</sup> After sixty-six days without a corpse, the collective horror at the depravity of the crime found its expression in the chilling rumours that circulated about the mistreatment of Matteotti's body. Though untrue, they attest to the perceived vulgarity of the crime in public consciousness, and the degree to which Matteotti was thought to have suffered from this primitive violence. As Luzzatto writes, the 'longer it took to find his corpse, the more charismatic a guide he would become to his followers.'<sup>107</sup>

The martyrological narrative faced a second challenge: the inherent clandestinity of kidnap. Though Matteotti had experienced a public clash with his

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<sup>103</sup> 'Le giornate di passione del giugno-agosto 1924', *Almanacco Socialista Italo-Americano 1925*, 1925, pp. 22–25 (p. 24).

<sup>104</sup> Arcuri, sec. 260.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> See: Borgognone, *Come nasce una dittatura*.

<sup>107</sup> Luzzatto, p. 7.

main opponent on 30 May when he gave his speech parliament, the final confrontation was confined to the back seat of a car. This privacy denied one of the essential components of classic martyrdom – the ‘martyrological confrontation’, defined by Weiner and Weiner as ‘a structured situation in which the martyr confronts his or her persecutor.’<sup>108</sup> This confrontation is typically a chance for the martyr to utter a final expression of conviction before making the ultimate sacrifice (Moro’s confrontation of his kidnappers was prolonged, making it all the more powerful). Indeed, the high visibility of the Mattei brothers’ deaths, as captured in Monteforte’s photograph, has been upheld by far right groups as proof of their sacrifice and turned unsuspecting victims into martyrs. In the classic martyr paradigm, it is usually public; consider the suffering of Christ on the cross, the killing of Joan of Arc. I believe that the collective acceptance of Matteotti’s final words as true, and their immediate incorporation into commemoration ceremonies (and later into sites of memory), served to underline Matteotti’s knowing self-sacrifice during his final confrontation.

### **The funeral in Fratta Polesine**

On 16 August, Matteotti’s body was finally discovered in the Quartarella woods. A metal file, thought to be the murder weapon, was found inside his ribcage.<sup>109</sup> As soon as the news broke, a gathering formed at the site and a makeshift oak cross was erected. The government was determined the transportation of the body not attract public attention, and ordered Matteotti’s remains be taken to his hometown of Fratta Polesine at night on 20 August. Despite Velia’s request that Blackshirts not be present on the train or at stations along the way, a number of armed *squadristi* surrounded the carriage holding Matteotti’s body. As the train stopped at Bologna station, they shouted threats and insults.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Weiner and Weiner, *The Martyr’s Conviction*, p. 10.

<sup>109</sup> The file was sold at auction on 28 December 1926 for the sum of two lire. The buyer, Francesco Grifi, was a dedicated fascist supporter, and a leading Blackshirt. He bought the file because «era un oggetto storico di valore, un vero e proprio cimelio da conservare tra le cose più preziose e da mostrare agli amici». See: Benegiamo, p. 122.

<sup>110</sup> Caretti, *Il delitto Matteotti*, p. 82.



**Figure 13: Mourners beside the train carrying Matteotti's body**

Mourners waiting at Fratta Polesine station (Figure 13) met the train carrying his body.<sup>111</sup> Sandro Pertini, who would become President of Italy 54 years later, was among them, and is pictured in Figures 13 and 15 in a white shirt and bow tie. He had joined the PSU in June 1924 after Matteotti's kidnap, declaring it 'vigliaccheria' to remain outside the party after this event.<sup>112</sup> In his 1975 book, the Rovigo-born historian and partisan Ives Bizzi, estimated the number of mourners to be 20,000, though most sources cite around 10,000 attendees - a figure three times as large as the population of Fratta Polesine. Despite the discrepancy, Bizzi's memory testifies to the enormity of the event, which took over the small town completely (Figure 14).<sup>113</sup> People arrived in Fratta on foot, crossing through fields to evade

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<sup>111</sup> Untitled Photograph of Train Carrying Matteotti's Body, Fondazione Nenni, Archivio Fotografico Matteotti. The image is reproduced with thanks to the Fondazione Nenni.

<sup>112</sup> Sandro Pertini, '*Lettera di Pertini alla segreteria PSU di Savona*', June 1924 <<http://fondazionematteotti.altervista.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Immagini-e-documenti.compressed.pdf>> [accessed 24 January 2018].

<sup>113</sup> Untitled Photograph of Funeral Procession in Fratta Polesine, 21 August 1924, Fondazione Nenni, Archivio Fotografico Matteotti. The image is reproduced with thanks to the Fondazione Nenni.

Blackshirts, who tried to stop crowds from forming.<sup>114</sup> Though the Rovigo chief of police had given orders that no socialist symbols be worn on the day, mourners gathered with red flowers and socialist flags.<sup>115</sup> Figures from the PSU, opposition deputies and regional councillors joined workers to form a procession through the town towards the cemetery. Those leading the procession carried staffs displaying the Camera dei Deputati logo (Figure 15).<sup>116</sup> Some kissed and placed flowers upon the coffin as it was carried past them, while others waved the commemorative flags they had made for the occasion.

Lino Rizzieri – who would become a partisan in the Polesine resistance, and later a regional councillor, then senator, for the PSI – described the moment Matteotti's coffin was lifted and his widow appeared:

È stato il momento in cui, nel silenzio generale, si è sentito il sacrificio di un martire che diventava simbolo di libertà e che richiamava tutti al dovere, non dico di vendicarlo, ma certo di combattere perché fossero restituiti al popolo italiano i suoi diritti, calpestati dal fascismo.<sup>117</sup>

Rizzieri's description draws on the vocabulary of religion ('sacrificio', martire') and politics ('libertà', diritti'), and refers to mourners' duty ('dovere') to continue to fight for freedom in Matteotti's name. The event she refers to – the funeral – had a higher function than simply remembering a victim. Commemoration was to translate into civic action. Consider briefly the narratives identified by Bellah in his analysis of civil religion in America. Bellah argues that various presidential speeches served to define the role of citizens in society as that of doing God's work by following the elected institutions of government and the president (whose allegiance is ultimately to God from the moment of the oath of office and the undertaking of duty in with God as the witness).<sup>118</sup> As such, Bellah argues, the president acts as an intermediary who guides citizens in their duty. In this case, however, it is Matteotti's memory that

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<sup>114</sup> Ives Bizzi, *Da Matteotti a Villamarzana: 30 anni di lotte nel Polesine (1915-1945)* (Treviso: Giacobino, 1975), p. 155.

<sup>115</sup> Caretti, *Il delitto Matteotti*, p. 83.

<sup>116</sup> Untitled Photograph of Matteotti's Casket Being Carried into the Cemetery, 21 August 1924, Fondazione Nenni, Archivio Fotografico Matteotti. The image is reproduced with thanks to the Fondazione Nenni.

<sup>117</sup> Bizzi, pp. 155–56.

<sup>118</sup> Robert N. Bellah, 'Civil Religion in America', *Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 96.1, Religion in America (1967), 1–21.

guides citizens in their duty, and not a living state figure. The deification of political leadership was underway in Italy; Mussolini presented himself as a link between man and God, as Gentile's analysis of Fascism as a civil religion shows, with some journalists and ministers even going as far as calling him God directly.<sup>119</sup> The emerging antifascist movement needed its own symbolic figurehead. Matteotti embodied the values of liberty and democracy, and was commemorated as a martyr of the nation they wished to build, as the following chapters will show. Parallels can be drawn here with the example of Abraham Lincoln; like Matteotti, his martyrdom occurred at a time of national conflict, and the notion of sacrifice in the name of a better nation was emphasised in his commemoration.<sup>120</sup> Lincoln, however, could immediately be mourned as a national martyr, with the support of the state. Matteotti's memory was confined to those who opposed the state. His position as a national martyr would not come for more than two decades.

This mixing of religious and political signifiers was also evident in the commemorative practices adopted by those unable to attend the ceremony, some of whom sent fragments of their belongings to the funeral. One lady from Livorno sent a section of a red flag belonging to a group of Livornese women to Velia, with an accompanying note: 'la preghiamo di mettere questo pezzo di rossa bandiera più vicino che può alla bara del Martire. Un giorno verremo tutti in pellegrinaggio devoto a ringraziare.'<sup>121</sup> These objects were sent to the martyr's body, reversing the usual tradition whereby items relics are typically taken from the martyr and into private possession. The tomb in which Matteotti was buried became a reliquary of sorts, but one that combined the martyred body with signifiers of socialism.

This sacralisation of the ideology had long featured in socialist culture. In *Politics as Religion*, Gentile addresses the way the creation of mass movements – particularly socialism – contributed to the sacralisation of politics.<sup>122</sup> These movements drew on the religious tradition, including symbols and rituals, 'giving rise to new fideistic relations between the masses and their leaders.'<sup>123</sup> Myth, symbols and rituals had become a core component of ideology, and the pursuit of ideological aims became an all-encompassing way of life that intended to bring

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<sup>119</sup> Emilio Gentile, *Politics as Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 100.

<sup>120</sup> See: Bellah, 'Civil Religion in America'.

<sup>121</sup> Caretti, *Matteotti. Il mito*, pp. 236–37.

<sup>122</sup> Gentile, *Politics as Religion*, p. 31.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

about a new civilization.<sup>124</sup> As we see through analysis of Matteotti's funeral, he was upheld as the (spectral) leader for the socialist masses and his sacrifice was represented as a step towards the renewal of the Italian nation. Suggestions of an emerging civil religion based around Matteotti's memory, which would find its fullest expression in Italy after liberation, were made immediately after his death.

All shops in Fratta were closed, and posters displayed around the town that declared a period of national mourning, testifying to the perceived significance of the death for the nation.<sup>125</sup> Once the casket arrived in the cemetery, mourners climbed over the cemetery wall to get closer while others knelt in reverence as the casket passed by (Figure 16).<sup>126</sup> Matteotti's remains were initially housed in a tomb owned by family friend Giuseppe Trevisan. It was guarded day and night by police and became a site of pilgrimage, even though mourners knew the authorities were recording details (like car number-plates, age, appearance, and assumed social class).<sup>127</sup> Guards were surprised to see that wealthy Italians also came to pay their respects, laying wreaths and writing messages on the cemetery gates.<sup>128</sup> A sign of the regime's concern about this emerging site of pilgrimage, a permanent structure to house guards was built in 1925 and the close recording of visitors' details continued until the second half of 1926. Looser surveillance lasted throughout the *ventennio*, but it was tightened around the anniversaries of the kidnap.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> 'Sgr. Matteotti's Funeral', *The Times*, 22 August 1924, p. 10.

<sup>126</sup> Untitled Photograph of the Funeral Procession Arriving in Fratta Cemetery, 21 August 1924, Fondazione Nenni, Archivio Fotografico Matteotti. The image is reproduced with thanks to the Fondazione Nenni.

<sup>127</sup> Zaghi, p. 113.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p. 114.





**Figure 14: The funeral procession carries Matteotti's body through Fratta**



**Figure 15: Matteotti's casket is carried into the cemetery**



**Figure 16: Mourners kneel (left) as the coffin is carried into Fratta cemetery**

Many elements of a civil religion were evident at Matteotti's funeral, which blended the iconography and rituals of Catholicism and socialism; from the presence of political leaders beside clergyman to the laying of red flowers symbolising socialism as mourners knelt in prayer, and the ritualistic procession of his casket through his hometown. This blending of religious and political ritual and iconography was not unique to commemoration of Matteotti. Gentile's work shows the quasi-religious framework of socialist culture predated Matteotti's death, and therefore the intertwining of the civic and religious realm was part of the movement's propaganda. The *delitto* included many elements of classic martyrdom, including a period of physical suffering, and those that were missing (such as the final expression of the martyr's values during the fatal confrontation) were nonetheless incorporated into the martyrological narrative. It therefore fitted easily within the existing quasi-religious culture that socialism had drawn upon in much of its propaganda. It was both the timing and symbolism of Matteotti's death that made his martyrdom so strong. The story's symbolic capital was clear, and the rituals and narratives were familiar to the primary community of mourning. His memory as a martyr could be evoked in direct opposition to the cult of personality Mussolini was constructing, and this diametric opposition would be clear in Italy's postwar commemoration of Matteotti analysed in chapter 8.

## Memory in domestic spaces

As an ideology built on myth and rituals, Mussolini's regime was, unsurprisingly, quick to ban public commemoration of its first prominent opponent. Though public rituals of memory became impossible, commemoration took place in domestic spaces across Italy. Velia received swathes of letters requesting photographs of her husband for inclusion in private shrines within the home. The most common image was a posed portrait of Matteotti in a suit, with his head turned to camera (Figure 17).<sup>130</sup> Thought to be his original parliamentary portrait, it was published throughout the country in commemorative pamphlets and newspaper articles, and Italians would cut it out for inclusion in domestic shrines. Portraits were placed beside votive candles and flowers. The centrality of a portrait of Matteotti as a parliamentarian is interesting; it suggests that what was being mourned was both Matteotti and democracy itself. Writing to Velia from Marmore di Terni on 26 June 1924, one woman described the position of Matteotti's photo within her home: 'come l'ho tenuto fin dai primi giorni, in un luogo di preghiera, nella casa ove abito e dove spesso arde una lampadina, la fotografia ch'io tagliai da un giornale "Il Messaggero", raffigurante il Nostro Grande Martire.'<sup>131</sup> Another unknown letter-writer requested a photo so that they might offer it flowers and ask for guidance, as one would a saint in a shrine.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Untitled Portrait of Giacomo Matteotti, Undated, Fondazione Nenni, Archivio Fotografico Matteotti. The image is reproduced with thanks to the Fondazione Nenni.

<sup>131</sup> Caretti, *Matteotti. Il mito*, p. 226.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 231.



**Figure 17: Parliamentary portrait of Giacomo Matteotti**

These images contributed to the development of what Caretti terms a ‘culto dell’immagine matteottiana’, highlighting the centrality of the individual (rather than wider movement) through the use of the term ‘cult’.<sup>133</sup> A staff member at the Museo Storico della Liberazione in Rome told me his parents had told him about the pervasiveness of Matteotti’s image as a symbol of antifascist resistance, and explained that many Italians had large framed portraits of Matteotti hanging on the walls that they would turn around to become a portrait of Mussolini, should a Fascist sympathiser come inside. Whether or not this practice was widespread, the anecdote and the swathes of letters sent to Velia suggest that Matteotti’s image was a particularly prominent component of clandestine antifascist memory during the *ventennio*, and he quickly emerged as the movement’s most important martyr. As this case study will suggest, this is likely a result of timing. Matteotti’s martyrdom occurred at a time when antifascist resistance was beginning to emerge in response to the regime’s turn to dictatorship; his image was thus a timely symbol to unite the movement, and inspire small, daily acts of resistance in domestic spaces.

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., p. 237.

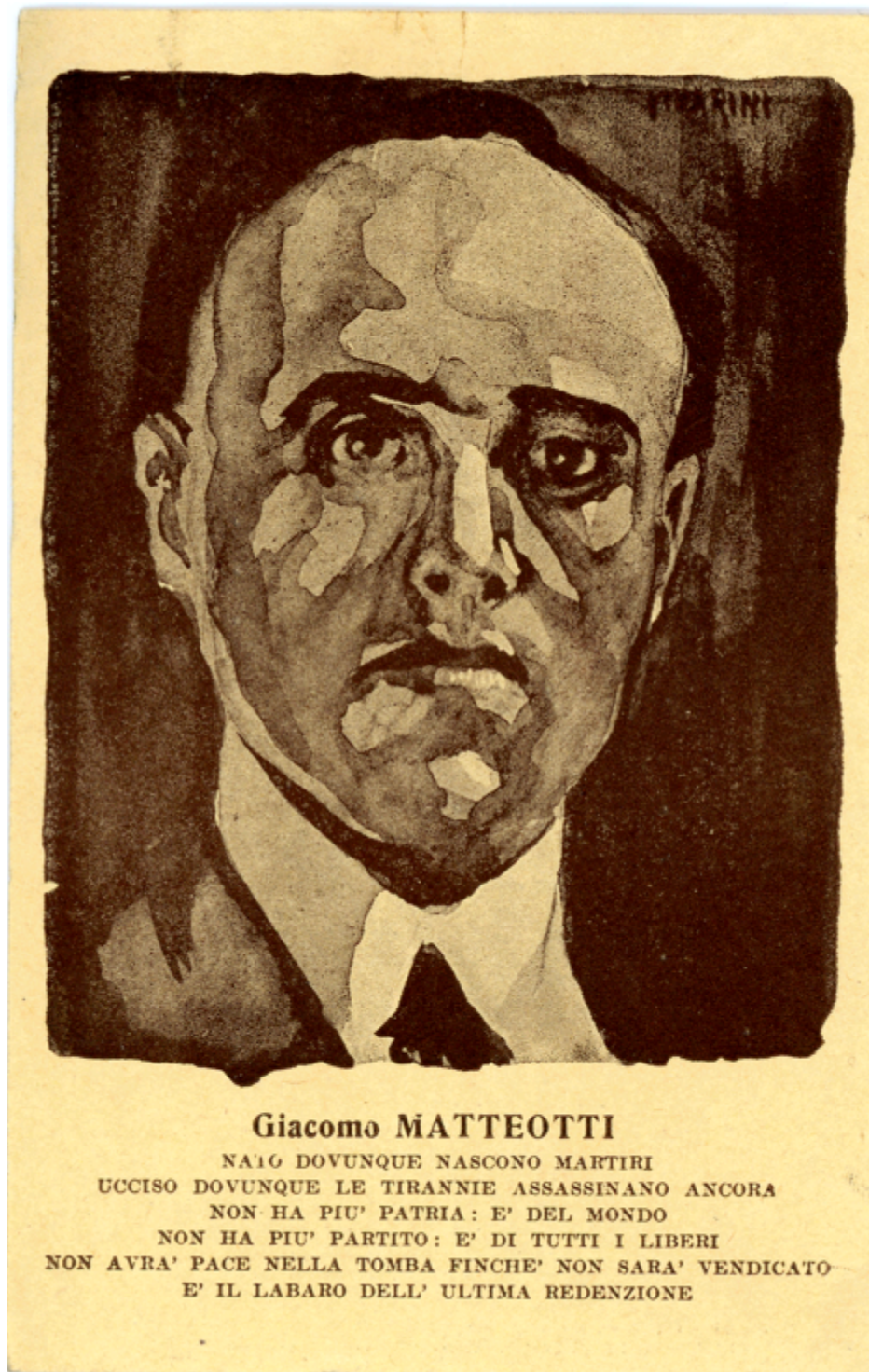


Figure 18: A commemorative postcard produced in Paris and sent to New York

Commemorative postcards featuring Matteotti's image were also produced outside of Italy by antifascist organisations, and found as far away as America

(Figure 18).<sup>134</sup> The majority of these cards also included his name and date of death. Given their use in private shrines, they were reminiscent of the *santini* prayer cards in both form and function. *Santini* - the small, mass-produced devotional images of saints - are part of the visual culture of Roman Catholicism, and typically include a prayer on the reverse. In the case of Matteotti cards, however, rather than a prayer, variations of Matteotti's final words were quoted. As already analysed, these words took root in collective imagination prior to the discovery of Matteotti's body. Their inclusion on the *santini*-style prayer cards reflects the way religious language and iconography were used to represent his sacrifice as one in the name of socialism ('VIVA IL SOCIALISMO!'). As we will see in the next chapter, this narrative featured in memorial activity around the world.

Worship of this image was not without risk. Writing to Velia on 13 July 1925, Elena Borghi explained that she and a colleague had lost their jobs (after seven years' employment) for commemorating Matteotti.<sup>135</sup> Nevertheless, she retained a small shrine to him in her home. Matteotti's image continued to attract the attention of the regime until the fall of Fascism. To give one example, a copy of the aforementioned pamphlet by the family lawyer Modigliani, *Perché l'opposizione non è a Chieti*, bore Matteotti's portrait on the front cover. A copy of the pamphlet is held in police files in the Bologna state archive. In an (unsuccessful) attempt to evade police interception, the sender had glued a commemorative postcard of a dead cardinal and a photograph of a woman to the front of the pamphlet to hide Matteotti's image.<sup>136</sup> Matteotti's image in domestic shrines allowed for on-going expressions of private resistance against the regime, at a time when Italians would be punished for declaring resistance publically. According to Caretti, in the years 1926-1929, people were arrested, exiled or referred to special tribunals for singing songs, possessing

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<sup>134</sup> E Cecconi, 'Commemorative postcard sent from E. Cecconi in Paris to Fred Celli in New York', 27 February 1929, Immigration History Research Center Archive, University of Minnesota, Fred Celli Papers, Box 1. The image is reproduced with thanks to the IHRCA.

<sup>135</sup> Caretti, *Matteotti. Il mito*, p. 309.

<sup>136</sup> Emanuele Modigliani, 'Il delitto Matteotti. Perché l'opposizione non è a Chieti', 1926, Archivio di Stato di Bologna, Gabinetto di Prefettura, anno 1926, busta 1435, categoria 7, fascicolo 'Scomparsa dell'onorevole Matteotti (varie)'. With thanks to Enrico Pontieri for drawing my attention to this.

pamphlets, or writing slogans relating to Matteotti.<sup>137</sup> They were also penalised for possessing photographs, drawings, medallions or stamps with his image.<sup>138</sup>

### **Conclusion: public protest, private resistance**

On 10 June 1925, Florentines woke to see Matteotti's image suspended from telephone lines across the Arno. The night before, on the eve of the first anniversary of his kidnap, the local branch of the antifascist organisation Italia Libera (Free Italy, IL) had hung a sheet with his portrait on it across the river that cut through the city.<sup>139</sup> Throughout the country, commemorative publications were printed in time to mark the first anniversary.<sup>140</sup> These spontaneous, guerrilla acts of memory took place away from the watchful eye of the regime, but they were an integral part of antifascist resistance. Similarly, as the regime strengthened its grip on Italy (and set its sight on foreign expansion), these acts of memory became an important part of the international fight against Fascism and took place as far away New York – almost 6,900 kilometres from the site of Matteotti's kidnap.<sup>141</sup>

By the first anniversary, the sacralisation of Matteotti's memory was clear. Some mourners compared his suffering to that of Christ; one letter to Velia that year stated: 'Il suo nome sarà tramandato ai posteri come quello di Gesù Cristo.'<sup>142</sup> In a letter in 1925, a Sicilian priest explained his decision to travel to Rome to commemorate Matteotti on the Arnaldo da Brescia; finding access to the site barred by Blackshirts, he decided instead to commemorate Matteotti at the Corpus Domini celebration the following day.<sup>143</sup> An edition of the antifascist paper *Non Mollare* published on the first anniversary opened: 'Milioni di italiani commemorano oggi nel

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<sup>137</sup> Caretti, *Il delitto Matteotti*, pp. 168–69.

<sup>138</sup> Arrests continued until the mid-1930s, when support for the regime reached an apex with the invasion of Ethiopia, with an impact on the prevalence of Matteotti's image. See: Caretti, *Il delitto Matteotti*, p. 172.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>140</sup> See, for example: *Giacomo Matteotti: nel I anniversario del suo martirio*, a cura del Comitato centrale delle opposizioni. (Bologna: Arnaldo Forni Editore, 1976).

<sup>141</sup> In an oral history interview with Guido Calabresi, the Italian American judge recounted his father's memory from the first anniversary of Matteotti's death. On 10 June 1925, his father laid a wreath for Matteotti at the Garibaldi monument in New York, and was violently beaten by Fascist sympathisers who watched the ritual. See: Judge Guido Calabresi, Oral history interview with Guido Calabresi, 2017, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Oral History Branch, RG-50.030\*0942 <<https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn562647>> [accessed 29 November 2017].

<sup>142</sup> Caretti, *Matteotti. Il mito*, p. 241.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 309.

chiuso del loro cuore la memoria di Colui che in sè riassume gli infiniti patimenti, le persecuzioni, il martirologio del popolo italiano.’<sup>144</sup> Matteotti’s death had become symbolic of the suffering of the Italian people in the way that Jesus’s death was considered to have occurred for the salvation of all, a theme I will return to in the thesis conclusion. This extrapolation of collective meaning from individual death sustained Matteotti’s ascent to the position of national martyr in postwar Italy, as chapter 8 will show.

With the mutilation of the body, the legendary final confrontation, and the private quality of remembrance, many qualities of Matteotti’s martyrdom were in line with the religious martyr paradigm. This was not simply because Italy was a Catholic country, and therefore held religious rituals of remembrance within its cultural framework. Rather, socialist iconography had appropriated that of the Church, and thus the party faithful commemorated Matteotti in religious terms. This approach had served to position socialism as much more than an ideology; it was a faith, a way of life, as this chapter has already addressed. However, the most significant contributor to the sanctification of Matteotti’s memory was the fact that memory had been banned by the regime and remembrance therefore *had* to be a private affair (or one confined to a very specific group), and therefore became an act of cloistered resistance. Had commemoration been permitted in public, it seems unlikely that many Italians would have kept portraits of Matteotti in their homes for the duration of the *ventennio*, when they could simply have visited the site of his kidnap. As a result of the ban, commemoration took on many of the qualities of religious worship: the relationship between the individual and the idol was largely private (confined to domestic shrines, for example), worship was ritualistic (involving pilgrimage and prayer), and a specific iconography lay at its heart. Matteotti had become a guiding force for the suffering people, in the way that the faithful were custodians of Christ’s memory. Rather than ensuring oblivion, Mussolini’s reaction had created Italy’s first antifascist martyr.

The simultaneity of Matteotti’s death and the dawn of dictatorship meant he would be upheld as Mussolini’s antithesis. As dictatorship became embedded in Italian society, so too did Matteotti’s memory. Commemoration continued throughout the *ventennio* and on every anniversary of Matteotti’s kidnap commemorative graffiti would appear throughout the country. One young man from

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<sup>144</sup> ‘Numero speciale per Matteotti’, *Supplemento Straordinario Di Non Mollare* (Bolletino Di Informazioni Durante Il Regime Fascista), June 1925, p.1.



Faenza was arrested for having left notes stating ‘VIVA MATTEOTTI!’ on the tomb of dead Fascists in the local cemetery.<sup>145</sup> Acts of memory were an expression of resistance, and martyrdom became a means of symbolically fighting the regime in Italy. But though Italians could not openly commemorate Matteotti, resorting to either guerrilla acts of memory or private, domestic reverence, international antifascists were able to build monuments, hold ceremonies and publish commemorative material, as the next two chapters will show.

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<sup>145</sup> *Giacomo Matteotti: la vita per la democrazia: atti del XVI Convegno di Studi Storici, Rapporti Polesine e Cultura Padana* (Minelliana, 1993), pp. 208–10.

## Chapter 6

### The Global Response to Matteotti's Martyrdom

In July 1927, a statue of Matteotti was dedicated to all emigrant Italian socialists and workers in the Casa del Pueblo, Buenos Aires.<sup>1</sup> It had been sculpted by the socialist deputy and sculptor Gaetano Zirardini in October 1925, and showed Matteotti in parliament and the words 'il socialismo non muore'. In a letter to Matteotti's wife, Zirardini explained that he planned to cast his work in bronze in the coming days, and send it to Buenos Aires, 'dove gli italiani colà residenti - socialisti e amanti della libertà - vogliono segnalare la gloria del grande Martire.'<sup>2</sup> Buenos Aires was also home to the Circolo di Studi Sociali e Ricreazione Giacomo Matteotti, which was established in early 1925 and had links with the PSU in Italy. Almost two years would pass before Zirardini's statue made it to Buenos Aires. On the 29<sup>th</sup> December 1925, Fascist sympathisers broke into the Zirardini's studio and stole the sculpture. It was retrieved at a later date, and sent (clandestinely) to Argentina.

Though the regime continued to keep a watchful eye on commemoration of Matteotti, his memory spread around the world during the *ventennio*. Sometimes memorial initiatives were designed in Italy, as in the case of Zirardini's sculpture, and unveiled abroad, but often international antifascist communities took it upon themselves to commemorate Matteotti. Outside of Italy, commemoration of Matteotti was public, persistent and popular. It occurred as far away as Australia, the United States, and Venezuela, and closer to home in European cities including Vienna, Paris and London. The depth and breadth of international commemoration of Matteotti has been totally underestimated by scholars, and this shortcoming has resulted in a general understanding that memory work was clandestine and confined to domestic spaces, as was the case in Italy. The following two chapters will overturn that understanding.

Until now, scholars of Italian American antifascism such as John Diggins and Charles Zappia have briefly mentioned Matteotti in the context of the violent clashes between Fascists and antifascists at public demonstrations in the United States, but

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<sup>1</sup> Nicola Cilla, 'La memoria di Giacomo Matteotti fra i proletari di tutto il mondo', *Avanti!*, 10 June 1964, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Caretti, *Matteotti. Il mito*, p. 276

his memory is not a focus.<sup>3</sup> In *Matteotti: Il mito* Caretti's substantial collection of archival sources relating to Matteotti's memory includes commemorative material from abroad, but the little analysis of the material there is confined to the introduction.<sup>4</sup> His earlier work, *Il delitto Matteotti: storia e memoria*, includes a chapter on international commemoration, but it presents numerous archival sources to convey the breath of commemoration, rather than engaging with the material itself.<sup>5</sup> A published collection of papers given at the XVI Convegno di Studi Storici in Padova in 1990 includes four pieces on the European media response to Matteotti's death, but the scope is narrow and articles are more concerned with media analysis than the role media played in popular commemoration.<sup>6</sup> Finally, although Pellegrino Nazzaro has dedicated the fourth chapter of his book *Fascist and Anti-Fascist Propaganda in America: the Dispatches of Italian Ambassador Gelasio Caetani* to Fascism in America after Matteotti's murder, the emphasis is on how the *delitto* shaped diplomacy and international relations, rather than public reaction to the loss of Matteotti.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, his earlier work on the American media reaction to Matteotti's murder provides an overview of the media's attitude towards the Fascist regime rather than its response to the *delitto* itself.<sup>8</sup>

My analysis addresses this significant gap in scholarship. This chapter will compare the rhetoric used by antifascists outside of Italy, focusing primarily on commemoration in Europe (though some examples will be given from further afield in order to illustrate the breadth of international commemoration). I will break my analysis down into several categories: socialist parties, international socialist organisations, exiled antifascists and groups established by Italians living abroad. These individuals, parties and organisations were all antifascist, but by analysing these categories separately I will show that each distinct narrative was constructed

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<sup>3</sup> See: John Patrick Diggins, 'The Italo-American Anti-Fascist Opposition', *The Journal of American History*, 54.3 (1967), 579–98 (p. 584); Charles A. Zappia, "From Working-Class Radicalism to Cold War Anti-Communism: The Case of the Italian Locals of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union" in *The Lost World of Italian American Radicalism: Politics, Labor, and Culture*. Ed. Philip V. Cannistraro (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2003), pp. 143–59 (p. 148).

<sup>4</sup> Caretti, *Matteotti. Il mito*, pp. 68–71.

<sup>5</sup> Caretti, *Il delitto Matteotti*, pp. 135–62.

<sup>6</sup> *Giacomo Matteotti: la vita per la democrazia: atti del XVI Convegno di Studi Storici, Rapporti Polesine e Cultura Padana* (Minelliana, 1993).

<sup>7</sup> Pellegrino Nazzaro, *Fascist and Anti-Fascist Propaganda in America: The Dispatches of Italian Ambassador Gelasio Caetani* (Youngstown, N.Y: Cambria Press, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 50–65

to suit specific socio-political needs. Matteotti's martyrdom was multifaceted. For many democratic socialist parties and related socialist organisations, for example, he served as a paradigm of peaceful self-sacrifice to encourage commitment to reformist social democracy, which had taken hold in interwar Europe. These groups tended to draw on pacifist, liturgical language to inspire commitment to the socialist ideology and position Matteotti within a wider canon of socialist martyrs. However, exiled antifascists, and antifascist organisations for Italians living abroad, commemorated Matteotti in more bellicose terms, turning mourners into warriors. These categories cannot always be neatly divided, nor can the various narratives be confined to each distinct group; nevertheless there are overall trends that I will analyse because they have significant repercussions for our understanding of the role of the martyr in political conflict.

Chapter 7 will use the United States as a case study to examine the role of the diaspora in transmitting memory of an Italian martyr to new territories. By examining the work of memory agents in the United States, the chapter will analyse the transnational quality of memory, whereby memory is influenced by Italy *and* the host country in order to serve the specific needs of Italians living in the United States. Together, the chapters will present the national, international and transnational spheres of remembrance, showing how they interlock and influence one another. I will show that Matteotti's memory was central in the establishment of what Killinger terms 'antifascism-in-exile'.<sup>9</sup> It is essential to look outside of Italy to understand the antifascist movement. Antifascism was transnational; though it was firmly tied to one nation – Italy – it was organised by exiles living abroad, and therefore influenced by other nation states. Italian borders did not contain antifascism. Many prominent antifascists were forced to flee Italy – hence the term *fuoriuscito* to describe Italians living in exile for political reasons – and subsequently moved from country to country, maintaining political and familial ties with Italy. The following two chapters will therefore show that memory formed part of the antifascist resistance immediately and on a global scale, and not only in the later militarised stages of the Italian Resistance.

### **The theoretical framework**

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<sup>9</sup> See: Charles Killinger, 'Gaetano Salvemini: Antifascism in Thought and Action', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 15.5 (2010), 657–77.

There is no existing literature on international commemoration of Matteotti, aside from the brief mentions in the works cited above. Two major theories are relevant to my analysis here: Levy and Sznajder's cosmopolitan memory, and Rothberg's multidirectional memory. In their work on cosmopolitan memory - examined closely in the thesis introduction - Levy and Sznajder suggest that the emergence of Holocaust memory led to global issues being digested locally.<sup>10</sup> I will extend Levy and Sznajder's cosmopolitan memory theory back to the 1920s, showing that memory was de-territorialised and given an ethical function in the wake of the Matteotti affair. This de-territorialisation was the result of the mnemonic labour of a global community of memory agents, which responded in a manner that shows the resonance of the *delitto* around the world. The global spread is particularly striking given the lack of technology in the 1920s, which is often a feature of globalised memory today. The analysis in this chapter will also draw on elements of Rothberg's theory of multidirectional memory, as outlined in the thesis introduction. In his work, Rothberg describes memory as 'subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and non privative.'<sup>11</sup> Multidirectional memory creates a space in which 'remembrance both cuts across and binds together diverse spatial, temporal, and cultural sites.'<sup>12</sup> It builds 'solidarity out of specificities, overlaps and echoes of different historical experiences.'<sup>13</sup> The same can also be said for international commemoration of Matteotti, as we shall see.

### **Extending solidarity through multidirectional memory**

I will begin my analysis with the response of international socialist parties to Matteotti's death. Shortly after his kidnap, Matteotti's wife, Velia, and his party received a large number of condolence letters from socialist parties and figures. The most frequently used word in these letters is 'dolore', which occurs in 18 of the 43 letters that were sent by Italian socialist parties and collected by Caretti.<sup>14</sup> The word also featured prominently in correspondence from international socialists; the

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<sup>10</sup> See; Daniel Levy and Natan Sznajder, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006); Levy and Sznajder, 'Memory Unbound', pp. 86-106.

<sup>11</sup> Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15

<sup>14</sup> Caretti, *Matteotti. Il mito*, pp. 141-49.

French *Parti Socialiste* writes of ‘douleur fraternelle’;<sup>15</sup> the Swiss Socialist party spoke of ‘leur douleur et de leur révolte’;<sup>16</sup> and socialist representatives of the Czechoslovakian parliament expressed ‘il suo dolore e spavento’.<sup>17</sup> Pain also featured in letters from socialists in the Netherlands,<sup>18</sup> Hungary,<sup>19</sup> and France.<sup>20</sup> The impact of Matteotti’s death was felt throughout the international socialist community, as the Yugoslavian Socialist Party explains: ‘irreparabile perdita che ha colpito non solo il movimento socialista italiano, bensì tutta l’Internazionale socialista’.<sup>21</sup>

Many international letter-writers pointed to a particular understanding of Italy’s suffering having lost their own national martyrs. In France, for example, Matteotti was compared with Jean Jaurès, co-founder of the French Socialist Party, journalist and historian.<sup>22</sup> A prominent anti-war activist, a nationalist fanatic shot Jaurès in 1914. His remains were moved to the Panthéon, the national mausoleum, in 1924 in a spectacular ritual designed by the state to prevent the descent of France into civil war by honouring the left’s iconic martyr.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, in a letter written by the Hungarian leader József Farkas shortly after Matteotti’s kidnap, Farkas linked Matteotti’s death with that of Béla Somogyi, the Jewish editor of the journal of the Social Democratic Party who was abducted and murdered in 1920: ‘Conosciamo questo stile della controrivoluzione da nostra esperienza. Vili assassini uccisero di modo molto somigliante nostro compagno Somogyi e perciò risentiamo più direttamente vostro dolore.’<sup>24</sup> A prominent critic of Hungary’s White Terror – a period of repressive violence during the country’s communist republic – Somogyi was killed by counter-revolutionary soldiers in 1919.<sup>25</sup>

International socialist parties created solidarity through the affective ties of shared experience. Memory was non-competitive, as in Rothberg’s theory of multidirectional memory, creating solidarity through shared national experiences of

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 206.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 207.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.208.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 219.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Il y a treize ans, était assassiné Matteotti’, *Le Front comtois: organe du Front populaire de Dole et de la région*, 19 June 1937, p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> Ben-Amos Avner, ‘La « Panthéonisation » de Jean Jaurès’, *Terrain. Anthropologie & sciences humaines*, 15 (1990), 49–64.

<sup>24</sup> Caretti, *Matteotti. Il mito*, p.208.

<sup>25</sup> Robert Gerwarth and John Horne, *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe After the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 63.

loss. Rothberg's theory draws upon the potential for memory to create solidarity through the overlapping of distinct historical events. Its central tenet is that collective memory is not competitive, but is 'productive and non privative'. This quality, and its outcome - cross-culture solidarity - are evident here.<sup>26</sup> Matteotti's memory bound groups across space, time and culture, and different national experiences coexisted in global collective memory. Indeed, in 1925 Matteotti and Somogyi, the aforementioned Hungarian revolutionary killed in 1919, were commemorated together in a ceremony attended by 2,000 people.<sup>27</sup>

Matteotti thus took his place in the global pantheon. The Belgian socialist party summarised this sentiment: 'Groupe parlementaire socialiste Belge encore sous impression émouvante discours Matteotti au congrès Parti Ouvrier Belge à Pâques s'associe à votre douleur et flétrit crime exécration qui ajoute au nom de plus à la liste des martyrs du socialisme international.'<sup>28</sup> This understanding of his death within the wider canon continued for decades. In a 1949 article published in *La Revue socialiste*, Pierre Giraud called for greater co-operation across the left, with reference to the sacrifice of socialist figures in France, Austria, Poland and Italy. He asked: "L'idéal qui a animé Jaurès et Mattéotti, Koloman Wallish et Victor Alter, Dormoy, Dunois, Lebas et Brossolette n'est-il pas de taille à susciter nos enthousiasmes?"<sup>29</sup> This statement underlines the internationalisation of Matteotti's memory – a subject that has so far been neglected in contemporary scholarship. Furthermore, it highlights the function of this international canon of socialist martyrs; as the canon expanded, collective identity became stronger. The unifying force of the martyr was clear.

### **Iconographical representations of sacrifice**

This section will introduce one example of the iconography used to create the global canon of socialist martyrs, allowing me to interrogate the function of Matteotti's martyrdom for socialists and therefore the relationship between ideology and martyrdom. Matteotti's death was understood as more than just the loss of a prominent leader in Italian socialism, becoming instead a paradigm of sacrifice for international socialism, with the effect of strengthening collective identity – as the

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<sup>26</sup> Rothberg, p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> Caretti, *Matteotti. Il mito*, p. 383.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207.

<sup>29</sup> Pierre Giraud, 'Au Coeur de l'action ouvrière: le problème de l'efficienc', *La Revue socialiste*, 1949, 30 edition.

previous section showed – and inspiring commitment to the ideology. Since its origins, socialism has drawn on religious iconography for political purposes. Henk te Velde’s work on early socialism and twenty-first-century populism considers the origins of socialist parties in the late nineteenth century, and highlights early socialists’ uncertainty about entering formal politics having originated as ‘a party of outsiders’. He writes: ‘The religious language was connected to this phase. It signified that their movement was more than ordinary politics: it was a ‘faith’, with a ‘Messiah’ and so on.’<sup>30</sup> We see many of these qualities in socialist newspapers’ response to Matteotti’s death.



**Figure 19: De Notenkraaker**

A 1924 edition of the Dutch satirical newspaper *De Notenkraaker*, which was published weekly as a supplement to the newspaper *Het Volk* of the Social

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<sup>30</sup> Velde, p. 37.



Democratic Workers' Party, draws on religious iconography to represent Matteotti's death as a step towards the victory of international socialism. Titled *Matteotti vijf jaar geleden vermoord* (Matteotti, murdered five years ago), the cartoon (Figure 19) depicts Matteotti and Mussolini, who is labelled as 'guilty'.<sup>31</sup> Matteotti is represented in a form typically seen in portraits of the Virgin Mary; shrouded in a veil, body turned to one side, and surrounded by light. Behind him is a rising sun, with 'socialism' emblazoned across it. His death is represented as relevant for socialism as a whole, not just Italian socialism. The publication date of 1924 is interesting, as is the title of the cartoon. Taken together, they point at the expectation that within five years Matteotti's sacrifice will have brought a new dawn in socialism and that the Fascist regime will not endure. Here we see the way martyrs created through conflict within the nation have tended to be commemorated with reference to national renewal, as argued in the thesis introduction. Matteotti's martyrdom was upheld as a force for renewal and redemption. His representation as an icon points to the notion that he is a guiding force for the international socialist movement and an example of global sacrifice.

### **A martyr for the international workers' movement**

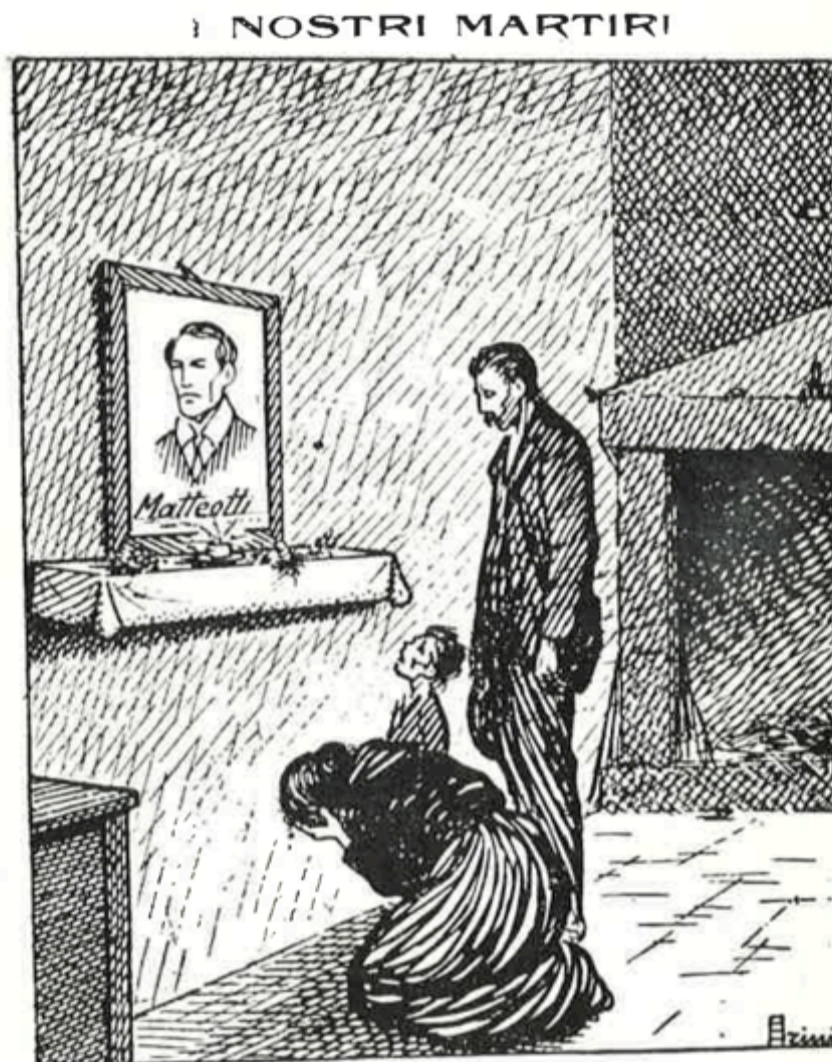
A second example builds on the use of quasi-religious imagery to inspire commitment to the movement, but positions Matteotti as a martyr for the workers in particular, rather than socialism on the whole. Of course, the two are inextricably linked, but it is worth analysing this slight nuance in order to show the flexibility of martyr memory. A cartoon by caricaturist Giuseppe Scarlini and published on page 3 of *Avanti!*, the daily publication of the PSI, on 6 July 1924 illustrates this point.<sup>32</sup> Scarlini was one of Italy's best-known satirical cartoonists, and his work featured frequently in *Avanti!*. He was attacked, arrested and detained by Fascists several times during his lifetime, but continued to publish antifascist sketches. Figure 20 shows the bare room of a house with a portrait of Matteotti standing upon a mantelpiece. A child gazes at the portrait, while the man stands with a lowered head and the woman kneels, head in hands. The bare interior of the house and the plain clothes worn by the individuals suggests this is a poor family of workers. The family

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<sup>31</sup> Victor Walle, «Matteotti vijf jaar geleden vermoord» in *Giacomo Matteotti: mostra storico-documentaria: guida e catalogo*, ed. by Mario Missori, Maria Pia Rinaldi Mariani, and Lucia Salvatori Principe (Bologna: A. Forni, 1977), p. 390.

<sup>32</sup> Giuseppe Scarlini, 'I nostri martiri', *Avanti!*, 7 June 1924, p. 3.

stand in worship of Matteotti as one might stand before a painting of a saint in a church – respectfully and reverentially. Matteotti's memory is sanctified, and his death is upheld as the ultimate sacrifice for the workers' movement.



**Figure 20: Scalarini's cartoon**

However, the clearest example of attempts to represent Matteotti as an international martyr for the workers' movement came from the Labour and Socialist International (LSI). Established in 1923, the LSI was a federation for socialist and labour parties born from the merger of the Vienna International and the Second International at a conference in Hamburg. The LSI deemed the rise of fascism one of the primary threats to the workers' movement.<sup>33</sup> Governed by an Executive

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<sup>33</sup> Labour and Socialist International, *Third Congress of the Labour and Socialist International, Brussels, 5th to 11th August, 1928. Reports and Proceedings* (Zurich;

Committee formed of elected participants, the organisation initially represented 41 parties that together counted 6 million members.<sup>34</sup> In its May Day Appeal of 1926, the Executive stated its intention 'to honour the memory of Matteotti by an external token'.<sup>35</sup> It is clear from the following statement that the construction of a monument in Italy was considered the ideal act of commemoration, but since the Fascist regime had imposed restrictions on Matteotti's commemoration, the LSI undertook the duty of memory on behalf of Italian workers. The manifesto addressed the dishonest nature of the Chieti trial and the 'enemies of the workers', adding:

But the name of Giacomo Matteotti will remain engraved in the hearts of the workers and will inspire them to follow his example of joyful work and willing sacrifice for the great cause of socialism. But the Labour and Socialist International wants to pay honour to the memory of its great martyr by an outward symbol also, and has therefore decided to erect for Giacomo Matteotti a Monument in the People's House, Brussels, in the conviction that the time cannot be far off when his monument will be able to find a place on the soil of an Italy liberated from fascism.<sup>36</sup>

On 11 September 1927, the monument to Matteotti was inaugurated at the Maison du Peuple in Brussels. Funded by the International Matteotti Fund, a fund managed by the LSI to support workers in countries without democracy, 3,858.60 Swiss Francs were spent on the construction of the Matteotti monument, which was designed by Belgian socialist sculptor War Van Asten.<sup>37</sup> It was located in the Salle Blanche, which was renamed as Salle Matteotti. The day before the ceremony, *Le Mouvement Syndical Belge*, the official newsletter of the Belgian Trade Union Commission, wrote:

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London: The Secretariat of the Labour and Socialist International, Publications Department, Labour Party, 1928), 1, Sections I–IV, p. 15.

<sup>34</sup> Bruno Naarden, *Socialist Europe and Revolutionary Russia: Perception and Prejudice 1848-1923* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 509.

<sup>35</sup> Labour and Socialist International, *Third Congress of the Labour and Socialist International*, p. 19.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Labour and Socialist International, *Fourth Congress of the Labour and Socialist International. Vienna, 1931. Reports and Proceedings*. (Zurich; London: The Secretariat of the Labour and Socialist International, Publications Department, Labour Party, 1932), p. 59.

Partout, dans tous les pays, la classe ouvrière, au rappel de son sacrifice, tendra son énergie, rassemblera ses forces pour faire reculer la réaction fasciste. Elle affirmera en ce jour solennel du 11 septembre ses aspirations vers la liberté et la paix et elle clamera, comme un avertissement aux classes dirigeantes, sa volonté de ne plus permettre qu'on tue impunément ses meilleurs défenseurs. [...] Le monument qu'on élève à Matteotti, victime et martyr, atteste hautement cette volonté prolétarienne de lutte et c'est elle qui donne à la journée du 11 septembre sa vraie signification.<sup>38</sup>

Both the LSI and the Belgian Trade Union Commission acknowledged the mobilising role of the martyr, and made reference to the collective struggle inspired by individual sacrifice. The Mattei case study also showed this dual function of the martyr for the socio-political group - commemoration of the martyr as condemnation of the opponent. This type of martyr is a unit of protest, regardless of the group's political identity. For a newly formed federation of socialist parties, this function of martyrdom was particularly useful in uniting representatives of a wide movement in protest, and inspiring ongoing political struggle.

This quality was reflected in the monument's design. Carved in white sandstone, the half relief showed a working man and woman, both with bowed heads, leaning on either side of a pillar, from which a flaming heart emerged. At the base of the column was the word LIBERTÉ. The plinth below included a carved portrait of Matteotti.<sup>39</sup> The monument suggested that Matteotti's sacrifice for the workers' movement would lead the workers to freedom. We therefore see the iconography of classical, religious martyrdom in the monument, which denoted ideas of individual sacrifice for regeneration but, given the location of the monument in front of the largest building dedicated to the workers' movement, the implied regeneration was that of the movement. There are no references to Italy on or around the monument. Matteotti was understood as an international martyr for the workers' movement, and his memory was not confined to the nation state.

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<sup>38</sup> 'Un monument à Matteotti', *Le Mouvement Syndical Belge*, 10 September 1927, p. 273 <[ftp://digital.amsab.be/pubs\\_serials/Le\\_Mouvement\\_Syndical\\_Belge\\_1918-1940/mouvsybe\\_1927/mouvsybe\\_1927\\_nr19.pdf](ftp://digital.amsab.be/pubs_serials/Le_Mouvement_Syndical_Belge_1918-1940/mouvsybe_1927/mouvsybe_1927_nr19.pdf)>.

<sup>39</sup> Labour and Socialist International, *Third Congress of the Labour and Socialist International*, p. 22.

Matteotti's death as sacrifice for the workers' movement was ritualistically reinforced during the inauguration ceremony, which was saturated by the rituals and the iconography of the left. According to the Italian American antifascist newspaper *Il Nuovo Mondo*, which will be considered in more detail in the next chapter, a train carrying prominent exiles including Filippo Turati, Claudio Treves and Pietro Nenni, arrived at the nearest station, where a large crowd greeted them. They then marched through the streets of Brussels, waving red flags and singing the international socialist anthem *L'Internationale*.<sup>40</sup> The inauguration ceremony began in front of the Maison du Peuple at 3pm and was attended by thousands. It was also opened up to larger audiences via radio broadcast. Arthur Henderson, president of the LSI Executive, gave the first address in which he commemorated those who had lost their lives fighting against Fascism and honoured Matteotti. Flemish politician Joseph Van Roosbroeck, who became treasurer of the LSI later that year, then took to the stage to remember Matteotti and accepted the monument into the care of the workers in the name of the Belgian Labour Party. As he spoke, the Belgian workers' guards walked towards the monument in a guard of honour.<sup>41</sup> The final speech was given by Filippo Turati, who had spoken at the first commemoration ceremony for Matteotti held by the opposition in Italy. He was given a long standing ovation, and crowds waved hats and handkerchiefs, throwing red flowers at his feet. Later that evening, a demonstration against Fascism took place, with speeches given by prominent figures including Léon Blum and musical performances in celebration of Matteotti.<sup>42</sup>

In his work on rituals of memory and collective identity addressed in the introduction of this thesis, Connerton examines the formation of social memory at commemoration ceremonies, and highlights the performative nature of commemoration.<sup>43</sup> As the above example of the inauguration ceremony in Brussels shows, commemoration tightened collective identity through the celebration of commitment to the workers' struggle. Unlike in the United States, where commemoration typically drew on the Italian or American national contexts only, as we will see in the next chapter, European commemoration included a range of

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<sup>40</sup> 'Il monumento a Giacomo Matteotti inaugurato a Bruxelles, con una grandiosa manifestazione operaia internazionale', *Il Nuovo Mondo*, 12 September 1927, p. 1.

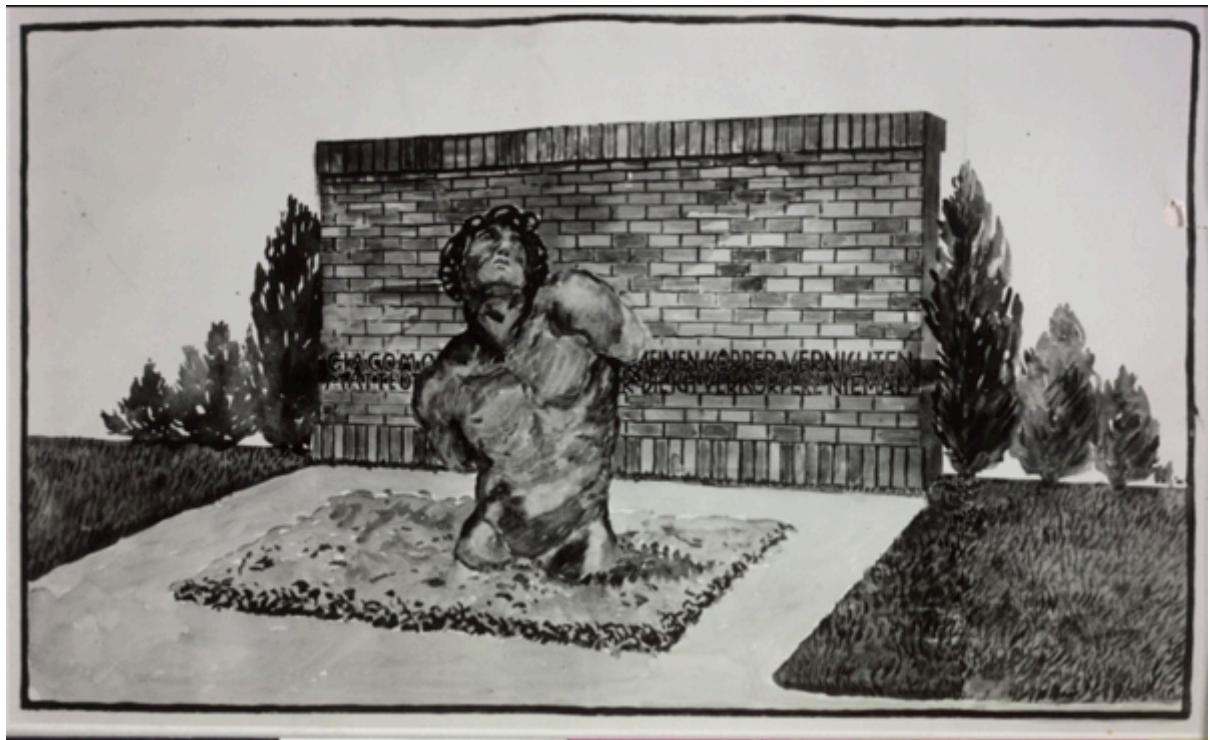
<sup>41</sup> Labour and Socialist International, *Third Congress of the Labour and Socialist International*, p. 22.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Connerton, p. 4

nations. Furthermore, the ritualistic, Belgian workers' guard of honour echoed the rituals so often performed by military forces at national commemoration ceremonies, adding recognisable formality to the ceremony and positioning the party as the overarching collective in the way the nation is upheld at annual state ceremonies. Memory was confined not by national but by political boundaries. Through rhetoric and ritual, commemoration served to reinforce group identity and Matteotti was claimed as a martyr for international socialism and the workers' movement.

However, though Matteotti was initially commemorated through structures and rituals in several nation states, the shifting priorities of various European governments would halt this spread (and later call for its return). In 1964, the Van Asten monument was removed ahead of the demolition of the Maison du Peuple in 1965. The building was replaced by a 26-storey office block. In 1970, the statue was relocated to a plinth in the gables of a house near to the Maison du Peuple of Petit-Wasmes - the workers' area of the larger village of Wasmes - in the municipality of Colfontaine, and once the home of Van Gogh. The politics of the nation state dictated the extent to which Matteotti's memory could be honoured in public space; the city authorities' focus on urban regeneration, labelled Brusselization by its critics, gave more importance to capitalist progress than the architectural and political history tied up in the Maison du Peuple. As we can see, the socio-political context of the country affected the monument, and revealed the changing prominence given to Matteotti's memory by the Belgian government. The destruction of such a central building in the international workers' movement in favour of commercial premises pointed to a shift in the nation's priorities, with implications for memorialisation of workers in public space.



**Figure 21: Mario Petrucci's design for a monument in Matteottihof**

Two further examples illustrate this shift. In 1926, Matteotti's name was given to a to a new public housing block of 452 flats in Vienna upon the orders of Karl Seitz, then mayor of Vienna and member of the Social Democratic Workers' Party. At the time, the city was known as Red Vienna as a result of the Social Democrats' majority in government and the first democratic rule of the city. Within the complex, which included a laundrette and several shops, was a bronze relief of Matteotti and a large *sgraffito* of a female figure with two children standing against a futuristic industrial landscape. On 1 August 1931 a memorial to Matteotti was unveiled at the housing complex, named Matteottihof, based upon Mario Petrucci's design (Figure 21).<sup>44</sup> Featuring a large, nude torso, the iconography of the sculpture evoked a sense of power through its similarities with Greek statues. The wall behind the sculpture included Matteotti's name, and though the full sentence cannot be read, the first line refers to the destruction of Matteotti's body and the second to the ideals he embodies. This message is likely to have been a reference to Matteotti's final words. A photograph of the inauguration ceremony (Figure 22) shows Filippo

<sup>44</sup> Mario Petrucci, *Giacomo Matteotti* [1885-1924], Bildarchiv Austria, Pf 40480: C (5) <[http://www.bildarchivaustria.at/Pages/ImageDetail.aspx?p\\_iBildID=8077751](http://www.bildarchivaustria.at/Pages/ImageDetail.aspx?p_iBildID=8077751)> [accessed 22 August 2017]. Image reproduced with thanks to ÖNB.

Turati and Emile Vandervelde, the Belgian socialist politician and statesman, sitting in the second row, underlining once again the coming together of international socialist figures in European ceremonies to honour Matteotti's memory.<sup>45</sup> The ceremony was upbeat and celebratory, with live performances from workers' orchestras who played Italian songs from the Italian labour movement such as *Bandiera Rossa*, and a number of pieces written for the occasion by non-Italians.<sup>46</sup> However, with the rise of totalitarianism in the region, and under the dictatorship of Engelbert Dollfuss and 'austrofascism', the relief of Matteotti was removed from Matteottihof and the building renamed 'Giordanihof' in 1934 to honour the Fascist martyr Giulio Giordani – considered the 'first martyr of Fascism in Bologna'<sup>47</sup> – in a gesture of alliance with Mussolini. This process of selection and rejection was evident in the graffiti on the walls of via Bibbiena, in the previous case study. However, after the Second World War and the fall of totalitarianism, the residential block in Vienna (Figure 23) was once again given Matteotti's name and the relief was restored.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Wide World Photo, *Enthüllung Einer Gedenktafel Für Giacomo Matteotti*, Bildarchiv Austria, Pz 1931 VIII 1/1/1

<[http://www.bildarchivaustria.at/Pages/ImageDetail.aspx?p\\_iBildID=10010355](http://www.bildarchivaustria.at/Pages/ImageDetail.aspx?p_iBildID=10010355)> [accessed 22 August 2017]. Image reproduced with thanks to ÖNB.

<sup>46</sup> Béla Rásky, 'Die Fest- und Feiernkultur der sozialdemokratischen Bewegung in der Ersten Republik Österreich 1918 - 1934' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Ludwig Boltzmann Institut, 1992), pp. 183–84.

<sup>47</sup> Matteo Di Figlia, 'The Shifting Evocations of Squadristo: Remembering the Massacre of Palazzo d'Accursio in Fascist Bologna', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 21.4 (2016), 584–602 (p. 591).

<sup>48</sup> Author's own photograph, *Matteottihof, Vienna*, 2017, and *Closeup of the Relief*, 2017.





Figure 22: the opening of Matteottihof



Figure 23: Matteottihof, Vienna, and a close-up of the relief, 2017

Finally, twelve years after his death, Rue Mattéoti was inaugurated in Houilles, France, in 1936.<sup>49</sup> Given Hitler's position as Chancellor in Germany by the 1930s, and the threat of the Spanish Civil War, it is unsurprising that Matteotti's memory once again came to the fore in Europe as a means of upholding antifascist values. The prominent *fuoriuscito* Giuseppe Modigliani, who lived in exile in Paris, gave the inaugural speech in the name of the Italian Socialist Party and the International Socialist movement on 7 June 1936, just a few days before the 12<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Matteotti's death. Publicity material stated: 'Toutes les organisations antifascistes françaises et Italiennes sont invitées à participer en masse à cette manifestation de solidarité antifasciste internationale.'<sup>50</sup> However, the dawn of Vichy rule in France promoted the removal of Matteotti's name from the street in Houilles.<sup>51</sup> As in Dollfuss's Austria, the country's new government opposed the values Matteotti symbolised, leading to the erasure of these permanent sites of memory.

During the *ventennio*, Matteotti's memory remained at the level of the group. That socio-political group was international, and memory spread globally, shattering the confines of the nation state. Nevertheless, the nation state continued to have the final say over memory *in its permanent form*. External stabilisers of memory were open to attack, appropriation or alteration, inserting Matteotti's monument at the centre of battles around collective memory. As we saw in the previous case study, external stabilisers of memory are often a focus for those who disagree with the values the martyr represents. We see this dynamic in the reaction of the non-socialist governments that came to power in France and Austria, which could not find shared meaning in Matteotti's martyrdom. External stabilisers of memory continued to be built, removed and restored as European politics evolved, with great implications for memory.

### **Memory as a foundation of international anti-fascism**

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<sup>49</sup> For an overview of the reaction to the delitto Matteotti in France, and close analysis of the media response, see: Michel Dreyfus, "Les Reactions en France à l'assassinat de G. Matteotti", in *Giacomo Matteotti La Vita Per La Democrazia. Atti Del XVI Convegno Di Studi Storici*, ed. by Mario Quaranta (Minelliana, 1993) pp. 247–277.

<sup>50</sup> 'A Houilles on inaugure demain une rue Matteotti', *Le Populaire*, 6 June 1936, p. 3.

<sup>51</sup> Hélène Vialles, *Tours pas à pas: ses rues, ses monuments, ses hommes célèbres* (Le Coteau: Horvath, 1985), p. 171.

So far, this chapter has addressed the religious iconography and rituals – typical features of the classic martyr paradigm – that defined international socialist commemoration of Matteotti. I will now consider the response of exiled antifascists (and explicitly antifascist groups), which were established with the primary aim of continuing the fight against Fascism from abroad. Existing scholarship has so far focused on the particularities of exiled communities in countries including Britain and the United States, for example, and the political differences that separated various strands of antifascism.<sup>52</sup> Of course, the movement was fragmented; it spread across the world, and exiled individuals often moved from country to country to fight Fascism from their new homelands, staging protests, writing subversive publications and supporting the resistance at home. With this fragmentation in mind, it is my contention that Matteotti's memory became a foundation of the international antifascist resistance, which operated outside of formal politics, and commemoration was one example of the small, daily acts of resistance that continued during the *ventennio*. Though the role of martyr memory during the partisan Resistance has been the subject of scholarship, I will argue it was a defining feature of antifascism less than two years after Mussolini's seizure of power.<sup>53</sup> The antifascist groups and exiles I analyse here commemorated Matteotti as a fallen leader and a soldier in the fight against Fascism, in line with the monumental mode of remembering addressed in the thesis introduction. This conflicts with the victim-focused narratives of cosmopolitan memory theory, and yet the central tenets of the theory are evident in international antifascist commemoration of Matteotti: memory had a 'nation-transcending dynamic', and remembrance was endowed with an ethical function as a warning against future violence.<sup>54</sup>

In order to explain this hybrid mode of remembering, part cosmopolitan and part monumental, an important temporal distinction must be made between commemoration of Matteotti and remembrance of the victims of the Holocaust – the basis of cosmopolitan memory theory. Matteotti's memory was endowed with an ethical function immediately after his death and therefore during the period of persecution. As such, memory was not 'future oriented', as Levy and Sznajder describe memory after the Holocaust, but tightly focused on the present day.

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<sup>52</sup> See, for example: Stefania Rampello, 'Italian Anti-Fascism in London, 1922-1934', *Modern Italy*, 20 (2015), 351–63; Charles Killinger, 'Gaetano Salvemini: Antifascism in Thought and Action', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 15 (2010), 657–77.

<sup>53</sup> Gundle, 'The "Civic Religion" of the Resistance in Post-War Italy'.

<sup>54</sup> Levy and Sznajder, 'Memory Unbound', p. 88.

Memory was belligerent in tone because the fight against Fascism was yet to be won; the symbolic power of memory was used as part of the battle being fought, and not in response to its conclusion. Holocaust memory could not undo Nazi genocide, but the symbolic power of Matteotti's memory could be leveraged to transform the oppressed into warriors.



**Figure 24: Language classes offered by the Matteotti League in New York**

Throughout the second half of the 1920s, antifascist organisations bearing Matteotti's name were established around the world in countries including France and Spain, and further afield in Australia, North America and Argentina. These groups organised social and political events for Italians living outside of Italy, and combined antifascist rallies with social events and, often, language lessons for the children or spouses of Italian immigrants (Figure 24).<sup>55</sup> In 1927, Isidoro Bertazzon

<sup>55</sup> 'Learn Italian Free Classes', 1938, Immigration History Research Center Archive, University of Minnesota, Albino Zattoni papers, Box 1, Folder 8. Image reproduced with thanks to the IHRCA.

These lessons were provided through President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration (WPA), a New Deal Agency designed to alleviate the

and Francesco Carmagnola, who sought to bring together Italians living in Australia to strengthen the fight against Fascism, set up the Matteotti Club in Melbourne, Australia. Figure 25 shows the Club after the May Day rally of 1928, including founders Bertazon, pictured on the far left in the second row, and Carmagnola, on the far right of the front row.<sup>56</sup> Headquartered in the Horticultural Society Hall, opposite the world's oldest trade union building Trades Hall, the Club organised political rallies and social events, provided English lessons to Italian migrant members and published the antifascist newspapers *Il Risveglio* and *La Riscossa*. Though the club was disbanded in the early 1930s, Matteotti's memory continued to symbolise the antifascist struggle for Italians in Australia. The antifascist club Casa d'Italia was officially opened on 12 June 1938, the closest Sunday to the anniversary of Matteotti's death; a photograph of the club's interior as it prepared for the Grand International Ball shows a portrait of Matteotti on the main wall, alongside Garibaldi - a martyr for the Republic in-waiting alongside a historical martyr for Italian unification.<sup>57</sup>

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Great Depression through government-subsidised infrastructure and construction projects, and the subsequent creation of jobs. A number of educational projects were also introduced as part of the scheme. In 1938, the Matteotti League organisers were surprised to discover the teacher was a Fascist sympathizer who used textbooks about Mussolini during the lessons. According to a letter sent to Albino Zattoni, one of the organisers of the Matteotti League, the teacher had direct links to a Fascist radio station operating in New York, which broadcast a program about the classes (changing the students' names only very slightly), and described the Matteotti League headquarters as 'a den of sin'.

See: Louise Esterly, '*Letter from Louise Esterly to Albino Zattoni*', 4 December 1938, Immigration History Research Center Archive, University of Minnesota, Albino Zattoni papers, Box 1, Folder 8.

<sup>56</sup> Members of the Matteotti Club and Proponents of Anti-Fascism during the May Day March, 1928., 1928, Italian Historical Society Image Collection, National Library of Australia

<<http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/157879773?q&versionId=172104413>> [accessed 7 April 2017]. Image reproduced with thanks to Co. As. It. – Italian Historical Society.

<sup>57</sup> Casa d'Italia Hall, 119 Palmerston Street Carlton, in Preparation for the Grand International Ball, 1938, Italian Historical Society Image Collection, National Library of Australia <<http://trove.nla.gov.au/version/172103055>> [accessed 7 April 2017].



**Figure 25: The Matteotti Club, Melbourne**

In 1927, the antifascist writer and essayist Mario Mariani published a short book titled *Matteotti* from Paris, where he fled after the rise of Fascism.<sup>58</sup> The first section of the book, which was part of his weekly series *I quaderni dell'antifascismo*, was written as a direct address to Mussolini, and addressed Mussolini's attempt to suppress all reaction to Matteotti's murder. He wrote: 'Ma, veda Eccellenza, un uomo si uccide, la sua memoria no.'<sup>59</sup> Mariani suggested Matteotti has come to represent all those who have died at the hands of Fascist violence, showing the abstraction of Matteotti's memory beyond his actual biography, to the point where he became representative of the entire nation. He wrote:

Ho scritto una volta che tremila Matteotti senza medaglietta giacciono sepolti e insepolti dietro le siepi, nei casolari, nei poveri camposani d'Italia. Ma essi non hanno un nome. Ella ha fatto bruciare duecento o trecento camere del lavoro, duecento o trecento cooperative, diecimila case d'avversari, ha mandato in carcere o al domicilio coatto cento mila nemici, ha costretto all'esilio mezzo

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<sup>58</sup> Mario Mariani, *Matteotti*, *I quaderni dell'antifascismo* (Paris: Cecconi, 1927).

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

milione d'uomini liberi. Ebbene tutte queste miserie, tutte queste vittime non hanno più un nome. Si chiamano Giacomo Matteotti.

Giacomo Matteotti, per l'avversa fortuna che in morte gli arrise, è diventato, on. Mussolini, IL MARTIRE IGNOTO della reazione italiana.<sup>60</sup>

Mariani's description of Matteotti as the 'martire ignoto', the unknown martyr, is important. Firstly, the label creates linguistic associations with the Unknown Soldier of the First World War, a martyrological paradigm that was understood across Europe. Matteotti was therefore extracted from a strictly Italian context and positioned within an international one. Secondly, associations with the Unknown Soldier positioned Matteotti's sacrifice within a wider, international tradition of military sacrifice. As we saw in the thesis introduction, the Unknown Soldier was the paradigm of heroic, military martyrdom. Thirdly, the Unknown Soldier reference suggests a level of abstraction, where one figure becomes representative of the whole. As the Unknown Soldier became a metonym for the harrowing losses of the First World War, Mariani's label suggested Matteotti had become a symbol of all victims of Fascism. This idea would be enacted after Italy's liberation, when institutional efforts to commemorate the victims of Fascism occurred around the symbol of Matteotti, as I will address in Chapter 8. What is important here is that Matteotti became an overarching symbol of all those who died at the hands of Fascist violence during the *ventennio* and this originated outside of Italy.

The bellicose, military association that characterised much antifascist representation of Matteotti contrasted with the more peaceful religious motifs used by socialists. This association with military valour placed memory within the monumental tradition, which was addressed closely in Chapter 1. The role of the martyr in the political battle was a recurring trope in antifascist response to Matteotti's martyrdom. The antifascist politician, historian and writer Gaetano Salvemini was one of the most prominent *fuoriusciti*. In 1925, he fled Fascist Italy under the threat of violence and spent the majority of the next ten years in France and England. While in Paris, he was part of two important antifascist groups: the

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

Concentrazione antifascista and Giustizia e Libertà (Justice and Freedom, GL).<sup>61</sup> He published *The Fascist Dictatorship in Italy* in 1927.<sup>62</sup>

Salvemini was a cornerstone of the international antifascist movement and played a pivotal role in disseminating information about the Fascist regime globally. Indeed, his 1927 book was ‘the first detailed, scholarly work on the subject’.<sup>63</sup> He convinced Giuseppe Emanuele Modigliani, acting as the lawyer for the Matteotti family as civil plaintiffs in the Chieti trial, to send him a set of the preliminary investigation documents, a copy of which he donated to the London School of Economics’ archive shortly before his move to the United States.<sup>64</sup> While in the US, he gave a series of lectures that exposed the Fascist regime, took up a position at Harvard, founded the US cell of G&L, and wrote a study of Italian Fascism in the U.S. from 1922 to 1936.<sup>65</sup> On 13 February 1926, shortly after going into exile, Salvemini wrote to Velia Matteotti from London to explain the role Matteotti’s kidnap had on his decision to engage in the antifascist fight:

Lui aveva fatto il Suo dovere: e per questo era stato ucciso. Io non avevo fatto il mio dovere: e per questo mi avevano lasciato stare. Se tutti avessimo fatto il nostro dovere, Egli non sarebbe stato ucciso. Se tutti avessimo fatto il nostro dovere, l’Italia non sarebbe stata calpestata, disonorata da una banda di assassini. Allora presi la mia decisione. Dovevo ritornare ad occupare il mio posto nella battaglia. Ed ho fatto il possibile per attenuare in me il rimorso di non avere fatto sempre tutto il mio dovere.<sup>66</sup>

Matteotti’s memory was directly linked to international antifascism and it was upheld as an inspiration to fight. Indeed, it was part of the ongoing political battle for decades after his death. An article published by G&L to mark the tenth anniversary of his murder states that no commemoration ceremonies should be held

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<sup>61</sup> Killinger, ‘Gaetano Salvemini: Antifascism in Thought and Action’, p. 661.

<sup>62</sup> Gaetano Salvemini, *The Fascist Dictatorship in Italy* (New York: Henry Holt, 1927), p. i.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 663.

<sup>64</sup> Canali, ‘The Matteotti Murder’, p. 144.

<sup>65</sup> Gaetano Salvemini, *Italian Fascist Activities in the U.S* (Washington, D.C: American Council on Public Affairs, 1940).

<sup>66</sup> Caretti, *Matteotti. Il mito*, p. 118.



since Matteotti's spirit should accompany antifascists in their everyday actions.<sup>67</sup> This idea continued into the next decade. In 1943, almost two decades after the *delitto*, antifascist leader Carlo Sforza wrote to Girolamo Valenti, an important memory agent in Italian American commemoration of Matteotti as we shall see, and stated: 'Si è perchè l'ombra di Matteotti deve continuare a combattere accanto a noi che mi limito a riferire un fatto ignoto; anche attraverso di esso il martire ci insegna la via.'<sup>68</sup> Matteotti's memory was represented as a warrior, part of the continued fight against Fascism, even 19 years after his death.

This bellicose rhetoric, which refers to battle, combat, and revenge, shows the role of Matteotti's memory in the international fight against the regime as part of what Killinger terms antifascism-in-exile. The battleground against Fascism was symbolically extended during commemoration of the first prominent antifascist martyr and ceremonies around the world were occasions to re-commit to the struggle. Correspondence from the Italian consulate describes a 1926 commemoration in Marseille, during which Arturo Vella, a member of the PSI and *fuoriuscito*, told participants that he had: 'trovato il modo di accennare alla morte di Matteotti e al Regime di oppressione che vige in Italia, per invitare i compagni a perseverare nella lotta contro il fascismo.'<sup>69</sup> Similarly, shortly after his kidnap, the Aquila section of IL wrote to Velia to reaffirm its commitment to the fight against Fascism, stating that it was prepared to fight until death in defence of democracy: 'Combattenti Italia Libera dell'Aquila degli Abruzzi si inchinano reverenti, commossi nuovo grande Martire Libertà, rinnovando giuramento lottare fino alla morte per trionfo idealità democratiche.'<sup>70</sup> The importance of his memory to the fight was evident almost immediately. Writing to Velia a few days after the kidnap, Amilcare Locatelli, who wrote for *Avanti!* under the name Travet Rosso, said: "Il proletario non dimentica. Il nome di Matteotti diventa un vessillo nella lotta per la libertà [...]".<sup>71</sup>

I will now briefly introduce an example from the American context. Though the response of Italo-American communities will be considered closely in the next

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<sup>67</sup> 'Niente commemorazioni: lo spirito di Matteotti dev'essere negli atti nostri di ogni giorno', *Giustizia e Libertà*, 8 June 1934, p. 1.

<sup>68</sup> Carlo Sforza to Girolamo Valenti, '*Matteotti morendo ha vinto*', Undated 1943, Girolamo Valenti Papers, Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives.

<sup>69</sup> Caretti, *Matteotti. Il mito*, p. 384.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

chapter, the following example shows the extent to which commemoration was linked to the fight against Fascism by antifascist organisations operating outside of institutional politics. Publicity material for a 1927 commemoration of Matteotti in New York printed in the antifascist daily *Il Nuovo Mondo* calls for attendees to do their duty and honour the dead in preparation for the liberation of Italy. It closes with: ‘Chi manca è un disertore.’<sup>72</sup> The application of the label deserter to anyone who fails to honour Matteotti’s memory is dramatic and significant; it put memory onto the battlefield. Failure to remember was equated with failure to commit to the ongoing struggle. Commemoration provided the opportunity to cement commitment to the movement in this distant territory - a very useful occasion given the fragmented nature of the antifascist movement, which was forced out of Italy itself - but it was also a symbolic part of the battle.

Finally, Matteotti’s memory literally became a war cry when revolutionaries adopted it during the Spanish Civil War. In 1936, José Santacreu wrote the text to the Himno del Batallón Matteotti:<sup>73</sup>

Audaces, bravos leones,  
guerreros come el buen Cid,  
en Castellón se agruparon  
para al fascismo batir;  
y un nombre digno buscaron  
que les sirviera de aliento  
y el nombre de Mateotti  
sonó oportuno y señero.  
El fascio es vil enemigo  
de la paz y la cultura;  
suprime libros y escuelas  
y es de la ciencia la tumba.

Batallón Mateotti.  
al fascismo aplastará

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<sup>72</sup> ‘Commemorazione Giacomo Matteotti, oggi 12 giugno 1927 ore 1p.m.’, *Il Nuovo Mondo*, 12 June 1927, p. 8.

<sup>73</sup> Marco Antonio de la Ossa Martínez, *La música en la guerra civil española* (Madrid: Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2011), p. 274.

con honor y gallardía  
en bien de la Humanidad.

The Batallón Matteotti, a resistance brigade fighting in the Spanish Civil War, sang the hymn. The lyrics reference Matteotti alongside El Cid, the medieval nobleman and military leader and celebrated national hero in the region. Matteotti's memory was thus adapted to national contexts, showing the versatility of memory in the creation of local meaning, and used as a war cry for antifascist communities.

This use of bellicose rhetoric, which linked commemoration to combat and revenge, shows the role of memory within global resistance to Fascism. Despite geographical distance from Italy, antifascist groups were able to leverage the symbolic currency of martyrdom through commemoration, organisations and protests, and thus create a global resistance. This was a fragmented international movement; though there were cells of G&L throughout the U.S., in France and operating underground in northern Italy, by and large the international movement was made up of small groups with different priorities. However, the above examples from America, France, Hungary and Spain show the use of Matteotti's memory as a cornerstone of global resistance. His memory was used as a symbol of the violent consequences of Fascism, becoming representative of the suffering of the entire Italian people, and his memory became a figurehead of resistance long before the Resistance began in Italy. Memory functioned as both the foundational martyrdom of international antifascism, and a figurative (and, in the case of Spain, literal) war cry.

**Conclusion: 'un simbolo, e non soltanto in Italia.'**<sup>74</sup>

This chapter has sought to fill a major gap in scholarship by showing that Matteotti was commemorated persistently and publicly during the Fascist *ventennio* outside of Italy. Martyrdom is not contained by the nation state. For decades after his murder, memory agents around the world held ceremonies, built monuments and collected funds in his name to aid the fight against Fascism. Matteotti's memory was central in the establishment of international antifascism. By analysing the differing narratives constructed around his martyrdom by socialist parties, the LSI, antifascists in exile and antifascist organisations established by Italians abroad, this

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<sup>74</sup> F. Bellanca, 'Un'opera degna di tutti gli emigrati e di tutti gli esuli del mondo. Un monumento a Giacomo Matteotti', *Il Nuovo Mondo*, 21 March 1926, p. 1.

chapter has shown that like collective identity itself, martyrdom is nuanced and always evolving.

Matteotti's memory remained at the level of the group throughout the *ventennio*. For many, he was a martyr for the future nation – reflective of the values they wanted their country to uphold (but a vision of national identity entirely incompatible with that promulgated by the Fascist regime). Socialist parties and organisations around the world incorporated Matteotti's memory into the international canon of socialist martyrs. They created new lines of solidarity, and expressed understanding of Italy's pain through their own national experience of loss, building a community of suffering. Many elements of Rothberg's multidirectional memory were evident in the response of parties belonging to the social democratic tradition. By drawing on shared rhetoric and iconography to remember Matteotti alongside figures like Jaurès and Somogyi, socialist communities celebrated Matteotti's sacrifice for socialism. Other groups understood his sacrifice as one in the name of workers. Those who partook in the rituals of commemoration during the unveiling of the Brussels monument performed this narrative, and its location in front of Europe's largest building for workers cemented it. But despite its various global iterations, Matteotti's martyrdom remained at the level of the group and commemoration was a political act. The efforts of institutional memory agents around the world to construct stabilizers of memory in Brussels, Vienna or Paris, shifted memory into public space where it became a focus of political promotion or demotion, according to the changing nature of the nation's politics.

This chapter has shown that memory of the martyr for the socio-political group is not contained by the boundaries of the nation, but rather tethered to the political fight – wherever that might take place. The de-territorialisation of memory and the use of commemoration as protest against future violence suggest that many elements of Levy and Sznajder's cosmopolitan memory theory were evident as early as the 1920s. However, one of the central tenets of their theory is contradicted in the material I have presented throughout the chapter – namely that global memory is constructed on victimhood. Repeated references to revenge, the declaration that failure to commemorate was an act of desertion, and representation of Matteotti as the *martire ignoto* (with its military connotations) made memory part of the fight against Fascism. However, I have argued that this bellicose quality emerged because the battle against Fascism was ongoing, and it does not negate the cosmopolitan

quality of memory analysed in the chapter. Levy and Sznajder attribute a future-facing quality to cosmopolitan memory because this mode of remembering only emerged after Nazi violence had ended; memory therefore had a 'never again' quality. In the case of Matteotti's memory, memory was a war cry, and bellicose rhetoric transformed mourners into warriors in order to put an end to Fascism. Memory thus had a present-day function. With this one essential distinction in mind, I contend that the sheer depth and breadth of global commemoration organised by groups and individuals outside of Italy, and the incorporation of Matteotti's memory into local memory, mean that some elements of the cosmopolitan mode of remembering can be extended as far back as the 1920s. Global concerns became part of local experience in response to Matteotti's assassination, as the next chapter will further show.

## Chapter 7

### Matteotti's Memory in Italian Communities of the United States

In July 1932, the British suffragette Sylvia Pankhurst received a letter from her friend and fellow suffragette Mary Gawthorpe, who had emigrated to the United States in 1916. In her letter, Gawthorpe recounted her correspondence with Roger Baldwin, founder of the American Civil Liberties Union.<sup>1</sup> She had written to Baldwin some days earlier to ask him to lend his support to an organisation that Pankhurst had recently founded - the Women's International Matteotti Committee (WIMC). The WIMC had three aims: to alert international communities to the persecution suffered by Matteotti's family in Italy; to convince European foreign offices to tell the Italian government that this persecution was 'an international disgrace'; and to send an international delegation of women to negotiate with the Italian government for Velia's right to remain in Italy 'in peace and freedom', or to leave the country freely.<sup>2</sup> In its early stages, as it sought to internationalise, the WIMC requested endorsements from various civil liberties groups abroad, and Pankhurst had asked Gawthorpe to write to Baldwin in the United States. In her letter back to Pankhurst, Gawthorpe acknowledged the threat of Italian Fascism in the United States, saying she would join the WIMC 'in direct cooperation with Roger, or with his endorsement (for USA) when your plans are matured. You know New York is a great Italian city, in part, and Mussolini and his cohorts are well represented here. This is simple prudence as well as good organization, don't you think?'<sup>3</sup> Fascism was growing in the United States, and important figures in the women's rights movement were campaigning to prevent further persecution at the hands of the regime on American soil.

This exchange highlights some of the key themes of this chapter. Firstly, it shows the extension of the fascist-antifascist fight that had begun in Italy to the United States. Secondly, Gawthorpe's comments regarding the pertinence of the WIMC's expansion into the U.S. hint at the potential emergence of a transnational memory culture linked to Matteotti's martyrdom that bound Italy to the United States. Finally, it also reveals the use of Matteotti's memory as part of a global

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Gawthorpe, 'Letter to Roger Baldwin', 14 July 1932, Mary E. Gawthorpe Papers, Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Pankhurst, *An Early Anti-Fascist Organisation*, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Mary Gawthorpe, 'Letter to Sylvia Pankhurst', 17 July 1932, Mary E. Gawthorpe Papers, Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives.

campaign to raise awareness of human rights infringements – a theme that was explored in detail in the previous chapter in relation to cosmopolitan memory. The purpose of this chapter is to take the United States as a case study to closely examine the incorporation of Matteotti's memory into everyday life in the diaspora. I will consider the role of the Italian diaspora in transmitting memory of an Italian martyr to a new nation, analyse the subsequent transnational memory practices (defined here as those influenced by more than one nation state – in this case, Italy and the U.S), and address the functions and implications of that memory. To use Levy and Sznajder's terminology, this chapter will consider how one distant event became part of local experience, and identify the individuals and organisations that facilitated this transmission of memory.

I will begin by providing an overview of Italian migration to the United States in the early twentieth century, and explain how migration trends created an environment in which support for Fascism could grow. The great migrations to the U.S. of 1880-1920 saw around 35 million emigrate from eastern and southern Europe; the largest nationality was Italian, which represented five million.<sup>4</sup> They were, initially, labour migrants, the majority of whom ultimately intended to return to their families in Italy richer than they had departed (around the turn of the century 50% of migrants to the United States returned to Italy).<sup>5</sup> Most Italians settled in Italian communities throughout the U.S. These so-called 'Little Italies' had the highest degree of residential segregation of any of the migrant groups from 1910 to 1950.<sup>6</sup> The Quota Act of 1921 and the Immigration Act of 1924 revealed significant hostility towards Italians as an ethnic group. Both acts limited the number of new immigrants permitted to enter the country, pegging that quota at just 2% of each ethnic group's resident number in the U.S. in 1890.<sup>7</sup> Since Italians had only really begun to arrive on U.S. shores in significant numbers in 1890, these acts hit Italian communities in particular. By favouring the arrival of immigrants from north-eastern Europe, they 'served as a de facto codification of the Americanization movement, which was intended to replace as quickly as possible the

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<sup>4</sup> Philip Cannistraro and Gerald Meyer, 'Introduction. Italian American Radicalism: An Interpretive History' in *The Lost World of Italian American Radicalism: Politics, Labor and Culture*, ed. by Philip Cannistraro and Gerald Meyer (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2003), pp. 1-50 (p. 6).

<sup>5</sup> Donna R. Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas* (London: UCL Press, 2000), p. 94.

<sup>6</sup> Cannistraro and Meyer, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

original immigrant cultures – and especially the languages – with Anglo-Saxon culture and English. Americanization’s implicit message insisted upon the inferiority of all other cultures and languages.<sup>8</sup> The so-called ‘Little Italies’ created a space outside of anti-Italian sentiment, but they also led to insulated communities with their own calendar – rejecting American celebrations in favour of May Day and other workers holidays, for example – and spaces in which radicalism could spread.<sup>9</sup>

It is important to stress that the United States was considered one of Mussolini’s success stories in terms of mass support among Italian communities outside of Italy. According to Pernicone, Mussolini’s motivation to extend his empire to North American shores was largely financial. Home to more than 4 million Italians in the 1920s, Mussolini sought to retain the loyalty of Italian citizens, guaranteeing the continued flow of remittances and ensuring a stock of manpower in the event of future wars.<sup>10</sup> In its early stages, the regime enjoyed the tacit (and sometimes explicit) support of the U.S. government and much of the national press, which praised the industrial and economic development of postwar Italy, and Mussolini’s strong leadership.

As early as 1915, the newspaper *Il Carroccio* launched in New York, operating as a mouthpiece of Mussolini’s regime that sought to assert its strength and downplay its brutality. In 1921, the first American branch of the Fasci all’Estero opened in New York. Mussolini immediately declared his intention to launch hundreds more throughout North, Central and South America by the end of the year.<sup>11</sup> Though this ambition was unrealised, he made considerable inroads; by the end of 1924, nearly a third of the 315 Fasci all’Estero were located in the Americas, with thirteen in New York alone by 1927.<sup>12</sup> These branches were charged with building the myth of the ‘good Italian’ as one who dutifully and publicly served the Duce from abroad.<sup>13</sup> Geographical distance from Italy was not to prevent devotion to

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> Nunzio Pernicone, ‘Carlo Tresca: life and death of a revolutionary’, in *Italian Americans: The Search for a Usable Past: Proceedings of the 19th Annual Conference of the American Italian Historical Association, Philadelphia, Pa., November 14-15, 1986*, ed. by American Italian Historical Association et al. (Staten Island, N.Y: The Association, 1989) pp. 216-235, (p. 223).

<sup>11</sup> Luca de Caprariis, ‘“Fascism for Export”? The Rise and Eclipse of the Fasci Italiani all’Estero’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 35 (2000), 151–83 (p. 152).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 158-160.

<sup>13</sup> Wendy Ugolini, ‘The Embodiment of British Italian War Memory? The Curious Marginalization of Dennis Donnini, VC’, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 46 (2012), 397–415.



Fascism. Indeed, a 1927 edition of *Il Legionario*, the official publication of the Fasci all'Estero, stated: 'At home as abroad, any good Italian is also a fascist.'<sup>14</sup> An article published in the antifascist press a year earlier had warned of the growing presence of Fascism in America. The author, an Italian American named Charles Fama, was chairman of the antifascist organisation the Defenders of the American Constitution. He wrote:

their ultimate program is the OVERTHROW of the government of the U.S. and substitution thereof of autocratic, tyrannical and murderous Fascism. This may seem like a pipe dream but it is in truth a part of the dream of a world empire with Mussolini as the great "Imperator". [...] Fascism is the enemy of our Constitution and of our free institutions; it is a foreign invasion of our sacred soil. It has no place in our Country.<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, Fascism continued to extend its influence in Italian American communities in the late 1920s, when the 1,100 lodges of the Order of the Sons of Italy in America – the largest formal organisation for Italian Americans – turned pro-Fascist.<sup>16</sup> The regime could also count on the church as a carrier of its ideology. Catholic Church representatives in Little Italies had strong alliances with diplomatic representatives of the Fascist regime, and leading figures in Italian American communities, who worked together to quash radicalism and promote nationalism.<sup>17</sup> There were financial links between the U.S. and the regime, too. In 1926 J. P. Morgan Company made a \$100,000,000 loan to Mussolini's government, ostensibly as a means of helping Italy to resuscitate her economy and move a step closer to paying her war debts to the US (totalling almost two billion dollars).<sup>18</sup> In antifascist circles in America, however, this was perceived as a loan that supported Mussolini's consolidation of power.<sup>19</sup> A cartoon published in *Il Proletario*, the weekly newspaper of the labour union Industrial Workers of the World, criticised Wall Street's

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<sup>14</sup> cit. by de Caprariis, p. 175.

<sup>15</sup> Charles Fama, 'American Citizens Awake from Your Slumbers!!! Be on Your Guard!!!', *Il Nuovo Mondo*, 11 JULY 1926, p.4.

<sup>16</sup> Cannistraro, p. 23.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> John Patrick Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism: The View from America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 152.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 154.

support of Mussolini.<sup>20</sup> It showed Mussolini holding Matteotti's skull, surrounded by bags of money. The caption read: 'Povero Matteotti; ma il prestito da Wall St, ben vale tutto ciò.'<sup>21</sup>

### **The development of Italian American antifascism**

Italian American opposition to Fascism was made up primarily of labour leaders and radical subversives living in the United States, like the prominent anarchist Carlo Tresca. According to historian Philip V. Cannistraro, Italian American antifascism first appeared in the United States 'during the consolidation of Mussolini's dictatorship in 1924-5.'<sup>22</sup> Given its establishment at the time of the *delitto Matteotti*, it is unsurprising that the movement drew so heavily on Matteotti's memory as one of its cornerstones, as this chapter will show. During Fascism, left-wing radicals – or *sovversivi* – flowed from Italy to the U.S. 'and in turn the radical elements in these communities often raised money for and supported causes back home.'<sup>23</sup> The antifascist movement in the United States was not originally characterised by the presence of prominent *fuoriusciti*, as it was in Paris, for example. Rather, opposition to Fascism was 'a genre of transatlantic radicalism that embraced the socialist, syndicalist, and anarchist traditions of Italy' along with the Marxism and reformism of the American left.<sup>24</sup>

This transnationalism, combining elements of Italian and American political culture, was apparent in the primary organisational structure of Italian American antifascism: labour unions. In the early days, most antifascists had emigrated from Italy at the start of the 1900s and many had left behind a history of labour activism in Italy.<sup>25</sup> Gabaccia has identified the 'ethnic segmentation' within labour movements which was 'especially pervasive in the U.S.' She argues that Italian exiles often held

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<sup>20</sup> Mussolini contributed occasional articles to *Il Proletario* as a young man and was offered a permanent position on the paper while living in Switzerland.

Mack Smith, p. 8.

<sup>21</sup> 'Povero Matteotti; ma il prestito da Wall St, ben vale tutto ciò', *Il Proletario*, 13 March 1926, p. 1, Library of Congress.

<sup>22</sup> Philip V. Cannistraro, 'Luigi Antonini and the Italian Anti-Fascist Movement in the United States, 1940-1943', *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 5.1 (1985), 21-40 (p. 21).

<sup>23</sup> Cannistraro and Meyer, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> John Patrick Diggins, 'The Italo-American Anti-Fascist Opposition', *The Journal of American History*, 54.3 (1967), 579-98 (p. 579).

<sup>25</sup> Cannistraro, *Luigi Antonini and the Italian Anti-Fascist Movement in the United States*, p.21.

ideological views that were deemed incompatible with national labour unions, and thus made requests for 'ethnic autonomy', which led to the creation of the many Italian locals - autonomous segments comprised of those with Italian ethnicity within large unions.<sup>26</sup> In 1923, the Italian Chamber of Labor inaugurated the Anti-Fascist Alliance of North America (AFANA), endorsed by the Italian locals within unions such as the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union.<sup>27</sup> It did not last long. Irresolvable differences between various radical ideological groups led to its dissolution in 1926.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, its creation underlines two key features of Italian American antifascism: the influential role of the Italian locals within American unions, and the centrality of prominent unionists.

Matteotti's memory was an important part of the development of Italian American antifascism, and labour unions were key memory agents.<sup>29</sup> Americans displayed great mistrust towards progressive Italian radicals and, when combined with the growing popularity of Fascism in the United States, this meant that public commemoration ceremonies for Matteotti were often tense events. But though the regime's influence in the U.S. did not create an entirely welcoming environment for the expression of antifascist sentiment, memory agents in the U.S. enjoyed freedoms that their compatriots in Italy did not. This freedom allowed for the ritualistic and public veneration of Matteotti's memory. In the years after his death, commemoration ceremonies took place in cities including New York (see figure 26), Philadelphia, Boston, Washington D.C. and Chicago, among others.<sup>30</sup> But they were not confined to the major cities; in 1928 alone, ceremonies took place in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, Torrington, Connecticut, and Reading, Pennsylvania.<sup>31</sup> This grassroots symbolic protest, whereby commemoration of the antifascist martyr functioned as a ritualistic expression of opposition, was essential given the lack of

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<sup>26</sup> Gabaccia, pp. 117-118.

<sup>27</sup> Zappia, p. 148.

<sup>28</sup> Cannistraro and Meyer, p. 20.

<sup>29</sup> Unions remained important memory agents in commemoration of Matteotti throughout the ventennio. In 1944, at its convention (held every three years), the ILGWU convention programme included a session dedicated to the commemoration of Matteotti. See: Luigi Antonini, *Dynamic Democracy* (New York: Allied Printing Trades Council, 1944), Immigration History Research Center Archive, University of Minnesota, Fred Celli Papers, Box 5.

<sup>30</sup> 'Commemorazione Matteotti', 1926, Immigration History Research Center Archive, University of Minnesota, Fred Celli Papers, Box 1. Image reproduced with thanks to the IHRCA.

<sup>31</sup> 'Commemorazioni Matteotti', *Il Nuovo Mondo*, 10 June 1928, p. 5.

financial commitment from the U.S. government to fighting the spread of Fascism on U.S. soil in later decades.

**COMMEMORAZIONE MATTEOTTI**

**CITTADINI, LAVORATORI, AMANTI DELLA LIBERTA'!**



Una data ed un nome che gli anni ed il tempo non cancelleranno mai dalla memoria della gente onesta.

Il cadavere straziato della Quartarella, epilogo del delitto orrendo che commosse ed indigno' il mondo civile, e copri' con il marchio indelebile dell'infamia una sozza figura di bruto ed un sistema criminale, punta, come ieri, il dito accusatore.

La voce che si volle soffocare con l'assassinio premeditato, si spande oggi, con il fragore del tuono dalle Alpi alla Sicilia, foriera della prossima tempesta.

E' il popolo oppresso, incatenato, dissanguato, che, memore del sublime olocausto di GIACOMO MATTEOTTI, si risveglia, incomincia a muoversi ed ad osare.

**ITALIANI LIBERI!**

GIACOMO MATTEOTTI, rivive oggi, nel cuore e nella mente di chi, non dimentica e non perdona, di chi, attende, in catene, per la china dolorosa del proprio calvario, il giorno della riscossa e della vittoria, il giorno immancabile della resa dei conti.

La Nemisi Storica, avanza, letale e tremenda sulle sue ali, si erge, vindice e giudice l'assassinato della Quartarella.

UCCIDETE ME, MA NON UCCIDERETE MAI LA MIA IDEA, grido' ai suoi carnefici GIACOMO MATTEOTTI.

Questo grido, viene oggi ripetuto, al nemico pavido e feroce, da centinaia e centinaia di eroi che il fascismo assassino tortura lentamente con sadica volutta', ed uccide, nelle segrete delle sue orribili prigioni e nelle isole maledette, illudendosi di poter spegnere, nella grande anima del popolo lavoratore il sacro fuoco della liberta', le sue tradizioni, il suo passato, il suo avvenire.

**ANTIFASCISTI, AMANTI DELLA LIBERTA'!**

Commemoriamo degnamente GIACOMO MATTEOTTI.

Onoriamo la sua memoria, ricordiamo il suo sacrificio.

Ispiriamoci al suo esempio nobilissimo, giurando di non concederli tregua e riposo, fino a quando la peste nera del fascismo, relegata nella sentina della storia, non sara' che un triste e nauseante ricordo del passato.

**LA COMMEMORAZIONE DEL MARTIRE avra' luogo**  
**Domenica, 13 Giugno alle ore 2.30 P. M.**  
**Nella RAND SCHOOL AUDITORIUM**  
**7 East 15th Street, New York**

**Oratore ufficiale sara' il dottore TANCREDI ANGELI**

Verranno a portare un saluto di solidarieta' i rappresentanti dei gruppi politici.  
Nel nome di GIACOMO MATTEOTTI: onoriamo tutte le vittime del fascismo.

**VIVA L'ITALIA LIBERA**

IL COMITATO ITALIANO D'AZIONE ANTIFASCISTA.

Figure 26: Publicity for a commemoration event in New York, undated but likely 1926

The underfunded grassroots antifascist cause in the U.S. had to contend with the significant amounts of money that had been channelled into Fascist propaganda abroad. In his study *Italian Fascist Activities in the U.S.*, Gaetano Salvemini, a Harvard professor and *fuoriuscito*, estimated that by 1938 the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was spending \$6.5 million on propaganda abroad, primarily in the United States, South America and France, almost half of which was put towards schools

sympathetic to the regime.<sup>32</sup> Salvemini called for the city, state and federal governments of the United States to make a financial contribution to fighting the influence of Fascist propaganda, and add public initiatives to the efforts of private individuals to stem this flow of influence. His call was unheeded.

Matteotti's memory became an important symbol in this propaganda battle. He featured in many cartoons drawn by the Italian immigrant cartoonist Fort Velona, which were published in a variety of Italian American antifascist papers. One such cartoon (Figure 27 shows the hand-painted original as found in his personal papers) is reminiscent of the *santini* prayer cards analysed in chapter 5, with rays of light surrounding Matteotti's head.<sup>33</sup> One of the most significant antifascist organisations, and a key memory agent in commemoration of Matteotti, was the Federazione Socialista Italiana of the Socialist Party of America (FSI/SPA). The FSI/SPA organised a number of events in the wake of the *delitto*, many of which attracted thousands of workers.<sup>34</sup> These events were advertised in the organisation's annual publication, the *Almanacco Socialista Italo Americano*.<sup>35</sup> The front cover of the publication's 1925 edition showed a worker with an arm over Matteotti's tombstone, which bore the words Matteotti was thought to have spoken as he was killed. Ten pages were dedicated to the Matteotti affair, including a detailed timeline of events with the title 'Le giornate di passione del Giugno-Agosto 1924.'<sup>36</sup> Given the liturgical rhetoric that featured in commemoration ceremonies and materials produced by socialist parties, as already analysed, this can be read as a reference to the Passion of Christ.<sup>37</sup>

The aim of the Almanac, which was published in Italian, was to educate and organise Italian workers living in the United States without English language skills.<sup>38</sup> Given the aforementioned low levels of assimilation and high level of residential segregation, these Italian language publications played a crucial role in organising the antifascist movement, and commemorative events were part of their organisational framework. Antifascist publications allowed members to meet and

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<sup>32</sup> Salvemini, *Italian Fascist Activities in the U.S.*, p. 24.

<sup>33</sup> Fort Velona, Giacomo Matteotti, Il Martire Della 'Idea', Immigration History Research Center Archive, University of Minnesota, Fort Velona Papers, Box 1. Image reproduced with thanks to the IHRCA.

<sup>34</sup> Federazione Italiana del Socialist Party of America, p. 203.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 21–31.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22–25.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

discuss the movement (and plan for future progress). They also kept Italians updated on developments in the Matteotti affair and the subsequent trial, and dedicated column space to criticism of the U.S. government's response to Mussolini's regime and to Matteotti's murder. Many similar publications were launched as the Italian language mouthpiece of various American unions; *Il Lavoro*, for example, belonged to the ACWA.



**Figure 27: Giacomo Matteotti by the cartoonist Fort Velona**

Levy and Sznajder discuss the role of media and global communications technologies in the creation of cosmopolitan memory in the era of globalisation. They argue that 'the media also becomes a mediator of moral affairs' and this has led to the creation of 'media events', whereby local events are shared across the world.<sup>39</sup> It is my contention that these antifascist Italian language publications published in the United States played this role during the Fascist *ventennio*. These papers were key memory agents in commemoration of Matteotti; they organised and advertised commemorative events, raised funds for sites of memory, and publicised related

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<sup>39</sup> Levy and Sznajder, 'Memory Unbound', p. 91.

initiatives throughout the U.S. in an attempt to draw attention to Fascist violence both in Italy and on U.S. territory. Though Matteotti's murder had occurred on Italian soil, news of this persecution was carried to the United States through Italian language publications like the *Almanac*, where it had particular resonance because support for Fascism was growing in Italian communities and supporters were being given increasing prominence in public space, as this chapter will show. Levy and Sznajder argue that 'Strong identifications are only produced when distant events have local resonance', and thus global issues become part of local experience.<sup>40</sup> The next section will outline the specific characteristics of the mnemonic labour that took place in the U.S., and address why Matteotti's murder resonated at a local level.

### **Characteristics of Italian American commemoration**

In 1927, Domenico Saudino, the Italian American writer, antifascist and later councillor for the Italian Socialist Federation in the United States, wrote to Albino Zattoni, one of the organisers of the Matteotti League (a New York-based socialist association that organised antifascist rallies, social activities, and English lessons for Italians in the U.S.). His letter focused on the recent inclusion of Fascist supporters in the Columbus Day celebrations of 1927 – a development he vehemently opposed. Saudino stated: 'Comunque, noi avremo, come negli altri anni, la nostra contro-commemorazione, ed è sperabile che il nostro altoparlante abbia più forza di quello ingaggiato delle camicie nere [...]'.<sup>41</sup> Commemoration of Matteotti was part of the battle against this rising support for Fascism in the U.S., and it displayed two characteristics that made it distinct from that which took place in Europe: the involvement of business and labour unions, and the use of the English language. On 27 September 1924 the newspaper *Il Lavoro* published an article about a ceremony held on 17 September in Baltimore and organised by *Locale Italiana 51* of the A.C.W. of A. The article describes a 'sacro silenzio' in the Brith Sholom Hall as attendees waited for the ceremony to begin. The stage curtain lifted, accompanied by

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>41</sup> Domenico Saudino to Alberico Zattoni, 'Letter from Domenico Saudino to Albino Zattoni', 30 September 1927, Immigration History Research Center Archive, University of Minnesota, Albino Zattoni papers, Box 1, Folder 8.

an orchestral performance of Chopin's funeral march, and revealed a large portrait of Matteotti, which was surrounded by red lamps and a wreath of red roses.<sup>42</sup>

Il palco-scenico è tutto addobbato in nero, un lutto nel vero senso della parola ad un caro compagno che, benchè morto, in quel solenne momento Lui era vivo con noi, con i nostri cuori.

La commozione è fra tutti, lo schianto terribili torture sofferto dal corpo del martire, che l'effigie ci mostra i lineamenti dell'uomo altero, è posato sul cuore unico della folla che a capo chino mesta e reverente e là in piedi pietrificata a condividere un dolore mondiale.

The funeral march continued as mourners walked to the portrait, placing below it wreaths of red flowers brought by the Baltimore Joint Board of the ACWA, the Circolo Educativo Italiano and the Italians, and women, of the Harry Sonnoborn & Co. factory.<sup>43</sup> Retussi described the overwhelming emotions felt by attendees:

Le lagrime non si possono frenare, ci sono momenti che l'uomo più forte si abbandona a se stesso; tutti senza eccezione versarono lagrime, si sentiva che si aveva bisogno di piangere, sfogo dell'animo umano, e in quel momento di angoscia, di dolore, e di nuove promesse di rivendicazioni, il nome di G. Matteotti pigliava il posto di fede e di supreme speranze in ogni cuore del proletario.

A representative of the A.C.W.A then took to the stage 'auspicando che il proletariato cosciente del mondo sappia seguire il suo cammino, e che un giorno le aspirazioni di Matteotti diventino una realtà, una meta della futura società.'<sup>44</sup> The ceremony closed with a speech from Italian American union leader, activist and poet

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<sup>42</sup> Giuseppe Betussi, 'La commemorazione di G. Matteotti in Baltimore', *Il Lavoro*, 27 September 1924, p. 5.

<sup>43</sup> This latter group had written a telegram to Velia Matteotti in August that ended: 'Devoutly we bow to the soul of the martyr which will be the halo of redemption.' Once again, religious rhetoric was employed in commemoration of Matteotti, and his death was upheld as a sacrifice for redemption. See: *Sarah Borinsky to Velia Matteotti*, Baltimore 24 August 1924, letter DXXXIII cit. in Caretti, *Matteotti. Il mito*, p. 220.

<sup>44</sup> Betussi, 'La commemorazione di G. Matteotti in Baltimore'.



Arturo Giovannitti who called for the continued struggle inspired by Matteotti's death to spell the end of the regime.<sup>45</sup>

With the ritualistic procession of mourners to lay flowers, the sacred silences, and the incorporation of signifiers of socialism (the red lamps, flowers and banners), the event had much in common with Matteotti's funeral in Fratta Polesine in August 1924 (though a large portrait took the place a body would typically occupy). Furthermore, the sentiment expressed by the A. C. W. of A. representative that one day Matteotti's aspirations would become reality show that he was upheld as a symbol of the Italy the community wanted to build, as was the case for mourners in Fratta Polesine. However, there were two significant differences between commemoration in Italy and commemoration in the U.S., namely the involvement of American businesses and the use of English. These particular elements situated Matteotti's memory within the U.S. national context, and highlighted the emergence of a transnational memory culture.<sup>46</sup> Though Italian Americans were the primary community of mourning, the rituals of commemoration enacted in the U.S. brought together Italians and Americans. This was not an international celebration that brought together a multitude of political figures from various countries around the world, as we saw in the European ceremonies analysed in the previous chapter, but something very particular to the United States.

The involvement of an American business within this antifascist commemoration ceremony was significant given the many public expressions of

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> A final point relates to the business that provided the flowers for the ceremony. *Il Lavoro* names the business as Harry Sonnoborn & Co., though it is more likely to have been Henry Sonneborn & Co., a national suit-maker. In the early twentieth century, the company claimed to manufacture 3,000 suits per day. It had a large factory in Baltimore – the largest building for the manufacture of clothing when it was opened in 1905- and hired thousands of immigrant workers. The Sonneborns were an important Jewish family, and the Matteotti commemoration ceremony was held in Brith Shlom Hall – a significant building for the Jewish community in Baltimore. Jewish Americans and Italian Americans were among the largest immigrant minorities in the interwar period, when they 'lived in adjoining or overlapping neighborhoods, shared the workplace and a common militancy in labor unions especially in the garment industry, and were key components of the ethnic coalition of voters that supported the Democratic Party at the polls'. The relationship between these two large ethnic communities could be seen in commemoration of Matteotti. See: Gilbert Sandler, *Jewish Baltimore: A Family Album* (JHU Press, 2000), p. 84; Richard Dilworth, *Cities in American Political History* (SAGE, 2011), p. 403; Stefano Luconi, "'The Venom of Racial Intolerance': Italian Americans and Jews in the United States in the Aftermath of Fascist Racial Laws', *Revue française d'études américaines*, 107.1 (2006), 107–19 (p. 107).

approval of Mussolini made by the American business community. The aforementioned financial support afforded to the regime by J.P. Morgan was just one example. According to Diggins:

With few exceptions, the dominant voices of business responded to Fascism with hearty enthusiasm. Favorable editorials could be read in publications such as *Barron's*, *Journal of Commerce and Commercial Bulletin*, *Commerce and Finance*, *Nation's Business* (the official organ of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce), and the reputable *Wall Street Journal*. Aside from the press, the list of outspoken business admirers read like a Wall Street "Who's Who."<sup>47</sup>

U.S. government institutions were largely supportive of the Fascist regime to begin with, but support also came from the business community. I believe we can read the involvement of American businesses and labour unions in Matteotti's commemoration as an act of protest against broader U.S. support of the regime. Consequently, these ceremonies had a self-reflective function. This was a multi-layered community of mourning, with specific transnational aims.

A second example will highlight this use of Matteotti's memory to counteract support for Fascism in the U.S. On Sunday 29 June 1924, a commemorative event in Boston attracted 10,000 people, who marched through the streets carrying a portrait of Matteotti. The march concluded in the Parkman Band Stand, where speeches were delivered – in English and Italian – by prominent figures in the emerging Italian American antifascist movement. During the march, a number of signs were held aloft, including one that read: 'Ogni tentativo di importare il fascismo in America dovrebbe essere combattuto per salvaguardare le libere istituzioni degli Stati Uniti.'<sup>48</sup> From signs like this, which tackle the threat posed by Fascism to American society, we see the way transnational memory communities were united under the symbol of an Italian martyr but with specific national issues in mind. The fact that much of the event was delivered in English suggests that Matteotti's murder was not considered of interest to the Italian community alone. His death was significant for everyone rallying against Fascism. Memory initiatives were not a

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<sup>47</sup> Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, pp. 146–47.

<sup>48</sup> 'Boston commemora Giacomo Matteotti e condanna il Fascismo', *Il Lavoro*, 19 July 1924, p. 7.

simple extension of Italian commemoration at home, but rather an adapted strategy that aligned with national interests.

This transnationalism, which saw memory of an Italian martyr used within an American context, meant commemoration was sometimes contentious. On 3 July 1924, an assembly was held at the Music Fund Hall in Philadelphia. The event attracted more than two thousand workers of all nationalities according to the weekly newspaper *Il Proletario* of the labour union Industrial Workers of the World.<sup>49</sup> The event ran smoothly until volunteers began to circulate the room to collect funds. At this point Giuseppe Mazzeo, a plain-clothes police officer, took to the podium and began to recite the nonsensical poem 'Parole per musica', written by Pietro Coccoluto Ferrigni (under the name of Yorick figlio di Yorick) in 1881 as a satire of the tortuous lyricism of opera. The journalist and antifascist campaigner Ettore Frisina took to the stage to remove the intruder, whose outburst interrupted the collection for the antifascist movement. According to a subsequent article in *Il Lavoro*, fights broke out and resulted in the ejection of the plain-clothes officer who was later found with eight missing teeth, and an eye that looked like an inkwell.<sup>50</sup> Arrests were made, but the individuals in question were released the following day.

The policeman later stated that he intervened because event organisers did not have the correct permit for a collection (leading a journalist to ask 'E quando mai ci è voluto il permesso per fare le collette nelle sale?').<sup>51</sup> His furtive presence at the otherwise peaceful event shows the mistrust of American institutions towards the Italian American antifascist movement. This was evident in the *New York Times* coverage of a protest rally at Carnegie Hall in New York on 26 June 1924.<sup>52</sup> The rally was organised by the Italian Chamber of Labor and associated organisations, and was attended by 2,500 people, both Italians and other nationalities, with a further 1,000 left outside due to venue capacity.<sup>53</sup> The gathering began peacefully. However, once the former newspaper editor Charles Erwin had opened the assembly, standing in front of a portrait of Matteotti draped in black, crowds grew louder, shouting in protest for the full three and a half hour event. A number of speeches were given in English and Italian by prominent antifascist leaders, judges and

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<sup>49</sup> P. Iannelli, 'Chi è la causa del suo male pianga se stesso', *Il Proletario*, 2 August 1924.

<sup>50</sup> 'Che si fa in Philadelphia?', *Il Lavoro*, 19 July 1924, p. 5.

<sup>51</sup> Iannelli, p. 5.

<sup>52</sup> 'Italians Here Riot; Denounce Fascisti', *New York Times*, 27 June 1924, p. 21.

<sup>53</sup> 'Il grandioso comizio antifascista', *Il Lavoro*, 28 June 1924, p. 5.

journalists, and a resolution read out calling for the American government to reject his ambassadorial appointments. The evening closed with a collection, which raised \$965.

In an article titled 'Italians Here Riot', *New York Times* fell back on descriptions that reflected the pervasive stereotype in the U.S. of Italians as unruly subversives. The article began: 'Indignant Italians, many of them without coats or collars, engaged in disorderly demonstrations during a meeting at Carnegie Hall last night, in protest against the rule of Premier Mussolini and Fascisti.' This characterisation of Italian American antifascists as disorderly dissidents continued throughout the article, culminating in a description of the reaction to the aforementioned reading of the resolution calling for Mussolini's resignation and the rejection of Mussolini's ambassador to the United States. The article described 'a riotous outburst' which 'called into action the several policeman and the entire Bomb Squad. There were shouts in Italian from the rear of the auditorium. Immediately the crowd of both men and women arose to their feet, jumped on their chairs and emitted a long series of lusty "boos."' The article continued: 'Men were punching, kicking, shoving and yelling. The rest of the audience, facing them, were shouting Italian threats and waving their hands.'

Violence, and then police intervention, occurred at the very moment the rally turned to U.S. complicity in upholding the Fascist regime. Matteotti's commemoration was used as an occasion to draw attention to perceived failures in international diplomacy and to call for change in American institutions – it therefore had an immediate, transnational quality. Indeed, the very presence of an undercover police officer (and the bomb squad) points to awareness that commemoration of an Italian martyr could have had significant political implications within the United States. The two nations' politics were intertwined at the commemoration ceremony and this transnational quality of commemoration was at times a source of tension.

This incorporation of Italian martyr memory into symbolic political protest on U.S. soil is perhaps clearest in the case of the planned monument to Matteotti in New York. On 23 June 1925, Velia Matteotti wrote of the ban on commemoration of Matteotti in Italy and the pain this caused in a letter to Girolamo Valenti, editor of the antifascist daily *Il Nuovo Mondo*. The paper was founded in New York in 1925 in response to the Fascist threat; it was deemed so significant that the Italian ambassador in Washington sent regular updates to the Italian foreign ministry

regarding its work and financial situation.<sup>54</sup> In her letter, Velia thanked Valenti for his role in organising commemoration, and continued: ‘invio a tutto gli operai e cittadini italo-americi che si riunirono nella commemorazione i miei più alti alti [sic] sentimenti di fede, e l’incrollabile certezza che il sacrificio riscatterà domani civiltà e giustizia.’<sup>55</sup>

An editor of many antifascist publications in the United States throughout the Fascist regime, Valenti also lectured on socialism and was a radio commentator. Born in Sicily, he left Italy for the United States in 1916 and was quickly involved in the labour movement. According to Serafino Romualdi, an Italian labour unionist living in the U.S., Valenti was responsible for the first U.S. fundraising collection for victims of Fascism in Italy – a campaign he organised upon the request of Matteotti himself, raising \$1500 in the summer of 1923.<sup>56</sup> During the Second World War, Valenti was a consultant to the chief of the Italian desk at the Office for Strategic Services. He later became leader of the Circolo Matteotti – an organisation that worked to expose Communist and Fascist propaganda in Italian American communities.<sup>57</sup>

Valenti’s commitment to commemorating Matteotti extended throughout the Fascist regime, as we can see from Figure 28.<sup>58</sup> The photograph was taken by Marjory Collins of the Farm Security Administration, Office of War Information, as part of a government photography project to document life in the U.S. between 1935 and 1944. Hanging on the wall behind Valenti is a large, imposing portrait of Matteotti.

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<sup>54</sup> Diggins, ‘The Italo-American Anti-Fascist Opposition’, p. 580.

<sup>55</sup> Velia Matteotti, ‘Letter to Girolamo Valenti’, 23 June 1925, Girolamo Valenti Papers, Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives.

<sup>56</sup> Serafino Romualdi to Sylvia Valenti, ‘Letter from Serafino Romualdi to Sylvia Valenti’, 14 July 1958, Immigration History Research Center Archive, University of Minnesota, Girolamo Valenti Papers, Reel 1.

<sup>57</sup> The Circolo was disbanded in the mid-1950s but reformed in 1958 when Luigi Antonini, organiser of the Italian American Labor Council, asked Valenti (who had recently returned to the U.S. from Italy) to write a pamphlet exposing the anti-Semitic propaganda being published in the daily newspaper *Il Progresso Italo-Americano*.

<sup>58</sup> Marjory Collins, New York, New York. *Girolamo Valente [sic], Editor of the Progressive Italian Weekly, La Parola, Conferring with His Secretary*, 1943, Library of Congress.



**Figure 28: Girolamo Valenti in his office**

On 21 March 1926, Valenti's *Il Nuovo Mondo* published an article titled 'Un'opera degna di tutti gli emigrati e di tutti gli esuli del mondo. Un monumento a Giacomo Matteotti'.<sup>59</sup> The article launched a fundraising campaign for a monument to Matteotti, stating:

Oggi Giacomo Matteotti è un simbolo, e non soltanto in Italia. Ed è venuta per noi l'ora di mostrarlo. [...] Avanti italiani dell'America del Nord e del Sud, portiamo a termine quest'opera sublime che resterà a monumento dell'amore sincero e disinteressato di tutti gli emigrati alla santa causa della giustizia e della libertà umana.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Bellanca, p. 1.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

The campaign opened with a \$100 contribution from the editorial and administrative boards of the newspaper. The next day, the paper published a second article, which focused on the overwhelming response of the Italian American community:

“Il Nuovo Mondo” era in circolazione da poche ore soltanto e le prime contribuzioni erano già arrivate. Numerosi sottoscritti aspettavamo ieri mattina l’apertura dei nostri uffici per dare il loro contributo. Uno dei nostri telefoni è stato occupato tutta la giornata a ricevere adesioni e a rispondere a domande intorno all’erigendo monumento. L’idea ha incontrato l’entusiasmo dei lavoratori italiani di America.<sup>61</sup>

On the 27 March, the newspaper published an article titled *Il valore dei simboli*, which addressed the positive response to the fundraising campaign, stating ‘Tutti han compreso che l’esaltazione del Martire è la condanna dell’assassinio,’ making explicit the notion that commemoration of a martyr is also an act of condemnation of the oppressor.<sup>62</sup>

A week after its launch, the campaign had raised more than \$1,500 and the monument’s location had been decided: New York.<sup>63</sup> Throughout the campaign, the newspaper published a number of letters from donors. Though antifascist associations made many contributions, a number of donations came from private individuals; financial contributions were a way of remembering the martyr. One letter-writer congratulated the paper on creating a long-lasting reminder of the crimes of Fascism, stating: ‘Bravi, bravi di cuore! Il monumento a Giacomo Matteotti eternerà in questa terra ospitale il misfatto di un gruppo di vigliacchi che oggi governa rovinando la nostra povera Italia.’<sup>64</sup> Another, sent by Domenico Viaggiani from Yonkers, New York state, read: ‘Rispondendo all’appello da questo battagliero Giornale da voi lanciato per una sottoscrizione a pro’ monumento all’On. Martire Giacomo Matteotti, vi accludo un “check” di \$13 collettati da miei intimi amici e dagli ammiratori di colui che fu assassinato per difendere noi lavoratori.’<sup>65</sup>

The location was significant; New York was a hotspot in the fascist-antifascist struggle, and the planned monument gained significant financial support.

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<sup>61</sup> ‘Per un monumento a Giacomo Matteotti’, *Il Nuovo Mondo*, 22 March 1926, p. 1.

<sup>62</sup> ‘Il valore dei simboli’, *Il Nuovo Mondo*, 27 March 1926, p. 1.

<sup>63</sup> ‘Per il monumento a Matteotti in New York’, p. 2.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

Unlike the monument outside the Maison du Peuple in Brussels, which was funded through socialist parties' commitments to the LSI, the collection in the U.S. drew support from private individuals, many of whom reference the importance of this monument to Italian Americans. The newspaper regularly published lists of contributors' names and donation figures, demonstrating the importance of the proposed monument to individuals living in the United States. Though the majority of contributions came from donors in New York, a number came from towns and cities in states including Illinois, Philadelphia, New England, New Jersey, Indiana and Maine. The monument was deemed of central significance in the development of Italian American antifascism. A letter from Rachele Pennacchio describes the monument as signalling 'una nuova Era per l'antifascismo italiano d'America.'<sup>66</sup>

On 25 April, *Il Nuovo Mondo* wrote a short report of the meeting of the LSI, which took place in Geneva two days earlier.<sup>67</sup> The piece explained that the erection of a monument to Matteotti was discussed at the meeting, which also saw the launch of the International Matteotti Fund, and it would be installed in front of La Maison du Peuple in Brussels. A second article that day addressed the planned New York monument – 'l'effigie fusa nel bronzo d'un Titano che lottò e morì per la libertà non soltanto del popolo d'Italia, ma della classe lavoratrice d'ogni paese.'<sup>68</sup> The description of Matteotti as a Titan drew on mythology that would be known to both Italian and American citizens, and placed Matteotti within a global tradition. Once again, his memory was part of a wider global pantheon of fallen warriors. While the newspaper praised the establishment of a monument outside the largest workers' organisation in the world, it was adamant that its campaign for a monument in New York must continue:

I lavoratori tutti d'Europa contribuiranno in uno slancio d'internazionale solidarietà a l'opera nobilissima. Vorranno essere i lavoratori degli Stati Uniti da meno dei loro d'Europa? Bruxelles onorerà Matteotti in nome dell'Europa del lavoro. New York ospiterà il suo ricordo imperituro per volontà di tutti gli italiani liberi del Nord America.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> 'L'Internaz. Socialista per un monumento a Matteotti', *Il Nuovo Mondo*, 25 April 1926, p. 2.

<sup>68</sup> 'Sottoscrizione per un monumento a Matteotti Bruxelles-New York', *Il Nuovo Mondo*, 25 April 1926, p. 2.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.



The construction of the U.S. monument was picked up by the LSI in a statement about the commemorative activities held around the world on the second anniversary of Matteotti's death. It wrote: 'Per iniziativa dei compagni residenti a New York si stanno attualmente raccogliendo fondi per erigere in onore a Giacomo Matteotti un pubblico ricordo marmoreo che sorgerà fra non molto nel quartiere italiano di quella immensa metropoli americana.'<sup>70</sup>

By the 19<sup>th</sup> July, donations via the newspaper had closed, raising a total of \$8,321 (the equivalent of \$114,599 today).<sup>71</sup> However, there is no further mention of the monument in the paper after this point, and the project never saw the light of day. Though it is unclear why the monument was never built, the increasingly public demonstrations of Fascist support in New York at this time might explain the insistence that the monument be located in the city, but also the issue that made its construction impossible. Blackshirt militia had been given permission to march at the Memorial Day parade of 1927. In an unpublished typescript written by Valenti, he explained that on discovering this news he wrote a letter of protest to the official in charge of the parade. Valenti, who had been a reserve in the US Army, protested 'against letting the black shirts dishonour and disgrace the memory of our great American soldiers who had died for freedom and democracy'.<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, permission remained.

On the morning of the parade, an assailant killed two Blackshirts on the stairs of the Third Avenue Railway. The first, Joseph Carisi, was stabbed several times, and the second, Nicholas Amoroso, shot trying to help him. Five antifascists in Brooklyn were arrested in retaliation, but they were freed thanks to the pro-bono work of a formal criminal lawyer, Clarence Darrow. The clash created the first Italian American Fascist martyrs, and they were treated as such. Their bodies lay in state at the local Fascist headquarters in the Bronx for several days, accompanied by an honour guard.<sup>73</sup> Around 10,000 attended their funeral, which included a parade through the streets of New York, accompanied by floral arrangements, one of which

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<sup>70</sup> Caretti, *Matteotti. Il mito*, pp. 391–92.

<sup>71</sup> 'Sottoscrizione per un monumento a Matteotti', p. 2.

<sup>72</sup> Girolamo Valenti, 'Fascist Propaganda in the United States', 1958 (unpublished), p. 4, Girolamo Valenti Papers, Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives.

<sup>73</sup> Pernicone, p. 385.

spelled out “Mussolini” in white roses.<sup>74</sup> The bodies were flown back to their native Naples, where a second funeral drew crowds of 150,000.<sup>75</sup> They were later buried in the Sacrario dei Martiri Fascisti, built in Florence in 1934 to house the remains of the regime’s martyrs. In the thesis introduction I addressed the way Fascism exalted its dead as martyrs, using memory to build loyalty. The above example shows that this memory was also transnational.

Though the Amoroso-Carisi murder is not mentioned by Valenti with regards to the monument, the anecdote shows that at the time of the collection for the monument Fascists were being incorporated into national rituals of memory, clashes had become increasingly violent, and Blackshirts had been permitted to mourn their martyrs in U.S. public space. Their funeral procession included a live band, which played both the *Giovinezza* – the official hymn of the Fascist Party – and the *Star-Spangled Banner*, combining elements of Italian and American national culture. The spread of Fascism in American communities was clear. Within this context, it seems unlikely that U.S. authorities would have granted permission for a monument to the first antifascist martyr, given the recent creation of the first martyrs for Italian American Fascism and their public mourning as such. Furthermore, the dispatches of Washington ambassador Gaetano Celasani to Mussolini speak of the reputation of the leaders of the New York Fasci all’Estero as hardened criminals of low moral standing.<sup>76</sup> The erection of a monument to Matteotti may have seemed too dangerous in this climate of crime and violence.

Nevertheless, several important conclusions can be drawn from the proposal of a monument to Matteotti in New York and the reaction of donors. The swift financial contributions made by individuals, both Italian and American, to fund the monument’s construction, as well as the insistence that the monument be constructed in America, point to the symbolic power of Matteotti’s memory in a country that had been targeted by Mussolini in his attempts to export Fascism. The timing of the collection to fund the monument is notable, as it occurred at a time when Fascism was gaining traction in U.S. public space, with violent consequences. The monument had transnational aims: to honour the first martyr of Italian antifascism and to symbolically protest against the rising tide of Fascism in the U.S. more generally, but New York in particular, and the potential for violence.

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<sup>74</sup> Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, p. 129.

<sup>75</sup> Pernicone, p. 386.

<sup>76</sup> de Caprariis, p.161.

Matteotti's memory was to be inserted into the urban landscape as a future warning of the fatal consequences of Fascist persecution. The issue of Matteotti's murder had been incorporated into local experience, and resonated at a local level because the Fascist violence on Italian soil had found echoes in the United States. Memory had been decoupled from the boundaries of the nation state, carried into the diaspora through antifascist media published in the U.S. and incorporated into local experience, and the future-facing 'never again' quality at the heart of cosmopolitan memory was evident. Though we cannot say that memory had been decoupled entirely from national identity because the Italian diaspora was the primary carrier of this memory (and thus ethnicity was an important factor), many elements of cosmopolitan memory were evident in commemoration of Matteotti in the 1920s. However, not all members of the left welcomed the dominance of Matteotti's memory in Italian American antifascist communities, as the next section will show.

### **Competing martyrdoms: Matteotti, Sacco and Vanzetti**

Founded in New York in 1922, the anarchist publication *L'adunata dei Refrattari* dedicated very little column space to the Matteotti affair, focusing instead on the plight of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti – the two Italian American anarchists accused of murder during an armed robbery at a shoe factory in 1920. The pair was convicted and sentenced to death in Massachusetts in 1921. Over the following six years, a number of appeals were launched against the conviction, which included ballistics evidence and a confession from one of the alleged robbers, and protests took place in major cities around the world. Their innocence was the subject of much debate in the international press. They were killed in the electric chair in Charlestown Prison in 1927 and the case was later described as America's Dreyfus case.<sup>77</sup> The Matteotti murder took place during their six-year imprisonment.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Francis Russell, 'America's Dreyfus Case', *The New York Review of Books*, 5 November 1981 <<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1981/11/05/americas-dreyfus-case/>> [accessed 21 August 2017].

<sup>78</sup> On July 5, 1924, Vanzetti wrote to Alice Stone Blackwell, an American suffragist, journalist and radical socialist, to express his disappointment at the workers' response to his murder: 'The murder of Matteotti has aroused Italy. It seems that the workers haven't learned anything. [...] Hundred thousand workers ran away like rabbits [sic] before some thousand blackguards; while they could have eliminated in a few hours all the fascisti of Milan – unarmed the blackguards, and kill [sic] their officers, and taken possession of the fortress and armory – forming a

The Sacco and Vanzetti case captured the attention of Italian Americans on the extreme left, some of whom questioned Matteotti's dominance of the commemorative events in the diaspora. On 12 June 1926, the weekly newspaper *Il Proletario* dedicated a special issue to Sacco and Vanzetti, despite the proximity to the second anniversary of Matteotti's death. Mention of Matteotti was confined to a small box at the bottom of the page. In its subsequent coverage of the large event held to commemorate the second anniversary of Matteotti's murder, which was held at Cooper Union Hall in New York, the newspaper focused on the importance of commemorating anarchist martyrs, too.



**Figure 29: A 1926 commemoration at Cooper Union Hall, New York**

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red army of volunteers; mind [sic] the bridges, the road and rail road, taken the banks, post office, the warehouses, in short – they could have begun the revolution, and with an army of 100,000 men, well armed, swept from the earth's surface, all the ruffians, the tyrants, and the parasites who are killing our people.' For Vanzetti, too, the murder had had the potential to spark the downfall of the Fascist regime. See: Bartolomeo Vanzetti, 'Bartolomeo Vanzetti Typed Letter (Copy) to Alice Stone Blackwell, [Charlestown], 5 July 1924', Boston Public Library, Rare Books Department MS 2030 Box 2, Folder 11, Item 14. <<https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:z603s390j>> [accessed 21 August 2017].

According to the report, more than 3,000 antifascists attended the event, some carrying images of Matteotti (Figure 29).<sup>79</sup> The event was organised by the Antifascist Alliance in collaboration with supporting organisations and antifascist newspapers. At 3pm, l'immenso edificio è incominciato a rigurgitare di proletari e proletarie delle differenti scuole ma contrare al mostro che oggi, per disgrazia degli italiani, domina le cose del bel paese nostro.<sup>80</sup> The newspaper described several interjections from the crowd regarding a perceived lack of support for anarchist martyrs.<sup>81</sup> During a speech given by Frank Bellanca, a member of the crowd is reported to have shouted: 'Perché parlate di tutte le vittime del fascismo e non menzionate gli anarchici?' "Vi siete dimenticati di Lavagnini?" another asked, referring to the murder of Spartaco Lavagnini, the murdered editor of *L'Azione Comunista*. One young man is reported to have risen to his feet, shouting: 'È dovere nostro commemorare i morti, ma non dobbiamo dimenticare i vivi', in reference to Sacco and Vanzetti. Chairman Pietro Allegra then reassured crowds that the fate of 'questi due martiri' was so dear to him that he himself would begin a collection of funds to support their plight, pledging ten dollars to the fund. Around \$440 was raised at the event.<sup>82</sup>

This episode is worthy of analysis for several reasons. Firstly, it underlines the category of living martyrs. For some, Sacco and Vanzetti's prolonged suffering had earned them the title of martyrs while they were still alive, and their plight needed more attention. However, it also highlights the extent to which Matteotti's memory had come to monopolise the attention of much of the Italian American left, to the apparent frustration of Italian American radicals. The scant attention given by *l'Adunata dei Refrattari* to Matteotti's memory even after Sacco and Vanzetti's execution - it later focussed on the case of the Italian-born American anarchist Michele Schirru in Italy in 1931 after his attempt to assassinate Mussolini - shows their lack of engagement with his memory. Matteotti was a reformist, democratic martyr and his symbolism was therefore incompatible with the more revolutionary groups of the left. Italy's new government, and indeed the Allied forces, would make

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<sup>79</sup> 'Anti-Fascisti Honor Chief', *New York Daily News*, 14 June 1926, p. 14, Immigration History Research Center Archive, University of Minnesota, Girolamo Valenti Papers, Reel 1. Image reproduced with thanks to the IHRCA.

<sup>80</sup> 'Solenne commemorazione di Giacomo Matteotti. Un incidente degno di nota.', *Il Proletario*, 19 June 1926, p. 1.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

the most of this association with democratic reformism during the construction of the postwar Republic, as chapter 8 will show, but this reformism was enough to distance the Italian American radical left. In the previous case study, I addressed the possessiveness of memory communities and the way some martyrs are outright rejected by those who deem the martyr's values incompatible with group identity. Though anarchists did not reject Matteotti's memory, they did contest its dominance. The episode is included to show that memory communities compete for recognition of their martyrs, and challenge the dominance of others. Though in this instance, it was not case of black and white possession or rejection of martyr memory, simply an anxiety that mnemonic labour is finite and apportioned unequally, the complex relationship between martyr memory and collective identity is evident in the example.

### **Conclusion: a transnational martyr**

This chapter has shown that Italian American communities used Matteotti's name and image in protest against Fascism and its activities in the United States. His symbolism was also leveraged during the Second World War. In fact, it was during this time that we see the clearest example of the dual function of Matteotti's memory in the construction of Italian American identity, when protestors used his martyrdom as an expression of loyalty to both countries. Figure 31 shows a demonstration on Staten Island, New York, in response to Mussolini's declaration of war on the United States on 11 December 1941.<sup>83</sup> Among the caricatures of Hitler and Mussolini, and slogans honouring freedom and calling for the end of dictatorship, one placard reads: 'Remember Matteotti, Symbol of Liberty and Faith. Kidnapped and Murdered by Mussolini's Order.'

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<sup>83</sup> *Photo from Demonstration against Mussolini's Declaration of War on US. Staten Island, Girolamo Valenti Photographs, Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives. Image reproduced with thanks to the Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives.*



**Figure 30: A Staten Island demonstration against Mussolini's declaration of war**

By 1941, antifascists had ensured the mass defection of Italians that had been supportive of Mussolini prior to his declaration of war on the United States; though more than 600,000 Italians living in the U.S. at this time were yet to become American citizens, just 250 were interned by the U.S. Department of Justice who deemed them an alien threat to America.<sup>84</sup> Though the perceived threat was low, Italy had by this point become an enemy country. By evoking Matteotti's memory, this placard simultaneously functioned as a performance of loyalty to Italy, whose values had been undermined during the Fascist regime, and to America in its fight against Fascism. The early 1940s was a decisive time in the development of American antifascism. Many of the prominent exiled leaders living in Paris fled for American soil after the outbreak of war, and joined the Mazzini Society, founded by Salvemini in 1939. Cannistraro says that unlike earlier important organisations in Italian American antifascism, 'the Mazzini society attempted to combine exiles with citizens of the host country.'<sup>85</sup> This chapter has shown that Matteotti's memory served the same function. Commemoration was often in English, and important American labour leaders and businesses participated. His commemoration as a transnational martyr sat within this shift towards cooperation with the individuals and institutional structures of the host country; Matteotti's memory acted as a unit to honour an alternative nationalism to that imposed by Fascism and a means of reaffirming the values of the American nation – an important statement given the negative perception of Italian American communities as segregated from the wider

<sup>84</sup> Jerre Mangione and Ben Morreale, *La Storia: Five Centuries of the Italian American Experience* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992), p. 321.

<sup>85</sup> Cannistraro, 'Luigi Antonini and the Italian Anti-Fascist Movement in the United States', p. 22.

American nation, and Italian American antifascists as unruly and subversive. Furthermore, by upholding the values of an Italian antifascist martyr, Italian American antifascists were able to protest against Mussolini without attracting the label of being 'un-Italian' by the broader Italo-American community – a stigma Italian American antifascists had long suffered.<sup>86</sup> As *Il Nuovo Mondo* reminded its readers in 1931: 'antifascism is something that is above all parties and something that expresses a feeling in connection with their homeland.'<sup>87</sup> Their patriotism remained, but it honoured a very different nation to that the regime was building in Italy and trying to export to the United States.

Matteotti's commemoration in the United States was transnational. It focused on the specific political environments of the two nation states, and the dynamics between them. This transnationalism was explicit and self-conscious, and not simply a by-product of mass migration and global communication as transnational memory is often considered to be. Italian Americans adapted commemoration of Italy's first martyr of antifascism to suit their contemporary needs in the United States. Memory was part of the symbolic protest against rising support for Fascism in the U.S., but also a way for Italians living in the U.S. to display loyalty to the values of the American nation without compromising ethnic identity. Given the legislative and social hostility towards Italians living in America, the majority of whom had not assimilated, this was a socially useful performance of loyalty to the host country and became even more vital when Italy was declared an enemy country.

Memory was free from the boundaries of the nation state, and became part of local experience. This chapter has shown the role of Italian Americans (particular Italian American newspapers) in this transmission of memory, and the creation of a transnational memory community with the primary objective of protesting against rising support for Mussolini's regime in the United States. Matteotti's memory also had a second function: it allowed Italian Americans to honour the ideals of liberty and democracy at the heart of the United States. Indeed, the term 'liberty' was frequently used in commemoration of Matteotti in the United States; it was used during speeches given at various commemoration ceremonies, and on placards held aloft during protests. An article from *Il Nuovo Mondo* that promoted events on the second anniversary of Matteotti's death closed with a call for free men to

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<sup>86</sup> Diggins, *The Italo-American Anti-Fascist Opposition*, p. 582.

<sup>87</sup> 'Subscription Agents - Newsdealers', *Il Nuovo Mondo*, 5 November 1931, p. 2.



commemorate Matteotti as a martyr for freedom: ‘Sull’altare delle umane sofferenze rinnoviamo il nostro giuramento di uomini liberi votati al trionfo delle umane emancipazioni, rievochiamo il Martire del più grande ideale umano cantando l’inno alla Vita, alla Libertà.’<sup>88</sup>

In the previous case study, I analysed the term ‘martire della libertà’ to show its association with memory of the Risorgimento and therefore its role within the construction of national identity in Italy. The term ‘liberty’ was frequently used in commemoration of Matteotti in the United States, where it is connected to U.S. national values due to its inclusion as one of inalienable rights in the Declaration of Independence. As it was in Italy, the notion of liberty was linked to national identity in the U.S., but it was associated with citizens’ rights rather than national unity. Its frequent use in relation to Matteotti’s memory in the U.S. might therefore be read as symbolic of the link between Matteotti’s memory and a commitment to prevent further violation of human rights on U.S. soil – a link that suggests the emergence of the central characteristic of cosmopolitan memory.

This chapter and the previous one have filled a significant gap in Matteotti scholarship. It was the depth and breadth of commemoration outside of Italy that prepared and established Matteotti’s position as a national martyr (albeit one in-waiting). This internationally recognised memory of Matteotti then returned to Italy after liberation, where it would be used to unite the Allies and the new Italian government, as the next chapter will show. My analysis of international commemoration has exposed the dual temporality of martyr memory, which simultaneously looks to the future and the past. When memory returned to Italy after the fall of Fascism, Matteotti’s memory would be used in the new Republic as a symbol of Italians’ historic antifascism; it would therefore look backwards. However, at an international level, Matteotti’s memory served as a warning against potential human rights violations during Mussolini’s rule. It is this ‘future-oriented’ quality of Matteotti’s memory around the world during the *ventennio*, a dimension Levy and Sznajder call ‘a defining feature of cosmopolitan memory’, that supports my assertion that the central tenets of cosmopolitan memory were evident in global commemoration of Matteotti during Mussolini’s rule.<sup>89</sup> It was only with the fall of Fascism that Matteotti would become a national martyr, and his memory would

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<sup>88</sup> ‘Commemoriamo Giacomo Matteotti’, *Il Nuovo Mondo*, 8 June 1926, p. 6.

<sup>89</sup> Levy and Sznajder, ‘Memory Unbound’, p. 101.

return to Italy as part of its new civil religion, drawing a link back to the nation's antifascist past.

## Chapter 8

### A Martyr Returns to Italy

On 10 June 1945, 16,000 people gathered in Pescia, a city in the province of Pistoia, Tuscany, to participate in the unveiling ceremony for the first public monument to Matteotti.<sup>1</sup> To put this figure in perspective, Pescia had a population of 20,798 according to Istat census figures for 1951.<sup>2</sup> Designed by Alfredo Angeloni, who had created the Monument to the Fallen of the Risorgimento in Lucca in 1930, it included a bronze bust and a plaque quoting Matteotti's final words. The event brought together representatives of the Communist, Socialist, and Christian Democrat parties, and members of the Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale (CLN, the political organisation representing the Resistance after Italy's surrender to the Allies in September 1943).<sup>3</sup> Matteotti's memory was an occasion for wide-ranging political unity in divided postwar Italy. Relatives of victims of Mussolini's RSI stood on the stage, alongside Attilio Mariotti, socialist and member of the regional CLN. He closed his speech saying: "Oggi, dopo ventun'anni di silenzio e di apparente oblio, intorno al nome e al ricordo, Giacomo Matteotti risorge ingigantito nei secoli e grandeggia idealizzato nel suo alone di martirio e di gloria."<sup>4</sup> Mariotti's words are striking. They exemplify the classic, religious martyr paradigm whereby the martyr exerts power through eternal life. Matteotti was venerated on a national scale – the major focus of this chapter. Furthermore, through the incorporation of various parties on the left, the CLN, and other victims of Fascism, Matteotti's antifascist

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<sup>1</sup> The city had links with Matteotti. In October 1920, the PSI won a majority in the Pescia council. Alberto Sainati, a local carpenter, became the town's mayor, and Arduino Ferruccio Borelli, a barber and member of the PSI, was appointed assessor. One of the new socialist council's first acts was to introduce a new income tax to fund various community projects. The Lucca prefecture rejected the proposal, so the council sought support from the league of Socialist councils and the socialist deputy, Giacomo Matteotti. After Italy's liberation, Borelli, who had been a partisan during the Resistance, was asked to oversee organisation of the 10 June 1945 commemoration, and therefore made the construction of a monument in his hometown a priority. See: Città di Pescia, *Presentazione del restauro del monumento a Giacomo Matteotti* (Pescia: Città di Pescia, 2012)

<<http://www.quelliconpescianelcuore.it/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/SITO-MONUMENTO-Opuscolo-Matteotti.pdf>> [accessed 21 November 2017]

<sup>2</sup> Istituto nazionale di statistica, 'Censimento popolazione Pescia (1861 - 2011) Grafici su dati ISTAT', *Tuttitalia.it* <<https://www.tuttitalia.it/toscana/97-pescia/statistiche/censimenti-popolazione/>> [accessed 24 July 2018].

<sup>3</sup> Città di Pescia, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

identity was emphasised over his socialist identity, marking the start of his ascension to martyr for the nation, as we will see.

This chapter will address the return of Matteotti's memory to postwar Italy after a period of sustained commemoration abroad. I will focus on the historical turning points that best illustrate the evolution of Matteotti's memory in Italy, and I will give an overview of memory in the interim periods to try to trace the circumstances that cause memory to wax and wane.<sup>5</sup> In the first section, I will address the return of Matteotti's memory to public space in Italy during the Resistance. By the 1940s, Matteotti had become a global icon of antifascism and therefore a useful symbol to unite the Italian Resistance movement. Furthermore, his appeal was broad; international awareness of his memory, as shown in the previous chapters, meant that occupying Allied forces would likely have been familiar with the values he represented. Crucially, Matteotti was not associated with either communism or insurrectionism, but he was Italian. His memory was therefore conciliatory, appealing to partisans because he represented national antifascism, and the Allies, because he represented parliamentary democracy and was not directly tied to the Resistance (trends in Resistance memory and the impact on how Matteotti was remembered will be analysed throughout this chapter). As such, both the state and the liberators sanctioned his memory, and Matteotti became part of the national pantheon of martyrs for the new Republic.

This unifying function of the national martyr stands in stark contrast with the antagonistic martyrdom analysed in the first case study on the memory of the Mattei brothers. This chapter will therefore allow me to address the idea of the national martyr as one that reflects the values the state wishes to promote (thus gaining institutional endorsement), and a symbol that unites the collective rather

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<sup>5</sup> The timeline of Matteotti's memory provided via a QR code in the appendix of the thesis is useful for this chapter. Though it is by no means exhaustive, I have plotted significant historical events, the construction (and destruction) of sites of memory, commemorative events, cultural production (books, films, plays), the formation of organisations bearing Matteotti's name, and the proposal and adoption of laws to preserve Matteotti's memory. These events are tracked both in- and outside of Italy, and a number of broad patterns can be identified: the high number of commemorative events held by international memory agents during the ventennio, as already addressed; the rise in cultural production in Italy in 1943-45; the steady construction of sites of memory throughout Italy from 1944-55; a renewed focus on cultural production documenting Matteotti's life in the 1970s and 1980s; and finally the move to protect Matteotti's memory through laws and museums in the period from 2000 to the present day.

than reinforcing the exclusionary boundaries of the group, as in the case of antagonistic martyrdom. However, the second section in this chapter will show the reclaiming of Matteotti's memory by socialist groups in the 1970s, when the fascist-antifascist binaries had returned to Italy and martyr memory was once again evoked within the antagonistic mode of remembering, becoming part of the political struggle itself. Martyrdom returned to the level of the socio-political group during this period. The purpose of this comparison is to show that although both case studies belonged to opposite ends of the political spectrum, during the 1970s the approach to commemoration was not dissimilar. This similarity suggests that though martyrs may symbolise opposing values, we can make some predictions about which mode of martyr memory – cosmopolitan or antagonistic – might be evoked at political flashpoints, and what use that memory might have in the construction of collective identity.

### **A martyr for liberty in free Italy**

On 25 July 1943, radio speaker Giovanni Battista Arista announced Mussolini's resignation and the appointment of marshal Pietro Badoglio as head of state and Prime Minister. Badoglio was a military general during both World Wars; after World War I he was a senator, and Mussolini made him the first governor of Italian Libya from 1929-33. Mussolini's resignation followed a number of defeats at the hands of the Allies. On 10 July, the Allies had landed on the Sicilian coast, marking the start of their invasion of Axis-controlled Italy (and, later, of occupied Europe). This followed the Allies' defeat of Axis powers in Italian Libya, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco. Sicily fell in just a few days after little resistance from the Italian army. On 19 July, the Allies ramped up air raids on Rome (which had begun on May 16); 521 planes targeted strategic sites including railway freight yards, steel factories and airstrips. These events accelerated the crisis in the Fascist regime and, on 25 July, the Grand Council of Fascism passed a vote of no confidence against Mussolini, who was arrested later that day.

The following day, Pietro Nenni, who had been secretary of the socialist party during the dictatorship and spent much of the *ventennio* in exile in Spain and France (where he was imprisoned for a time under Vichy rule), described the atmosphere in his diaries: 'Sui muri non sono che scritte di esecrazione contro Mussolini e di evviva a Matteotti. I simboli del fascismo sono già stati scalpellati dai

pubblici edifici e si direbbe che non abbiano mai avuto la minima presa nei cuori.<sup>6</sup> In Milan that day, the plaque identifying Corso del Littorio was removed and Corso Matteotti written in its place.<sup>7</sup> This marked the start of a trend that continued throughout the period.<sup>8</sup> Elsewhere in the city, pamphlets were distributed declaring ‘M Mussolini, W Matteotti’, the diametric opposition highlighting the extent to which Matteotti had remained the symbol of antifascism 21 years after his death.<sup>9</sup> The immediate incorporation of his memory into public space after the fall of Fascism hinted at what was to come: the foundation of the new Republic on the principles of democratic (not insurrectionary) antifascism, with Matteotti as its figurehead.

Though the Badoglio government publicly stated it would continue to fight alongside German forces, secret armistice negotiations with the Allied forces began in early September; on 8 September, 45 days after taking power, Badoglio declared the armistice. During this period, Allied forces had moved from Sicily onto the mainland, but German occupying forces had strengthened too, and they had taken control of important infrastructure. With their support, and following his rescue (upon Hitler’s command), Mussolini declared the RSI on 23 September, creating the second incarnation of the Fascist state.

Resistance groups had formed during this period. On 11 September, after the violent clashes at Porta San Paolo in Rome, the Partito Socialista Italiano di Unità Proletaria (PSIUP) established its underground military wing: the Brigade Matteotti.<sup>10</sup> The Matteotti Brigades were strongest in Lazio, but they also operated

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<sup>6</sup> ‘Giornata di entusiasmo patriottico’, *Corriere della Sera*, 27 July 1943, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> This inscription of antifascist narratives in public space became official policy after Italy’s liberation. On 2 February 1945, councillor Bersani presented a motion to the Roman Giunta to rename a number of streets in Rome, summarising the debates held by the Commissione Consultiva di toponomastica in 1944. As a result of the proposals, Ponte Littorio, the bridge nearest to the site of Matteotti’s kidnap, was renamed Ponte Matteotti. On 31 December that year in Adria, in the province of Rovigo, the Giunta Municipale legislated to rename Riviera Ettore Muti, honouring a pilot and former party PNF secretary, as Riviera Matteotti.<sup>8</sup> This occurred throughout the country and Matteotti is the most prominent twentieth century political figure in public space today, as I will show in the concluding part of this chapter. As the timeline in the appendix shows, the construction of sites of memory took place across the country between 1945-55 as the postwar nation was constructed on the legacy of antifascism.

<sup>9</sup> Caretti, *Matteotti. Il mito*, p. 72.

<sup>10</sup> The Partito Socialista Italiano di Unità Proletario was formed in August that year (after a merger with the Movimento di Unità Proletaria) by Giuseppe Saragat,

in regions including Veneto (the first formed in Monte Grappa, Veneto, on 12 December 1943) and Emilia Romagna.<sup>11</sup> The diaries of the three Bologna divisions show the use of Matteotti's memory as inspiration to commit to the antifascist fight. Pamphlets reminded young people joining the Matteotti brigades of the sacrifice made by Matteotti, 'che a voi attribuiva un'alta missione nella rinascita dell'Italia'.<sup>12</sup>

I giovani che hanno impugnato volontariamente le armi per combattere per la libertà d'Italia, prendendo a simbolo del loro ardimento e delle loro alte idealità civili e patriottiche il nome di Giacomo Matteotti, non solo rendono doveroso onore al grande eroe e martire, ma ben meritano la riconoscenza dei lavoratori e del Paese.<sup>13</sup>

In the same way it had been in antifascist communities outside of Italy during the Fascist *ventennio*, as chapter 6 showed, Matteotti's memory initially returned to Italy as a war cry used by antifascists. Maurice Fagence, war reporter for the Herald, explained his experience of the Italian Resistance. In *Matteotti Left an Army*, he described his advance into Italy's industrial north, where he met 'Matteotti's followers in scores of thousands'.<sup>14</sup> Fagence entered a house that had been occupied

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Sandro Pertini (who had cited Matteotti's death as the point that inspired him to join the socialist party and attended his funeral, as chapter X showed) and Pietro Nenni. Saragat had spent the *ventennio* in exile, primarily in France where he formed an alliance with Nenni, and took part in negotiations that led to the return of Turati's Partito Socialisti dei Lavoratori Italiani – the new name given to the reformist party Turati had established with Matteotti – to the PSI in 1930. Nenni had been one of the most influential figures in the brigades after returning from exile, and had helped to organise one of its most important operations; the liberation of Pertini and Saragat, who had been captured and sentenced to death by Nazi forces, from the Regina Coeli jail on 24 January 1944. The trio sought to reunite the fragmented socialist movement, but this unity would not last for long. Concerned that PSI was too close to communism, Saragat would soon split from the party to form the Partito Socialista dei Lavoratori Italiani, and the PSIUP became the PSI once again. In the 1947 elections, Saragat used Matteotti's memory as part of his campaign. Electoral posters featured the party name, a large portrait of Matteotti and the words 'VOTA MATTEOTTI'.

See: *Vota Matteotti, 1947*, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, Radicalism Photograph Collection, Box 6, Folder 296.

<sup>11</sup> ANPI, 'Matteotti', *ANPI* <<http://anpi.it/s197/>> [accessed 12 October 2017].

<sup>12</sup> *Documenti dei socialisti bolognesi sulla Resistenza: i diari delle 3 Brigate Matteotti*, ed. by Nazario Sauro Onofri, *La Resistenza in Emilia-Romagna*, 3 (Bologna: La squilla, 1975), p. 230.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229.

<sup>14</sup> 'Matteotti Left an Army', *Daily Herald*, 17 July 1944, p. 4.

by German troops, and met 40 men ‘with membership cards inscribed “Matteotti” [...] The spirit of Matteotti which lived throughout Italy’s years of shame still lives in Northern Italy. The dead Matteotti is an army on his own. He lives. He fights.’<sup>15</sup>

Drawing on these belligerent narratives, Matteotti’s memory was swiftly co-opted by the Resistance in order to encourage ongoing commitment to the antifascist fight. As such, during the fight for liberation we see a shift away from the cosmopolitan mode of memory that had characterised much international commemoration of Matteotti towards the monumental mode of memory analysed in the thesis introduction, which privileges tales of military might and heroism. The speed with which Matteotti’s name returned to Italy after Mussolini’s resignation can be seen in printed material. Figure 32 shows the frequency of Matteotti’s name in printed material published in Italian from 1924 to 2008.<sup>16</sup> The results show a peak in 1943 in the immediate aftermath of Mussolini’s resignation (showing, once again, the diametric opposition between the two). Many of these publications were propagandistic - produced in order to remind citizens of the sacrifice Matteotti made in the name of antifascism and encourage commitment to the ongoing fight against Fascism. During the period, Matteotti’s famous speech in parliament on 30 May 1924 was reprinted,<sup>17</sup> international socialist parties documented his assassination,<sup>18</sup> and the Chieti trial was the subject of renewed analysis in print.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> I ran a search for ‘Giacomo Matteotti’ in Google’s Ngram - an online engine that searches a corpus of books printed between 1500 and 2008, which have been digitised by Google. The search can be limited by corpus language and date parameters. To create the corpus, Google has used optical character recognition whereby computers take the pixels of a scanned book and recognise words within them. This technique has been criticised for its unreliability as computers fail to recognise, or confuse, certain letters particularly in older printed texts that are less uniform. However, since my search is limited to the twentieth century, and I have used Matteotti’s full name to make my search terms more specific, I believe the results to be reliable. It is important to say that these results do not show only material dedicated to Matteotti, but all Italian material that mentioned his name.

<sup>17</sup> Giacomo Matteotti, *Ultimo discorso di G. Matteotti (tenuto alla Camera dei deputati nella seduta del 30 maggio 1924)*. (Padova: Guerrini, 1943).

<sup>18</sup> Partito socialista svizzero, *Uno di allora, l’assassinio di Giacomo Matteotti* (Zurich: Partito socialista svizzero, 1943).

<sup>19</sup> Michele Parise, *Il processo Matteotti* (Naples: Masula, 1943).





**Figure 31: A Google Ngram search for 'Giacomo Matteotti'**

Matteotti's martyrdom became part of Italy's fight for liberation, and those who commemorated him drew on narratives that had first developed abroad. At this point, Matteotti's memory remained at the level of the political group – the antifascist Resistance – as the following example will show. In 1943, after the 8 September armistice and Italy's surrender to allied forces, a prisoner of war from New Zealand, Roy Johnston, was on the run as a fugitive. He had escaped from a prisoner of war camp in the Veneto region. Searching for shelter, he approached an old man working the land, aware that if he encountered hostile troops he could be killed. In an attempt to convey his antifascist beliefs, he said two words: "Conoscere Matteotti?" The old man called to his wife, who emerged from their house with a framed portrait of Matteotti that was usually kept hidden. He was adopted into the family, working in the family business. We see from this example that the private worship of Matteotti's image had continued for the duration of Fascism, and his name was synonymous with antifascist resistance, both for Italians and foreigners.<sup>20</sup>

It was only during the creation of the new constitution that the institutions of government (and the Allies) promoted his memory and, with the state's endorsement, Matteotti was incorporated into the pantheon of national martyrs becoming part of the new civil religion, as this chapter will show. Matteotti's memory was politically expedient at this particular moment in the nation's history;

<sup>20</sup> Diana McCurdy, 'The Italian Files', *Dominion Post*, 13 September 2003, p. 17.

it acted as a building block of antifascist consensus during the construction of the new Republic. In the next section, I will address the first free commemoration ceremonies held in Italy for Matteotti, most of which involved the Allied liberating forces and members of Italy's CLN, and show that his memory served as a bridge between the insurrectionary partisan forces and Allied occupiers.

### **Building consensus through commemoration**

By the summer of 1944, there were more than 82,000 people in the Resistance, primarily in Piedmont, Liguria, Veneto, Emilia, Tuscany and Lombardia (of course, this figure does not reflect all forms of resistance, but it does give some idea of scale).<sup>21</sup> Partisans had briefly held control of some areas including Carnia, Montefiorino and Ossola, where they planned to introduce democratic socio-economic policies like taxation of the rich (in reality very little was implemented).<sup>22</sup> Despite making significant gains in the north, including the notable liberation of Florence, the country suffered some enormous reprisals.<sup>23</sup> The liberation of northern Italy was further hampered by the harsh winter of 1944, which took its toll on partisan forces and caused serious loss of life.

In December that year, Resistance fighters secured 160 million lire a month in assistance from Italy's allied government. In concession, the CLN of Northern Italy (CLNAI) promised to obey the Allies upon Italy's eventual liberation and hand over all local governments currently under Resistance control.<sup>24</sup> The so-called Protocols of Rome also included an agreement to disband partisan units and hand over arms to the Allies. This was a major political defeat for the Resistance, and put them in a weakened negotiating position when Italy's liberation finally occurred.<sup>25</sup>

Malnutrition and unemployment were rife during the 18 months of German occupation of northern Italy.<sup>26</sup> Despite the harsh winter conditions, the partisan movement survived and its numbers had risen to 100,000 by April 1945, as the Allies launched their final assault against German occupiers to liberate Italy.<sup>27</sup> The

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<sup>21</sup> Ginsborg, p. 54.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Such as, for example, the Monte Sole massacre at the hands of Nazis, which caused the death of more than 800 citizens. See: Luca Baldissara, *Il massacro. Guerra ai civili a Monte Sole* (Bologna: il mulino, 2009).

<sup>24</sup> Ginsborg, p. 57.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

cities of Genoa, Turin, and Milan declared a popular insurrection against the Nazis and Fascists between 24–26 April, and on 25 April Mussolini fled to the Swiss border. He was arrested on 27 April, and shot by partisans. His body and that of his mistress were strung up in Piazza Loreto, Milan, for all to see.<sup>28</sup>

137 days after Mussolini's execution, a story broke that Matteo Matteotti had fired the fatal bullet to avenge his father's killing 21 years earlier. The American newspaper the *Chicago Sun* was the original source, but the story spread internationally. Though entirely false (Matteo and his brother, Carlo, were in Rome and Venice respectively that day), the story is testament to the strength of Matteotti's memory two decades after his murder.<sup>29</sup> The insertion of Matteotti's son, the heir of the Italian antifascist martyr par excellence, into the national narrative of the assassination of Mussolini provided a neat, symbolic conclusion to the Fascist *ventennio*. Matteotti, the first prominent victim of Fascism, was the one figure worthy of putting the final nail in Fascism's coffin and securing the nation's freedom.<sup>30</sup>

The timing of the story is also worth considering. At this point, Ferruccio Parri, one of the most important Resistance leaders, was leader of the provisional government. But while fierce debates were underway in government (and on the streets) about the country's future as a monarchy or as a republic, the Allies continued to play a large role in national governance, particularly with regards to the upcoming elections for both local administrations and government.<sup>31</sup> Postwar Italy was not yet autonomous, and remained subject to the influence of foreign powers. Italy's liberation had occurred thanks to both the Resistance and Allied intervention, and political negotiations (and concessions) between the two were tense. As Portelli notes, without the Resistance: 'Italy would have been only the object, not the subject, of its liberation – which is not a good start for the foundation of a free country.'<sup>32</sup> The insertion of Matteotti's memory into the story of Italy's

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>29</sup> 'Nessuno dei figli di Matteotti ha partecipato all'esecuzione di Mussolini', *Corriere della Sera*, 13 September 1945, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> For more on wartime myths and false stories in popular memory, see: Alan R. Perry, 'Pippo: An Italian Folklore Mystery of World War II', *Journal of Folklore Research*, 40.2 (2003), 115–48.

<sup>31</sup> *La nascita della repubblica: mostra storico-documentaria*, ed. by Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Quaderni Di Vita Italiana (Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, 1987), p. 158.

<sup>32</sup> Portelli, *The Order Has Been Carried Out*, p. 169.

liberation re-nationalised the narrative, and acknowledged Italy's attempts to liberate itself, but also underlined the values of democracy – the very values for which Matteotti had died – and thus appealed to Allied forces who distrusted the insurrectionary Resistance.

This section will focus on two key points: firstly, that the incorporation of Resistance and Allied representatives at the initial commemoration ceremonies elevated Matteotti to the position as a martyr for the nation, an important part of Italy's new civil religion. Secondly, the statement frequently made at these ceremonies that Italians had silently remembered Matteotti throughout the *ventennio* implied the nation's enduring, stoic antifascism and thus diminished Italian responsibility for more than two decades of Fascism. The narrative simultaneously suggested that the key to Italy's liberation had lay within its citizens all along, and presented Italians as victims who had suffered throughout the oppressive dictatorship but had nevertheless retained the moral courage to celebrate their antifascist values in private. This chapter will therefore show the importance of national martyrs after violence on national soil, as addressed in the thesis introduction, showing that Matteotti's memory was part of the postwar process of forgetting that many Italians had supported the dictatorship that allowed the nation to transition to postwar democracy. Current scholarship has argued that the mythology of the Resistance during the construction of the Italian Republic served this very purpose.<sup>33</sup> I will argue that Matteotti's memory did the same, but, unlike Resistance memory, it enjoyed the support of the Allies and thus had a practical, unifying function during the construction of the Republic.

46 days after the CLN declared Italy's liberation, the first free commemoration ceremonies for Matteotti were held across the country. In Rome, the main event took place at the cinema Cola di Rienzo. On the same day in Montecitorio, busts of Matteotti, Gramsci and Amendola were unveiled in the Sala Lupa (where Turati had held his 1924 commemoration of Matteotti), in the presence of many surviving parliamentarians from the Aventine Secession, antifascist groups, and government members.<sup>34</sup> This marked the start of the absorption of Matteotti's memory into the institutions of government, and the canonization of antifascist

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<sup>33</sup> Christopher Duggan, *A Concise History of Italy*, Cambridge Concise Histories (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 346.

<sup>34</sup> 'Lo scoprimento dei busti di Matteotti, Gramsci e Amendola', *Corriere d'Informazione*, 12 June 1945, p. 1.

martyrs in the new Republic. In Florence, Nenni led the ceremony; in Torino, large crowds listened to Innocenzo Porrone, a lawyer and prominent antifascist, in the Carignano theatre;<sup>35</sup> and in Milan, mayor Greppi led the event which he described as ‘un rito, meglio ancora; un rito religioso’,<sup>36</sup> highlighting the fusion of secular and religious discourses that characterised Matteotti’s memory.

The largest ceremony took place in Matteotti’s hometown. The PSI provided coaches (or a petrol allowance) for party members wishing to travel from Milan to Fratta Polesine.<sup>37</sup> People came from Polesine, Emilia Romagna, Veneto, Piemonte, and Lombardia by bicycle, foot, coach and car.<sup>38</sup> Many carried Matteotti’s portrait. The commemorative march began at Matteotti’s family home, which German soldiers had used as an infirmary during the occupation.<sup>39</sup> Ovidio Rigolin, who had organised the 1924 funeral addressed in chapter 5, led the procession. Many participants had been at the funeral and walked the same route through Fratta to the cemetery that they had in 1924. Each tree along the route bore a banner featuring his name or image. Mourners were thus guided through space by markers of Matteotti’s sacrifice, which functioned as secular *via crucis*.<sup>40</sup> When attendees reached the tomb, they saw a group of police officials standing in an honour salute, signalling the custody of memory by civic institutions for the first time since 1924. They then lay wreaths at the foot of a new black marble casket that had been provided by Belgian workers, showing, once again, the importance of Matteotti’s memory in international socialist circles.

Crowds then moved to the central piazza in Fratta to hear speeches. Standing beside Matteotti’s son, Matteo, on a balcony overlooking the square, General Dunlop from the Allied command in Veneto gave a short speech (in Italian) in which he declared himself ‘lieto di aver partecipato insieme con i partigiani alla liberazione

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<sup>35</sup> ‘Le celebrazioni nelle varie città’, *Corriere d’Informazione*, 11 June 1945, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> ‘Matteotti commemorato dal sindaco Greppi’, *Corriere d’Informazione*, 11 June 1945, p. 2.

<sup>37</sup> ‘Commemorazione di Matteotti a Fratta Polesine’, *Corriere d’Informazione*, 9 June 1945, p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> ‘Commoso pellegrinaggio alla tomba di Giacomo Matteotti’, *Corriere d’Informazione*, 11 June 1945, p. 1.

<sup>39</sup> During occupation, locals saved all his possessions, which were returned to their original place in the house as soon as occupying forces left. See: ‘Commoso pellegrinaggio alla tomba di Giacomo Matteotti’, p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> Via crucis, or stations of the cross, are images of Christ on his crucifixion day that line a particular path (through a church or pilgrimage route) and encourage the faithful to contemplate his suffering.

dell'Italia, che si dice certo saprà sempre degnamente custodire la libertà. Nuove acclamazioni al nome di Matteotti ed agli alleati.'<sup>41</sup> His speech acknowledged the involvement of partisans and the Allies in Italian liberation. Matteotti was a bridge between the Allies and partisans. As a prominent antifascist, a reformist (not a revolutionary), and a proponent of parliamentary democracy, Matteotti's memory was a unifying force that the Allies would promote.

The following description of the event, which was published in *Corriere d'Informazione*, is typical of the narratives that emerged during this period:

Ma ben altra luce era quella che ne emanava e guidava le colonne del popolo in una marcia grave e silenziosa. Rimase, non mai spenta, ma velata, nel chiuso degli animi e dei cuori. Adesso finalmente può ardere. Gli italiani traggono alla tomba di Matteotti non più furtivamente, spiati da poliziotti, come accadeva agli stessi famigliari se osavano accostarvisi, ma in folla, in un grande convegno di spiriti memori e grati intorno al grande spirito che per tanto, per troppo tempo, fu simbolo del martirio e della fede.<sup>42</sup>

Once again Italians were represented as stoic, silent (and silenced) custodians of Matteotti's memory, emphasising their private antifascist identity during twenty years of Fascist rule. At this point, the Allies retained an active involvement in the rebuilding of Italian democracy, and representatives took part in many commemoration ceremonies. Matteotti's memory was useful to the Allies because it celebrated the values of democratic antifascism, and not the insurrectionary, revolutionary antifascism of the Resistance. It is essential to remember here that partisan retribution had caused hundreds of deaths, and unrest had continued long after Italy's liberation. Furthermore, given its close ties with the communist party, the Resistance was not a movement the Allies wished to celebrate (not least because it downplayed Allied involvement in Italy's liberation).<sup>43</sup> For the partisans, Matteotti's memory re-nationalised Italy's liberation story and linked the idea of liberation back to 1924, suggesting Italy's potential to secure its own freedom had been there all along. Matteotti's memory was conciliatory.

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<sup>41</sup> 'Commosso pellegrinaggio alla tomba di Giacomo Matteotti', p.2.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Philip Cooke, *The Legacy of the Italian Resistance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 15.

## **Incorporating memory into the new Republic**

On 2 June 1946, Italy held its first free election since the advent of the Fascist regime. The Referendum Istituzionale asked the electorate to vote for a monarchy or a republic, and to elect deputies to form the *Assemblea Costituente* (AC), which would govern the country and draw up the new constitution. On 18 June, Italy was officially declared a Republic. In the 1946 elections, Nenni was elected deputy for the *Partito Socialista Italiano di Unità Proletaria* (Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity, PSIUP), which gained the largest share of votes on the left; the DC was the largest party in the AC, followed by PSIUP and the *Partito Comunista Italiano* (Italian Communist Party, PCI). On 27 June, in an edition of the newsreel *La Settimana Incom*, which was shown weekly in cinemas, Nenni outlined his vision for the new Republic. His statement bound Matteotti's sacrifice to the new Republic:

Proclamata la repubblica che in questo 10 giugno che placa finalmente la memoria di Giacomo Matteotti e dei morti sacrificati nella criminale guerra fascista, proclamata sei anni orsono, si apre una nuova fase della nostra attività che sarà caratterizzata da quattro esigenze fondamentali: la pace nei giusti confini d'Italia, la pacificazione interna di cui il primo atto sarà l'amnistia, pane a lavoro per quarantacinque milioni d'italiani; una moderna costituzione che ci ponga all'avanguardia del progresso.<sup>44</sup>

The following year, Piero Calamandrei, who sat on the committee for the new constitution, gave a progress update on the new Republic project to the AC on the 4 March 1947. He reminded deputies that the new constitution was not the epilogue to a revolution but its prelude, and would, he said, have collaboration at its heart. He closed his speech with a reflection on sacrifice and the building of the new Republic:

Io credo di sì: credo che i nostri posteri sentiranno più di noi, tra un secolo, che da questa nostra Costituente è nata veramente una nuova storia: e si

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<sup>44</sup> *La repubblica nelle dichiarazioni di De Gasperi, Sforza, Nenni, Giannini e Orlando*, *La Settimana Incom*, vol. 2554, XVI (Rome: Cinecittà, 1946), Archivio Storico Luce <[http://camera.archivioluca.com/camera-storico/scheda/video/i\\_tempi\\_della\\_politica/00044/IL5000008859/2/La-repubblica-nelle-dichiarazioni-di-De-Gasperi-Sforza-Nenni-Giannini-e-Orlando-27-06-1946.html](http://camera.archivioluca.com/camera-storico/scheda/video/i_tempi_della_politica/00044/IL5000008859/2/La-repubblica-nelle-dichiarazioni-di-De-Gasperi-Sforza-Nenni-Giannini-e-Orlando-27-06-1946.html)>.

immagineranno, come sempre avviene che con l'andar dei secoli la storia si trasfiguri nella leggenda, che in questa nostra Assemblea, mentre si discuteva della nuova Costituzione Repubblicana, seduti su questi scranni non siamo stati noi, uomini effimeri di cui i nomi saranno cancellati e dimenticati, ma sia stato tutto un popolo di morti, di quei morti che noi conosciamo ad uno ad uno, caduti nelle nostre file, nelle prigioni e sui patiboli, sui monti e nelle pianure, nelle steppe russe e nelle sabbie africane, nei mari e nei deserti, da Matteotti a Rosselli, da Amendola a Gramsci, fino ai giovinetti partigiani, fino al sacrificio di Anna-Maria Enriquez e di Tina Lorenzoni, nelle quali l'eroismo è giunto alla soglia della santità.

Essi sono morti senza retorica, senza grandi frasi, con semplicità, come se si trattasse di un lavoro quotidiano da compiere: il grande lavoro che occorreva per restituire all'Italia libertà e di dignità. Di questo lavoro si sono riservata la parte più dura e più difficile; quella di morire, di testimoniare con la resistenza e la morte la fede nella giustizia. A noi è rimasto un compito cento volte più agevole; quello di tradurre in leggi chiare, stabili e oneste il loro sogno: di una società più giusta e più umana, di una solidarietà di tutti gli uomini, alleati a debellare il dolore.

Assai poco, in verità, chiedono a noi i nostri morti.

Non dobbiamo tradirli.<sup>45</sup>

Calamandrei's words were evidence of the transposition of the religious concepts like sacrifice and renewal that lie at the heart of martyrdom into the secular project of the new Republic and the development of a civil religion of antifascism. Through references to sacrifice, and a commitment to building – and protecting – a more just society after Fascist violence, Calamandrei showed that memory had become a question of morality and civic duty, in line with the cosmopolitan mode of remembering. Martyrdom became the foundation of Italy's new democratic Republic, with Matteotti as its figurehead. This elaborate oratorical

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<sup>45</sup> *Seduta di Martedì 4 Marzo 1947* (Montecitorio, Rome, 1947), 1723–55 (p.1755) <[http://www.camera.it/\\_dati/Costituente/Lavori/Assemblea/sed049/sed049.pdf](http://www.camera.it/_dati/Costituente/Lavori/Assemblea/sed049/sed049.pdf)> [accessed 10 September 2017].



style was typical of speeches relating to the Republic. Cooke has identified the ‘common language, a kind of Resistance koiné’ in the years after Italy’s liberation, of which ‘Calamandrei was [...] the master practitioner’.<sup>46</sup> His excessive oratorical flourish ‘established a kind of linguistic paradigm that many subsequently tried to copy, feeling that the only suitable language of commemoration was the language of Calamandrei.’<sup>47</sup> Though Calamandrei expanded the pantheon of martyrs beyond the partisan movement, to include figures like Matteotti, the same rhetoric is evident. He drew on the sacrifice of the fallen for the nation, the pure, simple morality that underpinned their actions (and deaths), and the contemporary duty to work in their honour through the new Republic.<sup>48</sup> This rhetorical use of an emerging canon of martyrs created continuity between the antifascism of the 1920s, the Resistance, and the Republic.

The First Republic was built on the sacrifice of martyrs, it was claimed, and a commitment to prevent future violence. This was made explicit on the 23<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of Matteotti’s murder, when the new AC held an official commemoration ceremony in Montecitorio. Standing in the hall where Matteotti gave his speech denouncing Mussolini, deputies from various parties in the AC honoured Matteotti’s memory, which was repeatedly linked to Italy’s reconstruction. Sacrifice was described as ‘il cemento più solido con il quale il popolo italiano sta ricostruendo [...] le fortune immancabili della Patria immortale’ according to Umberto Merlin, a Christian Democrat who twice referred to Matteotti’s ‘sangue generoso’ in his interjection.<sup>49</sup> Canepa declared: ‘Pensando quale onda di sangue e di dolore ha costato la riconquista della libertà e da che nobile sangue è sorta la Repubblica’;<sup>50</sup> and Rubilli reminded deputies ‘dal sangue di Matteotti [...] stava per derivare la salvezza della Patria nostra.’<sup>51</sup> This link between bloodshed and the patria was reminiscent of the commemorative rhetoric after the Risorgimento, which upheld the dead as martyrs. It typified the rhetoric used in commemoration of those

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<sup>46</sup> Cooke, *The Legacy of the Italian Resistance*, p. 42.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>48</sup> For more on the incorporation of the memory of the Resistance dead into the new Republic project, see: Leonardo Paggi, *Il ‘Popolo Dei Morti’: la repubblica Italiana nata dalla guerra (1940-1946)*, XX Secolo (Bologna: il mulino, 2009).

<sup>49</sup> *Seduta Pomeridiana di Martedì 10 Giugno 1947* (Montecitorio, Rome, 1947), 4599–4640 (p.4603)  
<[http://www.camera.it/\\_dati/Costituente/Lavori/Assemblea/sed056/sed056.pdf](http://www.camera.it/_dati/Costituente/Lavori/Assemblea/sed056/sed056.pdf)>  
[accessed 10 September 2017].

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 4601.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 4604.

martyrs who are produced through conflict within the nation, marking a break with the past and commitment to build a better future. Furthermore, the frequent references to the purifying quality of Matteotti's blood show the fusion of religious and antifascist imagery in his commemoration as a martyr, with political sacrifice represented as part of the rebirth of democracy (albeit more than two decades later). This narrative symbolically truncated the long decades of Fascist rule, and drew a line of continuity between the Italy of Matteotti and the new Republic. A new civil religion was being built.

According to AC President Giuseppe Saragat: 'Noi lo dobbiamo a noi stessi, ai cittadini che ci delegarono, noi lo dobbiamo ai morti che ricordiamo: Giacomo Matteotti, oggi sortito dalla schiera dolente ed eroica per dare stimolo e conforto al nostro severo lavoro.'<sup>52</sup> Matteotti's memory lay at the heart of the new national project and he was remembered as a bipartisan, national figure. According to Alfonso Rubilli of the Partito Liberale Italiano, Matteotti's memory 'non appartiene ad un partito soltanto; appartiene a tutti i partiti, appartiene alla storia, appartiene all'umanità.'<sup>53</sup> Similarly, Gaetano Sardiello of the Partito Repubblicano Italiano stated 'non è più vostro soltanto, o amici socialisti, non è nostro e non è di quella parte o di un'altra: è dell'Italia, è della conquista della civiltà e della libertà del mondo.'<sup>54</sup> Once again, Matteotti's memory was used as a bridge to build political consensus, and he was incorporated into the state-sanctioned pantheon of secular martyrs.

Given the emerging Cold War climate, this was politically expedient. Italy needed to reassert and rebuild its antifascist values in a way that did not endorse Communism, as a celebration of the Resistance may have threatened to do. Matteotti's memory linked antifascism and liberty, but excluded Communism from this narrative. He was most frequently evoked as a martyr for liberty during this period of reconstruction. I analysed the origins of this term closely in the previous case study, arguing that the use of this label in reference to the Mattei brothers, showing that it was initially used to commemorate Risorgimento martyrs, and the emergence of the notion of sacrifice in the name of the *patria*.<sup>55</sup> This label,

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 4608.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 4604.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 4607.

<sup>55</sup> The fusion of religious and nationalist rhetoric contained in the term martyr for liberty has recurred throughout Italy's major political upheavals. As explained, the idea of dying for Italy began during the Risorgimento and the development of

therefore, evoked Matteotti's role in the construction of the Republic, in the way the Risorgimento fallen were remembered as having died for national unity and the creation of the Kingdom. This was a loaded, historical term that cut through the thorny memory of the Resistance and went straight back to the fight for Italian nationhood. Matteotti had become a martyr for liberty in free Italy for both the Allies and the new Italian state. A symbol of the nation's antifascist tradition, Matteotti's memory was officially incorporated into the project of the First Republic, a foundational part of the nation's democratic civil religion. He went from being a martyr for the group, as he had been throughout the *ventennio* at home and abroad, to a martyr for the liberal, democratic nation in the international, Cold War context.

### **Consolidating memory in the 1950s-60s**

The 1950s consolidated Matteotti's position as the national martyr for liberal antifascism. The building of memorials, and the publication of texts defined this phase in Matteotti's memory. A large number of *lieux de mémoire* were unveiled,<sup>56</sup> some of which were incorporated into civic buildings and cemented the link between Matteotti's memory and the new institutions of government.<sup>57</sup> There was renewed interest in those who had been involved in the crime or the trial. This included Dumini, who published the first edition of his memoirs in 1951,<sup>58</sup> Cesare Rossi's 1952 account of the Fascist year and the *delitto*,<sup>59</sup> and in 1954, Mauro Del Giudice, who had led the initial investigation of the crime released his account of the Matteotti trial.<sup>60</sup>

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Italian nationalism, when the terms 'martire' and 'libertà' were typically qualified with a reference to 'la patria' or 'l'Italia'. But it was not until the end of the Second World War and the fall of Fascism that the label 'martire per la libertà' is employed as a standalone term and is used in commemoration of Resistance fighters, victims of Nazi atrocities (such as the dead of the Fosse Ardeatine, as addressed in the introduction to this thesis) or indeed assassinated antifascist leaders.

<sup>56</sup> For example, commemorative plaques were installed in Alessandria, Piedmont, in 1949, and Rovigo and Fratta Polesine the following year. Marking the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Matteotti's death, plaques were also unveiled in Civitavecchia, and Comasine (on the former home of his ancestors) in 1954.

<sup>57</sup> The plaque on the exterior of Palazzo Pretorio, a civic office building in Pietrasanta, Lucca, is one such example. Unveiled in 1955, the building itself was located in Piazza Matteotti.

<sup>58</sup> Amerigo Dumini, *Diciassette colpi* (Milan: Longanesi, 1951).

<sup>59</sup> Cesare Rossi, *Il tribunale speciale: storia documentata* (Ceschina, 1952).

<sup>60</sup> Mauro del Giudice, *Cronistoria del processo Matteotti* (Lo Monaco, 1954).

During the period, Matteotti's antifascist - rather than socialist - identity was emphasised in commemoration, and he was still predominantly remembered in death (in the 1970s, the focus would shift onto his life and ideological formation with the reclaiming of his memory by socialist groups, as the next section will show). During a ceremony held in parliament to commemorate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death, Prime Minister Mario Scelba, a Christian Democrat who gave his name to the 1952 law banning exaltation of fascism, said that the only way to honour Matteotti's memory was to continue to fight against Fascism.<sup>61</sup> All members of parliament stood during these commemorative speeches, with the exception of MSI representatives.<sup>62</sup> Despite being upheld as a national martyr, Matteotti was categorically not their martyr.

That same year, Rodolfo Morandi described Matteotti as a forerunner of the Resistance during a commemoration ceremony attended by thousands, who came to pay their respects at his tomb.<sup>63</sup> This explicit link between Matteotti and the Resistance came at a time when the memory of the partisans enjoyed weak institutional support because of its association with armed insurrection.<sup>64</sup> Cooke describes the 'irenic gloss' given to the Resistance during this period by the Church and the PCI, both of whom wished to remember the Resistance as nonviolent and unified.<sup>65</sup> Though institutional memory of the Resistance (and its martyrs) would strengthen in the late 1950s, in the late 1940s and early 1950s Matteotti's memory continued to hold the position within national collective memory that partisans would soon come to occupy: a symbol of unified, stoic, Italian opposition to an oppressive Fascist regime.

Matteotti was firmly positioned as a national martyr by this point, but he was not commemorated as such by those on the far right. On 22 November 1960, three people hacked the plaque marking the site of his kidnap on the Arnaldo da Brescia from its wrought-iron case, covered it with a blanket and fled the scene.<sup>66</sup> Witnesses

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<sup>61</sup> The Legge Scelba outlawed the organisation of or participation in activities that exalt fascism or its proponents. It law also made *apologia del fascismo*, or Fascist apologism, a recognisable crime.

<sup>62</sup> 'La figura di Matteotti rievocata al parlamento', *Avanti!*, 6 November 1954, p. 1.

<sup>63</sup> Gaetano Tumiati, 'Migliaia di socialisti hanno partecipato al pellegrinaggio alla tomba del martire', *Avanti!*, 8 June 1954, p. 2.

<sup>64</sup> Cooke, *The Legacy of the Italian Resistance*, pp. 55–56.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>66</sup> 'Trafugata La lapide di Matteotti a Roma', *Corriere d'Informazione*, 23 November 1960, p. 10.

called the police immediately, and the culprits were identified by the car numberplate. Police found the plaque in the car, and brought its owner in for questioning. He did not disclose the motive, but he did declare himself a member of the MSI. In 1960, the DC minority government (which had been led by Tambroni since the spring) had only survived its first vote of confidence thanks to the support of the Monarchists and the MSI.<sup>67</sup> Bolstered by the DC's reliance on his party, Arturo Michelini, the erstwhile moderate leader of the MSI, provocatively declared that the party congress would be held in Genoa that year – a city that had been awarded a gold medal for its role in the Resistance. The party then 'added fuel to the flames' with the announcement that Carlo Emanuele Basile, who was the city's last prefect during the RSI and was responsible for the death of many workers and antifascists, would take part in the congress.<sup>68</sup> Tens of thousands of Genoese citizens marched in protest on 30 June, resulting in violent clashes between protestors and the police.<sup>69</sup>

While police reinforcements were drafted, Resistance veterans formed a committee ready to protect the city. The city's prefect consulted Tambroni, and the congress was postponed.<sup>70</sup> In an attempt to assert his authority, Tambroni gave police the right to shoot in emergency situations; 10 demonstrators were shot dead during antifascist protests in Sicily and Reggio Emilia in the space of three days, creating new martyrs.<sup>71</sup> Within this context of political tensions, Matteotti's memory came under attack – a reminder that all martyrs, even the national ones, are always to some extent contested. This attack was prescient of the re-politicisation of Matteotti's memory that would follow during the renewed political binaries of the Years of Lead (the subject of the next section).

Broadly speaking, however, in the early 1960s Matteotti remained a national martyr. In 1964, commemorative events were held across the country to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death. In Fratta Polesine, there was a continuous pilgrimage to his tomb throughout the day. Mauro Ferri, a member of the PSI, addressed mourners by Matteotti's tomb and reminded them that throughout the *ventennio* Matteotti had been a symbol of antifascist resistance across Europe, and not only in Italy, emphasising the importance of international unity.<sup>72</sup> The *delitto* was also the

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<sup>67</sup> Ginsborg, pp. 255–56.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., pp. 256–57.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 256.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 257.

<sup>72</sup> 'Giornata socialista in tutta Italia', *Avanti!*, 9 June 1964, p. 1.

subject of the Wednesday evening edition of *Almanacco di storia, scienza e varia umanità* broadcast on Rai as part of the Programma Nazionale, which brought the anniversary to television screens across the country.<sup>73</sup> A number of commemorative events took place in Rome, including within the Italian parliament. Standing before deputies (who rose to their feet), Cesare Merzagora, the acting president following the resignation of Antonio Segni, described the endurance of Matteotti's memory: 'È l'esaltazione del sacrificio supremo offerto in difesa di quella libertà che può essere offuscata per anni o per decenni ma che non può mai morire.'<sup>74</sup> He said it was important to remember the ethical and civic meaning of Matteotti's death, which occurred because of his defence of Italian democracy.<sup>75</sup> His memory was still inextricably linked to the institutions of government, a symbol of the democratic foundations upon which the new Republic had been built, and government institutions celebrated Matteotti as a defender of parliamentary, reformist socialism. Given the Cold War tensions, this emphasis on democratic socialism was welcomed by socialists. Speaking at a ceremony at the site of Matteotti's kidnap, Saragat welcomed this celebration of Matteotti's identity as a reformist socialist, which he said was a sign of the evolving perception of socialism as distinct from Communism.<sup>76</sup>

However, the changing relationship between the Italian state and the Resistance memory, which gained increasing traction in narratives of national identity during the 1960s, would have an impact on institutional engagement with Matteotti's memory. In 1965, the 20-year anniversary celebrations of Italy's liberation were organised by a national committee for the first time, and some of the celebrations (including a speech praising the partisans from Saragat, who had gained his recent presidency by showing he was prepared to move towards the PCI)<sup>77</sup> were broadcast on national television.<sup>78</sup> Cooke describes the celebrations as a 'national multimedia event' that took a variety of formats such as concerts, mass gatherings and documentaries.<sup>79</sup> Nenni, who had been an important custodian of Matteotti's

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<sup>73</sup> 'Rievocato l'assassinio di Giacomo Matteotti', *La Stampa*, 11 June 1964, p. 4.

<sup>74</sup> 'Matteotti ricordato al Parlamento per la cui libertà diede la vita', *La Stampa*, 11 June 1964, p. 1.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Vittorio Statera, 'Il sacrificio di Matteotti ricordato ieri da Saragat a Roma', *La Stampa*, 15 June 1964, p. 7.

<sup>77</sup> Cooke, *The Legacy of the Italian Resistance*, p. 91.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., pp. 93–94.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

memory, gave the first speech to commemorate the 8 September 1943 armistice, and Rome's liberation was celebrated in parliament.<sup>80</sup> Memory of the Resistance had 'been allowed to travel to the Pantheon' by the 1960s.<sup>81</sup> It also flourished outside of institutions, through public demonstrations and marches that took in significant *lieux de mémoire* like the Fosse Ardeatine memorial.

Towards the end of the decade, the student movement drew on Resistance memory to encourage pursuit of the new revolution, as already shown. The iconography and slogans of the Resistance were subsequently co-opted by left-wing political extremists of the Years of Lead, as the previous case study showed, who presented themselves as the new partisans. Resistance memory was beginning to take over as the founding myth of the Republic, and the way Matteotti was remembered evolved as a result. Furthermore, the notable strengthening of the PCI gave a boost to Resistance memory. Thus, the 1960s saw incorporation of insurrectionary antifascism into national memory through monument-building, national celebrations and commemorations of popular insurrection, and celebrating the democratic, parliamentary antifascism Matteotti represented became less pertinent.<sup>82</sup> This decrease in state sponsorship of Matteotti's memory paved the way for the subsequent reclaiming of memory by socialist groups in the 1970s, the subject of the next section, at a time when political assassination again became a feature of Italian public life, as it had been during the period of Matteotti's death.<sup>83</sup>

### **A return to the level of the group**

In the 1960s, Resistance memory gained significant institutional traction. Furthermore, at a grassroots level, left-wing extremists co-opted its iconography and slogans to position their political battle as an extension of the struggle for Italy's freedom during the Resistance. As Cooke states, the 'Resistance was, most emphatically, back – relived, rethought, and reinterpreted by the younger generations.'<sup>84</sup> This section will show the return of Matteotti's memory to the symbolic fascist-antifascist battle, and underline the centrality of martyrdom during

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., pp. 87–89.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>82</sup> The first official commemoration of a popular insurrection took place in 1963 in Naples. The following year, the March 1944 strikes were remembered in parliament. See: Cooke, *The Legacy of the Italian Resistance*, p. 94.

<sup>83</sup> The violent and unstable political situation of the 1970s has already been covered in depth in this thesis, and therefore will not be outlined again. See: chapter 2.

<sup>84</sup> Cooke, *The Legacy of the Italian Resistance*, p. 113.

times of violent political division, when martyrs are both created through violence and used within the fight. Matteotti's memory had been used as a unifying foundation of the country's new democratic identity, and was evoked within the future-facing cosmopolitan mode of memory with its inherent commitment to preventing future human rights violations. But, with the renewed political divisions of the 1970s, the way he was remembered shifted.

On 28 May 1974, just two weeks before the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Matteotti's kidnap, a bomb placed inside a bin exploded during an antifascist protest in Piazza della Loggia, Brescia, killing 8 and injuring 103. The country had witnessed an escalation in this kind of attack, known as *stragismo* (denoting the high number of casualties and fatalities), and on 4 August 1974, a bomb exploded on a crowded train, killing 12 and injuring 44.<sup>85</sup> The context of the Brescia bombing is important, as it occurred during the period of the 'compromesso storico' (addressed in detail in the thesis introduction), which aimed to increase collaboration between the PCI, the DC and the PSI - the three major political parties. However, it was seen as a betrayal by left-wing extremists. Given this context of rapprochement between opposing political parties, the planting of a bomb by right-wing extremists at a democratic, antifascist demonstration was highly symbolic, and revealed the re-polarisation of Italian politics.<sup>86</sup>

Political violence had returned to Italy, so security was tight at the ceremony held to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Matteotti's death. The roads around the Arnaldo da Brescia were barricaded off, and there was a large police presence; agents could be seen on the roofs of nearby buildings on both sides of the Tiber.<sup>87</sup> One journalist wrote: 'Si respira, ancora, dopo cinquant'anni, il clima dell'assassinio politico: la conferma si coglie nell'apprensione guardinga di chi ci deve proteggere.'<sup>88</sup> Commemoration took place under the threat of political violence, as it had at the time of Matteotti's kidnap. Nevertheless, the event went ahead and, a monument to Matteotti at the site of his kidnap was unveiled during the ceremony.

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<sup>85</sup> Anna Cento Bull, *Italian Neofascism: The Strategy of Tension and the Politics of Nonreconciliation* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), p. 4.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74

<sup>87</sup> 'Un monumento alla libertà nel luogo dove cadde Matteotti', *Corriere della Sera*, 6 October 1974, p. 2.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*





**Figure 32: The monument on the Arnaldo da Brescia**

Designed by Pistoia-based sculptor Jorio Vivarelli, who had been a prisoner of war in 1943 and interned in Bulgaria, Hungary, Austria and Germany, the monument featured a twisted base structure (like a fallen tree trunk) from which a 16m shoot emerges (Figure 33).<sup>89</sup> It was a figurative representation of rebirth after sacrifice, typifying the martyrological narratives that commemorate those who die in domestic conflict. Socialist organisations and associations had financed the monument, which was an initiative of the Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano (the name since 1952 for the former Partito Socialista dei Lavoratori Italiani, formed by Saragat in 1947) and the PSI, and their names featured on the nearby plaques.<sup>90</sup> We can see a shift away from the literal representation of the man that characterised the early monuments to Matteotti (as we saw in Pescia, Vienna, and Brussels), and a return to the exaltation of sacrifice in the name of socialism, as we saw internationally during the *ventennio*. This reclaiming of Matteotti's memory by socialist groups and organisations characterised many of the rituals of

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<sup>89</sup> Author's own photograph, *The Monument on the Arnaldo Da Brescia*, 2016.

<sup>90</sup> 'Il monumento a Matteotti', *Corriere della Sera*, 4 June 1974, p. 3.

commemoration during the 1970s. Crucially, it also opened memory up to attack by those who disagreed with this political narrative. Indeed just hours after its unveiling, and under the cover of darkness, unknown vandals (described as 'gli eredi del messaggio di un sanguinoso sicario come Dumini') drew swastikas in black varnish on the monument.<sup>91</sup> Memory wars were once again fought on the Arnaldo da Brescia, as they had been in the 1920s.

It is no coincidence that this attack on the monument, and the one that took place in 1960, occurred after political 'flashpoints' – the Genoa congress, and the Brescia bombing - which caused renewed political divisions and showed the return of political violence to public space. Within these contexts, the monument and surrounding plaques were understood as units of political memory, to borrow Assmann's term. Political memory is a top-down imposition of memory that externalises a certain narrative.<sup>92</sup> In the eyes of their attackers, these structures had taken on a 'totemic quality' - a term introduced by Bevan, and explained in the thesis introduction - showing the way structures become the focus of attack from those groups that disagree with the message or identity they encode.<sup>93</sup> In this case, the narrative reified in the monument was that Matteotti's sacrifice in the name of socialism had led to the rebirth of the nation.

Important figures in the socialist movement including Nenni and Saragat attended the ceremony. Matteotti's two sons, Matteo and Giancarlo were also present. The former had been a government deputy for both the Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano (Italian Democratic Socialist Party, or PSDI, of which he was secretary from 1954-57) and the PSI, and served as PSDI minister for foreign trade at this point. He was therefore a firm part of the socialist tradition. The latter had served as a PSIUP deputy, and member of the European Council.<sup>94</sup> Crowds held aloft red flags as various speeches were given. The first speaker was Flavio Orlandi, secretary of the PSDI, who spoke of the need for Italians to reclaim political freedom in the wake of the Brescia massacre. He declared 'il ciclo simboleggiato dal sacrificio di Matteotti non s'è chiuso', using Matteotti's memory to inspire commitment to the political fight once again.<sup>95</sup> The next speaker was Bruno

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<sup>91</sup> 'Un monumento alla libertà nel luogo dove cadde Matteotti', p. 2.

<sup>92</sup> Assmann, 'Four Formats of Memory', pp. 19-38.

<sup>93</sup> Bevan, p. 9.

<sup>94</sup> However, he was on the management board for energy company Eni at the time of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary

<sup>95</sup> 'Un monumento alla libertà nel luogo dove cadde Matteotti', p. 2.

Pittermann, president of the Socialist International, who warned that citizens' lives were in danger in Italy during this period of political unrest but also in Latin America, where dictatorship threatened civil liberties. Europe must collaborate in order to prevent the return of dictatorship on the continent, he declared: 'La realizzazione del socialismo, conclude Pittermann, merita ogni sacrificio.'<sup>96</sup> The ceremony closed with a speech from Saragat, who upheld Matteotti's memory as a guiding force for socialists. Describing Matteotti as 'un capolavoro della coscienza morale', he warned attendees that more work needed to be done in order to resolve economic and social ills. He expressed his hope that the centre-left government remained strong, with constitutional opposition to drive the government on towards delivering its aims. He closed with reference to the Brescia bombing, and told attendees "Ispiriamoci a Matteotti" in the fight against terrorism. The *Internazionale* played out over speakers.

Matteotti's memory was reclaimed as part of socialist heritage – both national and international.<sup>97</sup> Indeed, many of the speeches and rituals could be mistaken for those analysed in international, socialist commemoration of Matteotti addressed in chapter 6. After a long period of commemoration as a national martyr of liberty, his memory was again contested. The 1974 commemoration ceremony was saturated with the signifiers of international socialist heritage including the red flags, the playing of the *Internazionale*, and the presence of national and international socialist figures. Matteotti's memory was repositioned within a socialist tradition of anti-Communist, and antifascism. This memory was also politically expedient for the PSU (formed when the PSI and PSDI joined forces),

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> This can be seen in cultural production from the 1970s, which drew attention to Matteotti's ideological formation and the work he did on behalf of workers. In 1974, the Fondazione Giacomo Matteotti published a selection of Matteotti's writing and speeches to mark the 50th anniversary of his death. In the same year, Antonio Casanova produced his 1974 *Matteotti: una vita per il socialismo* – the first biography of Matteotti. Titles examining Matteotti's work in Polesine were also published during the period including Ives Bizzi's study of political struggle in Polesine (1975), and the Rovigo Administration's *Giacomo Matteotti*, which focused heavily on Matteotti's ideological formation and the speeches he gave in the province. See: *Giacomo Matteotti, scritti e discorsi*, ed. by Fondazione Giacomo Matteotti (Parma: Fondazione Giacomo Matteotti, 1974); Antonio Casanova, *Matteotti: una vita per il socialismo* (Milan: Bompiani, 1974); Ives Bizzi, *Da Matteotti a Villamarzana: 30 anni di lotte nel Polesine (1915-1945)*, 1. ed (Treviso: Giacobino, 1975); Amministrazione provinciale di Rovigo, *Giacomo Matteotti, Polesani illustri* (Rovigo: Amministrazione provinciale di Rovigo, 1974).

which was in decline and had suffered great losses in the 1968 and 1973 general elections. The PCI, on the other hand, was strong. Matteotti was a powerful martyr for reformist socialism, and commemoration had once again become an occasion to perform (or oppose) political identity in the face of acute political division.

The link between martyr memory and political conflict is clear. As we have seen from this section, martyr memory is revived by political conflict. We saw this occur in the previous case study, which addressed the revival in the Mattei brothers' commemoration by contemporary neofascist groups in the contemporary age following the far right's success in institutional politics. Martyr memory is evoked during these periods of political conflict because it has the simultaneous symbolic function of celebrating the values of a particular group, and condemning the enemy. Many elements of antagonistic martyrdom, a concept I introduced in chapter 3, were evident in commemoration of Matteotti during this period of renewed political violence; the use of memory to reinforce the exclusionary boundaries of the group – that of socialists - and to condemn the enemy (in this case, neofascism, the legacy of the original enemy). With the return of political assassination to Italian daily life, martyrdom was again part of the symbolic fight and memory was reclaimed at a grassroots level. Martyrs for the socio-political group are evoked during times of protest, as the previous case study showed. The values of freedom and democracy that he represented were perceived as being under attack from the far right, and Matteotti's memory returned to the political battle as both a symbol and a target.

### **Legislating against oblivion: the contemporary context**

After a return to the level of the group during the political violence of the 1970s, the 1980s and 1990s saw Matteotti's memory promoted by formal organisations dedicated to socialist heritage, and his life and death became the subject of academic study, at conferences and in written form. The custody of memory by historical and academic institutions was the result of two factors: the foundation of many socialist associations in the 1980s, and the donation of the Matteotti family archive. Several socialist foundations and associations were established in Italy in the 1980s, and given the name of historic socialist leaders. Considering the prominence of the socialist party at the time, and Benedetto Craxi's position as prime minister from 1983-1987, this impetus to protect socialist heritage is unsurprising. Today, these foundations are the primary memory agents relating to Matteotti and some hold

important archival documents. Among these are the Fondazione di Studi Storici Filippo Turati, the Florence-based not-for-profit foundation established in 1985 to promote historical research; and the Fondazione Pietro Nenni, founded by the PSI's Giuseppe Tamburrano in 1985 as an institute of political and historical study.<sup>98</sup> In 1986, the former was recognised by a Decree of the President of the Republic, which declared its role in researching, documenting and sharing knowledge about the workers' movement and Italian socialism.<sup>99</sup> Its first president was Sandro Pertini. The foundation holds the Matteotti archive: a collection of personal documents, correspondence, political writings, press material, material culture collected at his funeral, as well as the archives of the rest of his family. This incorporation of Matteotti's memory into historical institutions led to an increase in publications and conferences linked to Matteotti's memory.<sup>100</sup> In 1984, the Fondazione Giacomo Matteotti organised a conference about Matteotti in Rovigo. 1985 marked the centenary of Matteotti's birth; this was the second highest year in the Ngram sample on page 224 for references to Matteotti's name in print, and his portrait returned to the PSI membership card. A two-day conference was held in Padova in 1990, organised by the Istituto di Scienze Politiche dell'Università di Padova. Matteotti's memory was established as part of Italian heritage.

The institutionalisation of memory has continued into this millennium. In 2004, 80 years since Matteotti's kidnap, law 255 of 5 October secured €700,000 for the Comune di Fratta Polesine to support the restoration and maintenance of Matteotti's family home and the gardens surrounding it.<sup>101</sup> The law also tasked the Comune with co-ordinating cultural institutions, private and public entities and other local authorities, to support the promotion of cultural activities connected to Matteotti and his work in the local community. That year, €50,000 were given to the Fondazione Pietro Nenni and Fondazione Giacomo Matteotti to fund an exhibition, and the collection, conservation and maintenance of documents relating to

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<sup>98</sup> The Fondazione Nenni holds several important photographic archives, including the Matteotti family's personal photo albums, and has a reading room.

<sup>99</sup> Despite this aim, the foundation has repeatedly refused me access to the archive and consultation of the materials it holds.

<sup>100</sup> The creation of his archive led to the publication of books and conferences about Matteotti.

<sup>101</sup> Senato della Repubblica, *Disposizioni per la commemorazione del novantesimo anniversario della morte di Giacomo Matteotti* 2016, 1349.

<<http://www.senato.it/leg/17/BGT/Schede/Ddliter/44057.htm>> [Accessed 22 September 2017]

Matteotti's life and the socio-political context in which he lived, with the aim of supplying these materials to exhibitions and making them available for consultation. The creation of a film to show in schools and universities was also planned.

The museum in Matteotti's family home is laid out over three floors. The first and second are fitted with original period furniture, including some of the Matteotti family's personal belongings, and are laid out as if the house were still lived in. The top floor is the exhibition space; exhibits (including letters, photographs, newspaper articles, documentary footage, songs) have been printed directly onto panels and displayed on light boxes and television screens. The Fondazione di Studi Storici Filippo Turati provided material for the exhibition. There is a consultation room with two computers, and a final empty room. This is a museum with strong pedagogical aims.

In 2017, the museum was given national monument status. In his speech in parliament, Diego Crivellari, a Pd deputy who had introduced the motion, declared:

La volontà di riconoscere la Casa Museo in Fratta Polesine come monumento nazionale si lega, oggi, al doveroso omaggio a un luogo ricco di storia e di memoria, un luogo fondante – potremmo dire – per la nostra democrazia parlamentare, e alla valorizzazione di una figura che rimane centrale per la vicenda del movimento operaio e democratico e per la storia del nostro Paese.<sup>102</sup>

Custody of Matteotti's memory has now become the concern of government institutions. In December 2017, the draft law to secure €300,000 for the protection of Matteotti's memory was finally approved (having been proposed in 2014).<sup>103</sup> The funds will support initiatives designed to promote the study of Matteotti's life and work. There is renewed impetus to encourage engagement with Matteotti's memory at a grassroots level through pedagogical initiatives. Nevertheless, it is significant that institutions have had to legislate in order to preserve Matteotti's memory – a far

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<sup>102</sup> Senato della Repubblica, *Dichiarazione di monumento nazionale della Casa Museo Matteotti in Fratta* 2016, 2446, p. 6  
<<https://www.senato.it/service/PDF/PDFServer/DF/323998.pdf>> [Accessed 19 November 2017]

<sup>103</sup> 'Matteotti e Mazzini, dal Senato ok a Ddl che stanziava 300mila euro per preservarne la memoria', AgCult, 2017 <<https://agcult.it/2017/12/06/matteotti-mazzini-dal-senato-ok-ddl-stanzia-300mila-euro-preservarne-la-memoria/>> [accessed 8 December 2017].

cry from the widespread engagement with memory around the world throughout the Fascist regime.

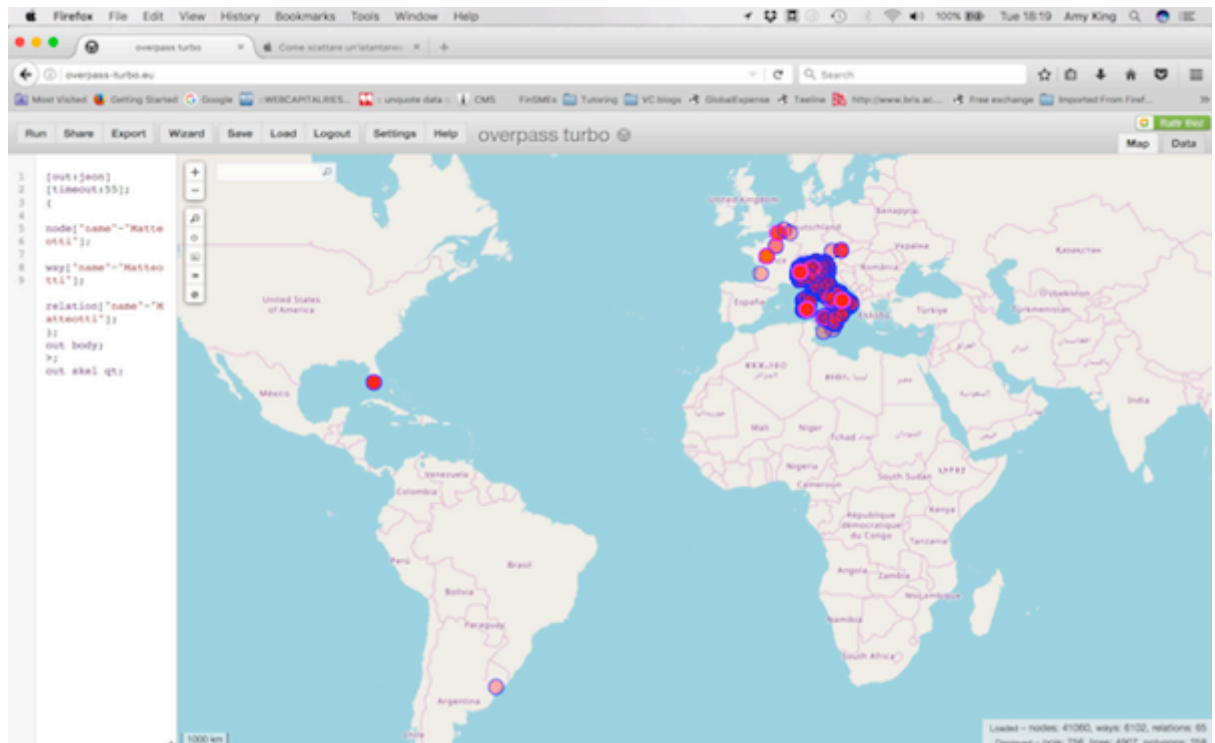
Memory is primarily honoured in public space. Today, there are more than 3,200 public spaces in Italy bearing Matteotti's name, making him the seventh most frequently named figure.<sup>104</sup> This figure shows the extent to which his memory has enjoyed the support of government, which has granted permission to inscribe his name across Italy throughout the decades since his death. However, though it is very high, this number does not accurately represent the extent to which Matteotti's name is visible throughout the country. In order to map Matteotti's name in public space I ran a data query on Overpass Turbo.<sup>105</sup> These results include the more traditional streets, piazzas, parks, monuments and memorials, but also cafes and restaurants, schools, bus stops, public transport hubs and roundabouts. It is important to note that a road named via Matteotti might have a number of bus stops, each named a variation of *fermata via Matteotti*, and will therefore count for multiple results. Consequently, this search does not show just Matteotti-related *lieux de mémoire* in the urban landscape. Rather, given the inclusion of *all* buildings, transport routes, bus stops and structures (like roundabouts) bearing Matteotti's name, these results instead show us the *visibility* of Matteotti's name in public space today.

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<sup>104</sup> Foot, Italy's Divided Memory, p.63.

<sup>105</sup> This a web-based data-mining tool that runs API queries and maps the results using OpenStreetMap (an open-source, editable, and searchable map of the world). I am grateful to Frederik Ramm, a user on the OpenStreetMap help forum, for answering my post and providing the code to run this query. The query is:

```
[out:json][timeout:55];
(
  node["name"~"Matteotti"];
  way["name"~"Matteotti"];
  relation["name"~"Matteotti"];
);
out body;
>;
out skel qt;
```



**Figure 33: Matteotti's name in public space around the world**

The query returned 41,322 results globally.<sup>106</sup> Though the results are predominantly concentrated in Italy, we see from Figure 34 that Matteotti's name can still be found in public space abroad, as far away as Uruguay (Plazuela Matteotti) and Florida (Matteotti View), and in parts of southern and western Europe (some of these sites were analysed in previous chapters).<sup>107</sup>

<sup>106</sup> To put this number in perspective, there are 88,718 results for a query of 'Garibaldi', many of which are found outside of Italy, on the east and west coasts of the United States, in Brazil and Argentina (though many results in Latin America refer to Anita Garibaldi, Giuseppe Garibaldi's Brazilian wife). Marconi returns 76,603 results (many in western and southern Europe, as well as the Americas). A query for 'Mazzini' returned 35,573 results, which are predominantly in Italy and spread more evenly throughout the country than those for Matteotti. There were 40,813 results for Cavour, primarily in Italy.

<sup>107</sup> The Uruguyan piazza was dedicated to Matteotti on 22 September 1944 at a ceremony attended by members of the antifascist group Italia Libera. See: Cilla, 'La memoria di Giacomo Matteotti fra i proletari di tutto il mondo', p. 3.



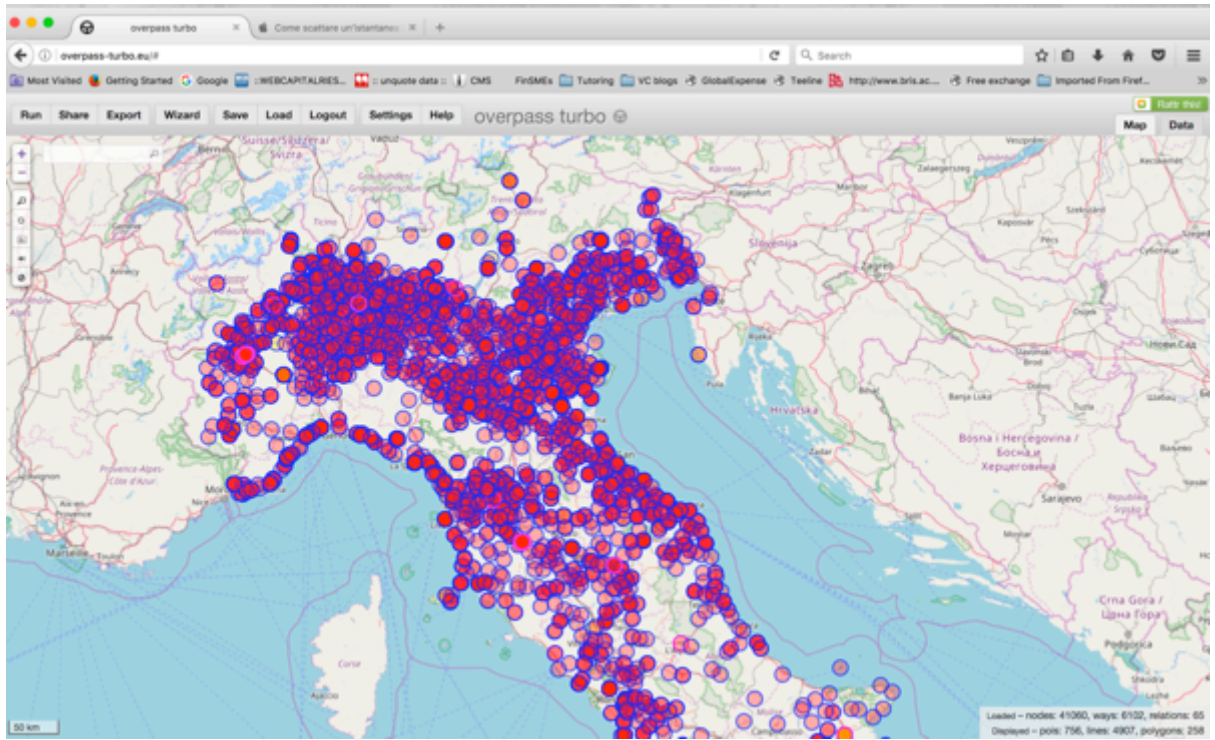


Figure 34: Matteotti's name in public space in northern Italy

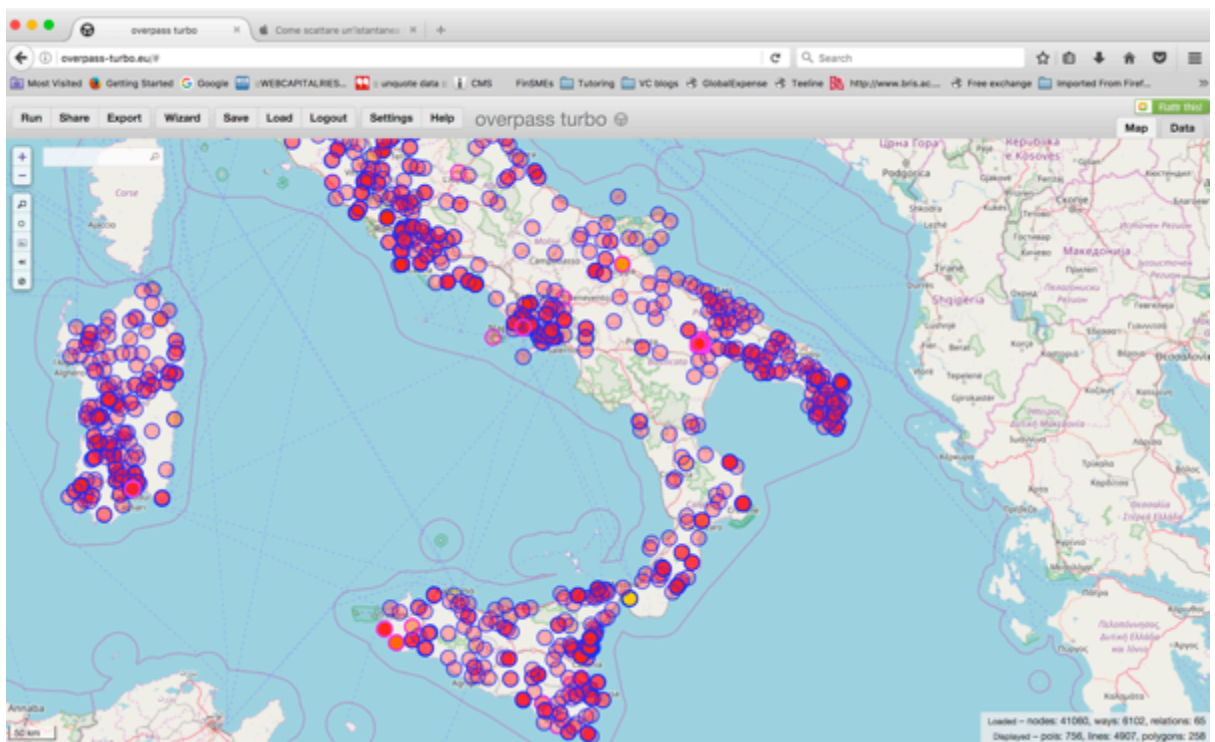


Figure 35: Matteotti's name in public space in southern Italy

Figures 35 and 36 show that his name features across the whole of Italy. However, the depth of colour and frequency of marker show that his name is more visible in the country north of Rome,<sup>108</sup> primarily in Lombardia (in the area surrounding Milan rather than in the city itself), the nearby mountainous areas, and in Piedmont. Despite dying decades earlier, his name is most visible in the areas associated with occupation and the subsequent Resistance, which supports my earlier thesis that his name was used in spaces typically associated with the Resistance as a means of emphasising Italy's democratic, rather than insurrectionary, antifascism. Given the enormous number of results, I have not been able to find out when each space was dedicated to Matteotti, but it is likely that the majority were named during the postwar process of erasing references to Fascism and its supporters in public space, as this chapter has already addressed. But rather than analysing the placement of Matteotti's name, I want to use this data to make a point about visibility. He is the most visible twentieth century Italian political figure in public space, both globally and within Italy.

Despite this, and although foundations and government have acted to protect memory, popular participation in commemoration of Matteotti is extremely low. Memory has turned passive. To borrow Nora's terminology though there are thousands of *lieux de mémoire*, the *milieux de mémoire* are weak – a total reversal of the situation with regards to the Mattei brothers. In 2016, I attended a commemoration ceremony for Matteotti, which had been co-organised by the aforementioned institutions. It began at 10am at the foot of the monument on the Arnaldo da Brescia, and was attended by fewer than 25 people. Five large wreaths were laid, provided by the Fondazione di Studi Storici Filippo Turati, and the Fondazione Giacomo Matteotti (founded in 1973 to promote the values of social democracy through research and activities in the community). Three wreaths had also been provided by government institutions: the Ministry of Justice, the President of the Republic and the city of Rome. The latter two were flanked by two *carabinieri* in ceremonial dress. A microphone was set up in the small space beside the monument, which also included a trestle table covered in the Italian flag upon which a number of free books produced by the various foundations had been laid. A large portrait of

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<sup>108</sup> The depth of colour of the markers on the map denote the expanse or density of the site; thus a cluster of sites or a long road with many bus stops featuring the street name will have several markers and therefore will show a deeper red due to cumulative effect.

Matteotti stood in front of the table facing the road, a section of which had been temporarily closed to traffic, and a second, smaller portrait was at the foot of the monument.

Vittorio Craxi, the socialist politician and son of Bettino Craxi, attended the ceremony. Angelo Sabatini, president of the Fondazione Giacomo Matteotti, Oscar Tortosa of the Circolo Culturale Saragat-Matteotti, Giancarlo Moschin, president of the Associazione Giacomo Matteotti,<sup>109</sup> and Giorgio Benvenuto president of the Fondazione Nenni and the Fondazione Buozzi were also present.<sup>110</sup> Messages were read on behalf of Giorgio Napolitano, former president of the Republic, the defence minister Roberta Pinotti, and the leaders of the trade union organisations Cgil, Cisl and Uil.<sup>111</sup> During his speech, Sabatini described the portraits of Matteotti that Italians had hidden in their homes during the *ventennio* and the huge public commemoration of Matteotti in 1945 after more than two decades of clandestinity, emphasising Italy's latent antifascism through this reference to clandestine commemoration of Matteotti. Craxi opened his address by describing Matteotti as 'un martire della Repubblica', showing the centrality of his martyrdom to national identity, and discussed the resurrection of Matteotti's memory during the Italian Resistance.

Two threads emerged from the speeches: the importance of teaching children about Matteotti, and the international reach of Matteotti's memory. Craxi addressed both, outlining the place of Matteotti's memory within international martyrology, and stating that Matteotti's story must continue to be taught, as it remains relevant throughout the world. He cited the example of Chokri Belaid in Tunisia. A lawyer and socialist politician, Belaid led the secular, left-wing Unified Democratic Nationalist Party in opposition to the Ben Ali regime and the subsequent Islamist-led government. He was known for publically denouncing both the threat of totalitarianism in Tunisia and the creation of armed squadrons linked to the government. On 6 February 2013, he was shot dead his house and died in hospital.

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<sup>109</sup> The association was founded in Rovigo in 2005 with the aim of promoting knowledge of Matteotti's life and works. It organises small, local events and has a blog that gives updates regarding sites of memory relating to Matteotti, posts images from archives, and some videos from commemorative events.

<sup>110</sup> Established in 2003, the Buozzi foundation is dedicated to supporting the study of syndicalism.

<sup>111</sup> The Cgil was led by Susanna Camusso, Annamaria Furlan led the Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori, and Carmelo Barbagallo led the Unione Italiana del Lavoro.

His assassination prompted 1,000 people to protest outside the Tunisian interior ministry; police responded with teargas.<sup>112</sup> The day before Belaid's funeral, the country's largest union called the first general strike in more than 30 years.<sup>113</sup> Tens of thousands of people attended his funeral on 8 February – 'the largest gathering in Tunis since the revolution two years ago' – and violent protests erupted after the ceremony.<sup>114</sup> It is clear to see the parallels with Matteotti's assassination. Indeed, Craxi described Belaid as 'il Matteotti Tunisino' – a term he introduced at the time of Belaid's murder and was picked up by Italian media, symbolising, according to Craxi, the importance of Matteotti's name in international collective memory.<sup>115</sup> Once again, then, the multidirectional memory of international martyrs had created cross-cultural solidarity more than 90 years after Matteotti's death. The cosmopolitan mode of memory, which brings with it a commitment to prevent further human rights violations, was apparent.

In keeping with their pedagogic aims, associations gave out free books about Matteotti after the ceremony. I appeared to be the only attendee who was neither a local government representative nor a member of a socialist foundation and members of the associations and foundations were delighted that a younger, foreign scholar was present. Benvenuto reminded attendees that Pietro Nenni came to the very spot they were standing on 10 June 1945 to declare 'la nuova repubblica di Giacomo Matteotti', and he called for protection of Matteotti's memory through education. He said that Italy has the highest percentage of children in poverty in Europe, asking what Matteotti would have said of this sad fact, and closed his short

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<sup>112</sup> Eileen Byrne, 'Tunisian Opposition Leader Shot Dead', *Guardian*, 7 February 2013 <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/feb/06/tunisian-politician-shot-dead>> [accessed 18 November 2017].

<sup>113</sup> 'Police Fire Tear Gas at Slain Politician Chokri Belaid's Funeral', *Independent*, 9 February 2013 <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/police-fire-tear-gas-at-slain-politician-chokri-belaid-s-funeral-8487852.html>> [accessed 18 November 2017].

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Lorenzo Cremonesi, 'La morte di Chokri Belaid l'avvocato che amava la libertà', *Corriere della Sera*, 7 February 2013 <[http://www.corriere.it/esteri/13\\_febbraio\\_07/avvocato-liberta\\_18f7a0d2-70f5-11e2-9be5-7db8936d7164.shtml](http://www.corriere.it/esteri/13_febbraio_07/avvocato-liberta_18f7a0d2-70f5-11e2-9be5-7db8936d7164.shtml)> [accessed 18 November 2017]; Orlando Sacchelli, 'Tunisia, omicidio Belaid come il delitto Matteotti?', *Il Giornale*, 7 February 2013 <<http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/esteri/tunisia-omicidio-belaid-delitto-matteotti-883268.html>> [accessed 18 November 2017]; 'L'Opinione Delle Libertà - L'Islamofascismo e il Matteotti tunisino', *L'Opinione della Libertà*, 12 February 2013 <[http://www.opinione.it/esteri/2013/02/10/magni\\_esteri-10-02-1/](http://www.opinione.it/esteri/2013/02/10/magni_esteri-10-02-1/)> [accessed 18 November 2017].

speech by saying that these ceremonies are a chance to remember the values Italy needs today.

Benvenuto's speech exposed the link between the socio-political context and martyr memory. Martyrs are symbols and when the values the martyr symbolises are perceived to be under threat, martyr memory is celebrated. Secular martyrs on the right and the left have been part of the political struggle, not simply its result, as this thesis has shown. If the threat against which martyr memory is deployed is perceived to have diminished, memory will lie dormant at a grassroots level. For those attending the ceremony, Matteotti's symbolism has contemporary value, as a unit of protest against poverty and international infringements of human rights. At a broader popular level, though, there is little engagement with Matteotti's memory, and it is managed solely by associations, organisations and government.<sup>116</sup> Memory is bound to anniversaries, physical forms and pedagogical institutions. To frame this within memory studies theory, 'communicative memory' (which 'lives in everyday interaction and communication' and thus is temporally limited) has disappeared, leaving only 'cultural memory' in its wake.<sup>117</sup> According to the Egyptologist Jan Assmann, cultural memory 'is a kind of institution. It is exteriorised, objectified, and stored away in symbolic forms that [...] are stable and situation-transcendent: They may be transferred from one situation to another and transmitted from one generation to another.'<sup>118</sup> When we consider the high levels of grassroots engagement with Matteotti's memory during the *ventennio*, the Resistance, in the immediate postwar period, and in the 1970s, the situation today is striking.

However, it is not a simple question of temporal distance pushing Matteotti out of collective memory. Rather, I contend that until very recently, the consistent celebration of antifascist heritage in Italy had suggested that Fascism belongs to the past and antifascism has 'won'. This has made the incorporation of those stories relating to far right victims into national narratives difficult, as the previous case study showed. Matteotti's memory has not been needed as a unit of protest, and it has therefore remained dormant, on the pages of textbooks or within the walls of museums and the academy. However, given the recent political developments in Italy, Matteotti's memory seems unlikely to lie dormant for much longer. In October 2017, Forza Nuova planned a march through the Italian capital to commemorate the

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<sup>117</sup> Jan Assmann, p. 111.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 110–11.

95<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the March on Rome. In response, Anpi organised a counter-commemoration, which would include a speech about the historical significance of the March on Rome, followed by a visit to the Arnaldo da Brescia to lay flowers at the Matteotti monument. Rome's mayor, Virginia Raggi of the M5S, declared her support for the counter-protest.<sup>119</sup> Matteotti was selected as a 'simbolo di giustizia sociale e di libertà in tutto il mondo,' according to the Roman branch of Anpi.<sup>120</sup> His martyrdom was a symbol of the violence that has occurred on Italian soil when far right power went unchecked, and a warning for the future. The dual temporality of martyr memory, which simultaneously looks to the past as a warning for the future, was evident.

References were made to this quality of martyr memory in visitors' comments at the exit of the Matteotti museum. Visitors are invited to pin their comments on a corkboard; this feedback is therefore unsolicited, and only represents the thoughts of those who are moved to leave a comment. Nevertheless, they are worth considering as a popular response to the *casa museo* and a barometer of the perceived role of Matteotti's memory today.

'Idea e progetto stupendo ..... la libertà e la giustizia sono sempre "sotto scacco", tutti noi e soprattutto i giovani hanno bisogno di ricordarlo.... grazie!'

'Abbiamo apprezzato moltissimo la rappresentazione dei momenti salienti della vita personale e politica di G. Matteotti. È questo un momento in cui anche nella nostra Europa si respira un'aria...'

Many visitors mentioned the importance of remembering Matteotti and the values he stood for in *today's* political climate, including the two examples included above.

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<sup>119</sup> 'Forza Nuova pronta alla marcia su Roma, Minniti dice no', *L'Huffington Post*, 12 October 2017 <[https://www.huffingtonpost.it/2017/10/12/forza-nuova-prepara-la-marcia-dei-patrioti-a-roma-il-28-ottobre-lanpi-fa-appello-a-minniti\\_a\\_23240940/](https://www.huffingtonpost.it/2017/10/12/forza-nuova-prepara-la-marcia-dei-patrioti-a-roma-il-28-ottobre-lanpi-fa-appello-a-minniti_a_23240940/)> [accessed 27 June 2018].

<sup>120</sup> Marino Bisso, "No alla commemorazione dell'ultra destra al Verano", la marcia antifascista dell'Anpi dal Campidoglio a Testaccio', *La Repubblica*, 27 October 2017 <[http://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/10/27/news/\\_no\\_alla\\_commemorazione\\_dell\\_ultra\\_destra\\_al\\_verano\\_la\\_marcia\\_antifascista\\_dell\\_anpi\\_dal\\_campidoglio\\_a\\_testaccio-179508367/](http://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/10/27/news/_no_alla_commemorazione_dell_ultra_destra_al_verano_la_marcia_antifascista_dell_anpi_dal_campidoglio_a_testaccio-179508367/)> [accessed 12 November 2017].

Matteotti's memory had a present-day function, and bridged the gap between contemporary politics and history.

### **Conclusion: poised for revival**

This case study has traced the multiple meanings of Matteotti's memory around the world since his assassination in 1924. Outside of Italy, he has been a pacifist symbol of socialist faith, or a warrior of international antifascism. In the U.S., his memory was adapted to suit the specific socio-political challenges faced by Italian Americans, as part of the fight against Fascism on American soil. Finally, this chapter has shown that Matteotti has been a martyr for liberty during the construction of the Republic (a symbolic part of the transition to democracy), a socialist martyr during the Years of Lead, and a historical figure today. Matteotti's memory has been adapted to suit the changing needs of the Italian nation, and adopted by international communities. Martyr memory is far from fixed, but constantly evolves.

So has Matteotti been forgotten in popular memory today? When I first discussed my PhD topic with an Italian friend, who gave me a list of his national martyrs (it did not include Matteotti), I asked if Matteotti would be an appropriate subject for my study of martyrdom. "Ma sì, certo. È un classico, un evergreen," was the emphatic response. The implication was that Matteotti was almost too obvious an example to be of interest. Today, his memory is protected by institutions, and anchored in public space throughout Italy. It is perceived as stable, and safe, but seems to be less alive than the memory of more recent martyrs (including the Mattei brothers). He is enshrined in history, part of the canon, and a foundation of the establishment. This calcification of memory through institutional adoption is precisely what Giampaolo Mattei feared in the first case study; aware that false narratives remained in collective memory regarding the circumstances surrounding his brothers' deaths, Giampaolo was worried that incorrect narratives would be enshrined in national heritage, where memory might go unchallenged. Today, there is no question that Matteotti might be forgotten; rather, his memory is so protected that he seems to belong to the past. Consequently, there has been little critical engagement with it – a fact that is evident in the surprisingly low number of studies relating to Matteotti, despite widespread acknowledgment of his historical importance.

In recent decades, Italian democracy has experienced new threats, and there have been more pressing national martyrs. Consider, for example, the rigour with

which Aldo Moro was commemorated nationally - the date of his body being found became the day of official commemoration of all victims of Italy's Years of Lead. In the 1990s, the war against the Italian Mafia produced more national martyrs in Falcone and Borsellino, who were commemorated enthusiastically throughout the decade (and remain so today). This case study has shown that martyr memory is most alive during political conflict, particularly those that take place within the nation itself. Further threats to democracy have been fought on Italian soil, and the canon of national martyrs has expanded, pushing Matteotti's memory out of the spotlight.

However, the great legislative and financial support given to the protection of his memory in recent years suggests that state institutions continue to value what Matteotti symbolises. With the strengthening of neofascist voices in Italy today, during the seventieth year of the antifascist constitution, some of the symbols and rituals of Fascist heritage have made an unwelcome return to public space, in graffiti, posters and marches. Recent election results and some members of government's overtly far-right rhetoric have shown the immediacy of this threat. Given the trend identified throughout this thesis, where martyr memory is mobilised as part of political protest, it seems likely that Matteotti's name may once again return to the symbolic political struggle, in the same way that grassroots commemoration of the Mattei brothers has enjoyed renewed vigour on the back of this strengthening. Some will no doubt rehabilitate partisan memory as part of the symbolic fight against neofascism, but ongoing debates around the legitimacy and legality of the Resistance has made this memory problematic for those who deem it incompatible with national narratives of democracy. Matteotti may, therefore, return to the fore as the democratic national martyr, acting as a warning of unchecked power.



## Chapter 9

### Conclusion: A Martyred Nation

In 2003, a new group of martyrs were commemorated at the Altare della Patria – the monument to national unity in the heart of Rome. On 12 November that year, a suicide attack on the *carabinieri* headquarters in Nasiriyah, Iraq, had killed 19: 12 *carabinieri*, five members of the army, and two Italian civilians making a documentary. The military were in Iraq on a peace mission, helping to rebuild the country. The so-called Strage di Nassiriya marked Italy's largest loss of military life since World War II. The following day, one newspaper declared Italy had been 'colpita al cuore'.<sup>1</sup> Another simply printed photographs of the soldiers beneath the headline 'I Nostri Martiri'.<sup>2</sup> Three days of national mourning ensued, and the caskets of Italy's fallen soldiers lay in state in the Altare della Patria – the symbolic altar of secular martyrdom. Hundreds of thousands of Italians made the pilgrimage to Rome to pay their respects.<sup>3</sup> Many left notes on the steps of the monument and shared prayers with the 50 military chaplains present.<sup>4</sup>

An estimated 50,000 Italians attended the state funeral, which was broadcast on national television, and blended many of the markers of national, military and religious identity: the *Tricolore* flag was draped over each casket with a gun placed on top, the military salute was performed, and the presiding clergy contributed to the overarching religious ritual and iconography. The funeral was an occasion to commemorate the dead, and celebrate the values of national identity. Commemoration was performed with anachronistic levels of national pageantry. In an oral history interview I conducted in 2017, one retired *carabiniere* who attended the 2003 funeral told me: "Chi ha partecipato si è sentito cittadino italiano, senza... senza... come dire, senza credi politici... insomma...si sono sentiti i valori... valori dell'italianità [...]". He went on to clarify that these feelings were about "patria, invece di paese".<sup>5</sup> The link between martyrdom and national identity was evident.

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<sup>1</sup> 'L'Italia colpita al cuore', *Il Messaggero*, 12 November 2003, p. 1

<sup>2</sup> 'I nostri martiri', *Il Tempo*, 13 November 2003, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Giancarlo Mola, 'In pellegrinaggio al Vittoriano', *La Repubblica*, 17 November 2003, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Mancini, pp. 15-16.

<sup>5</sup> Virgilio Spano, Interview by Amy King with Virgilio Spano, Presidente Associazione CCC Martiri di Nassiriya, 2017.

Institutional support for commemoration of the attack has continued on the anniversaries of the tragedy, and in 2009 the 12 November was declared *La Giornata del Ricordo dei Caduti Militari e Civili nelle Missioni Internazionali*. On 12 November 2017, I attended the official commemoration ceremony at the *Altare della Patria*. Roberta Pinotti, minister for defence, and Generale Graziano, head of the Italian army, were present, alongside relatives of fallen soldiers and Italian civilians. After the ceremony, we then moved to the nearby *Basilica di Santa Maria in Aracoeli*, where military and religious figures addressed the congregation. The Cardinal Priest focused his address on the eternal life after sacrifice, and the hope that is born from it. Later, minister Pinotti gave an address, which she directed towards the relatives of the victims who she said she had accompanied in times of deep pain, but also of pride in their relatives' sacrifice, which is 'una parte della rispettabilità che l'Italia si è meritata' on an international stage. She closed her address with a declaration that evoked the eternal life of the martyr: 'una vita dedicata agli altri non è una vita che finisce'. Her statement was met with strong applause. Winter recently argued that 'in Western Europe, the term martyr (with some exceptions) has faded rapidly and irreversibly from use in the twentieth century'.<sup>6</sup> Italy is one such exception to this conclusion.

Throughout this thesis, conclusions have been drawn about the role of secular martyrdom in the formation of Italian national identity; these will be summarised and compared here in this final chapter. I will also directly address the research questions that are central to this thesis, propose some definitions of the national martyr and the martyr for the socio-political group, and address the implications of the endurance of the military martyr paradigm addressed in the introduction to the thesis.

From the time of their funeral in 1973 to the present day, the Mattei brothers have been commemorated as martyrs, and their deaths upheld as political sacrifice for the radical right. In chapter 3, I analysed the first public application of the term martyrdom to the brothers' deaths by the MSI leader Giorgio Almirante during the funeral. I argued that events including the death of a policeman and investigations into Almirante's fascist past made the brothers' deaths powerful units of political capital. Martyrdom was not just the result of the violence of the period, but part of the symbolic fight. Media analysis in the same chapter showed the

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<sup>6</sup> Winter, p. 124.

campaign of misinformation that spread in the wake of the arson, which prevented the engagement with memory among broader communities beyond the far right. Ideology dictated the community of mourning. Memory was isolated and appropriated, and this has continued into the present day. Grassroots neofascists groups still commemorate the brothers as their martyrs - some have even gone as far as to add the boys' names to a Mausoleum commemorating the Fascist dead - and march in their honour each year, holding aloft banners bearing Fascist iconography. I concluded that neofascist groups have consistently evoked the Mattei brothers' memory within the antagonistic mode of memory, which reinforces group identity and cements opposition. My analysis also made clear that individual conviction to die for a belief is not required for the label of martyr to be applied to the dead. As long as there is a community of mourning ready to lead mnemonic initiatives and insert memory into the political struggle, conviction is not a prerequisite to martyrdom.

Chapter 4 analysed the efforts of the boys' surviving brother, Giampaolo Mattei, to relinquish memory from the clutches of far right groups. He has dedicated his adult life to remembering his brothers as two among many deaths from Italy's Years of Lead.<sup>7</sup> His memorial initiatives are inclusive of participants from across the political spectrum. They are designed to remind people of the tragedy of political violence, and the dangers of politicised memory. As such, Giampaolo Mattei's mnemonic labour is in line with the cosmopolitan mode of remembering, which has a future-function. It aims to prevent further violations of human rights through commemoration of the dead.<sup>8</sup> He emphasizes the futility of his brothers' deaths by constantly reiterating their lack of agency; they were unsuspecting targets of an attack on a domestic space.

Mattei opposes the instrumentalisation of his brothers' memory within contemporary politics through the martyr paradigm, with its suggestion of knowing sacrifice. His memorial initiatives are more in line with victimhood than martyrdom, reflecting the cosmopolitan mode of remembering. His attempts to promote this mode of memory have, however, failed. The representation of his brothers' deaths as martyrdom by the MSI and the far left's staunch campaign of misinformation served to isolate memory among the far right immediately after the arson. This isolation was exacerbated by the state's failure to deliver justice, and its delayed engagement with the boys' memory due to the antifascist narratives that

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<sup>7</sup> Conway, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Levy and Sznajder, 'Memory Unbound', pp. 86-107.

were built into the identity of the Italian Republic, with consequences for who is remembered as a martyr. A perfect storm left memory outside of national narratives, and open for appropriation. This historic isolation has meant that today, neofascist groups can continue to claim the brothers as their martyrs. Unlike in Germany, where victimhood and recognition of suffering have come to define the nation's approach to memory (reflecting the cosmopolitan shift), the Italian example shows the divisive legacy of the state's failure to recognise victimhood across the political spectrum, and to deliver justice. This has allowed the martyrological narrative constructed and sustained by the far right to endure, and has prevented the integration of the Mattei brothers' memory into broad, commemorative narratives of the period. Commemoration remains a political act. Indeed, in the Q&A session following a presentation on this research at a conference, a Roman academic, who declared her support of the left, challenged my point about bipartisan commemoration of the victims from across the political spectrum, asserting: "Ognuno piange i suoi morti." Her statement left us under no illusions as to whether national narratives of victimhood exist or not.

The second case study, that of Giacomo Matteotti, showed that national boundaries do not contain martyr memory, answering one of my primary research questions. After the tight restrictions imposed by the Fascist regime on commemoration (which only served to sanctify memory, as chapter 5 explained), Matteotti's memory stretched far beyond Italy's national borders. During the *ventennio*, he was remembered as a pacifist, semi-religious figure by socialist communities around the world, who created ties of solidarity through the concept of shared pain and the loss of other national martyrs. Chapter 6 showed that martyr memory brought unity to the global socialist movement, through the performance of commemorative rituals that celebrated socialism, and the construction of sites of memory around the world. However, some antifascists outside of Italy adopted more bellicose rhetoric to remember Matteotti, using memory as a war cry to inspire commitment to the fight against Fascism. Beyond Italy, commemoration was stable and sustained - a fact that has been significantly overlooked in contemporary scholarship. This de-territorialisation of memory was reminiscent of the cosmopolitan mode of memory identified by Levy and Sznajder. Though some bellicose narratives were used in commemoration of Matteotti, which were more in line with the monumental mode of memory, this was primarily by exiled antifascists who used memory for a present-day aim: to stop, rather than remedy, state violence.

Chapter 7 took the United States as a case study to examine how and why this distant event was incorporated into local experience, showing the role of Italian language publications in the United States in this transmission of memory via the Italian diaspora. My analysis of the proposed construction of the New York monument to Matteotti – the first to be planned in the world - made clear the insertion of Matteotti's memory into the day-to-day fight against Fascism in the U.S. at a time when Blackshirts had gained increasing visibility in public space. The chapter showed the transnational quality of Matteotti's martyrdom and how this very distant event became part of local experience. Italian Americans used memory as a way to symbolically fight against Mussolini's attempt to spread Fascism to American soil.

This pair of chapters redressed the historic overemphasis on Matteotti's commemoration in Italy, showing that during the *ventennio* Matteotti was commemorated as a national martyr in-waiting around the world, both publically and persistently. It was not until the fall of Fascism and the construction of the new Republic that Matteotti's memory was incorporated into the new national project, as chapter 8 addressed, becoming a foundation of the Republic's civil religion prior to the celebration of the partisan martyr. Matteotti's memory was politically expedient as Italy rebuilt its democratic foundations; it appealed to Italian antifascists, who sought to emphasise the role of Italian citizens in Italy's liberation, and to the Allies, who supported the celebration of a democratic reformist (rather than revolutionary) figure. Furthermore, it emphasised Italy's latent antifascism, and served as a symbol of the wider suffering of the Italian people during Fascism. As the Cold War climate emerged, institutional support of Matteotti's memory gained further traction because it avoided incorporating the memory of the partisans, who had been so closely tied to the PCI, into national postwar narratives, and celebrated democratic socialism instead.

Chapter 8 then analysed the evolution of Matteotti's memory during the 1950s and 1960s - a period of monument-building and increased cultural production that consolidated Matteotti's position as the national martyr. This position would not last into the 1970s. During the Years of Lead, socialists once again reclaimed Matteotti's memory as part of the symbolic fight against neofascism, and sites of memory were attacked as political binaries returned. Having been a way to symbolically unify the nation in postwar Italy, Matteotti's memory was used as a means of cementing the boundaries between 'us' and 'them' during the Years of

Lead. Many elements of the antagonistic mode of remembering were simultaneously evident in antifascist commemoration of Matteotti and neofascist commemoration of the Mattei brothers during this period. The fluidity of the boundaries between the national martyr and the martyr of the group was clear, and Matteotti's memory slid between both categories. A martyr for the socio-political group can become a martyr for the nation, and vice versa.

As political binaries thawed after the Years of Lead, Matteotti became the subject of academic study and cultural production. Films, books and exhibitions documented his life (and, of course, death), paving the way for his incorporation into Italian heritage institutions. With the turn of the millennium, new legislation was introduced to protect Matteotti's memory, which was firmly enshrined in national history. The establishment of associations in his name, the creation of the Matteotti museum, and the state's significant financial commitment to protect memory removed Matteotti from the political debate and elevated him to the place of a founding father, alongside figures like Garibaldi and Mazzini. Few questioned the antifascist credentials that were at the heart of the Italian state by this point. Antifascist memory was stable, anchored, and protected, which reduced the urgency of Matteotti's commemoration.

Today, however, the resurgence of the right across Europe (and the U.S.) has had significant implications for the memory of both case studies analysed in this thesis. The memory of the Mattei brothers and Giacomo Matteotti has been revived given the success of the far right in institutional politics. As stated in chapter 4, the 2018 commemoration ceremony in Primavalle was interrupted by the arrival of individuals strongly associated with the far right, breaking the tacit agreement between Giampaolo Mattei and local neofascist groups that they are not to attend the official, state-sanctioned ceremony. This renewed claim on memory was also evident during the grassroots commemorative march, which was the largest for many years. In opposition to this surge in support for the far right (and the subsequent energy with which far right martyrs are commemorated), there has been renewed interest in Matteotti's memory. Indeed, it was a focus of Anpi's counter-ceremony organised in October 2017 while an unprecedented number of neofascists commemorated the anniversary of the March on Rome.<sup>9</sup> The renewed call on

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<sup>9</sup> In October 2017, I visited Mussolini's hometown, Predappio, at the time of the 95<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the March on Rome. Attendees (totalling in the low thousands) marched from the town centre to Mussolini's tomb, where they prayed and

Matteotti's memory shows the dual temporality of martyr memory – Janus-like in its looking to a past event as a warning for the future.

Matteotti's memory has been revived at an international level, too. Somewhat unexpectedly, his name has been used on social media in the context of Donald Trump's election as president of the United States. Just weeks after his inauguration, one user tweeted: 'Let's crowd-fund security protection for conspicuous Trump critics. Call it the "Giacomo Matteotti" Murdered Critic Protection Fund.'<sup>10</sup> Mentions rose in summer 2018, when a number of news stories broke regarding Trump's treatment of his critics. In late June 2018, a Twitter user responded to a *New Republic* article about Congresswoman Maxine Waters' call for citizens to challenge Trump cabinet members in public.<sup>11</sup> The user tweeted: '[She's] Going full Matteotti'.<sup>12</sup> Days later, in the wake of fatal shooting of five people in a newsroom in Annapolis, another user responded to BBC presenter Simon Schama's tweet that 'killing journalists is the curtain raiser of fascism' with: 'And ignoring it or justifying it (Trump has done the former, how long to the latter?) Mussolini and

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performed the Fascist salute before his coffin, and then signed the nearby visitors' book. They then marched through the town along via Matteotti, in an act of symbolism that could not have been lost on participants. Many then boarded a coach to visit the unofficial museum, the Casa dei Ricordi Villa Carpena, near Forlì. The museum is a shrine to Mussolini, complete with relics. The strength of popular engagement with Mussolini's tomb and the museum in his former family home is interesting when compared to activity at Matteotti's tomb (which was for so long a site of pilgrimage) and the museum in his family home. Matteotti's tomb is housed in the local cemetery, roughly one kilometre from the museum. I visited it in June 2016, days before the 92<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of his death. There were very few signs that the tomb had been visited. By contrast, Mussolini's tomb receives 80,000-100,000 visitors per year. There are no visitor figures available for Matteotti's tomb, but a guide in the Matteotti museum told me they receive around 3,000 visitors per year, and the number of people who visit his tomb is thought to be less. See: Elisabetta Povoledo, 'Tourists Still Drawn to Tomb of Mussolini, "Il Duce," in Italy', *New York Times*, 2 November 2011.

<sup>10</sup> richard metafora, 'Let's Crowd-Fund Security Protection for Conspicuous Trump Critics. Call It the "Giacomo Matteotti" Murdered Critic Protection Fund. #msnbc', @dickytrope, 2017  
<<https://twitter.com/dickytrope/status/828698484601651201>> [accessed 5 July 2018].

<sup>11</sup> Jeet Heer, 'Trump Escalates with an Attack on Maxine Waters.', *The New Republic*, 25 June 2018 <<https://newrepublic.com/minutes/149354/trump-escalates-attack-maxine-waters>> [accessed 9 July 2018].

<sup>12</sup> Tarik Cyril Amar, 'Going Full Matteotti', @TarikCyrilAmar, 2018  
<<https://twitter.com/TarikCyrilAmar/status/1011605963235889152>> [accessed 5 July 2018].

Matteotti spring to mind'.<sup>13</sup> The re-insertion of Matteotti's name into vernacular debate in both Italy and abroad is included to show that martyr memory is tied to the political fight wherever that might take place, and not limited by national borders. It is this ongoing interrelationship between contemporary politics and martyr memory that has brought me to some definitions of secular martyrdom.

Martyrs for the socio-political group are part of political activism. They are created, politicised and instrumentalised by the living as part of political protest. We saw this during the *ventennio*, when Matteotti was remembered across the world in order to protest the institutional violence wielded by the Fascist state. Moreover, when various radical right groups have perceived their heritage to be under threat by changes in institutional politics (after the dissolution of the MSI, for example, or when the left is perceived as dominant) the Mattei brothers have been commemorated with renewed vigour. When political binaries sharpen, adversaries will organise rituals to remember their dead (and sometimes try to undermine the memory of the opposition's martyrs). Contemporary politics is the lifeblood of martyr memory.

This category of martyrs is typically commemorated as a symbol of suffering inflicted by the hand of a dominant (and often institutional) power. The state's failure to deliver justice may sustain commemoration of these martyrs long after their deaths, and memory will be used as part of the pursuit of justice. We saw this in the case of Valerio Verbano, whose mother dedicated her life to maintaining her son's memory in the hope his case would be reopened and justice would be delivered, as addressed in chapter 4. Martyrs for the socio-political group draw their symbolic currency from their outsider status, as we saw in the first case study. Though this category of martyr may not be enshrined in memory through formal *lieux de mémoire*, memory is kept alive through political activism. Their memory is sustained by the struggle against a stronger power.

Because of this link between the social martyr and the minority group, there is more scope for who becomes a martyr of this type. Consider, for example, the case of Jerry Essan Masslo, a refugee from South Africa who was murdered in Villa Literno in 1989 when armed criminals entered the building where he and 28 other

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<sup>13</sup> Mark Brierley, 'And Ignoring It or Justifying It (Trump Has Done the Former, How Long to the Latter?) Mussolini and Matteotti Spring to Mind', @MarkBrierley1, 2018 <<https://twitter.com/MarkBrierley1/status/1012483580919013376>> [accessed 5 July 2018].



homeless migrants were sleeping, and demanded they hand over their money. When Masslo refused he was shot dead. Masslo had arrived in Italy two years earlier, fleeing racial persecution under apartheid. He worked as a casual tomato-picker in a small town near Naples after his residence permit was denied. According to Sabrina Brancato, Masslo's death 'constituted a crucial moment in the history of African immigration in Italy; it forced the country to face its faults, opening a long-needed debate on the living conditions of immigrants, provoking protest from intellectuals and politicians, and making the presence of allogeneous groups (especially African ethnicities) on Italian soil suddenly visible.'<sup>14</sup> His funeral was broadcast by Rai, and attended by vice president of the council of ministers Claudio Martelli. Masslo's murder led to changes in the law regarding immigrant status (issuing residence permits to those who had arrived before 1989), and prompted Italy's first national anti-racism demonstration.<sup>15</sup> His memory was used as a unit of protest against Italy's lack of protection of refugees within its borders, and his name became synonymous with changes to immigrant rights in the late 1980s and 1990s.

Secular martyrs originate at the level of the group within political activism, and then ascend to the level of the martyr for the nation when memory comes under the patronage of the state. This institutional endorsement may be expressed through the construction of sites of memory, or the organisation of commemoration ceremonies, for example. It is this element of state patronage that creates a national martyr. This was evident in the Matteotti case study, and missing in the case of the Mattei brothers. My analysis showed that Matteotti's memory was first a unit of global antifascist protest, and later supported by the state through the construction of sites of memory across Italy, and institutional participation in significant commemoration ceremonies. His memory was part of the construction of a democratic, parliamentary foundation for the new Republic, and it underlined the nation's latent, oppressed antifascism. Martyr memory therefore had a legitimating function for the state after conflict within the nation, and formed part of the new civil religion after Fascism. In the case of the Mattei brothers, however, the institutional patronage needed to create a martyr for the nation was missing for

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<sup>14</sup> Sabrina Brancato, 'From Routes to Roots: Afrosporic Voices in Italy', *Callaloo*, 30.2 (2007), 653–61 (p. 2).

<sup>15</sup> Eduardo Meligrana, 'Razzismo: Jerry Masslo, un raccoglitore di pomodori ha cambiato l'Italia', *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, 25 August 2013 <<http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2013/08/25/razzismo-jerry-masslo-un-raccoglitore-di-pomodori-ha-cambiato-litalia/691986/>> [accessed 9 July 2018].

decades after their deaths. The appropriation of memory by the MSI and the media campaign of misinformation immediately prevented engagement with memory across the political spectrum, and although the state did later attempt to institutionalise memory (through the proposed construction of sites of memory analysed in chapter 4), the longstanding ghettoization of memory among the far right meant that the Matteis were anxious that this sudden state support was politically motivated.

Peter Novick argues that ‘there is a circular relationship between collective identity and collective memory. We choose to center certain memories because they seem to us to express what is central to our collective identity’.<sup>16</sup> The same is true of the state’s creation of national martyrs. It is only if the values the martyr are those the state wishes to project and encourage among its citizens that it will organise memorial initiatives. National martyrs are typically constructed after a period of social or political upheaval, not only because social or political upheaval leads to individual deaths, but also because the national martyr upholds civil religion by celebrating the values of liberty and democracy that underpin it. This function is particularly important after domestic conflict, which destabilizes national unity and can undermine the notion of state benevolence. Loyalty to the social contract that protects the relationship between citizens and the state is reaffirmed through the celebration of national martyrs. This was evident in my study of Matteotti’s memory in the new Republic, when memory became a symbolic foundation of the new democratic government through the language and iconography of martyrdom.

In order for the martyr to play a role within civil religion, however, the individual’s final confrontation must be represented in the martyrological narrative as proof of the martyr’s self-sacrifice in the name of the nation (which validates the nation as something worth dying for). Conviction must therefore be suggested in the narrative. As addressed in chapters 1 and 5, Scolari has examined the attribution of conviction in relation to Aldo Moro. Similarly, my study has shown that Matteotti’s conviction was emphasised through the obsessive focus on his defiant final words (even though the only witnesses to the crime denied him having said them). These words were later immortalised in monuments and memorials throughout the country. This focus on conviction in the martyrological narrative occurred because national martyrs need to have visibly shown self-sacrifice for the nation in order to

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<sup>16</sup> Peter Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory: The American Experience* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001), p. 7.

open up the space to celebrate civil religion. It is for this reason that they are so often former holders of public office or state representatives. Their existing professional commitment to doing the work of the state can be leveraged in the martyrological narrative, and celebrated as an expression of civic duty (the very duty civil religion encourages).

National martyrs are those who have shown sacrifice in the name of the nation (or, at least, this propensity for sacrifice in the name of the nation must be suggested in the martyrological narrative). It is for this reason that the military martyr paradigm has endured at a national level. The language and iconography of the military has been used consistently in commemoration of national martyrs since the creation of the Italian nation itself (even when remembering non-military figures like Matteotti, the *martire ignoto*). We saw the importance of military martyrdom to national identity in the extent to which the state supported commemoration of the Nasiriyah martyrs, as described in the introduction to this chapter. Military martyrdom is a longstanding and familiar language – Mancini calls it a ‘vocabolario di base’ – and part of the commemorative culture that has sustained national identity since its inception, as analysed in the thesis introduction.<sup>17</sup> Few other occupations suggest a propensity for self-sacrifice for the nation and dedication to a conviction to the extent of the military. However, this traditional reliance upon military figures or holders of public office, whose civic duty can be easily identified, has meant that the canon of national martyrs remains narrow, and male public heroism is still privileged.

We cannot therefore say that there has been a significant and irreversible shift from the monumental mode of memory towards the cosmopolitan mode of remembering at the level of the national martyr. Though some fundamentals of cosmopolitan memory were evident in international commemoration of Matteotti at various points during the *ventennio*, namely the de-territorialisation of memory and its use as a foundation for a commitment to prevent future human rights infringements, and again during the construction of the Italian Republic, these elements were combined with a strong focus on Matteotti’s self-sacrifice. The notion of victimhood that lies at the heart of cosmopolitan memory precludes any suggestion of a willingness to self-sacrifice, and instead underlines the infliction of suffering upon an innocent, passive individual. Though the cosmopolitan mode of

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<sup>17</sup> Mancini, p. 13.

memory may have dominated temporarily at various points, the characteristics of victimhood are fundamentally incompatible with the representation of the national martyr and its role in encouraging commitment to the nation.

In the thesis introduction, I addressed the role of memory in the transition after national trauma. Here, I conclude that Italy's commemoration of its national martyrs is part of the transition to peace after violence on national soil. With the exception of military martyrs, it is most frequently those who died through conflict fought from within that have emerged as national martyrs in Italy. Italy is a country that has repeatedly turned on itself, and then reformed (or tried to). Unification battles were bloody, but created the nation; Italy established - and then defeated - Fascism through civil war; the period of domestic terrorism known as the Years of Lead saw Italians kill Italians; and the Mafia Wars have taken place, largely, within Italy. During these periods, important deaths have acted as 'key watersheds of contemporary Italian history' and catalysed significant historical turning points.<sup>18</sup> They have also often been remembered as national martyrs. The concepts of renewal and rebirth that lie at the heart of the martyrological narrative relating to those killed during domestic conflict, as stated in the thesis introduction, signify a mark with the past. This is particularly useful when the martyr has been produced through domestic conflict (and doubly expedient if the state has then been unable to deliver justice within its institutional frameworks). I propose that commemoration of national martyrs is part of the cycle of violence and reform - a re-articulation of the values of the Italian state, and a public commitment to honour them in the future. We saw these qualities clearly in commemoration of Matteotti. This future-facing quality of martyrdom, as opposed to victimhood, is expedient after internal conflict, drawing a line between past violence and the future.

These national martyrs are also commemorated in recognition of the suffering of the broader Italian nation. Matteotti was remembered as a heroic opponent of the emerging Fascist regime, but he also came to symbolise the enormous number of deaths during the Fascist dictatorship, most of which went unpunished. He was mourned in domestic shrines during the *ventennio* as a symbol of the suffering of the Italian people, as chapter 5 concluded, and he was described as 'il martire ignoto', a metonym for collective suffering. Indeed, during the drawing up of the new constitution, Saragat declared: 'Matteotti 'è stato prescelto dal popolo

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<sup>18</sup> Gundle and Rinaldi, p. 2.

come simbolo di tutte le vittime che il fascismo ha sacrificato.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, the more recent martyrs Falcone and Borsellino represent the many who have lost their lives in the fight against criminality from within, and Moro's death has come to symbolise to all those who died during the Years of Lead given the choice of his kidnap date as the day of memory for the victims of terrorism. Collective national martyr groups like those remembered at the Fosse Ardeatine for example, are often commemorated nationally for this reason - a signifier of the shared suffering of the Italian people; as the thesis introduction showed, this narrative can help to integrate thorny memories into national narratives. The national martyr is a symbol whose meaning can be extrapolated to apply to the wider nation's suffering. Their commemoration is redemptive – a way for the state to reiterate its values after violence – and unifying, serving as a signifier of collective suffering. Italy's national martyrs are symbols of a martyred nation.

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<sup>19</sup> *Seduta Pomeridiana di Martedì 10 giugno 1947*, p. 4608.

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## Appendix

### List of libraries and archives consulted for research

Archivio centrale dello stato, Rome, Italy

Arts and Social Sciences Library, University of Bristol, Bristol, England

Biblioteca Casa della Memoria e della Storia, Rome, Italy

Biblioteca di Storia Moderna e Contemporanea, Rome, Italy

Biblioteca Nazionale, Rome, Italy

Biblioteca Nazionale, Florence, Italy

British Library, London, England

British School at Rome, Rome, Italy

CMS Archive – The Center for Migration Studies, New York

Fondazione Nenni, Rome, Italy

Immigration History Research Center Archive, University of Minnesota,  
Minneapolis, U.S.A

Library of Congress, Washington D.C., U.S.A

Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University,  
New York, U.S.A

The Women's Library, London School of Economics and Political Science, London,  
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University of Bath Library, University of Bath, Bath, England

### Online archives

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### Matteotti memory timeline (1924-2017)

Scan the QR code below to view a timeline of Matteotti's memory, which tracks significant historical events relating to Matteotti, the construction (and removal) of sites of memory, commemorative events, significant cultural production, the establishment of organisations linked to the preservation of his memory, and the introduction of related legislation both within and outside of Italy. These categories are colour-coded, allowing for visual representation of the broad trends that are analysed in chapter 8.



### **Oral history documentation**

The following documents were submitted to the University of Bristol Ethics Committee ahead of my oral history interviews in Primavalle. The English versions were approved on 16 April 2015. They were subsequently translated and used throughout my fieldwork.

I conducted and recorded the interviews, before creating a transcript for analysis. Participants were given a consent form prior to each interview, explaining the scope of the PhD and interview, storage of all data and the right to retract permission for use.

## Information Sheet

### Case Study: the Primavalle Arson

This PhD will examine who is remembered as a martyr in modern Italy. Oral history interviews, defined as discussions between myself and people with direct personal knowledge of a specific past event, are a central part of my thesis. By using oral history testimony visiting sites of memory, observing commemorative practices and analysing cultural production, the research will assess the changing memory of certain figures from modern Italian history.

I hope to collect the memories linked to my subjects of study, and learn about how they are remembered today. I want to understand the differences between personal memories and institutional, national memories through first-hand testimony. I will combine oral history testimony with attendance of public commemorative ceremonies and visits to sites of memory in order to trace the evolution of memory.

#### Why the Primavalle Arson?

The Anni di Piombo were a particularly divisive period in Italian history; no single case highlights this point so tragically as that of Stefano and Virgilio Mattei. I would like to gain a better understanding of the Mattei story and how it unfurled in Italy in the 1970s. The lack of judicial truth surrounding the event had an impact on how the tragedy was mourned in the public sphere, with implications for individual and collective memory in Rome and across Italy. I also want to understand how the event is remembered today, following the admission of guilt from one party.

#### Topics to discuss

- Your circumstances in 1973 (where you lived, worked etc)?
- Whether you knew the Mattei family?
- When you first heard about the Primavalle Arson
- The mood in Rome at the time
- Your thoughts on coverage (newspapers, books and films) of the Primavalle Arson?
- Whether you attended any commemorative ceremonies. How was the atmosphere?
- What did you think of Achille Lollo's confession in 2005?
- Did you discuss the confession with friends or relatives?
- Did that confession change your views on the Primavalle Arson?

Your testimony will help me to understand the events that took place in 1973 and their continued impact today. After our interview, I will transcribe the discussion and you will be given the opportunity to view the transcription. All files will be stored on the University of Bristol secure server.

I will also send you an informed consent form. The form explains your participation in the study, data storage procedures, and how the findings will be used in the study. It will also explain that you have the right to withdraw without reason at any point during the study.

**Will my name be used in the study?** I would like to name my subjects. I have selected participants in my study because of their unique, biographical experience. I want to record your personal experiences and perceptions of the event in question, and include *your* memories in my thesis. Your relationship to the subject will play an important role in *what* and *how* you remember an event: family members, for example, will have private memories of an individual, while an official involved in a trial may have their memories shaped by the legal framework. Your identity is very significant in your oral history, which is why I am seeking permission to use your name.

**If you have any concerns related to your participation in this study please direct them to the Faculty of Arts Research Ethics Committee, via Liam McKervey, Research Governance and Ethics Officer**



## Informed consent form

By using oral history testimony (interviews with people that have personal experience of a specific event), visiting sites of memory, observing commemorative practices and analysing cultural production, this PhD research will assess the changing memory of certain figures from modern Italian history.

I hope to collect the memories linked to my subjects of study, and understand the differences between personal memories and institutional, national memories.

### **Do I have to take part?**

No, participation is entirely voluntary. Likewise, you are free to take part in one interview and to refuse any requests for further interviews.

### **Can I withdraw at any time?**

Yes, you can withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

### **What do I have to do?**

We will arrange a time and a location that is convenient for you and meet for an interview. Before the interview, I will provide you with an information sheet outlining the topics I would like to discuss.

We will then meet and have a conversation, which will be recorded on a Dictaphone - this allows me to concentrate on our discussion and not on taking notes. After the interview, I will transcribe the discussion myself and send it to you for your approval. If there are any parts you would like to remove, that can be done.

It is important to remember that I am interested in *memory* and not facts. As such, there is no right or wrong answer to any of my questions.

### **How will the findings be used?**

My study is for academic purposes. I may quote some of our discussion in my PhD thesis, use them in published papers in academic journals or books, or in conference papers.

### **What will happen to the data collected?**

After our discussion, I will transcribe the interview and save both the voice file and transcription on my university servers, which are safe and secure.

### **Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?**

I am seeking permission to use your name in my study. I want to record your personal experiences and perceptions of the event in question, and include *your* memories in my thesis. Your relationship to the subject will play an important role in *what* and *how* you remember an event.

If, for reasons of security, you cannot be named but are willing to take part in an interview, we will discuss how best to describe you as a participant.

**What are the possible risks and disadvantages of taking part?**

The subjects of my research are sensitive, so you may find the discussion upsetting. If at any time you wish to stop the interview, you are free to do so. You are also free to withdraw from any further interviews and withdraw your consent to use any data collected during prior interviews. We will also be free to rearrange

**Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge  
YES/NO**

**Have you:**

- been given information explaining about the study?
- had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?
- received satisfactory answers to all questions you asked?
- received enough information about the study for you to make a decision about your participation?

**Do you understand:**

- That you are free to withdraw from the study and free to withdraw your data prior to final consent at any time?
- without having to give a reason for withdrawing?

**Do you give permission**

- For me to use your name in my study?
- If no, have we reached an agreement on how to describe you in the study?
- For me to use your testimony in academic articles for published journals or books, or at conferences?
- For me to record our interview, if the file is stored securely?

**I hereby fully and freely consent to my participation in this study**

Participant's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name in BLOCK Letters: \_\_\_\_\_

**If you have any concerns related to your participation in this study please direct them to the Faculty of Arts Research Ethics Committee, via Liam McKervey, Research Governance and Ethics Officer**



