

Addressing the People:
Architecture as a Medium of the Fascist Narrative of National Identity,
Case del Fascio, 1922-1943

Volume One of Two

by

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Submitted to the M.I.T. Department of Architecture on September 16, 2016 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the field of Architecture, History and Theory of Architecture

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines a building program for Fascist headquarters, or *Case del Fascio*, established by the *Partito Nazionale Fascista* (PNF) during the years of Italian Fascism, from 1922 to 1943. The PNF planned over 11,000 buildings by 1943 on the Italian mainland and in their colonial territories. This examination is a chronological study of these buildings demonstrating that the PNF expressed its political messages in built-form. Between 1919 and 1943, the PNF developed its political ideology, documented in the Statute of 1921, and its modifications in 1926, 1929, 1932, and 1938. The PNF building program mirrored their constantly modified political goals, as well as the PNF's decisions in areas of culture, religion, and foreign policy. The physical form of the *Casa del Fascio* embodied the PNF's evolving character that changed from fringe to progressive, to dominant, to authoritarian and militaristic.

While the politicians developed programmatic needs for the PNF headquarters building, many architects developed their own consensus about its design from articles in their professional periodicals. Journalists featured PNF sponsored competitions for *Case del Fascio*, *Palazzi del Littorio*, and *Torri Littorie* – all versions or components of the developing headquarters building. Wide spread participation of architects in national competitions for fascist headquarters allowed architects to observe other solutions and offer their interpretations. Articles and newsreels of building inaugurations aided the architect's view of the PNF's preferred examples. What began as a clandestine meeting space evolved into a building that could be identified at a distance as a *Casa del Fascio* - a symbol of the PNF, if not Mussolini, himself. However, no one model stood as the template for the new political building. Variations in form, plan configuration, and aesthetics continued until the PNF's 1943 demise, despite the 1936 "Declaration of the Empire" and the PNF's association with Germany – which would have suggested a government-sanctioned "monumental Roman" model. The outcome reveals that architects had unusually strong design control.

My study is a chronological analysis, using over 4,000 architectural examples, overlaid with the changing ideology of the PNF, which reveals the reactive design interpretations by professional architects during the *Ventennio*.

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(Volume 2 on CD-ROM)

Abbreviations:

ACS	Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome
AGT	Archivio Giuseppe Terragni
AOI	Africa Orientale Italiana
B	Busta (Archive folder)
CSAC	Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione, Parma
FPP	Fondazione Piero Portaluppi
GIL	Gioventù Italiano del Littorio
GRF	Gruppo Rionale Fascista
GUF	Gruppo Universitario Fascista
MVSN	Milizia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale
ONB	Opera Nazionale Balilla
ONC	Opera Nazionale per i Combattenti
OND	Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro
PNF	Partito Nazionale Fascista

Magazines:

Quadrante
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Introduction

The Architecture of the *Casa del Fascio*, 1922-43

It is hard to engage in any study of the *Casa del Fascio*, the name assigned to the Italian Fascist Party headquarters and built throughout Italy between 1922 and 1943, without recalling the most notable example, the *Casa del Fascio* in Como designed by the architect, Giuseppe Terragni. Despite the fact that the *Partito Nazionale Fascista* (PNF) administrators and architects planned over 11,000 *Casa del Fascio* by 1943, they are largely absent from most historical narratives. Perhaps because of their connection to Mussolini and the activities of his associates before and during World War II, the international dialogue about Italian architecture between the Wars is minimal. The inaccessibility of the archival material after World War II also compromised efforts by diligent historians to perform the kind of research necessary to uncover the scope and character of the PNF building enterprise.

More damaging to the historiography of Italian fascist architecture is the inclusion by historians and architects of only a few well-known buildings. Terragni's famous design for the PNF figures prominently in modern histories. The *Casa del Fascio*, in Como, was drawn into the canon of the Modern Movement by historians, most notably Alberto Sartoris, and placed firmly in a narrative that excluded the building's association with fascism after WWII in favor of its formal and stylistic associations with the work of architects, such as Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe.¹ Indeed, the *Casa del Fascio* purportedly gave evidence of a

¹ Alberto Sartoris, architect and historian, published *Encyclopédie de L'Architecture Nouvelle* in 1948 with 510 illustrations beginning with Giuseppe Terragni's *Casa del Fascio* in Como as the first plate. Following are 169 plates of Italian modern architecture including 29 plates of Sartoris' own work, 26 plates of work by Le Corbusier, trailed by renowned architects such as André Lurçat, Pierre Chareau, and José Luis Sert among others. See Alberto Sartoris, *Encyclopédie de l'Architecture Nouvelle; Ordre et Climat Méditerranéens* (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli Éditeur, 1948). Before the end of WWI, Sartoris wrote *Introduzione alla Architettura Moderna* in 1943 where he did acknowledge that the *Casa del Fascio* in Como was "Architettura del Partito, architettura della Rivoluzione," p. 148.

very different kind of historical phenomenon: rather than being interpreted within its local, regional, political and economic context, which would have asserted the importance of its iconography to the fascist cause, the Como *Casa del Fascio* was called upon to demonstrate that the International Style was indeed international. Despite Terragni's writings that connect the building to his fascist aspirations, he was reproached, even in his own time, by Giuseppe Pagano for Terragni's "masterly interplay of volumes which nonetheless came to formalism."² Even Terragni's own historical record is skewed by the Como building's notoriety, as most of his collaborative work is attributed solely to him in numerous cases, even with evidence to prove otherwise.³ In the 1970s, Peter Eisenman's writings on the Como *Casa del Fascio*, after his study of Terragni's work as a 1963 Cambridge University dissertation, emphasize its geometrical character as an example of architectural discourse about formalism that is closer to his work than it is to the building's identity as a representative example of the experiments in conjuring an appropriate style and program for fascist architecture.⁴ In 2003, Eisenman commented upon the release of this book, *Giuseppe Terragni: Transformations Decompositions Critiques* that the Como *Casa del Fascio*, "deserved to be situated outside the historical context."⁵ Architectural historian Diane Ghirardo argued that the constant focus on the formal analysis of the Como building in particular "erases *fascio* from its name."⁶ She continued, "this robs it of its historical particularity, its

² L. Benevolo, *History of Modern Architecture*, vol. 2. (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1977; first ed. 1960 by Giuseppe Laterza & Figli), p. 36. Refers to Pagano's comments in *Casabella*, Feb. 1937.

³ Carol Rusche, "1934, Progetto di concorso di primo grado per il Palazzo del littorio a Roma. Progetti A e B" in Giorgio Ciucci (ed.), *Giuseppe Terragni* (Milan: Electa, 1996), pp. 437-442.

⁴ Peter Eisenman, P. "From Object to Relationship: The *Casa del Fascio* by Terragni." *Casabella*, 344, pp. 38-41.; "From Object to Relationship II: Giuseppe Terragni, *Casa Giuliani Frigerio*." *Perspecta*, 13/14, pp. 36-61; "*Casa del Fascio*," *Perspecta*, 13/14, pp. 62-65.; "Semiotica e Architettura (*La Casa del Fascio*)," *Casabella*, 429, p. 25.

⁵ Peter Eisenman, *Giuseppe Terragni: Transformations Decompositions Critiques* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2003). Quote from Hugo Lindgren, "Architecture: A Little Fascist Architecture goes a Long Way," *The New York Times*, October 12, 2003.

⁶ Diane Ghirardo, "Terragni, Conventions, and the Critics," *Critical Architecture and Contemporary Culture*, ed. by William J. Lillyman, Marilyn F. Moriarty and David J. Neuman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 100.

expressed political agenda, its significance as a product of the designer's effort to wed a revolutionary aesthetic to a revolutionary political movement, to ground architecture in the new life praxis that he believed fascism provided."⁷ The Como *Casa del Fascio* is most often included in the historiography of the Modern Movement because of its complex formal qualities and frequently presented without an explanation of its historical-political context.

Stepping back from the particular instance of the Como building as a canonical historical building, its location among the many other iterations of *Casa del Fascio* reveals Terragni's design as a remarkable exercise in the attempt to formulate a building that represents the PNF. Through its circulation pattern, its formal "honest" character, the program elements of the Party, and features drawn from well known public buildings, such as the *palazzo*, the *basilica*, and tower – the building is an embodiment of the PNF's political agenda. PNF leaders and their architects followed the urban tradition of architectural representation with a monumental building program that had been a common strategy for disseminating political ideals throughout the European continent since the time of antiquity. The major building block of the PNF, the *Casa del Fascio*, translated as the "House of the *Fascio*", accommodated a group of fascist members in each city, who were the foundation of the PNF. The *fascio*, in Roman times, was an axe encased in a bundle of reeds which represented the authority of the *Lictor*, who would walk protectively before ancient leaders. The *fascio*, adopted as the symbol for the PNF, was intended as an expression of the PNF's legitimacy and authority to govern nationally with similar power and longevity as did Caesar and other Roman leaders.

Equally significant, in this study, is the parallel between the *Casa del Fascio* building as it was conceived programmatically and symbolically over time and the specific historical

⁷ Ibid.

circumstances of the PNF. The changes in the form and content of the building reflect – actually mirror – the changing language fomented by Party members as the PNF and its political manifestation changed from fringe, to progressive, to dominant, to authoritarian, to emboldened and militaristic and even to its ultimate demise. The large numbers of *Casa del Fascio* examples, studied chronologically, presents a remarkable opportunity to see the ways in which architecture – buildings – can manifest political agenda, both representing content and performing its role as a kind of architectural rhetoric. Sometimes the architecture took the form of a literal expression of Party identity – as in the case of a proposed *Casa del Fascio* for Rome to be built in the form of Mussolini's head [Fig. 1].⁸ In other examples, the building's expression of the PNF was more abstract, but no less meaningful, as program elements such as the cinema or the radio room – merely by their presence in the building – represented the powerful role, which public pronouncements played in advancing and solidifying the image of the PNF. Other features reminded the public of the PNF's presence, such as the tower form recalling the *campanile* and the balcony representing the absent *Duce*, who was perpetually invited to speak. PNF headquarters made references to the *palazzo* and urban *piazza*, which drew upon familiar architectural and urban typologies known by the constituency of the PNF. These references, understood by most citizens, assisted the PNF in communicating their Party's legitimacy through a known architectural and urban language.

Yet, a coherent solution was far from clear. During twenty years of fascism, architects, engineers, PNF leaders, critics, historians, as well as the general public sought an architectural expression for the PNF. The seeking of an architectural solution was not a secret enterprise, but neither was it ever wholly conclusive nor did it track along a purposeful line from beginning to

⁸ ACS, PNF, Serie II, B. 132a, Rome, *ceramista* Settimio Rometti. Date shown on project is XX or 1942; sent to Rome PNF after 1934 Rome *Palazzo del Littorio* Competition.

end. One cannot speak of the historical development of the *Casa del Fascio* as an evolution, for the changes were not developmental, but rather were reactive to a changing perception of what was required at the time to bolster the PNF. The many designs of *Casa del Fascio* represent architecture in the service of politics with all of the temporal, political and economic contingencies, which fuel change in any political process. As the circumstances changed, so too did the expression of an ideal solution. The architectural discourse was responsive to the immediate needs of the PNF – the architects created designs in a reactive manner.

This dissertation is a study of the process of architecture crafted in the service of a political agenda – with all of the requirements of rhetoric including exaggeration, formalism, reference, and familiarity. It combines – of necessity – a historical study of the PNF, from 1921 to 1943, with an architectural investigation of the product of this exercise. The chronological study reveals the developments in the thinking and designing of the *Casa del Fascio* over time in relationship to a chronology of events that the PNF’s leadership crafted in response to conditions that influenced their political and economic interests. This study reviews the history of the communicative building against the changing ideology of the PNF represented by major events such as the “Battle of the Grain” program, the Tenth anniversary of the Regime, the signing of the Lateran Treaty with the Vatican, the “Declaration of the Empire,” subsequent League of Nations’ sanctions and the reactionary “Autarchy” program, the Rome-Berlin Axis, and the advent of new media instruments, which were used to reach the masses with Mussolini’s message. The essence of a PNF *Casa del Fascio* is captured in a sketch by Architect Luigi Vietti describing his joint 1934 proposal, with Terragni and others, for a *Palazzo del Littorio* (Palace of Fascism) planned for a site next to the Colosseum [Fig. 2].⁹ Vietti revealed that the Fascist

⁹ Vietti made this sketch during a 1985 interview with Carol Bentel in Milan.

headquarters was intended to be the megaphone for the Fascist regime, if not for Mussolini himself.

I will also take the opportunity to run the analysis in reverse – to examine the building designs over the *Ventennio* (twenty years of fascist rule) in search of their own internal consistency and development as architectural design to test the hypothesis that the buildings and their architects had occasionally the opportunity to influence the political discourse. In simple terms, my analysis is an opportunity to see in what ways the metaphor of Base and Superstructure applies to architectural design as a cultural practice in relationship to its corollary in the political domain.

I have catalogued an inventory of over 4000 individual designs noting the architect (when available), the location, the date in which the design was submitted for approval to the PNF leadership, the responses to that submittal and the subsequent history of the project – most notably, whether the *Casa del Fascio* was built or not. The major source of this material comes from the *Archivio Centrale dello Stato* in Rome, which consists of architectural drawings, letters of exchange between provincial and national PNF leaders, and Technical Service Department documents. To this, I have added information in situ for erected buildings, as many *ex-Case del Fascio* were available for my study.¹⁰ The field research has given me the ability to examine local conditions that may not have been fully represented in the paper submissions to the PNF, but which may have influenced the designs in ways that reinforced the monumental presence of the Fascist headquarters within the communities they served, or were located to rival competing organizations like the Catholic Church. I have also had the rare opportunity to include oral histories, which I collected from architects still living at the time I commenced this research in

¹⁰ Many *ex-Case del Fascio* are occupied by the *carabinieri*.

the 1980s, to augment, clarify and in some cases render problematic what might otherwise have been a cogent historical explanation of form and content.

I have organized information in a timeline format with photos, architectural drawings, and site plans describing the context of each *Casa del Fascio*.¹¹ My analysis has the goal of identifying distinguishing features that developed either within a particular phase or as anomalies within their temporal context. I have also produced a kind of encyclopedia of program components, repetitive visual elements, and recognizable building features related to familiar urban building typologies, etc., which appear sometimes only in specific regions or are more consistent in a particular year versus another. In addition, I have tried to associate the re-occurring architectural components with either a political imperative or a proposed architectural solution fomented by those in whom central authority of this building was vested. It is my hope that my study and analysis will both clarify the subject by providing an interpretive tool and also to establish a foundation for judgments about the relationship of politics and architectural design.

Brief Notes on Historiography of the *Casa del Fascio*

In our effort to understand the relationship between the intention of our historical protagonists – evident in their words and actions – and the historical evidence, which is the outcome of their historical presence, we must acknowledge diverse groups whose interests do not fully align. It seems clear that the primary historical determinant for creating a “House of Fascism” are the political circumstances in which the PNF leadership found itself as they tried to assert, maintain and expand their authority to govern. As historical observers, we will be required to filter their thoughts and actions with respect to the features of the *Casa del Fascio*

¹¹ Not all *Casa del Fascio* in the ACS had plans or site plans. Most folders contained written documents about the construction of *Casa del Fascio*.

through the lens of political expediency, recognizing those features that persist as being those that either support or do not undermine their material and political interests. It is important to understand that the relationship between an architectural form – alchemized to operate effectively as a form of communication – is not transparent to meaning. We will find that "reading" these many buildings as a direct translation of a political thesis is impossible. Yet, we have an opportunity to inform our interpretation of the buildings and their meaning by conducting a study to reveal what they intended to express and what was implied in their built or proposed forms.

We must also be cognizant of the fact that whereas politicians may be single minded in their pursuit of political goals, the architects who crafted the visual imagery and forms in response to programmatic elements participated in the political discourse focused on political authority and the legitimacy of the Fascists to govern. By 1932, architects had to join the PNF to be considered for public work in Italy. Many were not coerced and some, including Terragni, were ardent Fascists. Architects designed public work for the Party with great seriousness and made sincere efforts to reflect the values of the ever-changing PNF in the architecture. Interviewing architects such as Quirino De Giorgio, Gino Pollini, Alberto Sartoris, Ludovico Belgiojoso, Luigi Vietti and Ignazio Gardella was eye-opening. They were absolutely supportive of Fascism when their country was experiencing a building surge and then lost heart in the later years. Many were arrested and deported, some such as Gian Luigi Banfi, died in concentration camps and many fought in the Resistance. They were actually startled that anyone would ask about their architectural work from the years between WWI and WWII. At the same time, these architects were engaged in the professional discourse, simultaneously seeking a valuable role (to themselves perhaps more than the PNF) to create Mussolini's "glass house," as well as to be a

participant in the creation of a contemporary architecture. The fascist architects, while designing *Casa del Fascio*, were negotiating issues of modernity, tradition, Mediterranean regionalism and the internationalism fomented by modernist architects throughout Europe.

While I will be interrogating the intentions of the primary players in this historical process, I will also be investigating the buildings themselves in search of commonalities and dissimilarities of form, program, materials, and urban location. I have referred to the two prevailing analytical tools appropriate for this exercise, typology and iconography, but we must be careful not to confuse our use of these analytical tools and the same terms as they were used by the architects themselves as a design methodology. Instead, typology is an active and historically significant design method that architects used to legitimize their development of plan forms and architectural features, which they claimed made reference to some building phenomenon in the past. The result of their work could hardly be called a "type." The *Casa del Fascio*, over the course of its history, changed according to the political tides and not as a result of a prevailing cultural practice. The exemplars of the discussion about what constituted the appropriate form never coalesced into a singular pattern. Instead, these buildings possess a synthetic quality, a result of the imposition of a rhetorical agenda, which used specific forms to convey specific messages.

Similarly, iconography as we might use it as an analytical tool is, in the hands of these architects, a design tool that ostensibly provides a way of communicating ideas about the role of the building and fascism generally. Among the most interesting aspects of this is the presence of certain formal features that "represent" something familiar. There is an iconographic value in the program elements of the building as well.

Scholarship on the Topic of the *Casa del Fascio*

Significant scholarship has been written on the *Casa del Fascio* building topic during the same years as my own research, which started in the mid-80s. An exhibition, titled *L'Architettura delle Case del Fascio*, and catalogue produced in 2003 by Paolo Portoghesi, Flavio Mangione and Andrea Soffitta, and a book by the same title in 2006, have amassed a notable body of information for public view from the *Archivio Central dello Stato* (ACS) in Rome. Despite the fact that my unpublished database with over 4,000 entries duplicates much of this material, the catalogue and book support my belief that there is much unknown work to be studied by architectural historians. Their excellent encyclopedic study adds a wealth of information to a virtually unknown area and greatly aided my observations. The introductory chapters of the exhibition catalogue provided summaries of the birth and evolution of the *Casa del Fascio*, the description of the building as a new type, and 3D formal analyses of four architectural plan-forms for the *Casa del Fascio* that Portoghesi, Mangione and Soffitta identified.

Paolo Portoghesi, Flavio Mangione and Andrea Soffitta refer in their text to Giuseppe Terragni, the *Gruppo Sette*, *Razionalismo* and the *Casa del Fascio* in Como. While there is little disagreement about the notability of the Como example – it was an extraordinary example on many levels – it did not dominate the discussion about these buildings in their own time. Many architects, often located in small farming villages, did not enjoy the same circumstances as Terragni, yet also designed buildings for the national PNF. The challenge is to define this new political building of the PNF without being constantly reminded of the Como example in order to understand the basic rules and typical components of these buildings first. A subsequent inquiry

would then be to reexamine the Como *Casa del Fascio* against the background of more than 11,000 buildings of the same name.

One of the few books in English with documentation on *Case del Fascio* is Diane Ghirardo's *Building New Communities: New Deal America and Fascist Italy*. Ghirardo filled a void in historical analysis that compared communities in the United States under the aegis of the New Deal and in Italy under the PNF. In the course of her accounts in her dissertation, *Architecture and the State: Fascist Italy and New Deal America* (1982), and book (1989), she revealed both the scope of Italian building and displayed the American material in a new light. Ghirardo claimed legitimacy for this comparative history on the basis that both the Italian and American examples demonstrated an underlying theme of urban "decentralization" and the "return to the land" policy that serviced the political ambition to clear a restless working class from overpopulated cities and to employ the workers in jobs that would benefit each of the countries. Ghirardo's work focused on new towns, both agricultural and industrial, as well as new settlements in Africa and demonstrated the range of Mussolini's endeavors. Significant contributions include a focus on Predappio, Mussolini's birthplace, by revealing the town planning methods and the reluctance to claim a representative architectural image for itself, which is useful corroborative data for an analysis of a political building, which was often a part of each new town. Using comparative history, she reveals many insights in town planning of the 1930s in Italy. I draw from Ghirardo's early research on fascist new towns and devote a chapter to an analysis of *Case del Fascio* as a component of PNF new towns or new *borghi* (rural centers) in order to study the *Casa del Fascio* and the hierarchy of the PNF buildings in an absolutely unencumbered context, unfettered by existing buildings.

Italian scholars and architectural historians have provided significant data to my

architectural research, which draws on history from the African continent to religious and political debates with the Vatican. Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller have added rich material from the African continent to the urban and architectural histories of the Fascist era that has aided my work determining the role and the form that the *Casa del Fascio* took in the midst of two cultures, one transplanted and the other indigenous. Lucy M. Maulsby's book, *Fascism, Architecture, and the Claiming of Modern Milan, 1922-1943*, and her article, "Case del fascio and The Making of Modern Italy," thoroughly covers the political and cultural growth of fascist architecture in Milan, as well as documenting specific *Casa del Fascio*.¹² Her book was my constant companion throughout my research trips in Milan. Antonio Pennacchi, author of many fiction novels, including some about the Pontine Marshland towns, has covered the vast building program of *borghi* on the Italian continent in his 2008 *Viaggio per le Città del Duce*, which aided my analysis of numerous rural enclaves. Enrico Pietrogrande's research on *Casa del Fascio* in Padua, documented in his 2014 *Trentaquattro case del fascio*, was a rich source for my study of the many *Casa del Fascio* designed by architect Quirino De Giorgio, whom I interviewed in 1985. David I. Kertzer's work on religion and politics during the Fascist period in *The Pope and Mussolini: The Secret History of Pius XI and the Rise of Fascism in Europe* abetted my suspicion that the architecture of the Church and the *Casa del Fascio* had something in common. The Vatican archives were not used in my study, but would be the next area of research I would conduct to find corroborative material from the Vatican point of view about parallels between the two institutions. Victoria de Grazia's *The Culture of Consent: Mass Organization of Leisure in Fascist Italy* clearly illuminates the cultural activities that were unique to the *Ventennio* (twenty years of fascist rule), which assisted my need to imagine what happened inside and on the

¹² Lucy Maulsby, "Case del fascio and The Making of Modern Italy," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, Vo. 20, Issue 5, December 2015, pp. 663-685.

grounds of the *Casa del Fascio* and the *Dopolavoro*, an associated building and program. Professor De Grazia kindly reviewed my dissertation proposal in 1992 and provided invaluable comments. Giorgio Ciucci's work on architecture during the fascist period, including *Gli Architetti e Il Fascismo: Architettura e Città, 1922-1944* and the seminal work, *Giuseppe Terragni*, which he edited, is a wealth of information from many scholars, most notably Ciucci himself.¹³

Research Methods for the Study of *Casa del Fascio*

My study differs from others in its view of the growth of the *Casa del Fascio* and its program through more than twenty years of change during Fascist rule, from 1922-1943. The study begins with an analysis of a nascent building program, which met the early needs of a militant group, and ends with a structure, years later, which could be visibly recognized as a PNF headquarters building. Design solutions for the *Casa del Fascio* reflected the phases of change in PNF programs, as well as modifications that developed from outside forces, such as conflicts with the Vatican, international sanctions, ties with Germany and the claiming of colonial properties. The creation of the *Casa del Fascio* building is viewed, in this investigation, through the filter of its own political history, as well as through the eyes of the architectural profession, who competed for commissions and learned about alternative solutions through architectural publications, the press and newsreels.

For my research, I studied most *Casa del Fascio* in their context, when possible. As a practicing architect, I felt strongly that personal observation and analysis of the specific location would aid my understanding of the design decisions of other architects. The *Archivio Centrale*

¹³ See Giorgio Ciucci, *Gli Architetti E Il Fascismo: Architettura E Città, 1922-1944* (Turin: G. Einaudi, 1989). Print. Carol Rusche Bentel contributed to the "Catalogo delle opere" as Carol Rusche (C.R.), see Giorgio Ciucci. *Giuseppe Terragni: Opera Completa* (Milan: Electa, 1996), pp. 437-442, pp. 515-518, pp. 545-552, Print.

dello Stato in Rome provided me with site plans, so I could discern the condition of each site in its time. My site visits were complemented by interviews with many of the living architects, whose names and office addresses I could find in the archive, and whose telephone numbers still miraculously worked in the 1980s. Although I have found hundreds of *Casa del Fascio* in person, I have not found all of the 4,000 examples that are listed in my database. The Internet, particularly its map search websites, has greatly assisted me in seeing if a *Casa del Fascio* project was ultimately built, to see if it shared a *piazza* with a church, to know if it was visible from the train station, or expressed its dominance over the town with a *torre littoria* (fascist tower) – often discovered by studying the shadows on the map. An extensive analysis of written records in the *Archivio Centrale dello Stato*, not solely the architectural drawings, revealed interchanges that confirmed the national hold on local decisions as to the location and aesthetics of the *Casa del Fascio*, as well as providing countless records of building costs and discussions of construction materials. The archival material from the ACS was the major source of data that I used for this dissertation.

My study first views the *Casa del Fascio* as a singular building on the Italian mainland and defines the different categories of the building from the most prominent *Palazzo del Littorio* to the peripheral *Casa del Fascio* called the *Gruppo Rionale Fascista* (GRF). Explanations of the hierarchical system of the PNF building and its components are provided to establish a vocabulary that is used throughout the following chapters. The second chapter is a chronological study that overlays the political, religious, and cultural milieu on the development of the PNF headquarters building to demonstrate that the building was architecturally shaped by many of these non-architectural dynamics. The third chapter is a view of the *Casa del Fascio* from the point of view of professional architects, and some student groups, through their involvement in

national competitions to design *Casa del Fascio* and their access to architectural periodicals and other media. The format in chapter three is also chronological and demonstrates that the PNF-sponsored competitions were a vehicle for the architects to gain knowledge about the new PNF building and an opportunity for them to propose solutions representing the political aspirations of the regime. Chapter four is a study of the *Casa del Fascio* at the level of a city. Three Italian cities – North, Central and South – provided another perspective about the hierarchy and positioning of *Casa del Fascio* within cities. *Casa del Fascio* in large cities were generally called *Palazzi del Littorio* and were singular and centrally located, while *Gruppi Rionale Fascisti* (GRF) were numerous and placed in surrounding neighborhoods beyond the center. These two buildings, both *Casa del Fascio*, differed in their architectural form from the historic *palazzo* form to a building that was more visibly functional with additive forms. The study of the *Casa del Fascio* from the North to the South, revealed some regional and climatic differences and was useful in determining if the message from the central PNF authority reached each city equally. Chapter five is a study of *Casa del Fascio* in new towns and *borghi* (rural centers). These *Casa del Fascio* were designed for virgin land, unencumbered by an existing urban fabric. Isolating the *Casa del Fascio* from the existing context in new settings brought an alternate perspective to the analysis of the building. The PNF headquarters building could be seen in relative terms within a group of PNF buildings designed at the same time, often by the same architect. The hierarchy of buildings and the importance – or not – of the *Casa del Fascio* within the new enclaves became very clear.

Although there are many similarities to other building programs in Germany and Russia before WWII, these foreign programs are not included in this thesis. Unlike the equivalent government buildings in Germany and Russia in the 1930s, there was a varied range of solutions

in Italy for its government sponsored buildings in the 1920s and 1930s. The widespread variety, despite some repeated forms emerging by the late thirties, led me to believe that the enormity of the endeavor by hundreds of architects in so few years, and the design overview by the central authorities of so many buildings, was somewhat overwhelming for the Technical Service Department of the PNF, the overseers of the public buildings. The PNF could only control so much and needed the *Casa del Fascio* to extend their ranks, which allowed the architects and engineers to make the majority of design decisions for the ultimate embodiment of the PNF message.

I have created several maps and architectural diagrams to organize the historical material and to convey my findings. While in graduate school, I studied with Professors Roger Clark and Michael Pause, authors of *Precedents in Architecture*, who taught me the value of a simple diagram to convey the essence of an architectural idea or concept. After time spent in Como at the *Archivio* Giuseppe Terragni (AGT), I was able to contribute information to their second edition, which included a chapter of analysis of several Giuseppe Terragni buildings. Clark and Pause's method of analysis aided me in simplifying the many variations of *Casa del Fascio* buildings that I encountered and allowed me to identify dominant features, which I could describe with my own diagrams paralleled with actual examples.

I have reviewed the *Case del Fascio* in most provinces of Italy, its properties on the Dalmatia coast and in its colonial possessions on the African continent seeking to define a building that grew to make its political presence known. The vast PNF building program was unprecedented with most of the actual construction occurring in only the last ten years of the more than twenty years of Fascist rule, from 1933 to 1943, and yet it remains fairly unknown. I hope that my investigation will allow the rich variety of building solutions representing a

political ideology to be used for further study by others and could be considered for inclusion in the general histories of architecture of the twentieth century.

Chapter One: What is a *Casa del Fascio*?

In a 1936 issue of the magazine *Quadrante* devoted to Giuseppe Terragni's *Casa del Fascio*, the PNF headquarters in Como, Terragni posed the question, "What is a *Casa del Fascio*?¹⁴ As a partial answer, he suggested that the diverse political programs of the PNF created a need for several new building types – the *Casa del Balilla*, *Stadio*, the *Casa dello Studente*, the *Casa dei Sindacati*, the *Casa del Dopolavoro* – but the *Casa del Fascio* was by far the most "politically prestigious and had propagandistic value."¹⁵ For Terragni, the *Casa del Fascio* was a center of political and moral activity and not a "fort" as one might assume of a building, which housed the functions of a militaristic party. Instead, in Terragni's design for the Como *Casa del Fascio* of 1932-36, he interpreted the requirements of the PNF as calling for a building to enrich the mind and body of fascists as a school, a house, and a temple [Fig. 1].¹⁶

Although Terragni's *Casa del Fascio* was not the only interpretation of the new PNF building, the Como building was often been used as the benchmark by which to compare other *Casa del Fascio*, as in a photo comparison with the unbuilt Torino *Casa del Fascio*, designed in 1938 by Engineer Alberto Ressa [Fig. 2].¹⁷ The Como *Casa del Fascio* was not always favorably compared, as the editors of *Casabella* noted that the Italian public preferred the *Casa*

¹⁴ G. Terragni, "La Costruzione della Casa del Fascio di Como," *Quadrante*, 1936, p. 14.

¹⁵ Ibid. (There are numerous examples of the combination of a *Casa del Fascio* and a *Dopolavoro* in one building with their own entry portals; as well as buildings where the *Dopolavoro* is a minor component within the *Casa del Fascio*. Many variations existed in the PNF archives in the Archivio dello Stato in Rome.)

¹⁶ G. Terragni, "La Costruzione della Casa del Fascio di Como," *Quadrante*, 1936, p. 14. (The concept of the *Casa del Fascio* as "a house" was not repeated in the PNF archival material that I studied. The *Casa del Fascio* building was considered as a "house" for the PNF and had after-work activities and some domestic activities for women, however, there was no clear description for the naming of the building as a "Casa" in the material I researched. The "houses" of parliament or a "house" of worship could have been a precedent for the selection of the word "casa.")

¹⁷ *Domus*, no. 128, August 1938. The Torino *Casa del Fascio*'s plan was a *palazzo* configuration twice the size of the Como building with two large inner spaces. The building and the "*Piazza Impero*" by Ressa was the first place winner in a 1938 competition. A detached tower, *arengario* and sculpture were included in the competition entry, which are not evident in the image. It remained as a project. ACS, PNF, Serie II, B. 1593/1594.

del Fascio in Bollate by Magni, Oposzynski, and Pasquali, completed in 1935-1936 [Fig. 3].¹⁸ Due to Terragni's resurging popularity in the 1970s and 1980s, albeit with a focus on formal strategies, his *Casa del Fascio* has become the paradigm of the PNF's headquarters building.¹⁹ Its architectural quality notwithstanding, Terragni's *Casa del Fascio* in Como was not a standard example of a PNF headquarters building. What did the architects of the thousands of *Casa del Fascio* believe to be the typical *Casa del Fascio*? What did they use for design guidance? Terragni wrote that the PNF Provincial Secretary handed him only a type-written list of required rooms for his design of the Como building.²⁰ This dissertation will stitch together the visual and written material that was accessible to the designers – surveyors, engineers and architects – which allowed them to give physical form to the building needed by the PNF. Seeking a template, the designers' major source of guidance was from publications, which included competition briefs, the resulting designs submitted, and the projects of the preferred winners most often published in *Architectura* and *Casabella*. The student competition of 1932, the 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* Competition, the subsequent Grade II of the *Palazzo del Littorio* Competition in 1937, and 1939-1940s competitions for rural and border area *Casa del Fascio* were the threshold moments in the discourse about the PNF's representative building.

Between 1922 and 1943, the PNF attempted to build over 11,000 *Casa del Fascio* throughout Italy and its territories [Fig. 4].²¹ The government had a massive building program, which included other buildings, but the *Casa del Fascio* was the one that most visibly represented the PNF and therefore, was considered more prominent than other government

¹⁸ *Casabella*, no. 110, February, 1938.

¹⁹ K. Frampton described the Como *Casa del Fascio* as the "ideal symbolization of fascism" in *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1980), p. 206.

²⁰ G. Terragni, "La Costruzione della Casa del Fascio di Como," *Quadrante*, 1936, p. 5.

²¹ Paolo Portoghesi, Flavio Mangione and Andrea Soffitta, *L'Architettura delle Case del Fascio* (Florence: Alinea Editrice s.r.l., 2006), p. 55.

buildings. The 1932 Statute of the National Fascist Party stated that “the PNF consists of the *Fasci di Combattimento*.”²² The many *Fasci di Combattimento*, also called *Casa del Fascio*, were considered to be the core of the PNF.

The following text describes the variations of *Casa del Fascio*, the typical layout, the physical features of the building, the typical setting, the general program, the financing, and the special components of these buildings – towers, balconies, memorials – to establish a common vocabulary for this thesis. These descriptions are not a set of fixed guidelines, since the *Casa del Fascio*'s form and character were in constant flux. The PNF organization began by inhabiting existing buildings that were hard to recognize as political centers and 21 years later, the local PNF members were housed in new buildings that were easily recognizable at a distance as PNF centers.

[See Table No. 1: Map of *Federazioni* quantities and locations of singular *Casa del Fascio* and *Borghi/New Town's Casa del Fascio*]

The Programmatic Foundation of the *Casa del Fascio*

The early *Casa del Fascio* were generally placed inside of existing *palazzi*, which had offices, meetings rooms and internal courtyards. The first seat of a local PNF group, for example, was located in Bologna in a majestic *palazzo*, called the *Palazzo Fava*, with three floors and a courtyard [Figs. 5-6].²³ These existing buildings housed a combination of PNF functions – administrative, social assistance, leisure, memorial, educational, physical and militaristic. This mixture of activities was entirely new and the necessity to also represent the national presence of the PNF made it a never-seen-before amalgamation. It was part “Boy Scouts” and part YMCA –

²² PNF Statute 1932, Article 10.

²³ “*L'Assalto*,” October 31, 1923, p. 43.

both programs that were studied by the PNF. In essence, a *Casa del Fascio* was a multifaceted “communications box” for the PNF.²⁴

The previous Socialist Party buildings had included rooms for social services, such as medical assistance, maternity and child rearing aid, nurseries, and clinics for the public, therefore many of these services found a new home in the new PNF buildings – many of which were old Socialist buildings. No new *Casa del Fascio* building was exactly alike. As buildings became available for acquisition or by “donation” from local building owners, the PNF would discuss if previous activities in the former building could co-exist with the PNF. In 1933, in Troghi (Firenze), a building was donated for a *Casa del Fascio*, but the owners found themselves negotiating space for the Red Cross, which had space in the PNF building. The PNF noted their concern writing, “La Croce Rossa pero nessuna pratica ha inteso svolgere finora in proposito, per lo meno nessuna segnalazione e stata fatta dal rappresentante del Fascio di Troghi, in modo che – ove l’associazione Venisseassorbita da quel Fascio – si troverebbe poi di front al fatto compiuto.”²⁵

The *Fasci di Combattimento*, the first title given to these buildings and to the group of fascists within them, were founded on the 23rd of March 1919 in *Piazza San Sepolcro* in Milan. During the first national Congress of *Fasci* (fascist groups) in Florence on the 9th and 10th of October 1919, Mussolini reaffirmed the birth of the *Fasci di Combattimento* organization in *Popolo d’Italia*.²⁶ He said, “it is not an organization of propaganda, but of combattimento” and continued, “Più che al proselitismo, per vendere marchette, tendono all’azione. Non hanno

²⁴ PNF, *Religione e Clero nell’Opera del Governo Fascista* (Rome: PNF, 1924), pp. 10-11.

²⁵ ACS PNF, Serie II, Troghi, Florence, B. 1050, August 26, 1933, p. 3.

[Translation: “The Croce Rossa (Red Cross Party) has not taken any action on the matter, or at least there has not been any indication from the representative of the Troghi’s Fascio, where in the event the association would be absorbed by that Fascio, it would find itself facing a done deal.”]

²⁶ *Fasci* refers to groups of fascists that made up a group. The word is also used to refer to *Casa del Fascio*.

programmi immutabili.”²⁷ The development of the fascist “houses” over a 23 year period prove their changeability as they were often a mélange of functional spaces, meeting local needs as well as the PNF’s requirements. Contrary to Mussolini’s 1919 description of the function of *Fasci di Combattimento*, the *Casa del Fascio* did become a vehicle for propagandistic messages.

The Hierarchy of *Casa del Fascio* Buildings and Site Selection

Both the PNF Federal Secretary and their executive committees were responsible for the final decisions of a symbolic and programmatic nature for all *Casa del Fascio*. The local authorities were entrusted with the decisions of a more specific nature regarding land or building acquisition and the selection of designers, who were surveyors, architects or engineers.²⁸ Local PNF authorities corresponded directly with those selling or donating land/buildings and spoke directly with the design professionals.²⁹ The PNF Technical Service files indicated that the Federal Secretary of the PNF requested initial information regarding the site selection or options, if more sites were available, as was the case in Appio, which submitted three site possibilities [Fig. 7]. The Central PNF required a final report before the construction or modifications of existing buildings would be allowed.³⁰ The Central PNF pre-construction report included

²⁷ Marco Piranio, Stefano Fiorito, curatori, November 2012, “Il Partito Nazionale Fascista,” *Venti Anni, Volume Primo: Dottrina, Storia e Regime (P.N.F. – Ufficio Stampa*, Prima edizione, Rome, 1942; second edizione, Lulu.com, 2013), p. 127.

[Translation: "it's not a propaganda organization, but that of "combat"; "More than proselytism and hustling they lean towards action. They do not have invariable programs."]

²⁸ Competitions were sponsored by the national PNF in the late 1930s and early 1940s for rural *Casa del Fascio* of various sizes. Some towns were given a design and an architect, however in general the selection of the architect was a local decision.

²⁹ Letters in the PNF Technical Service files indicate that the local PNF head communicated with Rome, but that the architect or engineer only spoke directly to the local authority.

³⁰ There are numerous letters for *Casa del Fascio* approval in the PNF Technical Service file from Giovanni Marinelli (PNF Administrative Secretary, 1920 -24, 1926-43) and Carlo Scorza (PNF Director 1926, INF Vice-Secretary 1942, PNF National Secretary 1943).

documents of the property, photos of land and/or existing buildings, proposed designs, and proof of donations to finance the building. After the Central PNF office received the information, they would send a letter of approval or disapproval back to the Provincial Headquarters.

The Central PNF also determined which type and size of *Casa del Fascio* could be built.³¹ Terragni's own query about the definition of a *Casa del Fascio* did not acknowledge the complex hierarchical system of the PNF building. There were five types of fascist groupings, but generally three types of fascist headquarter buildings were planned by the PNF: the *Sede Federale* (provincial headquarters) often called the *Palazzo del Littorio* and considered the most important; the *Casa del Fascio*; and the *Gruppo Rionale Fascista* (GRF). Although, in practice, all three names were regarded as *Casa del Fascio* or "houses of the *fascio*." These names represent a system of ranking that related the size and type of building to the town or city's population and its location. For example, the head of each of the 97 Federations, not counting the colonies, would get a *Palazzo del Littorio*. There were also two additional groupings, the *Settore* and the *Nucleo*, that were smaller fascist enclaves, which did not necessarily inhabit a building.³² All were still considered *Fasci di Combattimento*. The use of these titles was fairly consistent, but there are numerous cases when the building's title was a mixture of the names, such as "*Casa Littoria*," as was the case in a 1938 *Domus* article, where two *Casa del Fascio* – including Terragni's Como building – were called *Casa Littoria*.³³

The PNF had five categories of building sizes bound to a specific quantity of required rooms for the PNF headquarters. Those in Category I – Bari, Florence, Genoa, Milan, Naples, Palermo, Rome and Turin – would get the largest building. The populations in these cities, in

³¹ The decision-makers for determining building hierarchy and sizes in the Central PNF were generally administrators with planning expertise in the PNF Technical Service Department.

³² Flavio Mangione, *Le Case del Fascio* (Pubblicazioni degli Archivi di Stato, Rome: 2003), p. 32.

³³ *Domus*, no. 128, August, 1938.

1934, were all of the largest in the country except for Bari, however, Bari had more births than all other cities in Italy in the same year, so they were included in the category to receive the largest building.³⁴ The agencies that required offices in the building were the *Servizi Politici*, *Servizi della Disciplina*, *Servizi Cultrali*, *Servizi Economico-Sindicali* and *Servizi Amministrativi*.³⁵ In total, twenty offices were split between the five services. Smaller cities were considered to be in the remaining categories, Category II, III/IV, and V and had to have the same areas of service covered, but rather than twenty offices, the local PNF had to double people up in fifteen, eleven and eight offices respectively or have one person take on multiple services, which was the norm.³⁶ Even if the building was small, the local PNF was still required to cover the twenty areas of service. Other significant program components to add to the space requirements were gymnasias, grand meeting rooms, theaters, cinemas, libraries, billiard rooms, and bars which varied in consistency from city to city.

The process to procure locations for fascist groups to congregate began in major cities where the PNF would acquire an existing *palazzo* of honorable character located in a prominent part of the city for its *Sede Federale*, often called the *Palazzo del Littorio*.³⁷ After establishing the larger central location, then the smaller local *Casa del Fascio* sites would be selected. This was documented in letters sent to the existing Provincial *Sede Federale*, which enumerated the building locations in the smaller surrounding towns. In districts of the provincial capitals served

³⁴ “Note Demografiche per le Grandi Città Italiane nel 1934,” *Urbanistica*, November-December, 1935 XIV, pp. 366-7.

³⁵ [Translation: “Political Services, Discipline Services, Cultral Services, Economic-Union Services, and Administrative Services”]

³⁶ ACS, PNF, Seg. Amm., Serie II, Busta 418.

³⁷ *Littorio* was fascist term, often used instead of *fascio*, refers to historic Roman lictors, who carried a *fascio*, which was an axe with bound reeds around its handle.

by *Palazzi del Littorio*, the PNF approved the construction of GRF buildings in outlying districts of the larger city.

The Planning of *Palazzi del Littorio* in Existing Buildings

In the 1920s, the PNF's primary task was to secure locations for PNF headquarters in the center of the largest cities in Italy. This coincided with the PNF's focus on the reworking of many urban plans. The PNF authorities in Florence, for example, selected an existing *palazzo* that was in disrepair, which was the former home of numerous ambassadors, first called the *Palazzo da Montauto* and later the *Palazzo del Conto di Boutourlinn*, for their *Palazzo del Littorio* in 1927 [Fig. 8]. The Provincial PNF Secretary sent photos and plans to the Rome PNF for its approval as the *Palazzo del Littorio* and noted that the building was a "noble *palazzo*" located in the heart of the city near the Duomo on *Via dei Servi*. The *palazzo* included an arcaded courtyard and a second larger yard with an overhanging balcony – ample space for PNF exterior activities [Figs. 9, 10, 11]. In a 1939 tourist guide from *Consociazione Turistica Italiana*, the location of the *palazzo* was marked as a *Casa del Fascio* and was noted in the guidebook to be near Brunelleschi's 1528 *Rotonda* of *S. Maria degli Angeli*, tying the PNF building to an area of significant architecture.³⁸ The PNF also authorized the construction of numerous *Casa del Fascio* and GRF buildings beyond the central *Palazzo del Littorio* in Florence. A total of 92 PNF buildings – 78 *Casa del Fascio* and 14 GRFs – were planned around the city of Florence itself [Fig. 12]. The Federation of Florence, a wider area beyond the city

³⁸ *Italia Centrale, Guida Breve* (Consociazione Turistica Italiana, Milan, (XVII), 1939), pp. 30-31, p. 60.

borders, which included many small towns, had planned for a total of 189 buildings – 172 *Casa del Fascio* and 17 GRFs [Fig. 13].³⁹

In Modena, where the Provincial Federation had a total of 71 buildings, their *Palazzo del Littorio* was also an existing *palazzo*. Prior to 1937, a grand *palazzo* was secured by the local Modena authorities on the major entry road to the city [Fig. 14]. The local PNF added the signs “*Viva il Duce*” over the entry portal and “*Casa del Fascio*” on the façade as they transformed the building into a PNF headquarters. Internal modifications included a photograph of Mussolini, collages of the regime’s accomplishments, and party slogans applied to the internal walls [Fig. 15]. Many existing buildings required few literal cues to convey their new function, as demonstrated by the *Casa del Fascio* in Maranello for which a single *fascio* and a loud speaker attached to its façade was sufficient [Fig. 16]. Except for attached *fasci* symbols or a mounted sign reading “*Casa del Fascio*,” little was done to the exterior of older buildings to give them a new identity as a *Casa del Fascio*. Period postcards of *Casa del Fascio*, from the 1920s, show minimal signage [Fig. 17].

Palazzi del Littorio, when possible, often occupied a prominent and sizable location in the city. The building of a *Palazzo del Littorio* was generally a large construction project, as in Cuneo, where the building occupied an entire city block.⁴⁰ The Cuneo headquarters was started in 1936 and consisted of new construction and renovations to existing buildings. The entire construction project lasted until 1942 [Fig. 18]. The city block was broken up into three zones. Zone A was the *Casa Littoria*, located in an existing *palazzo* that would receive minor renovations and would hold the offices of the Cuneo PNF Federation. Zone B was the smallest

³⁹ ACS, PNF file, Serie II, Florence.

⁴⁰ ACS, PNF, Serie II, B. 1016, Cuneo.

segment planned for the *Teatro Littorio*. Zone C was new construction and would include the *caserma* of the *giovani fascisti* and the *Gruppi Universitari Fascisti* (GUF).⁴¹

The Planning of new *Palazzi del Littorio*

In Trieste, a new building was planned through a competition for a *Palazzo del Littorio*. The proposed building was to occupy a large portion of a central city block, which was considerably difficult to obtain because of numerous small properties to be acquired by the Trieste PNF. The local Trieste PNF decided to claim the adjoining *piazza* for its “*Piazza Littoria*” and the neighboring ruins as part of the overall site for the competition [Figs. 19-20].⁴² It was important for a PNF headquarters to have a central location, a pedestrian *piazza* or park adjacency and some physical connection, if possible, to a heroic past – such as an ancient Roman ruin [Fig. 21]. The Trieste architects highlighted major monuments and churches near the new PNF building’s location on a site plan. They titled the site “*Casa del Fascio*,” despite the official designation as a *Palazzo del Littorio*.⁴³ Architects Raffaele Battigelli and Ferruccio Spangaro won the 1937 competition for their design of a new *Palazzo del Littorio* for the site in Trieste. The jurors chose Battigelli and Spangaro’s solution because of its attention to a form and material that complemented the recently unearthed Roman theater, which can be seen in the architects’ perspectival rendering. The architects had planned to add Roman statues on the façade facing the *piazza* to give tribute to the adjacent ruin and to create a tie back to antiquity. The Trieste *Palazzo del Littorio* was constructed in 1939, but the statues were never realized [Fig. 22]. The Battigelli and Spangaro building did make reference to the ancient Roman theater

⁴¹ ACS, PNF, Serie II, B. 1016, Cuneo.

⁴² ACS, PNF files, Serie II, B. 1634, possibly built after 1939 by Battigeli and Spangaro.

⁴³ ACS, PNF files, Serie II, B. (Verona).

by creating a counterpoint with its own modern theater-cinema in its interior courtyard [Fig. 23].⁴⁴ Similar to the Trieste *Casa del Fascio*, other *Casa del Fascio* that followed a *palazzo* form were generally designed with a cinema/theater/assembly in the central space, rather than an open courtyard by the late 1930s.

The Ferrara PNF constructed a *palazzo* for their Provincial headquarters on a major street, Viale Cavour, near the train station between 1926 and 1930. The location near a train station and on a major street was typical of most PNF Provincial headquarters. It was designed ornately by Ing. Giorgio Bandini and criticized after its erection in the local paper. The reporter commented on the robust aesthetics by describing the facade as a “ profusione di balconi marmorei, terrazze, bugnati, colonne e cornicioni risultanti in una citazione alquanto greve dell’architettura cinquecentesca” and added “non dovesse sottrarsi al suo compito di monumento celebrativo del regime.”⁴⁵ Bandini designed the Ferrara *Palazzo del Littorio* with a front courtyard used for PNF rallies. Even though the Ferrara building was a PNF Provincial headquarters, which was generally called a *Palazzo del Littorio*, the 1937 Italian Touring Club guidebook listed the building as a *Casa del Fascio* [Figs. 24-25].⁴⁶

⁴⁴ ACS, PNF files, Serie II, B. 1634.

⁴⁵ “Urbanistica e architettura a Ferrara negli anni Venti e Trenta” in Raffaella Picello “Arte per tutti” in *Novecento*. http://guide.supereva.it/storia_arte/interventi/2004/08/171931.shtmlhttp://guide.supereva.it/storia_arte/interventi/2004/08/171931.shtml; also see G. Medri, *Ferrara brevemente illustrata nei suoi principali monumenti* (Ferrara, 1933), p. 61.

[Translation: “profusion of marble balconies, terraces, ashlar, columns and cornices resulting in a rather heavy reminder of sixteenth century architecture, it should not forego its main task of celebratory monument of the regime.”]

⁴⁶ The *Guide D'Italia* published by the *Touring Club Italiano* would list government building locations, such as the *Palazzi del Littorio*, *Casa del Fascio*, among other government buildings.

Town *Casa del Fascio* and Site Selection

Unlike large cities with a *palazzo* for the main PNF headquarters and several GRFs within the city borders, towns in the provinces received one PNF headquarters building generally referred to as a *Casa del Fascio*. The building could be seen at a great distance because the scale of the town made it easier to see the *Casa del Fascio* tower. The tower, called a *torre littoria*, was often incorporated in architectural designs after 1932 and became a regular component of many *Casa del Fascio* after 1935. The only other tower visible in small towns, except in some medieval enclaves with numerous towers, was the bell tower, or *campanile*, of the local church. In Suzzara, in the province of Mantova, the *Casa del Fascio*, built in 1939, had a tower that dominated the skyline and governed one end of the main *piazza*, while the church and its *campanile* dominated the other.⁴⁷ A photo showing this relationship was sent to the Central Rome PNF [Fig. 26, Fig. 27]. In 1932, the competition guidelines for a student designed “typical” *Casa del Fascio* noted that town halls and churches were recognizable at a great distance and that the design of *Casa del Fascio* should be recognizable as well.⁴⁸ While most *Casa del Fascio* were placed on prominent corners in cities or on major thoroughfares, smaller towns like Montevarchi, made their *Casa del Fascio* visible with a tower over twice the building’s height. The addition of a *torre littoria* gave the PNF the potential for their fascist message to be seen in the urban context at a great distance [Fig. 28].

⁴⁷ ACS, PNF Files, Serie II, B. 365. The *Casa del Fascio* was constructed in 1937. The designers listed in the archive were engineer Francesco Bertazzoni and Guido Freddi.

⁴⁸ 1932 Competition Guidelines, Bologna, ACS, PNF, Serie II.

The *Casa del Fascio* Program

Although smaller in size than a *Palazzo del Littorio*, *Casa del Fascio* contained the same programs as the larger *Palazzo del Littorio* building, just housed in fewer rooms with fewer people. In addition, the PNF and their architects often had to incorporate several other programs that would be located within their own separate buildings in larger cities. Examples of programs, which serviced different sectors of Italian society, included the *Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro* (OND), the *Opera Nazionale Balilla* (ONB), the *Gioventù Italiana del Littorio* (GIL) and the *Fasci Femminili*.⁴⁹ A room in a *Casa del Fascio* would be given over to each of these programs and in some cases a new appendage would be part of the overall building composition with its own separate entry. In Bernezzo, Cuneo, an OND and an ONB were symmetrically added to each side of the *Casa del Fascio* [Fig. 29]. The Bernezzo *Casa del Fascio* consisted of only one large meeting room in the middle. Despite the small size of the building, there were three separate entries. Each of these government programs had activities that overlapped with those of the *Casa del Fascio* and the inclusion of an OND or ONB in the building varied widely across Italy. A small 1939 building in Ardea included a room for the OND, a room for the MVSN (*Milizia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale*), the active volunteer military group, and a large space for the GIL, the youth group. The GIL space was designed like most *palestra*/meeting rooms in *Casa del Fascio* with multiple exits. Another plan for a *Sede del Fascio* in Sestola included a MVSN room for the volunteer military, two administrative *Fascio* offices, a larger *Sala Adunanze* meeting space, two GIL rooms and a second floor of school rooms, reinforcing the reality that few buildings were alike [Fig. 30].⁵⁰ A 1930 *Casa del Fascio* displayed exterior

⁴⁹ The *Opera Nazionale Balilla* was started on April 3, 1926 and was incorporated into the GIL, *Gioventù Italiana del Littorio* on October 27, 1937. See, Victoria De Grazia, "Youth Organizations," in Philip V. Cannistraro, ed. *Historical Dictionary of Fascist Italy* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982), pp. 569-573.

⁵⁰ [Translation of MVSN - *Milizia Volontaria Sicurezza Nazionale*]

signage to identify the various parts of the building as demonstrated by the *Opera Nazionale Balilla* sign and other program signs on the cornice line [Fig. 31]. The signage on a 1937 building in Caselle Landi clearly states on its front façade that the organization included after-school and after-work activities. In 1937, the OND, an after-work leisure program, became an official part of the *Casa del Fascio* and the other programs, such as the ONB and the GIL, tended to increase in popularity and size, which justified occupying their own buildings. The ONB and GIL, with a focus on youth, had a strong presence in the late 1930s. PNF leaders were able to gain control over youth with these programs which strengthened the “general moralizing and indoctrinating role” of the PNF.⁵¹ The *Fasci Femminili* was focused on assistance for women, which included the teaching of child rearing and methods to help build strong and large families. The *Fasci Femminili* group operated many of its social and health assistance programs in *Casa del Fascio*, regularly placed on the second floor.

The Planning of *Casa del Fascio* in Existing Buildings

Most *Casa del Fascio* were not newly constructed and the local Provincial PNF endured a fairly complicated process of land or building acquisition. The local PNF had multiple discussions with the national PNF about money, ownership, and design. One project in the town of Gambulaga, in the Comune of Portomaggiore, went through the process and in 1941 documentation was placed in the PNF files under the heading of “not yet approved.” The project was listed as a construction because the architect proposed to make the existing theater building a *Casa Littoria* by adding a tower to it [Figs. 32-33]. The original building was a narrow two-story structure with two hipped roofs at different levels. For the sum of £150.000,00 (Italian

⁵¹ Philip Morgan, “Partito Nazionale Fascista,” in Philip Cannistraro, ed., *Historical Dictionary of Fascist Italy* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982), p. 405.

lira), the building was to be modified by adding a long entry lobby to the theater, which would cover the original façade and was intended as an aesthetic alteration. Furthermore, both short ends of the building were to receive additions. One of the additions extended the building to allow for access to the OND on the upper floor. The building's hipped roof was extended upward and altered to be a flat roof supporting an OND sign. The other side of the building received a three-story entry tower with a flat roof, which held a major staircase to access the upper floor. The tower's smaller spaces were planned for a buffet area, ticket office, *Fascio Femminile* office and *Sindacato* office. The upper floor contained a room for the OND, *a sala adunanze*, a billiard room, a larger room for the *Sindacato*, office for the *Fascio*, the Director and Secretary of the PNF's office, a second buffet area, and an office for the Comando of the GIL. A new modern sign "CASA LITTORIA" was placed across the long elevation of the building. The short side of the building, now with a tower and balcony, was considered to be the official front façade and entry. The tower's presence, as the main "entry," assisted with the public's identification of the numerous entries, which served the various PNF activities and associated organizations. On July 19, 1939, the Rome PNF requested that a structural analysis be done before the additions would be approved. In 1941, a letter was sent to the *Capo dei Servizi* at the Rome PNF to say that the local PNF had acquired the authorization to buy the building for the sum of £30.000,00. Regardless of the authorization for the purchase of the building, the project still remained in a stalemate after two years of discussions, because the construction price was still considered to be too high. Thus, the *Casa del Littorio* in Gambulaga remained on the list of projects waiting for approvals and funds.⁵² The process that the local Gambulaga PNF members and their Provincial

⁵² ACS, PNF files, Serie II, B. 1030, Gambulaga (Ferrara).

Secretary from Portomaggiore undertook to build a *Casa del Fascio* was fairly typical throughout Italy.

The lists of buildings around Ferrara also indicated that several of the architects were responsible for more than one building. Architect Soriani, who designed the additions to the Gambulaga project, was listed as the designer for at least eight projects in the Ferrara region.⁵³ Soriani had a similar challenge of modifying a building in the small town of Sandolo, in the *Comune* di Portomaggiore, where he designed three alternatives for an existing building [Fig. 34 - existing, Fig. 35 - alternatives].⁵⁴ Similar to the Bambulaga project, the Sandolo building was a two-story structure, long and narrow, with a hipped roof. In one scheme, he added an eagle over the door with a flagpole reaching above the roof and a modern “CASA LITTORIA” sign above the cornice line. The first scheme was the least expensive alternative of the three schemes. In the second scheme, the architect altered the corner of the building to incorporate a brick tower that was slightly higher than the roofline, with a balcony and flagpole. A new higher parapet was added with the CASA LITTORIA sign placed on top. A third scheme merged the tower into the existing building, leaving a vertical wall plane with a balcony.⁵⁵ Soriani added an eagle and flagpole to the new wall, which created the desired verticality. The new material in his third scheme was meshed with the old and the distinct brick tower was abandoned. The funding suggested by the PNF for the building alterations was minimal with the sum of only £50.000,00, which caused Soriano to present design alternatives.

⁵³ No first name was listed for the architect Soriani. He was also called Prof. Soriani.

⁵⁴ ACS, PNF, Serie II, B. 1033, Sandolo, Portomaggiore.

⁵⁵ ACS, PNF files, Serie II, B. 1033, Gambulaga, (Ferrara).

The Building of New *Casa del Fascio*

In the ten years between 1932 and 1942, the majority of new *Casa del Fascio* were constructed, including those in new towns and *borghi* (rural centers). The PNF building program for *Casa del Fascio* developed rapidly with design cohesiveness visible in the selection of construction materials and the employment of specific architectural components, in contrast to the prior ten years; however a consistent design for the entire *Casa del Fascio* building never emerged. Architects drew on visual data from the 1932 student competition entries, the subsequent competitions for the *Palazzo del Littorio* in Rome in 1934 and 1937, in addition to other national competitions including those for rural *Casa del Fascio*. The published work of *Casa del Fascio* projects added visual information to the conversation about program, materials, architectural components and aspects of design.

An example of a representative new *Casa del Fascio* was designed in 1939 by an engineer and a surveyor in Gradizza [Fig. 36].⁵⁶ The program consisted of a *sala adunanze*, which was a large open room with tall ceilings with Mussolini's credo "*Crede, Obbedire, Combattere*" (believe, obey, fight) written across the inner walls, a tower, and two offices. It was a one level building with a spiral staircase (hand drawn) used to reach the rooms in the tower, which typically included an archive with local member information. The *Casa del Fascio* had a flagpole on the tower and a *fascio* symbol near the entry door. The tower and a horizontal band at the window level were clad in brick, while the remaining surfaces of the building were faced with stucco. Details and window frames were constructed with travertine. During the design process in Gradizza, the entry location had changed several times and by the time it was built in 1939, the main entry was located on the left side of the tower [Fig. 37]. Typically, a balcony

⁵⁶ ACS, PNF files, Serie II, B. 1030, Gradizza (Ferrara).

would have been a feature on the tower, but one was never included in the designs of the Gradizza *Casa del Fascio*.

Architect Soriani, the architect of the previous renovations in Bambulaga, was able to design a new building for Maiero in 1941 which was typical of a two-story *Casa del Fascio* [Fig. 38]. The land had been acquired in 1938 and was considered by the PNF to be in “ottima posizione nel centro del paese.”⁵⁷ The building would cost a sum of £142.325,20. The work was halted in 1940 because “era già sopraelevata di circa 1 metro dal suolo. I lavori furono sospesi,” therefore elevations heights had to be adjusted.⁵⁸ Soriano produced a design after the delay that clearly articulated the typical elements of a PNF headquarters. The plan included three entry platforms allowing for the diversified use of the building. The *sala* was a large double height space with exits to the rear fields. The tower included a balcony, an eagle sculpture, three *fasci* and an asymmetrically placed flagpole. Two stories of offices, with a different total height compared to the *sala*, were positioned on the other side of the tower. The exterior was primarily clad in brick. The year noted on the façade drawing was 1941. *Casa del Fascio* in other areas of the country, as in Gatteo (Forlì-Cesena) and in Merano (Bolzano), showed similar features when compared to the Maiero building, demonstrating that a common aesthetic and a common set of elements had developed, but one that was not identical from building to building [Fig. 39].

The *Casa del Fascio* building components and its program began to coalesce from 1933 onward as competitions and publications of material generated by the PNF became more accessible. Plans and elevations found in the archives bore similarities, although never an exact repetitive copy of one another. Most *Casa del Fascio* projects included a large meeting and/or

⁵⁷ [Translation: “an optimum location in the center of the country (village)”]

⁵⁸ Letter from 15 Ottobre, 1942 to *Direttorio Nazionale* del PNF in Rome from the *Segretario Federale* Olao Gaggioli from the *Federazione dei Fasci di Combattimento* of Ferrara. (B. 1030)

[Translation: “it was already one meter about the ground level. Work was suspended.”]

gymnasium space, a tower with a balcony, and an office block which included a billiard room, bar, radio listening room, library with books on fascism, an archive which kept records on all members (occasionally in the tower), sometimes a bowling alley or bocce court and a *sacrario* – a memorial to “fallen” fascists – most often located in the ground floor of the tower. Cinemas became the norm in the late 1930s, as they shared the *Sala/Palestra* space or became an actual cinema space with a raked floor. The exterior grounds were essential for a *Casa del Fascio*, both the area in front of the tower for rallies and for the visibility of PNF ceremonies, and the zone adjacent to or behind the building’s gymnasium, which was used for exercise. Additional elements like swimming pools were occasionally included, but they were rare. This diverse programmatic mixture merged the militarism the MVSN with the recreational and social activities of the OND, which reinforced the goal of the PNF to simultaneously strengthen, educate, and entertain, while promoting the national agenda of the PNF.

The Design of *Gruppi Rionale Fascisti* in Outlying Urban Districts

Gruppo Rionale Fascista, or GRF buildings, were very close in program and character to the *Casa del Fascio* [Figs. 40-41]. In most cases, a GRF could be easily confused with a *Casa del Fascio* when the GRF included a tower and a balcony, but a GRF also had a wider range of varied designs and often lacked the visual rhetoric of a *Casa del Fascio*. The GRF buildings were considered the extended arms of the PNF, which were strategically located in the outer edges of large urban cities as the “eyes” of the PNF. Author Torquato Nanni wrote, “Il gruppo controlla, con occhio vigile, il quartiere e la contrada, la famiglia e l'individuo.”⁵⁹ The GRF had a

⁵⁹ Torquato Nanni, *Leandro Arpinati e il Fascismo bolognese*, Bologna, Edizioni Autarchia, 1927, p. 150.

[Translation: “The group controls, with watchful eye, the neighborhood and the district, the family and the individual.”]

slightly different program from the *Casa del Fascio* consisting of a *Feduciario*, a *Consulta*, a *Vice-Fiduciario*, a *Consulatore Amministrativo* and four *componenti*. The *Casa del Fascio* had a similar ranking of commanders with a *Segetario Politico*, the *Direttorio*, the *Vice- Segretario politico*, *Segretario Amministrativo* and six *componenti*. *Casa del Fascio* Secretary, Rinaldo Gramondo, wrote a manual for PNF leaders in 1938 and noted, “per I Gruppi Rionali la struttura è identica a quella di un Fascio di Combattimento.”⁶⁰ The GRF and the *Casa del Fascio* basically functioned in very similar ways.

The GRF buildings almost always received a name based on an Italian hero or martyr, such as Michele Bianchi, P.E. Crespi, Dante Rossi, Costanzo Ciano or Arnaldo Mussolini.^{61 62} Often the same martyr or hero’s name was shared with buildings in other cities. For example, there is a GRF “Filippo Corridoni” in Bologna and in Turin, which had no other relationship other than the name [Fig. 42]. Filippo Corridoni was an early interventionist who was known to Mussolini [Fig. 43]. He volunteered for WWI and died a hero. Smaller towns outside most provincial cities would generally receive one single building named *Casa del Fascio*, which

⁶⁰ Rinaldo Gramondo, *Il Segretario del Fascio di Combattimento*, Milan: Edizioni O.L.M., ca. 1938, p. 34.

[Translation: “for local groups the structure is identical to that of a Fascio di Combattimento”]

⁶¹ **I Gruppi rionali fascisti (GRF) in 1933 in Bologna (names of Martyrs/Heros)**

1. Leandro Arpinati, via degli Angeli, 16
2. Celestino Cavedoni, S. Viola (via Emilia Ponente, 131)
3. Filippo Corridoni, Viale Masini, 5
4. Edgardo Gardi, c/o castello Cassarini, via Castelmerlo, 6
5. Gesù Ghedini, Corticella
6. Giulio Giordani, via Saragozza, 217
7. Natalino Magnani, Piazza di Porta S. Stefano
8. Sebastiano Monari, via Toscana, 69-71
9. Clearco Montanari, alla Pescarola
10. Gian Carlo Nannini, via Luigi Serra, 7
11. Oscar Paoletti, via P. Muratori, 1/2
12. Andrea Tabanelli, Porta Lama
13. Giorgio Tinti, Pontevecchio (via Oretti, 21)
14. Augusto Baccolini, Monte Donato

⁶² The PNF considered a person a martyr if they died because of the Fascist Revolution in 1919.

might also be connected to a martyr's name. The distinguishing features for a GRF – such as the receipt of a hero's name – was the norm, but the practice was not absolute and variety abounded.

The Federation of Turin had numerous GRF buildings, which reveal the variety of layouts, aesthetics, and varied rhetoric that existed. The Turin PNF Federation had 191 *Casa del Fascio* and 40 *Gruppi Rionale Fascisti* within its borders. A third of the buildings in each group were owned by the PNF and the remaining two-thirds of the buildings were rented.⁶³ The acquisition of an early Fascist seat in Turin was tumultuous, as fascist groups attacked and burned the *Camera del Lavoro* building, which had ties to the Italian Socialist Party, and then transformed it, in 1928, into a *Casa del Fascio*.⁶⁴ A magazine reporter titled an article about the event and the new PNF seat as “*Incipit Vita Nova*” (thus begins a new life) [Fig. 44].⁶⁵ The central *Casa Littoria* was located in the very heart of the city, near *Piazza Carlo Alberto*, which was listed as a *Casa del Fascio* on a Turin map from the 1930s [Fig. 45].⁶⁶ A competition for a larger central *Palazzo Littorio* was won by engineer Ressa in 1938, but was never constructed. Mussolini visited the existing *Casa Littoria* and spoke from its decorated balcony on the occasion of the show “*Torino e l'Autarchia*” in 1938, which celebrated the car and airplane industry of Turin [Fig. 46, Fig.47]. Mussolini also visited the GRF “Filippo Corridoni” located near the FIAT factory during his official visit.

The architects Mario Passanti and Paolo Perona designed the GRF “Filippo Corridoni” in 1937 for the Lingotto factory district of Nizza Millefonti. The GRF “Filippo Corridoni” was a

⁶³ Flavio Mangione. *Le Case del Fascio in Italia e nelle Terre D'oltremare* (Rome: Ministero per i Beni e la Attività Culturali, Cento Stampa S.r.l., 2003), p. 419.

⁶⁴ The internal program of a *Camera del Lavoro* was similar to a *Casa del Fascio* program with rooms for workers to meet and reading rooms. See Michael Hembree, “Camera del Lavoro,” in Philip V. Cannistraro, ed. *Historical Dictionary of Fascist Italy* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982), pp. 97-99.

⁶⁵ *Torino 1920-1936* (Edizioni Progetto, Torino, 1976), photo citations beyond section ending at p. 34.

simple rectangular brick building set back from the street, with a large recessed glass entry. The entryway included travertine steps and a large platform with a separate off-axis *arengario* (speaker's podium). Three *fascio* symbols and an eagle sculpture were mounted to the façade behind the *arengario*. Loud speakers were mounted to the top of the building above the entry. The façade aesthetics were severe and modern. The side elevations revealed the two story office spaces within the building that surround a double height *sala* with multiple exit doors at the rear of the building [Fig. 48].

In 1936, A. Canestri designed a GRF for the San Paolo district of Turin, quite different in character from the GRF "Filippo Corridoni." The building was named "Amos Maramotti" in honor of a young Turin fascist killed on April 21, 1921, while attacking the Workers Union Building. The GRF "Amos Maramotti" was situated on a large avenue with a smaller cross street and faced the corner with a chamfered façade, a common GRF plan form [Fig. 49]. A long horizontal base supported a smaller floor plate of two more floors located at the corner. The front angle of the building displayed a twenty-nine meter tall glass *torre littoria* bearing a reference to the axe in a *fascio*, topped with an open balcony. Below the tower, yet above the entry and street, was a large exterior balcony platform. The V-shaped plan contains a large meeting room on one arm, which was contiguous with the exterior backyard. Exit and entry into the rearyard was also possible through the main entrance to the building, which would facilitate marching *milizia*, who could stream out under the podium and balcony on to the street to attend a rally. The GRF "Amos Maramotti" was originally red brick like the "Giovanni Porcù del Nunzio" and "Filippo Corridoni" GRF buildings in the other outlying districts of Turin. The GRF "Amos Maramotti" was vandalized on July 25, 1943, a day after the regime fell, and was

modified years later with upper additions and a layer of exterior stucco. In 2014, the building was functioning as a school.⁶⁷

The GRF “Porcù del Nunzio” was designed by Mario Passanti and Paolo Perona, the same architects of the GRF “Filippo Corridoni,” and located near the FIAT Mirafiori factory in 1938. The contractor was engineer Oreste Caldera of Turin, under the technical direction of the Office of Construction at FIAT. The GRF “Porcù del Nunzio” was inaugurated on the 23rd of October by the *Segretario* of the PNF, Achille Starace, and was the most published of the Torino GRFs.⁶⁸ The GRF “Porcù del Nunzio” did not follow the typical building configuration of other GRFs or even *Casa del Fascio*, but does embody some PNF preferences, such as an attention to autarchic practices in its use of brick, common after 1937, and of making connections to an Imperial Roman past or a Mediterranean heritage with its bold arches. The building was sited on the corner of a major intersection with a concave curved front appearing as the entry façade and a convex curved façade facing into an open rear yard [Figs. 50-51]. The site itself was a trapezoid shape. An inner courtyard opened up to the exterior courtyard. An *arengario* and stair-platform created the threshold and the stage for events, which was located between the inner courtyard and the exterior rear yard. The building housed the political offices of the OND, the MVSN, a library that housed books on fascism, the *Fasci Maschili* and *Femminili*, the GIL, a large hall with a ticket office and an *ambulatorio* with its own side entry. The basement level contained a laboratory, an *armeria delle sale gioco* (armory of game rooms), gym and a

⁶⁷ It was common after WWII for *Casa del Fascio* to receive damage, however, most buildings were not destroyed. Most became police or carabinieri stations and some became schools. The Dopolavoro “leisure” and sporting activities did not remain as activities in the buildings after the demise of fascism, but the ex-*Casa del Fascio* took on more of a policing role after 1943. The PNF’s enormous building program (train stations, hospitals, summer camp buildings, port buildings, airports), which included the *Casa del Fascio* buildings among others, ultimately benefited the Italians after WWII, since the infrastructure of the country was inferior before 1922.

⁶⁸ Located at Unione Sovietica and Corso Giambone 2, currently a police station.

rifugio antiaereo (air-raid shelter).⁶⁹ The varied functions of the PNF were dispersed throughout the symmetrical form. The grand hall was opposite the many small offices of the GIL.

In the 1940 January issue of *L'Architettura Italiana*, the author praised the GRF “Porcù del Nunzio” for its modernity, freshness and vitality as compared to other buildings of this type throughout Italy.⁷⁰ The GRF “Porcù del Nunzio” was indeed unique and bore a resemblance to the minimal arched facades of the *Palazzo Civiltà Italiana* at I'EUR, whose design was underway. The architectural plan of the building was unusual with its trapezoidal shape, however, the inner courtyard and multi-entry points were common components for the *Casa del Fascio* and *Palazzi del Littorio* that followed a *palazzo* plan concept. The entry hierarchy was unclear, but the primary function of the building was to serve as a vessel for *milizia* to ceremoniously march out of the building to hear the speaker on the *arengario* [Fig. 52]. The rear of the building was actually the backdrop for the rallies and the exterior room – the rear yard – was the spectator's theater. *L'Architettura Italiana* celebrated the rear façade rather than the street façade and noted that it was an excellent example of modern Italian architecture. The author commented on its austerity with the three simple arches and a lone eagle sculpture on the façade.⁷¹ The rear façade faced south, thus giving it a strong Mediterranean tone with the deeply shadowed openings. The other three faces of the GRF, including the actual entry façade, have multiple levels of fenestration revealing a two-story building. Each of these three faces bore a horizontal line of modern script at its cornice line.

⁶⁹ The inclusion of a laboratory and air-raid shelter was unique to this building. The type of laboratory was not described.

⁷⁰ “Nuova Sede del Gruppo Rionale Fascista “Giovanni Porcù del Nunzio” a Torino, *L'Architettura Italiana*, January, 1940, p. 20.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 22.

Three other Turin GRF buildings, “Gustavo Doglia,” “Cesare Odone,” and “Mario Gioda,” were unlike those already described. GRF “Gustavo Doglia” exhibited a “*Stile Littorio*” style with modern horizontal lines, clad with stucco and brick; the latter two consisted of a modern four and five-story block with repetitive office windows with an adjacent gym or meeting space [Fig. 53]. This wide variation in architectural expression in Turin for a GRF building was consistent throughout Italy and demonstrates the creative interpretation that the architects were allowed by the PNF, particularly with the GRF headquarters [Fig. 54].

The Components of *Palazzi del Littorio*, *Casa del Fascio*, and *Gruppi Rionale Fascisti*

Most PNF headquarters included offices for the numerous government programs, however, unique to these buildings were the non-office spaces – both inside and out – that distinguished them from other buildings. Inside the building, there was a large room used as a gymnasium, theater or meeting room – developing later into a cinema space; outside the building, the PNF members had their own open exterior space – often a *piazza* or rear yard for games such as *bocci*. Other unique building components included a tower, an *arengario* or balcony, a radio room, and a *sacrario* (memorial) among others.

The remainder of this chapter describes the *Casa del Fascio* building components separately, describes the typical fascist symbols often used on the PNF building, and concludes with examples of how new or renovated buildings were financed.

The *Palestra* and the *Piazza*

The early necessary function of a *Casa del Fascio* was to gather *fascisti* together for meetings, but physical education quickly became an important part of the discipline of fascism and a component of the *Casa del Fascio*. In 1923, Mussolini appointed Aldo Finzi as the

president of the Italian National Olympic Committee and created the *Ente Nazionale per l'Educatione fisica*.⁷² The PNF realized that sports and exercise generated mass enthusiasm and was of the same spirit as the earlier activism of the *squadristi*, who touted their physical strength.⁷³ ⁷⁴ As a result, the *sala* (assembly room) became a dual purpose room functioning also as a *palestra* (gymnasium), mixing the two activities of meeting and exercising. In early buildings or in very small towns, *Case del Fascio* were just one large room, as in the towns of Zelo Buon Persico, Fiaona, or Venasca [Fig. 55]. Multiple doors were typical on *Case del Fascio* for mass exiting after a roaring oratory, so *fascisti* members could spill out into the *piazza* or the streets. Architect Giuseppe Vaccaro designed a building that was largely a theater in 1933 with no other rooms and sketched arrows on the plan to indicate the six exits to the exterior [Fig. 56]. Vaccaro designed two other *Case del Fascio* for the Rimini region during the same year, each with a similar tower, plans with seating depicted – which indicated fixed chairs, and a booth at the rear of the large space for film projection [Figs. 57-58]. The large room was most often located next to an open frontyard or public *piazza*, which was generally the front side of the building that also had a tower by the mid-1930s. A 1940 document from the competition for rural and border area *Case del Fascio* listed a requirement for out-in-the-open spaces for dancing, bocce, sports, recreational or post-work activity, which needed to be near the large interior space. Both interior and exterior spaces were multifunctional, as they were equally used for exercise, rallies, theater, cinema (even outside film showings occurred) and the flow from one to the other was evident on most floor plans. The *piazza* was equally important and large

⁷²Philip V. Cannistraro, ed. *Historical Dictionary of Fascist Italy* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982), pp. 514-515.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ *Squadristi* were the militaristic force of Fascism. See Anthony Cardoza, “Squadristi,” in Philip V. Cannistraro, ed. *Historical Dictionary of Fascist Italy* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982), p. 515.

portions of the site were allocated for it, as demonstrated by a site plan from Raffadali, whose designer titled the space “*Piazzale Littorio*,” or the site plan from Foggia, whose designer titled the space “*Piazza Impero*” [Figs. 59-60]. These two sizable elements, the *palestra* and the *piazza*, dominated many of the decisions an architect or engineer would make, as the large footprint of the *sala/palestra* and the required adjacency to an exterior space was essential.

Architects generally designed L-shaped plans for *Casa del Fascio* as a result of juggling the components of the *sala/palestra*, an office wing, and an exterior space. Most often, a *Casa del Fascio* had a two-story height space for the *sala/palestra* on one side of the building’s entry and a double-stacked office component on the other. The L-shape plan allowed for an exterior space either in the front or the back of the site, contiguous with the *sala/palestra* [Fig. 61]. The PNF preferred the exterior space, usually referred to as a *piazza* or *piazzetta*, in the front of the building so that PNF activities could be visible to the townspeople. In Castagneto Carducci, the *Casa del Fascio* was to be located on *Via Roma* with its own front open space, a two-story office block and a tower [Fig. 62]. A *sala/palestra* was planned as a future addition, which would create the L-shaped building configuration. In Marcigliana, one leg of the L-shaped building plan was the *sala* with doors exiting out both sides of the room. A grand entry was located in the tower at the head of the room for grand ceremonies. The second wing of the Marcigliana building was filled with offices [Fig. 63]. A typical L-shaped building plan from the *Casa Littorio* in Casumaro demonstrates the difficulties with assembling the necessary PNF building components. The *Casa Littorio* appears as a unified block with an imposing tower as the front entry into the building, despite being an L-shaped asymmetrical building plan [Fig. 64]. The tower was asymmetrically located in the composition between the assembly *sala* and the two-level office wing. The bottom of the tower was filled with the *sacrario*, so the main stair was

shifted into the office wing and rose until the second level. When the stair reached the second level, it was relocated back into the tower. A two-story stone colonnade was applied to the *Casa del Fascio*'s facade to equalize the two sides, which created an unused arcade on the right side of the building in front of the office windows. The building was designed by Geometra A. Burati in 1938 and built in 1941 for the price of £240.000,00. The major discussion in an exchange of letters in the PNF Technical Service file was about construction feasibility of the *Casa del Fascio* because the tower's footings were so large. The PNF Technical Service overseers were worried that the ground was too permeable for the immense tower, however the problem was overcome and the building was completed.⁷⁵

In Bari, an outdoor space was surrounded by offices on three sides of the *Casa del Fascio*, with an *arengario* centered on the exterior space. A large field marked *Campo d' Armi* was located at the rear of the PNF building. A playing field, tennis courts and *bocce* court were located next to the grand *sala* managed by the OND [Fig. 65]. Several Bari *Casa del Fascio* had U-shaped plan configurations, which surrounded an exterior space, rather than including a large internal gymnasium or meeting room. Other PNF groups besides the *milizia* (MVSN) used the large exterior spaces. Exercise for all ages of society, including the youngest PNF groups such as the *Balilla* (ONB) or the *Gioventù del Littorio* (GIL), occurred in and outside of the PNF headquarters buildings. Summer camps with a focus on physical education were organized at most *Casa del Fascio*, although some children went to seaside or mountain *colonie* for the summer.

⁷⁵ "Relazione," in PNF, Serie II, B. 1028, Casumaro, (Ferrara), 3/6/41, pp. 1-2.

Medieval Towers, Church *Campanili* and *Torri Littorie*

A second dominant feature of *Casa del Fascio* was the *Torre Littoria* (fascist tower), which conveyed a sense of civic prominence and served as a reminder of the superiority of the PNF institution it represented. A few of the early towers that appeared on *Casa del Fascio* mimicked medieval towers. In Arezzo in the early 1930s, the local *Fascio* group obtained an existing medieval tower and increased its height and added a bell. The surge of *torri littorie*, without the medieval aesthetic, but with the function of a visible tower marking the location, occurred after 1935 and remained constant as part of many *Casa del Fascio* buildings until 1943, growing larger and more dominant.⁷⁶ Often visible from the train station or the main entry of the city, a *torre littoria* marked the PNF's location and acted as an urban marker for a parade of fascists marching from the train station. The 1937 *Casa del Fascio* tower in Montevarchi was so tall that it could be viewed from a great distance [Fig. 66].⁷⁷ Towers for the *Casa del Fascio* in La Spezia and Trento corresponded to the city's entry boulevard [Figs. 67-68]. The *Gruppo Rionale* "B. Mussolini," designed by Arch. Mario Bacciocchi, was constructed on one of Milan's main entry roads near the gates of the *Cimitero Monumentale*. Bacciocchi's design of a six-story *torre littoria*, fashioned from three *fasci*, was placed toward the intersection. The Milan tower was visible, as if it were a marker for a gate house in the city's nearby medieval brick wall [Fig. 69]. The *torre littoria* for the San Sepolcro *Casa del Fascio* in Milan was a building in itself, large enough to house many offices. The tower was placed strategically to gain prominent views of it, as well as rivaling the nearby church towers with its height [Fig. 70]. The "Michele Bianchi" GRF in Mantua, built in 1939, was similarly located at an urban entry point for

⁷⁶ ACS, PNF Serie II, B. Arezzo.

⁷⁷ ACS, PNF files, Serie II, B. 843.

automobiles and was equally visible from the train station for those visiting the city [Figs. 71].⁷⁸ Many *Case del Fascio* had towers, although the *torri littorie* were all very different in character.

The *torre*, similar to the *palestra*, posed design challenges for the architects who designed *Case del Fascio*. An architect from Pianura Segnalato described the planning of the components of a *Casa del Fascio* beginning with the placement of the tower.

...dal punto di vista funzionale che estetico. Planimetricamente si è disposta la torre, che è il fattore più aulico e rappresentativo, in posizione dominante creandole dinanzi uno spazio libero adeguato, che possa servire per le adunate e che permetta di abbracciare le visuali dell'insieme. Alla torre fanno capo con disposizione ad L l'ambiente degli uffici, tramezzabile in tre locali, a quello della sala della feste. Essi sono riuniti tra loro da un piccolo passaggio coperto di minore altezza,Un vestibolo coperto, chiuso sul fondo da un basso muro avvivato da un affresco ed aperto competentemente sul piazzale, riunisce la torre agli uffici e dà un nobile e comodo accesso al Sacratio ed alla Casa del Fascio. Nello spazio racchiuso dalle due braccia di fabbricato è sistemata una pista per il ballo ed il campo per le bocce.⁷⁹

Most building plans for *Case del Fascio* were asymmetrical due to the program components – a large assembly or gymnasium space, many small offices, and a tower. The components dedicated to public spectacles and ceremonies, which included the *torre littoria* and the balcony or *arengario* – reminiscent of the feudal *arengario* – needed to be on the front of the building or placed in a visible position relative to the urban situation. The *Gruppo Rionale* “Mario Asso,” designed in 1938, was located on an acute corner in an outlying district in Milan with a tower located at the apex of the site. A large *arengario* was wrapped around the base of the tower. The

⁷⁸ The GRF was designed by the Engineer Girolamo Bonatti and Architect Fernando Cazzanica, 1939.

⁷⁹ ACS, PNF Serie II, B. Pianura Segnalato, (Naples), “Relazione.”

[Translation: “...from an aesthetic and functional view. Planimetrically, the tower - which is the most elevated and representative factor - is placed in a dominant position, creating in front of it an adequate open space that can be used for gatherings and allow a global view of the ensemble. At the head of the tower, forming an "L" shape are situated the office areas, which can be subdivided into three separate units, and the festivities hall. These are connected by a small lower walkway. A covered vestibule, enclosed by a low wall enlivened by a mural and completely exposed to the open space, connects the tower with the offices and provides a convenient and dignified access to the Shrine and to the House of Fascio. In the space enclosed by the two wings of the building are situated a dancing floor and a bocce court.”]

tower and *arengario* were both orientated toward a communal park and large street intersection, which would serve for fascist gatherings [Fig. 72].

Towers began to appear on a few *Casa del Fascio* in 1933, but were more prevalent after 1935. Generally, the tower was also the entry to the building [Figs. 73-75]. In the mid-1930s, *Casa del Fascio* buildings grew larger in size and the main entry was moved from the base of the tower to the office block, generally to make room for the *sacrario* (the memorial to the “Fallen”) in the tower base. The entry was occasionally located between the tower and the office block. Often the roof of the entry doubled as a platform that was connected to the balcony in the tower, as was the case for the *Casa del Fascio* in Biella or the GRF “Amos Maramotti” in Turin [Fig. 76]. The upper floors of the tower were often used for the local PNF archive, which held records of its fascist members. The tower also held the water tank for the building. Access to the belfry level of the tower was by a spiral staircase or ships ladder, unless there was ample room in the plan for a rectangular stair [Fig. 77]. Towers became larger toward the end of the 1930s and early 1940s and housed actual spaces, such as offices with numerous windows as seen in the *Casa del Fascio* in San Sepolcro, the *Gruppo Rionale* “A. Mussolini” in Mantova or the *Casa del Fascio* in the new town of the Carbonia [Figs. 78-80].

Torri littorie rivaled church *campanili* and medieval towers, but had their own distinguishing features. In concept, *torri littorie* represented the *fascio* symbol and several architects proposed this idea literally [Fig. 81]. Most *torri littorie* had flat tops, usable open platforms at their pinnacle, which was often used to manage the bells and chiming equipment, a flagpole, a clock, and visible loud speakers to blast radio announcements. The middle section of the tower was decorated with *fasci*, eagle sculptures, the fascist year in Roman numerals, and quite consistently – a balcony that jutted out from the vertical structure. If the *torre littoria* did

not have a balcony, it would have a massive stone *arengario* located at its base. The cladding of the *arengario* or balcony was generally in stone and the tower was clad in either stone or brick in contrast to the stucco (*intonaco*) of the building's surface. The town of Nerviano's 1933 *torre littoria* had many of these features. Nerviano's tower was one of the first *torre littoria*, however, it was solely a municipal water tower and did not include a *Casa del Fascio* building [Fig. 82].

The Nerviano *torre littoria* was a grand civic marker for the townspeople, who conducted a celebratory inauguration of the tower on November 12, 1933 [Fig. 83].⁸⁰ Another early example of a *torre littoria* was located in Ostra Vetere (Ancona). The architect of the tower displayed the symbols of the regime loudly in its design using four grand *fasci* to support the upper belfry. A balcony was positioned on the second level of the *torre littoria* to address the crowds. The tower was attached to a renovated building, which was converted into a new *Casa del Fascio*. *LUCE* Film captured the 1933 inauguration of the *Casa del Fascio* and its *torre littoria* on moving film. The newsreel of the Ostra Vetere celebration served to disseminate the new idea of *torri littorie* to Italians around the country and to the distant territories [Fig. 84]. A common practice of architects, following this example in Ostra Vetere in 1933, was to add a *torre littoria* to an existing building, which would immediately raise their ordinary building's stature to that of a *Casa del Fascio*.⁸¹ A period postcard from Ostra Vetere shows the *torre littoria* in comparison to the town's church *campanile*, which highlights the formal and aesthetic differences between the two towers, as well as the rivalry of the national PNF newcomer [Fig. 85].

The new towns in the Pontine Marshlands, near Rome, incorporated prominent *torri littorie* in the center of their town developments. The 1932 new town of Littoria's symbol was its

⁸⁰ Engineer Gabio Prandoni (designer), Engineer Luigi Capuano (director of work), 1933; see inauguration poster for date.

⁸¹ ACS, PNF file, Serie II, Fiorano dell Chiana (Arezzo).

torre littoria, which was located in the heart of the town's center square and used constantly as a feature on graphic advertisements from the early 1930s [Fig. 86]. Littoria's *torre littoria* was next to the *Comune* and not attached to the *Casa del Fascio*. The 1933 new town of Sabaudia's tower, also adjacent to the *Comune* as in Littoria, was austere by comparison, but acted as a strong urban marker from a distance. The Sabaudia *torre littoria* was three times the height of the adjacent *Comune* and was aligned in the urban layout for deliberate viewing angles from points of entry and from views within the town itself [Fig. 87]. It was a two sided tower which addressed the entry into Sabaudia, as well as serving an adjacent rallying park. There were three towers in Sabaudia; the tallest was the *torre littoria* of the *Comune*, then the church *campanile*, and smallest was the squat brick tower of the *Casa del Fascio*.

By the late 1930s into the 1940s, *torri littorie* were designed to stand as isolated elements or were minimally attached to *Casa del Fascio*. Architect Giovanni Jacobucci designed a *Casa del Fascio* with a huge semi-detached tower in Frosinone [Fig. 88]. Smaller rural *Casa del Fascio*, published in *Architettura* in September 1942, illustrated the detached tower in two *Casa del Fascio* from Podgora and Grappa, designed by architect Mario Fagiolo [Figs. 89-90].⁸² A national competition for the design of rural *Casa del Fascio* buildings, organized in the late 1930s, specifically required a detached *torre littoria*, possibly to give the tower more visibility as a marker.⁸³ The emerging tendency in the late 1930s and early 1940s to detach the tower caused other developments in the architecture of the *Casa del Fascio*. An attached tower allowed for a smooth transition for PNF dignitaries to arrive at the building's balcony to address the crowds from within the *Casa del Fascio*. A detached tower required an architectural "path" to arrive at

⁸² *Architettura*, September 1942, p. 304.

⁸³ The rural *Casa del Fascio* competition is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three. No explanation was recorded about the decision to require detached towers.

the balcony or a podium from the building, therefore covered and non-covered architectural connections were proposed by numerous architects. As an adjustment to the new requirement, balconies were designed to be part of the *Casa del Fascio* building as they were in the late 1920s, rather than being part of the tower. *Arengari* were located at the base of the detached tower, which still required that a PNF dignitary exit the *Casa del Fascio* building before speaking to a crowd. Architect Arturo Rossi tried to solve the circulation challenge in his *Casa del Fascio* project for Quiliano, in the Federation of Savona. Rossi located stairs inside the grand *sala* that reached an exterior second floor bridge, which connected to the detached *torre littoria* and its balcony [Fig. 91]. The possible motives of the PNF to request a detached tower could have been to better define the exterior *piazza*, the outdoor “room” of a *Casa del Fascio*, or just to have more presence on the street. A subsequent national competition for rural *Casa del Fascio* was issued by the PNF Ministry of Public Work in September of 1940. The earlier requirement of the PNF, in the late 1930s, to include a detached tower was changed in the 1940 competition; the competition brief required that the *torre littoria* be inserted into the body of the *Casa del Fascio*.⁸⁴

The Balcony and *Arengario*

Most *palazzi* in the years before fascism had a balcony, which was located over the main entry and connected to an important room centrally located within the building. Many *Casa del Fascio*, in existing or newly built buildings, in the 1920s and early 1930s, had a balcony centrally located in the front façade, as can be seen in both the early and late Sciesa Group’s *Palazzo del Littorio* in Milan [Figs. 92-93]. Although balconies were typically on *palazzi*, the

⁸⁴ Rome, September 18, 1940. Official bulletin of MINISTERO DEI LAVORI PUBBLICI.

balcony on *Casa del Fascio* was modeled on Mussolini's *Palazzo Venezia* balcony, which was framed with two huge *fasci*. Mussolini's balcony was the most visible balcony in Italy, except for the balcony on St. Peter's Basilica. Mussolini's balcony was documented in numerous *LUCE* newsreels, which captured views of *Il Duce* holding the attention of massive audiences in *Piazza Venezia* below [Fig. 94].⁸⁵ The presence of a balcony on a *Casa del Fascio* connected the local PNF building to the national centralized PNF authority and to Mussolini. Mussolini could not be present at the thousands of *Casa del Fascio* inaugurations. PNF officials would visit and speak from the singular perch, as did Archille Starace, the 1931-1939 PNF Secretary, on numerous inauguration days. Starace visited the small town of Intra when its *Casa del Fascio* was inaugurated and stood upon a massive cantilevered "balcony" to speak to the townspeople [Fig. 95]. Starace also visited the Tombolo *Casa del Fascio* in 1935 on the day of its inauguration and stood on the platform above the entry to address the people [Fig. 96]. The balcony, which was rarely used outside of building inaugurations and PNF events, represented the presence of *il Duce*, despite his absence. The *Casa del Fascio* balcony in Oleggio or in Lissone, like most others, stood vacant most of the time [Figs. 97-98]. When the balconies were used, they were draped with fabric adorned with symbols of the PNF such as "M"s, *fasci*, eagles, or simply "PNF," which also paralleled the Vatican balcony adornments on religious occasions.

When a *Casa del Fascio* did not have a tower, architects dealt with the need to have a raised platform for PNF dignitaries in two ways: they added the typical centralized balcony on the building or added an *arengario* at the base of the building. In the new town of Pomezia, a grand tower was positioned across the *piazza* from the *Casa del Fascio*, an identifiable marker for the fascist town rather than the singular PNF headquarters building [Fig. 99]. The architects

⁸⁵ The balcony, also referred to as the ancient *arengario* is described in Chapter 2.

C. Petrucci, M.L. Tufaroli, and engineers E. Paolini and R. Silenzi, known as “2PST”, added a balcony over the *Casa del Fascio* entry, despite the ample speaking platform on the town’s tower [Fig. 100].⁸⁶ The door and balcony were framed with huge sculpted *fasci* similar to those framing Mussolini’s *Palazzo Venezia* balcony. An *arengario* would be placed on the ground level if no balcony were included on the building, as in the two GRF buildings, “Filippo Corridoni” and “Porcù del Nunzio,” in Turin, and De Giorgio’s Pontelongo’s *Casa del Fascio* [Fig. 101]. In Ponte Valtellina, an *arengario* was lifted on a pedestal with a decorated backdrop, a mixture of balcony and *arengario* [Fig. 102]. Architect Gian Luigi Giordani mixed the two types of speaking platforms as well, by placing a stone *arengario* on the second level of a *Torre Littoria* in Minerbio, Bologna [Fig. 103]. The 1941 *Casa del Fascio* in Borgo Sisa, the 1936 *Casa del Fascio* in Ravenna, and a competition entry in 1941 for a rural *Casa del Fascio* include a typical *arengario*, which wrapped the bottom of the *torre littoria* [Figs. 104, 105, 106].

As *Casa del Fascio* became larger and the PNF ceremonies occurred more regularly, architects needed to plan the circulation sequence in the buildings to support the PNF activities. An inner balcony, much like church lectern, was placed above the auditorium space within *Casa del Fascio*, as in several Verona competition entries [Fig. 107]. The sequence of exiting the auditorium by the audience of fascists was often below this inner podium, after a rousing speech. After exiting, the fascists would fill up the exterior *piazza*. The PNF dignitaries would remain on an upper level of the *Casa del Fascio* and then speak to the audience again, with added townspeople, from a balcony on the exterior of the building or from a slightly lifted *arengario*, similar to Marcello Piacentini’s podium in Brescia [Fig. 108]. The ceremonial parade of the PNF worked well with the *palazzo* form because of its inside and outside mass gathering spaces. In Como, the “black shirts” listened to the PNF officials from the inside covered courtyard of

⁸⁶ A small tower had been designed for the rear of the building of the *Casa del Fascio*, but was not built.

Terragni's *Casa del Fascio*, then marched under the upper level hallway, through the multiple glass doors and out onto the *piazza*. The PNF dignitaries used both the inside upper level hallway – designed to be extra wide – and the exterior horizontal balcony of the façade to speak to their fascist members [Figs. 109-110]. Many other *Casa del Fascio*, as in the town of Fontanella, had long horizontal balconies [Fig. 111].

Terragni and Carminati redesigned the circulation system, which affected the placement of the balcony and tower, of the Lissone *Casa del Fascio* several times before its completion in 1938-1939. The Lissone *Casa del Fascio* plan was not a *palazzo* form as in Como, but the inner theater/cinema functioned in a similar manner, as it took the place of the large interior *cortile* of the earlier Como *Casa del Fascio*. The ceremonial needs of the PNF were the same for both buildings, which affected decisions made by the PNF and the architects regarding the circulation sequence. The original plans of the Lissone project included an embedded *torre littoria* on the left side of the building, which contained a *sacrario* in its base, the director's office in the center level of the tower, and a small *sala riunione* at the top level [Fig. 112]. The PNF Director could exit his office in the tower and walk directly on to the balcony outside of the tower. The other PNF officials could exit their individual offices from separate glass doors in the front façade and fill the horizontal balcony that continued across the entire façade [Fig. 113]. The fascists in the cinema also had an exit sequence with pivoting doors on two sides of the theater and a full wall of glass exit doors at the rear of the theater. The theater audience could also exit, as in Como, from a series of glass doors in the façade at the main entry, moving under the PNF official's offices and then into the *piazza*. The final building was greatly modified. The *Casa del Fascio* was originally planned as a three floor building with a large atrium entry with multiple glass doors. The lower floor was omitted in the final plans, which caused the director's

office not to have direct access to the second floor balcony in the tower. The *sacrario* was required to be in the base of the tower, so the tower was relocated to the right side of the building as a detached isolated tower [Fig. 115]. The horizontal balcony for PNF officials remained, and functioned similarly to the horizontal balconies on the Como *Casa del Fascio* [Fig. 116]. Cost overruns had been a large factor in the reduction of the size of the building. An engineer, Luigi Lapis, from the PNF Technical Services Department wrote a letter to Terragni and Carminati after the building was in use, “La Casa gli è piaciuta, la conosceva già pubblicazioni. Trova però che un paese di 17.000 abitanti ha speso un pò troppo.”⁸⁷

The *Sacrario*

The PNF required a solemn space for a memorial, honoring the “Fallen” from the Fascist Revolution or former wars, in every *Casa del Fascio* called the *sacrario*, which was to be located away from the boisterous activities of the *fascisti*. The emergence of the *Casa del Fascio*’s own religious component was required at the start of the *Ventennio* in all buildings – new and old. The *sacrario* was to be “situato nella parte dell’edificio più separate dalle sale e dai locali in cui inevitabilmente non potrà esservi quel silenzio e quell raccoglimento che formano le essenziali prerogative di questo luogo sacro.”⁸⁸ It began as a room within the *Casa del Fascio* as a “chapel,” as can be seen in the 1927 Bologna *Sacrario*, with symbols of the Catholic Church. Most often the *sacrario* was located in the entry vestibules of *Casa del Fascio* represented by a stone plaque and cross [Fig.117]. A perpetual lamp for the heroism of the “Fallen of the

⁸⁷ Fondazione Giuseppe Terragni, 11/3/4, letter of 17 Febbraio 1941.

[Translation: “I liked the *Casa del Fascio*, I knew it already from publications. However, for an area of 17,000 inhabitants, you spent a little too much.”]

⁸⁸ ACS, PNF file, Serie II, B. 1509, “Relazione Tecnica del Progetto, Casa del Fascio di Monte Mario (Rome),” p. 3.

[Translation: “located in part of the building separated from the large halls where there can be silence and recollection that form the essential prerogatives of this sacred place.”]

Revolution” was required.⁸⁹ The *sacrario* in the *Palazzo del Littorio* in Cuneo was given much attention. The PNF spent £60.000 for the interior addition of the *sacrario*. Several designs and possible locations were considered in the existing *palazzo* before the design was finally approved [Figs. 118].⁹⁰

The *sacrario* later found a more consistent home in the base of the *torre littoria*, which caused changes in the *Casa del Fascio*'s overall composition. If the tower was large, it could accommodate the entry, the *sacrario*, and the stair to the upper floors, but often these three items required too much space. Architects began to locate the entry to the *Casa del Fascio* in the building block itself, not the tower. A rural competition proposal for a *Casa del Fascio* from 1941 and the *Casa del Fascio* planned for Canfarano in 1943, both had entries in the building block, which were located next to the towers [Figs. 119-120]. Towers grew in size in the 1940s to accommodate the space requirements of the *sacrario* and stairs at the ground level.

Adalberto Libera designed an immense *Sacrario dei Mariti* for the 1932 *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista* (Show of the Fascist Revolution) in Rome. Libera designed a large circular space with a central crucifix on which the words, “*Per la Patri Immortali*” were inscribed. Recorded voices would repeat, “*Presente! Presente!...*” in the space, representing the roll call of the martyrs [Fig. 121]. “*Presente! Presente!...*” words were repeatedly written across the walls of the circular room, implying that the martyrs were still present and not forgotten. Libera designed a similar space for the 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* Competition in Rome, where he placed the circular *sacrario* under the ground of the main *piazza* [Fig. 122]. Memorials were numerous during the *Ventennio*, particularly in honor of the “Fallen” of the Fascist Revolution, and were a

⁸⁹ ACS, B. 1032, #19. Saletta (Ferrara).

⁹⁰ ACS, PNF, Serie II, B. 1016, Cuneo, p. 4.

required component of the *Casa del Fascio*. The placement of the memorial, or *sacrario*, in a *Casa del Fascio* affected the arrangement of the entry and tower.

The Emergence of the Cinema and its Effect on *Casa del Fascio*

As the presence of film increased in Italy, so did the appearance of sloped cinemas in the plans of *Casa del Fascio*. The PNF's use of film as a medium of propaganda and entertainment made it a natural component of the building. Films were often presented in the multipurpose gymnasium or *sala*, generally managed by the *Dopolavoro* (OND) office. By 1936, the OND began offering classes in cinematography. The *Casa del Fascio*/OND in Milan sought spaces for viewing film and for teaching a cinematography course.

Cinematografia- In considerazione dell'alta utilità della cinematografia, come mezzo di propaganda e di ricreazione, il Dopolavoro di Milano ha provveduto ad incrementare la costituzione di sale cinematografiche, specie ne Dopolavoro di azienda ed è ora possibile potere usufruire di buoni locali che settimanalmente raccolgono in serena ricreazione largo numero di lavoratori. Speciali accordi in corso di attuazione consentiranno a tale attività un più largo sviluppo.⁹¹

The addition of sloped floor cinemas replaced the open courtyards or large *sala/palestra* spaces in *Casa del Fascio* in the late 1930s. The PNF activity in the large space became more visual and audible than physical. When existing PNF buildings were retrofitted for movie viewing, the sloped floor was not always erected, but a projection booth was a common addition.

By 1932-1933, articles on cinema spaces began to appear in *Architettura* and *Domus* with information for architects on the proper sloping of floors and angles of ceilings for the coordination of the film angle from the projection booth. Articles about acoustics were also

⁹¹ Dopolavoro Archive, Milano.

[Translation: "Cinematography- given the high usefulness of cinematography, as a means of propaganda and of recreation, the *Dopolavoro* of Milan provided it to assist with the establishment of movie theatres, the *Dopolavoro* is now exercising this class in good locations that collect large numbers of workers for weekly evening recreation. Specific arrangements are being implemented to create a wider development."]

prevalent and directed to architects, who would design the new spaces or retrofit old ones [Fig. 123]. In the Saletta *Casa del Fascio*, a large *sala adunanze* was planned for 220 people in 1939, which incorporated a projection room on the upper floor [Fig. 124].⁹² The entryway to the cinema was by way of the *Dopolavoro* office, since the OND was tasked with the entertainment activities of a *Casa del Fascio*, and a coffee bar. In Savigliano, Cuneo, a 1942 design for a *Casa del Fascio*, by engineer D.M. Garro, included a large space labeled, “*Palestra GIL– Cine – Teatro di OND – Salone adunanze – conferenze (500 posti).*” The multiple names demonstrate the multifunctional use of the one large PNF *sala* [Fig.125].⁹³ The *sala* included a *palcoscenico* (stage) in the front and a *cabina cinematografica* (projection booth) at the rear on the upper floor. A new *Casa del Fascio* in Fossano, Cuneo had a large space, which the PNF titled “*palestra e cinema teatro*” (gym and movie theater), indicating that the space was used for multiple activities – physical and visual [Fig. 126]. The architectural sections of the Fossano project show the projection lines of the film that the architect was investigating [Fig. 127] . The Fossano *sala* retained the normal relationship of the *palestra* to the exterior areas, by including multiple doors on both sides of the grand room for mass exiting.

In the town of Camposampeiro, in the Padova Federation, an existing building that had formerly accommodated the *Societa Filanmonica*, since 1848, was proposed as a *Casa del Fascio*, designed with a new theater by architect Giuseppe Tombola [Fig. 128]. Architect Tombola reported that the space was sufficient for “una sala ad uso rapporti e teatro....ad uso teatro di avra anche la possibilita di tenere spesso riunito il popolo con spettacoli educati e

⁹² ACS, PNF, Serie II, B.1032, #19, Saletta (Ferrara), 8.5.1939.

⁹³ ACS, PNF, Serie II, B. 1015, Savigliano, (Cuneo), Tav. 20 & 21, 19.6.1942.

propagandistici e di ottenere dei ricavati utili per le associazioni politiche e propagandistiche.”⁹⁴

Another *Casa del Fascio* in the Padua Federation, in Curtarolo, was retrofitted in 1943 for a projection booth and corrections were made to the acoustics for “*pubblico spettacolo*.”⁹⁵ It seemed logical to PNF leaders and their architects to seek out existing buildings that had formerly served large groups of people, such as orchestra halls or warehouses, for the PNF’s new cinematic needs.

Cinematic theaters were one of the most important additions to the *Casa del Fascio* program. Similar to the radio and the newspaper, film spread news of PNF activities and achievements. In *Re-Viewing Fascism, Italian Cinema, 1922-1943*, Jacqueline Reich wrote, “Italian Fascism never had a far-reaching and all-encompassing control over the film industry...[and] was late in realizing the enormous potential of feature film as a capable means of creating cultural consensus.”⁹⁶ Cinema theaters occurred in *Casa del Fascio* in the late 1930s, despite the availability of film years before. The Italian film industry lagged behind the American film industry.⁹⁷ Most films shown in *Casa del Fascio* were foreign entertainment films, which were interrupted by obligatory PNF state newsreels. The opportunity for fascists to see the same film, as their countrymen in other parts of Italy, helped create the shared sense throughout Italy of a “nation” with a central authority.⁹⁸ The combination of film as

⁹⁴ Dott. Arch. Giuseppe Tombola, “Relazione del Progettista,” July 6, 19--, (date unclear), p. 3; ACS, PNF Serie II, B. 1247, Padua.

[Translation: a Hall to use speaking and theater to use the theater with the possibility to hold gathering of people often for educative and propagandistic shows and get the proceeds that are useful for propaganda and political association.”]

⁹⁵ “Relazione,” Architect Gabriele Saligon, 8.3.1943, ACS, PNF Serie II, B. 1247, Padua.

⁹⁶ Jacqueline Reich, “Mussolini at the Movies,” Jacqueline Reich and Piero Garofalo, eds. *Re-Viewing Fascism, Italian Cinema, 1922-1943* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2002), p. 7.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ A large percentage of the films were American. See V. De Grazia, *The Culture of Consent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 216-8.

entertainment and news reporting (*cinogiornali*) was a similar concept to mixing the *Dopolavoro* with the *milizia* in a *Casa del Fascio*. Entertainment drew the Italians to the *Casa del Fascio*, which in turn, increased the fascist membership.

Loud Speakers and Radios

The *Sede Federale*, the GRF and the *Casa del Fascio* shared the same program components necessary for mass communication. The loudspeaker, for example, on the Maranello façade, would spread Mussolini's message to the crowds gathered in the *piazza*, his voice substituted for his "presence" in each small town. Loudspeakers were often placed in towers, the modern equivalent of a bell-filled *campanile*, as in the tower of the *Casa del Fascio* in Rapallo by Luigi Vietti [Fig. 129].

Inside *Casa del Fascio*, Mussolini's voice would also resound. A *Balilla* radio kept all fascist members abreast of his dispatches [Fig.130].⁹⁹ These new modern communication devices also demonstrated the technical abilities of their government to the masses. The combined use of the *piazza*, the radio and the loud speakers worked in unison. An article from *Il Giornale d'Italia* from October 4, 1935 describes the audible dimension of a PNF event. The reporter wrote,

At the hour of 15:20 the Secretary of the Party will announce over the radio that a message will be given at 15:30. At 15:20 the siren will sound accompanied by the bell of the *Campidoglio*. This sound all over the city is to signal to the people to leave their houses and offices and to get into the buses, taxi and every car possible. From all windows, balconies, and roof tops, everyone should wave the flag. All towns and cities should also sound their siren and campanili to arrive in their piazza to hear the words of *Il Duce*.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ ACS, PNF files, Serie II, B. 1016, the Cuneo file includes documents showing the selection of radio equipment for the *Casa del Fascio*.

¹⁰⁰ *Il Giornale d'Italia*, October 4, 1935.

Radio rooms were included in most buildings and radio towers were incorporated in the designs [Fig. 131]. The Cuneo file contains a 1941 letter discussing the purchase of typewriters and radios for *Casa del Fascio* in the towns of Piasco and Briga Mare. The Super Stella II radio was tagged in an advertisement for the sum of £1.297,00. A microphone and record player were also considered for purchase by the Cuneo PNF Federation. Amplification was added to the price for £890,00, “per le audizioni esterne e cioè nella piazza.”¹⁰¹ The advertisement featured speakers for *palestre* called “apparecchio radio rurale,” which had *fasci* symbols centered on the face of the radio and speaker box [Fig.132].

Symbols of Fascism for the *Casa del Fascio*

The iconography to express the presence of the PNF, or Mussolini, was often very literal. A *Casa del Fascio*, for example, was proposed by a ceramic maker in the shape of Mussolini’s head [Fig. 133].¹⁰² Adding to this imagery, the ceramicist proposed a tower in the shape of a literal *fascio*, the bundle of reeds and axe formerly carried by lictors in ancient Rome, to be placed next to Mussolini’s head. Many symbols originated in ancient Rome, such as the Roman signum that was used for PNF parades and ceremonies. The *torre littoria* for the *Casa del Fascio* in Ragusa was inspired by the Roman signum, designed by Ernesto Bruno La Padula in 1936-1937 [Fig. 134]. Roman numerals representing the year, with the added “E.F.” for *Era Fascista*, was included on most buildings, particularly new *Casa del Fascio* inaugurated on October 29th, the start of the fascist year [Fig. 135].

¹⁰¹ Letter from Electronic store in Verzuolo, Cuneo for the purchase of electronic radio equipment by the *Federazione dei Fasci di Combattimento* of Cuneo for the *Casa Littoria* of Piasco, February 23, 1941, ACS, PNF Serie II, p. 1.

[Translation: “for external sound, namely in the square”]

¹⁰² ACS, PNF files, Serie II, database 1206, 1357, 1848.

Some buildings symbolically represented Mussolini by adopting an “M” shaped plan configuration, as was the case with the *Casa del Fascio* added to the new town of Littoria in 1938-1942. The building was designed by Oriolo Frezzotti and included a tower design similar to the Roman inspired “staff” *torre littoria* built in Ragusa [Fig.136]. The designer of the Igliano *Casa del Fascio* added an “M” to the top of the *torre littoria* [Fig. 137]. Mussolini was often represented by the words “DUCE” or the Latin “DUX,” which meant leader, on countless *Casa del Fascio* facades and roofs [Figs. 138-139].

The eagle or *aquila* symbol of ancient Rome’s military, often in the shape of an “M,” was a favored motif included on *Casa del Fascio* buildings by their designers. A grand eagle monument with a “DUX” labeled balcony was created for Mussolini’s visit to Torino in 1939 [Fig. 140]. The *Casa del Fascio* from Sogliano-Cesena was covered in repetitive eagle sculptures. The words and symbols applied to *Casa del Fascio* assisted with sending a message to its members that the *Casa del Fascio* had a connection to its Roman past.

Financing a *Casa del Fascio*

Because of a request by the PNF Federal Secretary in Rome in 1941, ample documentation regarding the financing and construction of *Casa del Fascio* in the late fascist period exists in the PNF files of the *Archivio Centrale dello Stato* in Rome (located at l’EUR). The PNF Federal Secretary and Head of Technical Services, Luigi Mancini, asked for an accounting of all work being done for *Gruppo Rionale Fascisti* and for *Casa del Fascio* in the provinces in January of 1941.¹⁰³ On February 15, 1941, a list of work, divided into four categories, was submitted by the *Segretario Federale* Olao Gaggioli of Ferrara to Luigi Mancini,

¹⁰³ Letter to the Secretary of the Federation of *Fasci di Combattimento* di Ferrara from Luigi Mancini, the *Segretario Federale* and the *Capo dei Servizi Tecnici del P.N.F.*, Rome, January 23, 1941, B. 1027, Ferrara.

which described the details for financing the GRF buildings and *Case del Fascio* in the Ferrara PNF Federation.¹⁰⁴

The first category submitted by the PNF Ferrara Provincial Secretary was “Lavori ultimate ma non interamente pagati” consisting of 15 projects ranging from 1929 to 1940.¹⁰⁵ The project work varied from “acquisition and systematizing” to construction. The directors of the work were listed for each project on a summary sheet. They consisted of a mixture of architects, *geometri* (surveyors) and engineers. The accounting sheet revealed the amount estimated for the proposed work, the actual cost and the various parties that would be supplying the funds, such as the PNF (who did not fund all projects), the Enti (corporations), and the local patrons, who donated. A summation was calculated by the central PNF Technical Services Department, which described what was already paid and what was still outstanding. This internal PNF report revealed that the total cost proposed for the fifteen projects was £1.927.000,00 and that the total actual cost, by 1941, was estimated at £2.310.715,50.

The typical cost for renovation in the year of 1939 was documented as £68.000,00 for acquiring a building and £72.000,00 for its renovation.¹⁰⁶ The information in the Sant. Edigio file, from the province of Ferrara, noted that a new small building in 1943, including the furniture, cost approximately £250.000,00.^{107 108}

The second list submitted by the PNF Ferrara Provincial Secretary consisted of work “*in corso o sospesi*” and consisted of five projects all in the midst of construction with costs ranging

¹⁰⁴ Letter with project list sent to the *Direttorio Nazionale* of PNF in Rome from the *Segretario Federale* Olao Gaggioli of Ferrara, February 15, 1941, B. 1027, Ferrara.

¹⁰⁵ [Translation: “Ultimate works but not fully paid”]

¹⁰⁶ Note regarding costs from August 29, 1939 for Saletta, Ferrara #19, ACS, B. 1032.

¹⁰⁷ Note from *Il Segretario Federale* Olao Gaggioli to engineer Pasquale Amodio, January 21, 1943, p. 1. ACS, B. 1033.

¹⁰⁸ The estimates for renovated and new buildings came specifically from the ACS folders no. 1031 and 1033, which were consistent with costs in other areas of the country, also documented in the PNF files.

from £135.000,00 to £250.000,00, during the years between June 1940 and June 1941.¹⁰⁹ The PNF, on an average, contributed £10.000,00 to £15.000,00 to each of these *Casa del Fascio* projects with the majority of the funds coming from *Enti* (institutions, organizations). The total cost for all five projects was £985.000,00.

The third list from the PNF Ferrara Provincial Secretary was missing from the *Archivio Centrale dello Stato* in Rome.

The fourth list from the PNF Ferrara Provincial Secretary consisted of work “*gia progettati e non ancora approvati.*”¹¹⁰ There were twenty-nine projects on this fourth list, which consisted mostly of construction work with a wide range of costs from £16.000,00 to £500.000,00 with most projects in the £100.000,00 to £150.000,00 range. Two projects were noticeably more expensive than the others, with estimates of £350.000,00 and £500.000,00. The total cost to complete all of the projects on the list was calculated at £4.456.000,00. There was no accounting column for a PNF contribution. For most of the *Casa del Fascio* projects on the list, the land had been secured. The method for securing the land was not listed in the PNF summation report.

The PNF Ferrara Province report on the status of GRF and *Casa del Fascio* financing was typical of reports sent in from other PNF Federations in Italy in 1941. The financial data and the PNF summation list reveals the hierarchy of *Casa del Fascio* buildings within the province, which city or town merited more funds, where the funds originated from, the names of architects, the names of the construction companies, and the status of completion of each PNF building by 1941.

¹⁰⁹ [Translation: “ongoing or suspended”]

¹¹⁰ [Translation: “already planned and not yet approved”]

Financing Large *Casa del Fascio* Projects: Renovation/Addition and Competition

The most expensive *Casa del Fascio* proposed by the PNF Provincial Secretary in 1940 for the Ferrara region was not an entirely new project and was on the fourth PNF summation list of designed, but not yet approved projects. A *Casa Littoria* was planned for the town of Massafiscaglia by using an old “fabbricato” building, which was acquired for £152.000,00. A report, written in June of 1940, was prepared by the architect for a review of the technical and artistic character of the building by the local PNF, and then by the central Rome PNF. The report notes that the cost of the endeavor would include the demolition, selling of the demolished material, reconstruction, and new construction work. The *Casa Littoria* project was described in three sections: the west side would incorporate a café, *magazzino* (small store), bathrooms, heating room and a space for the MVSN; the central mass of the building would face the *piazza* and would have a *torre littoria* with a principal entry that would lead into a courtyard, the main stair and the *sacrario*; the east side would be dedicated to the OND and composed of rooms for billiards, a café, game rooms, a room for lectures, a room for “*radioaudizioni*” (radio-listening), locker rooms and bathrooms. An apartment was also included to be part of the *Casa Littoria* in Massafiscaglia. A major part of the PNF building was the *cinema-teatro*, which would seat 750 people. The space was measured to be 43.5 meters in one dimension, with a height of 11 meters, rising up to 15.6 meters. The *cinema-teatro* was designed with doors at the base of the room to allow for mass exiting into the street or *cortile*. An inner-sloped balcony within the theater would seat 350 people, which also included a projection booth.

The aesthetic character of the *Casa Littoria* of Massafiscaglia was described in a separate document by the architect. The *Casa Littoria* was “ottenere un organismo di masse il cui

andamento lineare è sobrio ed elegante.”¹¹¹ The tower was 29 meters tall, more than twice the height of the building itself, with a tapered profile described by the architect as “un tronco di piramide avente il vertice a circa duecento metri di altezza. Tale concetto contribuisce ad ottenere una torre snella ed elegante se pur modesta nelle sue dimensioni” [Fig. 141].¹¹² The tower material, rendered in brick, was different than the material of the body of the building to accentuate its verticality. The *arengo* protruded from the tower over the entry of the *Casa Littoria* and was rendered in black stone “del Carso e in porfido rosso antico.”¹¹³ A symbolic sculpture was placed on the front face of the balcony. The windows were framed in travertine. The face of the building would be “rustico del luogo che non disturba affatto il complesso.”¹¹⁴ The *cinema-teatro* was rendered in the same way, “un misto di novecento e di rustico che non offende l’occhio ma che dà un sobrio tono di modernità rispondente all’ uso del locale.”¹¹⁵ The actual cost of the Massafiscaglia *Casa Littoria* was estimated at £549.708,00. The *cinema-teatro* was priced separately at £280.000,00.¹¹⁶

Another high priced *Casa del Fascio* in the Ferrara region was planned for the town of Portomaggiore, at the corner of *Piazza G. Verdi* and *Via Statuto* [Fig. 142]. The PNF Ferrara Provincial office had organized a competition for the design of the *Portomaggiore Casa del Fascio*. Holding competitions, run by the local PNF Federation, for renovated or new *Casa del Fascio* was very common.

¹¹¹ “Relazione,” B. 1030, Massafiscaglia, (Ferrara), June 10, 1940, p. 2.

[Translation: “to obtain a body of mass whose linearity is sober and elegant”]

¹¹² Ibid., p.3. [Translation: “a truncated pyramid with the summit about two hundred meters high. This concept helps to get a lean and elegant tower albeit modest in size”]

¹¹³ Ibid. [Translation: “karst and ancient red porphyry”]

¹¹⁴ Ibid. [Translation: “rustic place that doesn't bother the aesthetics of the whole”]

¹¹⁵ Ibid. [Translation: “a mixture of the style of *Novecento* and rustic, which does not offend the eye, but gives a sober tone of modernity in response to local use”]

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p. 4.

The competition guidelines for the future Portomaggiore *Casa del Fascio* had established the cost for the building to be between £300.000,00 and £350.000,00. One project considered in the competition exceeded the established amount and was estimated to cost £480.000,00. The price the PNF agreed to for the final building was higher than their original estimate at £383.270,20.

The guidelines for the Portomaggiore competition indicated that architects or engineers could enter the competition only if they were in the *Sindacati Professionisti ed Artisti dell' Emilia* and members of the PNF. Other competition requirements noted that there was an existing building on the site and that the entrant was required to indicate in the competition submission the manner in which the existing building would be considered – modified or demolished. The competition guidelines noted that the style implied was tied to the cost of the building, perhaps implying that a simple modern building would fit the budget the best. The author of the guidelines wrote, “la costruzione di stile modern dovrà essere ispirata a semplicità ed essere contenuta nella spesa di £300 - 350 mila dalla quale somma è da escludersi l'importo dell' III stralcio.”¹¹⁷ The ultimate winning competition entry for the Portomaggiore *Casa del Fascio* had a stripped-down neoclassical aesthetic.

The required components for the Portomaggiore *Casa del Fascio* consisted of a *salone per adunate* of not less than 16 x 8 meters on the ground floor and a *torre littoria* with a bell and clock centered on the existing building (if not demolished), which would be “più precisamente assiale alla Via Garibaldi.”¹¹⁸ The main entry for the *Casa del Fascio* was required to be in the

¹¹⁷ “Bando di Concorso per la costruzione della Casa del Fascio,” Portomaggiore, (Ferrara), approx. 1939, B. 1031, p. 1.

[Translation: “The construction of modern style must be inspired by simplicity, which would be contained in the cost of £300 – 350 thousand from which the sum of the third stage is excluded.”]

¹¹⁸ [Translation: “more specifically, axial to *Via Garibaldi*”]

torre littoria. Typical architectural drawings (plans, sections, elevations), a detail of the stair, and “un plastico” (an architectural model) were required. The architectural competitor needed to specifically address three parts of the PNF project separately: the *Casa del Fascio*, the *Torre Littoria*, and the façade of the “stabili di Proprietà Comunale at the front of Piazza Verdi.”¹¹⁹

On September 27, 1938 the competition proposals were examined by the *Segretario Federale* and other fascists: Dott. Nerino Nenci; Dott. Ermanno Jannicci; Ing. Gandini; Ing. Sprisani; Ing. Carlo Savonuzzi; Prof. Pontoni; Dott. Facchini. Six signatures were added to the typed statement of the jury’s comments. The jury conclusions were presented in the *Casa del Fascio* building of Ferrara. The first three winners of the Portomaggiore competition were awarded prizes of £3.500,00, £1.500,00, £1.000,00 respectively. The *Casa del Fascio* project would remain the property of the *Fascio* of Portomaggiore. A written notice described the three winners by the titles of their schemes: “ITALIA”, “MAS”, and “Audere Semper.”¹²⁰ “ITALIA” came in as a third place winner. The other two entries were very similar, but “MAS” was internally better organized, however both were recognized at first place winners.¹²¹ The engineer Carlo Savonuzzi (also noted as an architect from Ferrara) wrote a five-page document comparing the two competing first place entries, “MAS” and “Audere Semper.” Structural and decorative materials were compared, along with a discussion of the respective cost differences. The project “Audere Semper” would cost a total of £500.00,00 compared to the project “MAS,” which would cost £383.270,20. The price difference reflected the totally new construction (and

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 2.

[Translation: “Municipally owned buildings at the front of *Piazza Verdi*”]

¹²⁰ Engineer Carlo Savonuzzi, “Relazione for the Concorso per la Costruzione della Casa del Fascio,” Portomaggiore, (Ferrara), January 15, 1939; PNF Files, Serie II, B. 1031, p. 1-3.

¹²¹ “Verbale della commissione giudicatrice del concorso per la Casa Littora di Portomaggiore,” approximately 1938, B. 1031, Portomaggiore, (Ferrara).

demolition of an existing building) of the the “Audere Semper” scheme compared to the use of the existing building by the “MAS” scheme. The competition brief required the cost of the building to be between £300.000,00 and £350.000,00. Therefore, juror Carlo Savonuzzi recommended the “MAS” project for staying closer to the competition guidelines [Fig. 143]. The jury had suggested that the “MAS” project could eliminate the steel in its proposal and use *cemento armato* (reinforced concrete) instead because of the country’s autarchic policy, which would reduce the price even more.¹²² Thus, the jury’s final decision was to select the “MAS” competition entry as the winner.¹²³

Resulting Plan Configurations of *Casa del Fascio*

A “typical” *Casa del Fascio* would be difficult to fully describe. One possible visual description of a standard *Casa del Fascio* could be the drawing on the Florence PNF Federation quantity report of an L-shaped building with a horizontal window attached to a tower with a *fascio* symbol and an Italian flag [Fig. 144]. The drawing at the top of a 1938 poster, announcing the restrictions of the Jewish population in Italy, illustrates a *Casa del Fascio* as a four-story building with an attached “*fascio*” tower with a balcony and a huge PNF sign [Fig. 145]. These two drawings capture the essence of the *Casa del Fascio*, which was generally modern, asymmetrical, included a tower and a balcony, and was covered with symbols of the PNF. Newly built, renovated buildings, additions to renovated buildings, and unbuilt proposals for *Casa del Fascio* from 1922 to 1943 indicate that a more complex description of this building

¹²² Engineer Carlo Savonuzzi, “Relazione for the Concorso per la Costruzione della Casa del Fascio,” Portomaggiore, (Ferrara), January 15, 1939; PNF Files, Serie II, B. 1031, p. 2.

¹²³ Ibid, p. 5. Notes in the archive documents and on the drawings indicate that Architect Soriani was a contender and the author of the MAS entry. Soriani was born in Portomaggiore in 1903.

is required. The 11,000 plus examples demonstrated that there was a huge range in the variety of solutions.

The diagrams in Table no. 2 focus on several alternative plan forms that were characteristic of most new *Casa del Fascio*: the L-shaped plan, the *palazzo* plan, the bar plan, the U-shaped plan, the urban block form with an embedded tower, and the corner plan. The plan results came from the study of thousands of *Casa del Fascio* examples and an analysis of the shifting position the building's components: the tower, *sala*, *palestra*, offices, *sacrarario*, *arengario* or balcony, and *piazza* over twenty years. The development of the most often employed plans – the L-shaped and the *palazzo* plan – were the foundation for many of the other variations. The unique collision of spaces and forms of the *Casa del Fascio* were molded by the ceremonial, as well as day-to-day, needs of the PNF. The PNF spoke to its fascist constituents visually through the hierarchy of rooms in the plan, the architectural components, the aurtarchic materials selected, and the symbols on the *Casa del Fascio* building, as well as addressing their fascist audience audibly from the cinema, the “*altoparlante*,” (loudspeakers) and the radio.

Early *Casa del Fascio* located in existing buildings or in occupied *Casa del Popolo*, were generally composed as a symmetrical building with a singular balcony over the entrance. If the *Casa del Fascio* was large, it would have an inner courtyard. New *Casa del Fascio*, that were designed in the early 1930s, continued to be symmetrical with a central entry and balcony – if the building was at least two-stories tall. As the *torre littoria* emerged in the early 1930s, the front facades often remained symmetrical as in Villa Magliano, Tontola or Meldola from 1934 to 1935 with the entry in the bottom of the tower [Fig. 146]. In the town of Cameri, Novara, the architect added a *torre littoria* to the *Casa del Fascio* façade, which had a central emphasis accented by the balcony over the entry. The tower, which accommodated the staircase, collided with the

symmetry of the building [Fig. 147]. The strategy of some architects in 1934 was to offer the PNF two alternatives, one design with a *torre littoria*, and one without, which did not affect the symmetrical façade and central entry [Fig. 148]. Some architects in the later 1930s continued to give the PNF the option of including the tower, or not, as can be seen in the asymmetrical composition of the Poviglio *Casa del Fascio* in 1939 [Fig. 149]. The additional PNF requirement to place the *sacrario* in the bottom of the tower required that the entry into the *Casa del Fascio* be relocated, unless the tower was large enough for both.

After the mid-1930s, the composition of the *Casa del Fascio* was most often arranged asymmetrically. The lop-sided effect of a two-story office block matched with a one story *sala/palestra* or cinema, caused architects to consider other plan forms to accommodate the architectural components. *Casa del Fascio* were composed of additive forms as they grew larger in the mid-to-late 1930s. The most common plan configuration in the mid-to-late 1930s and 1940s was the L-shaped plan, which created an outdoor component, a *piazza*, used for exercise and mass gatherings.

Typical L-shaped *Casa del Fascio* began with a large *sala*, a few offices, and a tower. The building's size grew as other PNF programs became associated with the *Casa del Fascio*, such as the ONB or OND that needed their own entries. Visual and written data in the PNF files in the *Archivio Centrale dello Stato* revealed that many communities would consider the L-shape to allow them to slowly obtain funds for the remaining building parts, which started with obtaining funds for the symbolic tower and minimal offices, and later adding the *sala/palestra*, or the *sala adunanze*, as was the case in Castagneto Carducci [Fig.150]. The PNF competition guidelines for rural *Casa del Fascio* suggested the “add-on method” and noted that the L-shaped building form allowed for future extensions. The *Casa del Fascio* planned for Cerro Maggiore

consisted of many buildings, including a *colonia* (summer camp building for children) [Fig.151]. The *Casa del Fascio* was realized, but the additional buildings were never added [Figs. 152-153].

As the amalgamations of building components were added to the *Casa del Fascio* building in the late 1930s, designs resulted with many visible parts, as can be seen in the 1940 *Casa Littoria* in San Biagio d'Argenta, designed by Geometra Rubeglio [Fig. 154]. The *Casa Littoria* in Biagio d'Argenta is a prime example of how architects combined the multiples parts of a growing PNF program. The *Casa del Fascio* constructed in Codigoro, in the Ferrara Province, was built at once, but was visually an architectural massing of several building components [Fig. 155]. The building consisted of three parts, the central *Salone d'Onore*, a grand atrium, and the offices of the *Fascio*. The newspaper, *Corriere di Padano*, on April 16, 1938 declared the PNF building a “miracle!” as the realization of the *Casa del Fascio* was the result of many local volunteers who donated the necessary building materials. In addition, the PNF files for the Codigoro building revealed that the parcels of land that were also “donated.” [Fig. 156]. The new PNF building was located on a new *piazza* and street named the *Viale del Littorio*. The construction of the *piazza* allowed for upgrades in the water and sewage systems of the town. The local PNF members reported in the newspaper, *Corriere di Padano*, that the emergence of the new *Casa del Fascio* renewed their city and made them look toward the future.¹²⁴

The competition for a *Casa del Fascio* in Sesto Calende, Varese, in 1937, demonstrated the difficulty with the growing size of the architectural components. Numerous variations for an acute corner site in Sesto Calende were submitted to the competition jury for a new *Casa del Fascio* that included a large cinema building with a two-story office building and a tower over

¹²⁴ “La Casa Littoria di Codigoro,” *Corriere Padano*, Saturday, April 16, 1938. PNF, Serie II, B. 1028, Codigoro, (Ferrara).

twice the height of the two buildings.¹²⁵ Most architects treated the three components as isolated buildings. Architect Augusto Legnani won the Sesto Calende competition and his design was built, however without the tower. Legnani's design entry included a system of exterior balconies and suspended bridges that connected the three architectural components as is seen in his competition model [Fig. 157]. The competition for a new *Casa del Fascio* in Oleggio, Novara, illustrates similar form challenges as was seen in the Sesto Calende *Casa del Fascio*. Architect G. Franzi, engineers M. Martelli and W. Torri won the 1934 Oleggio competition, which was constructed by 1936 and published in 1938 by *L'architettura italiana*.¹²⁶ Their design disguised the angled theater in a rectangular building. The theater is situated next to a long office building that incorporates a tower, balcony and entry in its form. A space was left between the theater block and the office wing for circulation [Fig. 158]. Two roof areas facing into the *piazza* were used for the gathering of the Oleggio fascist members. A submission to the same Oleggio competition by L. Vietti and I. Gardella show the same architectural components broken apart and their shapes exposed [Fig. 159]. The offices are in a suspended block and the theater, also suspended over the plaza, had angled side walls and a large curved wall on the rear side of the *Casa del Fascio*. The curved wall was the ceremonial backdrop for a grand balcony.

Casa del Fascio based on the *palazzo* plan, previously discussed in this chapter, such as the Verona *Casa Littoria* competition entries, Giuseppe Terragni's Como *Casa del Fascio*, and the Trieste *Casa del Fascio*, were derived from a traditional cortile. The *palazzo* inspired *Casa del Fascio* developed the inner cortile to be a usable gathering space and then later, to be a theater or cinema space. The sectional drawings of this particular type of *Casa del Fascio* reveal the benefits of a *palazzo* plan, which uses the alternate heights to support the needed circulation

¹²⁵ ACS, PNF file, Serie II, B. 1046, Sesto Calende.

¹²⁶ *L'architettura italiana*, January, 1938, pp. 8-9.

path for PNF ceremonies. The relationship of the large inner “cortile” space to the exterior *piazza* created unique opportunities for PNF dignitaries to address their fascist crowds in multiple ways.

Angled plans were far less prevalent than the L-shaped and *palazzo* plan configurations for *Casa del Fascio*, although some significant buildings followed this plan form, as was the case of the Asti *Casa del Fascio*. A corner building was less useful for the PNF’s exterior celebratory activities, since they needed a generous *piazza* out front. The Asti *Casa del Fascio* fortunately had ample space in front of its entry. The corner location in most small towns was difficult for serving an exterior crowd which needed to face the front of the balcony or the tower. The intersection was generally used to accommodate a massive crowd.

Numerous variations of *Casa del Fascio* were planned by architects and reviewed by the Technical Services Department of the PNF. The level of variation from building to building was great, which suggests that a single “typical” solution was never recommended from the central PNF. Rather, architectural experimentation for designs took place in the architect’s studio. The following chapter reviews the *Casa del Fascio* building in a chronological format to demonstrate the effects of the political, social and technological milieu on the development of the *Casa del Fascio* building during the *Ventennio*.

[See Table No. 2: Individual Plan and Elevation Diagrams of the *Casa del Fascio*]

Chapter Two: Rhetoric from the Balcony, the Microphone, the Radio and the Written Words of the PNF Decrees: The Political Formation of the *Casa del Fascio* from 1919-1943

Mussolini was convinced that the charismatic function of his power had to be expressed through a dialogue with the people....The balcony address was simply the culminating moment...the fusion of the masses with the leader...The basic discussion of fascism must be developed around the control that fascism exercised over all forms of information, and therefore on the enormous importance assumed not only by the traditional instruments of information (the press), but even more by the movies and radio – true vehicles of mass information.¹²⁷

Historian Renzo De Felice concluded that Mussolini was trying to create a community where the Italian people would follow his government programs willingly, without coercion.¹²⁸ The PNF building, the *Casa del Fascio*, was a firearm in Mussolini's arsenal – a vehicle of verbal and visual communication and a magnet to lure Italians into the fascist community. "Fascism...[was] wholly founded on the materiality of words. Chiseled words, carved words, words in relief, words of stone, words of metal..."¹²⁹ Words of the PNF and Mussolini are embodied in the architecture of the PNF headquarters. Mussolini's own words streamed from the radio room and the cinema of the *Casa del Fascio*. This chapter ties the political, social, religious and technological developments of the *Ventennio* to the physical development the *Casa del Fascio* building. It is a chronological study with a focus on the major occurrences of the Fascist period from 1919 to 1943, which directly affected the architecture and urban planning of the PNF's primary building – the *Casa del Fascio*. The chronological analysis reveals that the *Casa del Fascio* building developed from a nondescript edifice in the 1920s, because of the need for members to assemble, to a recognizable PNF building by the late 1930s that "spoke" visually and audibly to the Italian people.

¹²⁷ Renzo De Felice, *Fascism* (New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1976), p. 75.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

¹²⁹ Carlo Pirovano, ed. *Modern Italy, 1900-1939*, Volume Two, (Banca Nazionale del Lavoro: 1985), p. 90.

[See Table No. 3: The Development of the *Casa del Fascio* and Comparative Data Chart]

The Foundation Years: *Fasci di Combattimento*, 1919 - 1922

Groups of *Fasci*, who gathered years before the 1922 March on Rome, provided the groundwork for the creation of the *Casa del Fascio* building. On April 11, 1919, after a gathering in *Piazza San Sepolcro* in Milan, Lieutenant Pietro Gorgolini assured Mussolini that he could count on approximately one hundred officers and university students to form a local *fascio di combattimento*.¹³⁰ Gorgolini, author of the 1923 book titled *The Fascist Movement in Italian Life*, defined a *fascio* as a nucleus. He suggested that “wherever there are ten Italians there should be a Fascist nucleus.”¹³¹ Groups of clandestine men congregated in groups called *covi* (dens), which were the first offensive squads.¹³² After these squads became the new fascists in 1922, they sought places to congregate and no longer needed to remain in secret locations. The newly installed PNF government desired a strong relationship with these “black shirts” and planned to educate them to the ways of the developing PNF. Local meeting spaces would serve as a beneficial connection point between the national PNF and the individual member. In addition, a central meeting space would support the PNF’s desire to form local military groups, called MVSN or *Milizia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale*, and to create a sense of solidarity with mass gatherings. *Fasci di Combattimento* was the name given to the group of men and the first title given to these national buildings of the PNF founded on March, 23 1919 in *Piazza San Sepolcro* in Milan.

¹³⁰ Paul O’Brien, *Mussolini in the First World War: The Journalist, the Soldier, the Fascist* (Bloomsbury Academic: 2005), p. 20.

¹³¹ Dott. Pietro Gorgolini, *The Fascist Movement in Italian Life*, (Middletown, DE: Ostara Publications, first published in English in 1923; 2016), p. 52.

¹³² *Ibid.*

Architectural and urban features of the *Fasci di Combattimento* (or *Casa del Fascio*) were introduced early in the building's development – before the 1922 March on Rome – and remained part of the *Casa del Fascio*'s identity for the next two decades. Architecturally, the need for a large assembly space remained a constant for the PNF building, although it changed from a simple *sala* in the 1920s to a raked-floor cinema by the late 1930s. The urban *piazza*, as an exterior assembly space, was also a constant element of *Casa del Fascio* throughout the twenty years of fascism, which allowed the fascists members to display their political energy in full public view. The concept of fascists gathering in a large communal space and then running riotously into the *piazza* was born at the San Sepolcro gathering.¹³³ Fascist Augusto Turati described the need to run and shout, “Dobbiamo correre. Se il regime sarà superato, saremo noi che dovemo occupare il suo posto. Perciò creiamo i fasci. Questi organi di creazione ed agitazione capaci di scendere in piazza e gridare....”¹³⁴ In *Il Popolo d'Italia*, on March 24, 1919 the basic need of a *Fascio* group to assemble was reported, “L'essenziale è che l'assemblea è stata fattiva....devono sorgere indugi in ogni paese e in ogni città. Ogni amico e lettore nostro, deve farsi iniziatore del Fascio....Cinque, dieci individui bastano per costituire un Fasci.”¹³⁵

¹³³ “...it is well known that the Duce had read with a great deal of interest on of the earliest treatises on mass communication, the *Psychology of Crowds* by Gustave Le Bon.”

Carlo Pirovano, ed. *Modern Italy, 1900-1939*, Volume Two, (Banca Nazionale del Lavoro: 1985), p. 85.

¹³⁴ PNF, preface by Augusto Turati, *Le origini e lo Sviluppo del Fascismo* (Rome: Libreria del Littorio, 1928 – VI), p. 71.

[Translation: “We have to run. If the regime is out-of-date, we will occupy its place. Therefore we create the *Fasci*. These organizations of creation and agitation give us the ability to descend into the piazza and shout.”]

¹³⁵ “a ripresa del nostro movimento nel commento del “Popolo di Italia,” 24 March 1919, *Le origini e lo Sviluppo del Fascismo* (Rome: Libreria del Littorio, 1928 ,VI), p.72.

[Translation: “The main thing is that the meeting was effective ... (the *Fascio*) must rise to indulge every region and every city. Each friend and reader must be the initiator of the *Fascio*. Five, ten individuals are enough to constitute a *Fascio*.”]

A convegno dei Fasci di Combattimento dell'Italia, of the Central and *Settentrionale* (northern) areas, met on July 18, 1919.¹³⁶ The first national Congress of *Fasci* (Fascist groups) occurred in Florence approximately three months later in October of 1919. Seventeen months later, on March 23, 1921, *Il Popolo d'Italia* reported that the fascist movement was developing day-by-day and described it in architectural terms,

Il Fascismo non è una chiesa; è piuttosto una palestra. Non è un partito; è un movimento; non ha un programma bello e fatto da realizzarsi nell'anno duemila per la semplice ragione che il Fascismo costruisce giorno per giorno l'edificio della sua volontà e della sua passione.¹³⁷

By December 23, 1921, *Il Popolo d'Italia* reported on the approved motions of the National Council of the PNF, who declared that Mussolini was the father of fascism, “Il Consiglio Nazionale riconosce a Mussolini, acclamandolo, il privilegio della paternità del Fascismo: Egli diventerà il Padre del popolo italiano.”¹³⁸ Paralleling a parochial hierarchy, Mussolini was the “father” of the PNF members in each local *Casa del Fascio* and was represented by his portrait, which dominated over the assembly space, and in the architecture of the building by the empty balcony, which hovered above the *piazza*.

Repurposed Buildings: The *Casa del Popolo* becomes the *Casa del Fascio*

The *Casa del Fascio* evolved programmatically out of *squadristi* gatherings, as well as from several architectural antecedents. In the years prior to the Fascist period, many social

¹³⁶ [Translation: “conference of the *Fasci di Combattimento* of Italy,” *Fasci di Combattimento* are *Casa del Fascio*.]

¹³⁷ PNF, preface by Augusto Turati, *Le origini e lo Sviluppo del Fascismo*, (Rome: Libreria del Littorio, 1928 – VI), p. 128.

[Translation: Fascism is not a church; but rather it is a gym. Is not a Party; it is a movement; it does not have a beautiful and fully realized program in this twentieth century for the simple reason that fascism is constructed day by day, the building of one's will and passion.]

¹³⁸ PNF, preface by Augusto Turati, *Le origini e lo Sviluppo del Fascismo*, (Rome: Libreria del Littorio, 1928 – VI), p. 174.

[Translation: The National Council recognizes Mussolini, acclaimed to him, the privilege of fatherhood: he will become the father of the Italian people.]

functions, which were later associated with *Casa del Fascio*, took place in *Casa del Popolo*. Socialist organizations built the *Casa del Popolo*, incorporating cooperatives, theaters, and social services into the activities of the building.¹³⁹ Although *Casa del Popolo* were not government outposts, but alternative political Party buildings, *Casa del Popolo* were similar in function to the subsequent *Casa del Fascio* and served as a forerunner to the PNF building. In light of this similarity, it is significant that the PNF took over these buildings – a move taken to avoid threats from opposing parties. The takeover of working-class *Casa del Popolo* officially occurred under Mussolini's orders after 1926, when he took charge of the Ministry of the Interior.¹⁴⁰ The *Casa del Popolo* buildings were developed in the early 1920s by the *Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro* (OND). The OND was an after-work organization that was adopted by the PNF as its own in 1925, made into law in the 1929 Decree, and then officially made part of the *Casa del Fascio* program in 1937. The OND “considered itself the natural heir” to the *Casa del Popolo* properties.¹⁴¹ Most often, these repurposed *Casa del Popolo* buildings were simple multi-storied structures with a large meeting room, offices, and a central balcony [Fig. 1].

National Fascist Party (PNF) Guidelines, 1921-1925

Michele Bianchi, the PNF Secretary, introduced institutional guidelines for the PNF in phases beginning with the Decree of 1921, followed by major modifications in 1926, 1929, 1932, and 1938, as well as smaller modifications at interim stages.¹⁴² The ideological advancements at each interval placed new demands on the design of the PNF headquarters building.

¹³⁹ F. Biscossa, “Dalla Casa del Popolo alla Casa del Fascio,” in M. De Michelis, *Casa del Popolo* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1986).

¹⁴⁰ Victoria De Grazia, *The Culture of Consent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 45.

¹⁴¹ Victoria De Grazia, *The Culture of Consent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 46.

¹⁴² Ricciotti Lazzero, *Il Partito Nazionale Fascista* (Milan: Rizzoli Editore, 1985), p. 13.

The first Decree (*Statuto-regolamento*) was approved by the PNF on November 20, 1921. The Provincial Federations of the PNF were established in every province in Italy. The 1921 Decree established the requirement to install a local PNF administrator in a central location within each province with the duty to coordinate, discipline and to control the actions of each *Fascio* (a fascist group) in their Federation.¹⁴³ By the final year of the PNF in 1943, *Casa del Fascio* had been planned for 97 *federazioni*, in addition to others in the Italian colonies. By 1943, the PNF-controlled administration of each Federation had planned numerous *Casa del Fascio* throughout their province. The local administrator, the PNF Federal Secretary, oversaw the planning and distribution of *Casa del Fascio* throughout neighborhoods in the cities, small towns, and rural areas. The combined work of the Provincial Federation Secretaries, with central PNF oversight from Rome, was responsible for approximately 11,743 planned buildings.¹⁴⁴ The total number of *Casa del Fascio* consisted of acquired or donated buildings, renovated structures, existing buildings with additions, new buildings, and projects which remained on paper.

The PNF's aim in acquiring a local central meeting place, or a *Casa del Fascio*, was to reach all members of society and to engage them as devoted members of the PNF. In the first PNF Decree of 1921, regulations for *i Fasci*, *i Gruppi Universitari*, *Avanguardia Giovanile Fascista*, and *i Gruppi Femminili*, were established, demonstrating the early reach of the PNF to diverse constituents. Regardless of the PNF's widespread outreach, the *Fascio*, or group of men occupying a *Casa del Fascio*, was the major focus of the PNF in its early years.¹⁴⁵

The 1921 Degree began with nine specific requirements for a *Fascio*:

1. Twenty fascists constitute a *Fascio* (a division of the PNF).

¹⁴³ Mario Missori, *Gerarchi e statute del P.N.F.* (Roma, Bonacci Editore, 1986), p. 340.

¹⁴⁴ See Table no.1: Map of *Federazioni* quantities and locations of *Palazzi del Littorio*, *Casa del Fascio*, *GRF*, and *Casa del Fascio* in *borghi* or New Towns.

¹⁴⁵ Mario Missori, *Gerarchi e statute del P.N.F.* (Rome: Bonacci Editore, 1986), p. 331.

2. If the number of twenty members cannot be reached, then those fascists could be a subsection under the nearest *Fascio* group.
3. Every *Fascio* group must display a *Gagliardetto di Combattimento* (flag of combat).
4. The group is directed by a Director and a Political Secretary.
5. The Directors of each group integrated with the Political Secretary constitute the organizational leaders of the group.
6. The Directors must follow the rules of the PNF with absolute discipline.
7. Every group must give official notice to the national PNF Secretary and the Secretary of the Provincial Federation of the names of the members of each *Fascio*. A delegate should represent the PNF Provincial Federation group.
8. All will get a *fascist* card for a sum.
9. The scope is to organize a force in respective zones.¹⁴⁶

The emphasis of the *Fascio* section of the 1921 Decree was on the formation of the group and the need to develop a hierarchy of PNF command, but other than the flag, no particular language suggesting “bricks and mortar” for an actual *Casa del Fascio* building was described.

The 1921 Decree consisted of numerous sections that contained requirements for all PNF members, not just members of the *Fascio*. The emphasis of the 1921 Decree was on the structure of command, with oversight from the central PNF, and on the safeguards that would insure the high moral character of individuals who would be in any position of command. The leader of any PNF group was required to have at least six months of residency in their provincial federation.¹⁴⁷ Each PNF member had to be an Italian of high “*moralità*” with a minimum age of 18 for men and 16 for women. The 1921 Decree guidelines required that a general assembly of local PNF members meet twice a year in a *Fascio*, once in May and a second time in December. Each province was to send delegates to congress. The number of delegates sent from each province was dependent on the quantity of local fascist members. Thus, the more members a federation could acquire the better representation the provincial group would have in Rome, which was an incentive for increasing membership.

¹⁴⁶ Mario Missori, *Gerarchi e statute del P.N.F.* (Rome: Bonacci Editore, 1986), pp. 336-337.

¹⁴⁷ Mario Missori, *Gerarchi e statute del P.N.F.* (Rome: Bonacci Editore, 1986, Statute PNF, 1921), p. 338.

One of the first *Casa del Fascio* was inaugurated in Milan on October 28, 1923, the first anniversary of the March on Rome. On this occasion, Mussolini said that PNF headquarters, “should be temples, not just buildings; they should have powerful, harmonious lines. When a Fascist goes into his headquarters, he should enter a house of beauty, so that his heart will be roused with strength, power, beauty, and love.”¹⁴⁸ Mussolini inaugurated a second *Casa del Fascio* in Bologna the following day, which took place in a repurposed *palazzo* on Via Manzoni [Fig. 2]. The Bologna PNF headquarters was open to all, not just to registered fascists, in order to make the ranks of the local PNF membership grow. Mussolini said that “fascists must be placed in contact with one another.”¹⁴⁹ The acquisition of space for the *Casa del Fascio* in a grand *palazzo*, which included a *cortile* and tower, was the inspiration of Leandro Arpinati.¹⁵⁰ Arpinati was a *squadrista*, who became the first *podestà* of the city of Bologna and served from 1926 to 1929. The PNF headquarters project was started with the sum of £1.000,00. The *piano nobile* (main upper floor) of the existing *palazzo* was reserved for the seat of the PNF, which included a lecture hall and a large library. A reporter from the newspaper *L'Assalto* described the spaces within the new seat of the PNF,

Il primo piano, che sarà dedicato alla elevazione spiritual e culturale fascista e alla memoria dei nostri caduti, comprende un ampio salone magnificamente decorato nello stile quattrocentesco dell'edificio. Sale di lettura e una grande biblioteca. Inoltre, il Pantheon fascista bolognese.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ Mussolini's quote from October 28, 1923, from Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 47. Originally from B. Mussolini, *Opera Omnia* (Florence: La Fenice, 1951-1962, vol. 20), pp. 61-7.

¹⁴⁹ Mussolini's speech before the National Council of the Fascist Party, August 8, 1924, in *La Nuova Politica dell'Italia*, Milan, Alpes, 1928.

¹⁵⁰ The location of the *Casa del Fascio* was formerly the *Palazzo Ghisilardi Fava* (now the *Museo Civici Medievale*).

¹⁵¹ “*La Casa del Fascio Bolognese di Combattimento*”, *L'Assalto*, A. IV, n. 43, October, 27-31, 1923, p. 3.

[Translation: “The first floor, which will be dedicated to the spiritual and cultural fascist and to the elevation of the memory of our fallen, includes a large living room magnificently decorated in the style of 15th-century building. Reading rooms and a large library. In other words, the Pantheon Fascist Bolognese.”]

On March 1, 1925, the PNF library, an essential educational component of *Casa del Fascio*, was officially dedicated. The library contained PNF publications, significant periodicals, such as *Scintilla* directed by Archeologist Pericle Ducati, and books of importance for PNF members, such as Lieutenant Pietro Gorgolini's *Le fascisme* (Paris, 1923), Giorgio Pini's *Benito Mussolini* (Bologna, 1926) and *Le legioni bolognesi in armi* (Bologna, 1923).¹⁵² In 1939, a new Bologna *Casa del Fascio* was planned for *Piazza VIII Agosto*, but was never completed.

Between January 1923 and February 1925, modifications were made to the 1921 Decree and issued as one publication, *Modifiche agli Organi Direttivi e all'Ordinamento del PNF apportate dal Gran Consiglio*, in January of 1925.¹⁵³ The modifications listed in the 1925 document consisted of new PNF programs, which would directly affect the physical planning of a *Casa del Fascio* because of the need to add more office space. Offices were added for the *Fasci l'Estero*, the *Ufficio Stampa*, the *Ufficio Propaganda*, the *Avanguardia Giovanile* (already noted as an existing program in 1921) and the *Balilla*.¹⁵⁴

From the March on Rome on October 28, 1922 to January 3, 1925, the PNF developed in a slow and haphazard manner. Conflicts between the PNF and the Socialist Party continued to occur in these years. In 1924, Socialist Party leader Giacomo Matteotti documented numerous atrocities of the PNF in his book, *The Fascisti Exposed, A Year of Fascist Domination*, which was published in English. He listed city after city where Socialist Party members had been "dragged to the Fascist headquarters, warned and threatened."¹⁵⁵ The cities listed with PNF

¹⁵² "La Casa del Fascio di Bologna e la sua Biblioteca," in http://badigit.comune.bologna.it/mostre/pubblica_lettura/bacheca4.htm

¹⁵³ Mario Missori, *Gerarchi e statute del P.N.F.* (Rome: Bonacci Editore, 1986), *Satuto* PNF, 1921, pp. 352-354.

¹⁵⁴ Mario Missori, *Gerarchi e statute del P.N.F.* (Rome: Bonacci Editore, 1986), p. 353.

¹⁵⁵ Giacomo Matteotti, *The Fascisti Exposed, A Year of Fascist Domination* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969; first published in English in 1924), p. 125.

headquarters were Florence, Molinella, and Milan, among others, which demonstrated that numerous *Case del Fascio* existed in the first years of the PNF's reign. Matteotti listed cities from the north to the southern tip of Italy in which conflicts had occurred between fascists and supporters of non-Mussolini affiliated newspapers. Many of the newspaper offices, not affiliated with Mussolini, were vandalized. Matteotti documented hostilities between fascists and Catholics as well. He wrote about, "the sequestration of all property of the religious Congregations" and warned that "Catholic youths [had been] assaulted and beaten for wearing the badges of their associations."¹⁵⁶ In the same year as the publication of his book, 1924, Giacomo Matteotti was kidnapped and murdered.¹⁵⁷ Mussolini spoke several months later to the Chamber of Deputies on January 3, 1925, and took blame for the former violence in Italy. The PNF emerged with totalitarian regulations after his speech, which was focused on the suppression of opposition, including increased oversight by the PNF of the press. Secret police were dispatched throughout Italy and the beginning of PNF observance of the Italian public, as standard procedure, was established.¹⁵⁸

Prior to Mussolini's 1925 speech, PNF provincial leaders attempted to establish a network of PNF representation for fascist members located beyond the central provincial offices in the cities.¹⁵⁹ The PNF started procuring locations for *Case del Fascio* in which to hold political meetings, which occurred unsystematically in existing buildings. Documents visually describing these buildings, such as architectural drawings or photos, are few. By 1925, despite the growth

¹⁵⁶ Giacomo Matteotti, *The Fascisti Exposed, A Year of Fascist Domination* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969; first published in English in 1924), p. 15, p. 87.

¹⁵⁷ Matteotti was kidnapped and murdered in June of 1924.

¹⁵⁸ M. Clark, *Modern Italy 1871-1982* (London: Longman, 1985), p. 230.

¹⁵⁹ Renzo De Felice divided the *Fascist* years into the phases in his book on *Mussolini* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi editore, 1974) as "*la conquista del potere*" from 1921-25; "*L'organizzazione dello Stato fascista*" from 1925-29; "*Gli anni del consenso*" from 1929-36; and "*lo Stato totalitario*" from 1936-1940.

of fascist membership, there is minimal evidence of the construction of new *Casa del Fascio*.

The normal procedure to acquire a “headquarters” location by a PNF Provincial Secretary, in the years between 1923 and 1925, was to repurpose a previous *Casa del Popolo*, acquire an existing *palazzo* as was the case for major Italian cities, or simply to use an existing meeting room for the new local PNF seat.

The Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro (OND), 1923

The *Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro*, or OND, was a significant program component of the *Casa del Fascio* building. The *Dopolavoro* was first “setup up by Fascist trade unions in 1923-24 to compete with still surviving Socialist recreational and cultural circles. On May 1, 1925, these were removed from syndicalist control by the PNF and unified under the *Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro* (OND).”¹⁶⁰ In June of 1925, a letter was sent from the PNF Internal Minister to the Prefects of the Kingdom of Italy.

l’Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro, istituita con R.D.Legge 1st Maggio 1925 n. 582, si è rivolta a questo ministero per conoscere gli indirizzi dei circoli di cultura, ricreativi e sportive di tutto il Regno, per potere più efficacemente diffondere in “bollettino”, che l’Ente pubblica e meglio conseguire, quindi, gli scopi patriottici e nazionali, che sono la ragione della istituzione.¹⁶¹

After May 1927, when the PNF seized full control of the OND, the network of local groups was gradually extended nationwide. Under Achille Starace, the earlier vice-secretary of the PNF and the later national secretary of the PNF from 1931 to 1939, “the OND’s local operations were

¹⁶⁰ Victoria De Grazia, “Dopolavoro,” in Philip V. Cannistraro, ed. *Historical Dictionary of Fascist Italy* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982), p. 175.

¹⁶¹ ASM, Rome, June 2, 1925, letter from the *Ministero dell’Interno* to *Signori Prefetti del Regno*. (Milan Archive)

[Translation: The Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro, established by Royal Decree Law 1st May 1925 # 582, turned to this Ministry in order to know the addresses of circles of culture, sports and recreation across the Kingdom, to be able to more effectively disseminate public institutions in the “Bulletin”, and to better achieve, for patriotic and national purposes, which are the reason for the institution.”]

vastly expanded as a way of undercutting the Fascist unions” in the years during the depression.”¹⁶² Using the OND to gain influence over the working class, as well as the peasants in rural areas, was a strategy the PNF took seriously. Historian Diane Ghirardo noted that “anonymous spies for the Ministry of the Interior and for the PNF repeatedly emphasized that the working class was the most disdainful of fascism, the most skeptical about its promises and the most critical and rebellious.”¹⁶³ A 1936 OND book published by the PNF graphically demonstrated that the PNF organization focused on its 19,554 members separately depending on their “class” level. The OND chart, in the book, divided the members into office workers and working class members. The PNF had a specific unease with the working class and sought to educate those members in order to mollify any potential unrest [Fig. 3]. In later years, Starace had complained that the *rurali* “when not simply apathetic or recalcitrant, were little inclined toward any form of organized activity,” therefore in some cases, the strategy to keep the working class and the *rurali* busy with OND activities did not work as well as planned.¹⁶⁴

The OND book was distributed by the PNF in order to publicize the beneficial results of the OND organization. Boldly graphic charts in the OND book document the membership growth and the quantity of activities the organization offered to its members. The membership had strong growth from 1926 to 1936, increasing from 164,000 office workers and 116,000 working class members in 1926, to 864,000 office workers and 1,921,000 working class members by 1936 [Fig. 4]. The 1929 Decree included the *Dopolavoro* program in the PNF regulations and a surge in membership occurred, particularly for the working class who doubled

¹⁶² Victoria De Grazia, “Dopolavoro,” in Philip V. Cannistraro, ed. *Historical Dictionary of Fascist Italy* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982), p. 175.

¹⁶³ Diane Yvonne Ghirardo, “Città Fascista: Surveillance and Spectacle,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, SAGE, London, Thousand Oaks, CA and New Delhi, vol. 31 (1996), pp. 347-372.

¹⁶⁴ Victoria De Grazia, *The Culture of Consent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 124.

their earlier membership numbers. A law was enacted on May 24, 1937, officially incorporating the OND into the national structure of the PNF as a component of the *Casa del Fascio*.¹⁶⁵ By 1939, the OND had 23,000 groups, which constituted over 3.5 million members including a quarter of “*rurali*” constituents, which demonstrated high participation of OND members in group activities, movie entertainment and radio shows.¹⁶⁶ In the book, *Il Secondo Libro del Fascisti*, written by the PNF in 1939, the author wrote, “Il Fascismo ha fondata il dopolavoro, per offrire ai lavoratori di tutte le categorie un lieto riposo, che diventa una fonte di nuove energie per la razza.”¹⁶⁷ The PNF wanted voluntary participation in their headquarters and the leisure and entertainment activities of the OND attracted members, which also increased the PNF *milizia*.

The OND was a common program in the *Casa del Fascio* building before the official 1937 “incorporation” law was enacted. The OND often flanked the *Casa del Fascio* and had its own entry as did the ONB (*Opera Nazionale Balilla*) [Fig. 5]. Once the PNF adopted the OND, the “national leisure-time organization,” the PNF began to fuse regional loyalties into a consensus of national solidarity. The President of the *Dopolavoro* wrote that Mussolini wanted the OND organization to “dare al popolo lavoratore ogni mezzo atto alla sua elevazione e al suo benessere perchè questo compia in serenità il lavoro che forma la vittoria dell’Italia fascista.”¹⁶⁸ The OND was an adult organization, with social activities similar to an American YMCA,

¹⁶⁵ Victoria De Grazia, “Dopolavoro,” in Philip V. Cannistraro, ed. *Historical Dictionary of Fascist Italy* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982), p. 175.

¹⁶⁶ M. Clark, *Modern Italy 1871-1982* (London: Longman, 1985), pp. 244-45.

¹⁶⁷ PNF, *Il Secondo Libro del Fascista* (Rome: PNF, 1939), p. 52.

[Translation: “Fascism founded the Dopolavoro, for all categories of workers to have a happy respite, which becomes a source of new energy for the race.”]

¹⁶⁸ Archive of Milan, #378, *Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro*, signed by *Il Presidente del Dopolavoro*.

[Translation: “give the working people any means helpful to their elevation and well-being because it accomplishes serenity in their work and Fascist Italy’s victory.”]

incorporating game playing, relaxing, group sports along with much needed social assistance.¹⁶⁹

The educational activities of the OND included artistic and popular culture activities. One diagram in the OND book demonstrated the input of education and its resulting manifestation, which is evident in the large quantities of OND members who attended the theater, art classes and read books [Figs. 6-7]. Artistic education included participating in the orchestra, *pletto*, *archi*, *corali*, *filodrammatiche*, cinema, and *bande*.¹⁷⁰ Also reported in the OND diagrams was factual data about the PNF's 6,427 libraries, which owned 1,173,537 books, demonstrating the member's intellectual prowess [Fig. 8]. Cultural activities included classes, art shows, theater and conferences [Fig. 9]. The first art show of the OND, the *Mostra Dopolavoristica* (Show of the *Dopolavoro* members), consisting of works of painting, sculpture, photography and decorative art, occurred in October 1929. The poster for the art show included a quote by Mussolini, "L'arte portata a contatto delle moltitudini, che ad essa, come alla religione domandano un sovrumano conforto, deve costituire una delle fonti perenni di vita per il popolo Italiano."¹⁷¹ There were 3,420 courses offered in areas of *stenografia*, *disegno*, *scultura*, *pittura*, *ligue estere*, *analfabeti*, *cultura generale*, *politica*, *diritto*, *economia*, and *insegnamento professionale*, which were well attended.¹⁷²

OND members were fond of games, with over 1,000,000 members participating in *bocce*, followed in popularity by board games. Besides the low energy board games, the PNF deemed

¹⁶⁹ Victoria De Grazia, *The Culture of Consent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1981, pp. 15-17.

¹⁷⁰ [Translation: "picks, strings, choirs, amateur theatre activities, cinema, and bands"]

¹⁷¹ Announcement of *Mostra Dopolavoristica di Pittura, Scultura, Bianco e Nero, ed Arte Decorativa in Sala del Teatro Dopolavoro C.G.E., dal 5 al 27 Ottobre, 1929.*

[Translation: "The art brought in contact with the multitudes, who, as a religion they ask a superhuman consolation, it must be one of the perennial sources of life for the people of Italy."]

¹⁷² Archive of Milan, #378, *Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro.*

[Translation: "shorthand, drawing, sculpture, painting, foreign policy, reading classes, general knowledge, languages, law, business, and professional teaching"]

games of sport essential for improving the physical and mental abilities of the members. The OND included games of *atletica pesante, canottaggio, scherma, tennis, atletica leggera* – the favorite of the members, *tiro a volo, ginnastica, nuoto, tiro a segno, pallacanestro, pugilato*, and hockey.¹⁷³ Both interior games and exterior sports required designated spaces in the planning of new *Case del Fascio* buildings [Figs.10-11].

OND group outings and tours were considered by the PNF to be a leisure activity, as well providing education to its members about Italy. Italian tourism by its citizens grew rapidly in the 1930s, which was one of the most popular *Dopolavoro* activities. Some OND groups took trips together on bicycles or motorcycles. Many Italians obtained summer residences at the sea or in the mountains and frequented exhibits of vacation house designs. The growth in travel and the creation of a vacationing leisure culture developed from the OND's programs. Thousands participated in the OND tourist activities, which the PNF promoted through the *Federazione Italiana dell'Escursionismo* (Italian Federation of Excursion), which noted that “queste attività che raccolgono largo favore nelle masse lavoratrici hanno avuto notevole sviluppo” [Fig. 12].¹⁷⁴ Tourism became a well-developed industry in the 1930s due to the OND.

Social and health assistance was part of the early *Dopolavoro* program and grew to as many as 3,500 assistance centers in OND spaces in *Case del Fasio* by 1936. The OND also provided *abulatori* and *poliambulanze* (out-patient and ambulance) services. From these OND assistance centers, Italians could enroll their children in *colonie* (seaside or mountain summer

¹⁷³ Archive of Milan, #378, *Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro*.

[Translation: “heavy athletics, rowing, fencing, tennis, track and field, light athletics - the favorite of the members, skeet, shooting, gymnastics, swimming, archery, basketball, boxing...”]

¹⁷⁴ Archive of Milan, #378, *Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro*.

[Translation: “these activities that have gained wide favor of the working people, they have had remarkable development.”]

camps), which would allow the youth to escape the inner city for fresh air with the PNF's goal of preventing tuberculosis, among other benefits [Fig.13].

Milan had a particularly strong OND program by 1928, noted for having groups that were “la più viva partecipazione delle masse lavoratrici, cui il Dopolavoro ha in ogni modo offerto la più ampia possibilità di elevazione morale, materiale e culturale.”¹⁷⁵ The Milanese OND dispersed a journal, titled “*Il Dopolavoro di Milano*,” to 20,000 Italians in order to spread the message of their activities and to reach isolated groups. The OND's motive was propagandistic demonstrated by their celebration of the successful mailing. The Milan OND boasted that the journal, “*Dopolavoro di Milano*, che entra ormai nel 4th anno di vita ha dimostrato di essere ottimo veicolo di propaganda tra le masse lavoratrice. L'azione del giornale *Il Dopolavoro di Milano* è stata illustrata ampiamente l'azione del Governo Nazionale per il benessere delle masse lavoratrici italiane.”¹⁷⁶ The outreach of the PNF, through the OND, to satisfy the working class was useful in creating a national consensus among Italians and helped the PNF to increase their membership, thereby increasing the numbers of *milizia* as well.

The presence of the OND organization in a *Casa del Fascio* building benefited the membership numbers for the PNF, while also benefiting the financial stability of the *Casa del Fascio*. The OND often supported their portion of the construction of a *Casa del Fascio* with their own funds or the OND contributed to the income of the local PNF by renting space in the *Casa del Fascio* building. In Bernezzo, Cuneo, for example, the cost for the *Casa del Fascio*

¹⁷⁵ Archive of Milan, #378, *Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro*, Prot. N. 13393.

[Translation: “the more lively participation of the working masses, which the Dopolavoro has offered to them in ample ways the possibility of moral, cultural and material growth.”]

¹⁷⁶ Archive of Milan, #378, *Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro*.

[Translation: “The journal, “The Dopolavoro (after-work) in Milan,” entering now in the 4th year of life, has proven to be a very good propaganda vehicle among the working masses. The results of the well-illustrated journal, “Dopolavoro (after-work) of Milan,” amplified the action by the National Government for the welfare of working people.”]

building in 1936 was a sum of £44.497,90 and the OND group supplied the largest singular contribution of £19.000,00.¹⁷⁷

The 1925 “*Battaglia del Grano*” Program and Self-sufficiency

In the 1920s, Mussolini developed a foreign policy with the goal of raising the Italian economy through self-sufficiency by avoiding dependence on foreign countries. Pietro Gorgolini wrote in 1923 that Mussolini believed “we should keep our gold at home instead of spending it on foreign products that merely hinder our own prosperity.”¹⁷⁸ Mussolini’s 1925 program, called the “Battle of the Grain,” was an early effort to make Italy a producer of its own food, particularly grain. This ambitious rural program spawned many new towns and *borghi* (rural centers) in the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s in hopes of creating a strong agricultural base. The program’s other purpose was to decentralize the urban population by moving workers from dense cities to the countryside, which would help avoid urban uprisings from disgruntled city dwellers. Photos of the grain harvest were taken in unlikely locations, such as the *Piazza del Duomo* in Milan, to make a strong visual example of self-sufficiency to the Italian people [Fig. 14]. Mussolini was also photographed harvesting grain in many of the new rural locations, particularly in the new towns built in the Pontine Marshlands close to Rome. Mussolini’s own image, holding a bundle of wheat, can still be seen in the entry mosaics of the church in Sabaudia, one of the agricultural new towns of the Pontine Marshlands. Metal ornamentation in the shape of wheat stalks was commonly applied to many PNF buildings. After the 1925 “Battle of the Grain,” Mussolini’s desire for Italy to be self-sufficient extended beyond the agricultural fields. An “*Enti Autarchici*” (Public Agency of Self-sufficiency) was

¹⁷⁷ ACS, Serie PNF B. 1012, Bernezzo, (Cuneo), “*rendiconto finanziario*.”

¹⁷⁸ Pietro Gorgolini, *The Fascist Movement in Italian Life* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, Ltd., 1923), p. 76.

established in the 1926 Decree, and by January 1929, all Italian government agencies were required to purchase only Italian-made goods. By September 1931, all foreign products were tariffed at a higher rate.^{179 180}

1926 Decree (*Statuto-regolarmento*)

By 1926, the PNF made modifications to the 1921 Decree to accommodate the growing complexity of the PNF. The regulations in the 1926 Decree established a stronger central administration rather than the decentralized provincial authority prevalent from 1921 to 1925. The regulations began with the statement, “Il Fascismo è una Milizia al servizio della Nazione” rather than the “milizia volontaria” (voluntary militia) as noted in the 1921 Decree. The 1926 statements were followed by, “il Fascismo si è sempre considerato in stato di Guerra,” which increased the militaristic fervor of the PNF in the new guidelines.¹⁸¹

In the 1926 modifications, the PNF was defined as “costituito da Fasci di Combattimento, che sono raggruppati in Federazioni Provinciali” and “il Duce” was listed at the top of the hierarchical chart.¹⁸² Il Duce was followed by the *Segretario Generale* del PNF, then the *Segretario del Fascio di Combattimento* (Secretary of the *Casa del Fascio*).¹⁸³ The *Segretario Generale* of the PNF, the second in command after Il Duce, presided over the offices of the *Segreteria Politica, the Segreteria Amministrativa, Enti Autarchici, Stampa, Propaganda,*

¹⁷⁹ Mario Missori, *Gararchie e statuti del P.N.F.* (Rome: Bonacci Editore, 1986), p. 357.

¹⁸⁰ Philip V. Cannistraro, ed. *Historical Dictionary of Fascist Italy* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1982), p. 43.

¹⁸¹ Mario Missori, *Gararchie e statuti del P.N.F.* (Rome: Bonacci Editore, 1986), *Statuto del PNF*, 1926, p. 355.

[Translation: “Fascism is a militia at the service of the nation”]

[Translation: “Fascism always consider itself in a state of war”]

¹⁸² Mario Missori, *Gararchie e statuti del P.N.F.* (Rome: Bonacci Editore, 1986), p. 356.

[Translation: “consisting of Case del Fascio, which are grouped in provincial federations”]

¹⁸³ Mario Missori, *Gararchie e statuti del P.N.F.* (Rome: Bonacci Editore, 1986), p. 356.

Organizzazioni giovanili, Fasci femminili, Associazione Famiglie dei Caduti Fascisti and Associazione Studenti Universitari. The *Segreteria Politica* was responsible to oversee the associations titled *Insegnanti Fascisti, Ferrovieri Fascisti, Postelegrafonici Fascisti*, and to maintain a connection to the offices of the *Comando Generale MVSN, Segreteria Generale dei Fasci all'Estero, Presidenza della Confederazioni dei Datori di Lavoro e lavoratori, Presidenza dell'Ente Nazionale della Cooperazione.* As the program for the PNF expanded, so did the space required in the PNF headquarters buildings.

The singular *Fascio* group was an essential arm of the central PNF authority, as was noted in regulation number 25 of the 1926 Decree: “Il Fasci è l’organismo fondamentale dell vita del Partito...”¹⁸⁴ The head authority of each *Fascio* group was hand-picked by the Federal secretary who nominated the secretary of every *Fascio di Combattimento (Casa del Fascio)* of the province and “controllando che le norme di vita che promanano dell’alto costituiscano uniforme disciplina per tutti i gregari.”¹⁸⁵ PNF membership cards were instituted in 1926 and new members were required to attend an annual “solemn” ceremony occurring on the 23rd of March, the anniversary of the 1919 rally in *Piazza San Sepolcro* in Milan. Each member was required to recite, “Giuro di seguire senza discutere gli ordini del Duce e di servire contute le mie forze e se è necessario, col mio sangue la causa della Rivoluzione Fascista” [Fig. 15].¹⁸⁶ Card-carrying PNF members were required to convene at the *Fascio* at two designated times during in the year. The 1926 Decree never described the type of building needed for the PNF *Fascio*, but it

¹⁸⁴ Mario Missori, *Gararchie e statuti del P.N.F.* (Rome: Bonacci Editore, 1986), p. 360.

[Translation: “The Fascio is the fundamental organization of the life of the Party.”]

¹⁸⁵ Mario Missori, *Gararchie e statuti del P.N.F.* (Rome: Bonacci Editore, 1986), p. 360.

[Translation: “making sure the standards that emanate from the high are a uniform discipline for all members.”]

¹⁸⁶ Mario Missori, *Gararchie e statuti del P.N.F.* (Rome: Bonacci Editore, 1986), p. 360.

[Translation: “Swear to follow, without question, the orders of Mussolini and to serve with my force and if needed to, with my blood, for the cause of the Fascist Revolution.”]

was obvious by 1926 that an assembly space and offices were essential for the developing programs of the PNF.

The *Opera Nazionale Balilla* (ONB), 1926 and the *Casa del Fascio*

On April 3, 1926, the *Opera Nazionale Balilla* (ONB) was established for children from six to eighteen years of age. The PNF-controlled ONB program was run by Renato Ricci, the ONB president, for ten years. The ONB's youth programs rivaled the educational programs of the Catholic Church, which was a source of tension between the Vatican and the PNF. The ONB became a law-sanctioned program when modifications were made to the former 1926 Degree on January 12, 1928, which, "prohibited the creation of any new youth groups and dissolved all branches of the Catholic Boy Scouts except those in towns of more than twenty thousand inhabitants."¹⁸⁷ Enrollment in the ONB was compulsory after 1937.¹⁸⁸ The ONB's physical fitness training and semi-military approach mirrored the activities of the adult's training in the *Casa del Fascio*. Often, small ONB buildings were tacked on to the *Casa del Fascio* with their own entrance [Fig. 16]. In the early 1930s, the *Casa del Fascio* often included an ONB office within the body of the building and the youth would use the same facilities as the adults. After 1937, the ONB occupied their own buildings, which rivaled the *Casa del Fascio* in size and could be easily mistaken for the adult PNF headquarters building [Fig. 17].

A square within the town plan of Littoria, a new PNF town built in 1932, provides some insight into the relationship of the ONB organization to the institution of the Catholic Church. The ONB, with a large *palestra*, flanked the Catholic Church in a planned town square of

¹⁸⁷ Victoria De Grazia, "Youth Organizations," in Philip V. Cannistraro, ed. *Historical Dictionary of Fascist Italy* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1982), p. 570.

¹⁸⁸ Victoria De Grazia, "Youth Organizations," in Philip V. Cannistraro, ed. *Historical Dictionary of Fascist Italy* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1982), p. 570.

Littoria [Fig. 18]. The ONC (Veteran's organization of PNF, mothers and widows included in this building) occupied the other PNF building in the square. This town square layout embodies the tension and the inherent hierarchy between institutions that were recognized by the PNF, who sanctioned the town plan and financed the construction of all of the buildings in Littoria. In 1942, a large *Casa del Fascio* was built on the neighboring block, in the shape of an "M", behind the ONC building [Fig. 19]. In the earlier configuration, the Catholic Church was dominant in size, with the flanking ONC and ONB buildings receiving equally-sized spaces on each side of the church edifice. One could infer that the PNF, represented by the ONC and the ONB buildings, was watching over the activities of the Catholic Church. On the other hand, the PNF buildings, particularly the ONB, may have been located in close proximity to the church's entry to make their presence known and their PNF youth programs a temptation to the youthful congregants.

1928 *Ordinamento e Attribuzioni del Gran Consiglio del Fascismo*

In 1928, modifications were added to the former Decrees to define the work of the *Gran Consiglio* of *Fascismo* (Grand Council of Fascism), which was described as the supreme organization that coordinates and integrates all of the activities of the PNF. The members of the *Gran Consiglio* established the laws and were responsible for all national interests. Article number 10 in the 1928 modifications noted that the work of the *Gran Consiglio* was done for free and that the seats of the *Gran Consiglio* were secret. This 1928 modification had little effect on the singular *Casa del Fascio*, but did affect the central PNF *palazzo*, which housed the PNF offices in Rome and created an atmosphere of additional secrecy.

***Bonifica Integrale* Program, 1928**

A law passed on December 1928 (no. 3134), which established the *Bonifica Integrale* (land reclamation) Program that was connected to the 1925 “Battle of the Grain” effort. The *Bonifica Integrale* Program’s greatest success was in the draining of the Pontine Marshes and the subsequent construction of five new towns, most notably Littoria (renamed Latina after WWII), built in 1932, and Sabaudia, built in 1933.¹⁸⁹ The PNF’s emphasis on rural living and agricultural self-sufficiency, which these new towns represented, was highly publicized in journals, in the newspapers, and on newsreels. Mussolini was celebrated for his massive effort in draining the marshlands and ridding them of malaria-carrying mosquitoes. Caesar had hoped to clear the marshlands during ancient Roman times, but did not succeed, which made the accomplishment of Mussolini seem even greater. The new towns and *borghi* (rural centers), built as a result of the *Bonifica Integrale* Program, provided useful data for determining the PNF’s functional and symbolic intentions for their buildings. The new towns and *borghi* were unencumbered by existing buildings and each enclave generally had a newly built *Casa del Fascio*. The new towns also included a church, a tower, a *comune*, a shop, a school and occasionally a hotel and buildings that served the agricultural needs of the nearby farmers. The *borghi* generally had a church, a *comune*, a *Casa del Fascio*, a shop and a school.

Most new PNF communities were located south of Rome and a few were located in rich mineral zones in the north. The locations selected by the PNF took advantage of areas that could cultivate crops or extract mineral riches most easily. The PNF also placed the newly constructed communities in locations in underdeveloped areas of the Italian peninsula, where the least pro-fascist population lived.

¹⁸⁹ Philip V. Cannistraro, ed. *Historical Dictionary of Fascist Italy* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1982), p. 81.

1929 Decree

Modifications titled, “all’ordinamento del Gran Consiglio del Fascismo e del PNF” were issued four days before the official 1929 Decree was issued on December 18, 1929.¹⁹⁰ The December 14, 1929 modifications added PNF regulations in foreign affairs, education, forestry and industry. The actual 1929 Decree refined definitions to the previous Decrees of 1926 and 1928.

Regulations in the 1929 Decree affected the physical *Casa del Fascio* building and the placement of the building within urban areas of Italian cities. The authorization to organize *Fasci in Sottosezioni* (outside sections) or *Circoli rionali* (districts) revealed the PNF’s push for growth beyond the central areas of Italian cities. The establishment by the PNF of more *Casa del Fascio*, called *Gruppo Rionale Fascista* (GRF), in outlying areas increased the membership and the PNF’s surveillance of more city zones.

Minor regulation additions to the 1929 Decree affected the signage and insignia that adorned *Casa del Fascio* buildings. In the earlier 1921 Decree, the requirement of a pennant for each *Fascio* was called a *Gagliardetto di combattimento*, which changed in 1929 to be referred to as “l’emblema del Fascio ed il simbolo della fede.”¹⁹¹ In the 1926 Decree, Mussolini was referred to as “il Duce,” which meant leader. In the 1929 Decree, Mussolini’s title was spelled out in capital letters “DUCE,” which embellished many *Casa del Fascio* facades and building cornices [Fig. 20].

PNF office requirements were increased in the 1929 Degree with the addition of offices for university educators, *Gruppi universitari fascisti*, sports, the *Dopolavoro*, a history office and

¹⁹⁰ [Translation: “the orders of the Grand Council of Fascism and of the PNF”]

¹⁹¹ Mario Missori, *Gararchie e statuti del P.N.F.* (Rome: Bonacci Editore, 1986), p. 370.

[Translation: “the emblem of the Casa del Fascio and the symbol of faith”]

an *archivio*.¹⁹² Records of registered fascists were ordered to be kept and archived; therefore a secure space for this increased observance by the PNF was warranted. In the mid and late 1930s, the *archivio* was often located in the tower, along with stored water to increase the water pressure in the building. The 1929 Decree stipulated that the head of each *Fascio* was required to observe and report any problems of the local PNF group – in particular any problems of a moral, social or economic nature – to the provincial PNF head, who was then required to report the information to the Federal PNF Director. The new motto for fascist members listed in the 1929 Decree was “*Fede, Coraggio, Disciplina e Onestà*” (Faith, Courage, Discipline, and Honesty), demonstrating an emphasis on promoting more trusting PNF members. The PNF’s mistrust was revealed by the added surveillance of the additional GRF buildings.

The increased control and surveillance by the central PNF in Rome was evident as the PNF *Segretario Federale* was required to nominate the *Segretario* of each *Fascio di Combattimento*. The *Segretario* of each local *Fascio* had the assignment to assemble their members at the beginning of the year to announce the PNF programs intended for the next six months. The *Segretario* was required to meet again with their members in May or June. The assembly space of the *Casa del Fascio* building was often used and still considered as the essential component of the building for the activities of the PNF.

A major part of the 1929 Decree refined the rules for becoming a member of the PNF, which was first noted in 1921. The PNF was free for a new member to join if he or she was an invalid of the war, a family member of a fallen fascist or the father of a family with seven or more children. Otherwise the new member had to pay a fee to the PNF and a stamped “paid”

¹⁹² Mario Missori, *Gararchie e statuti del P.N.F.* (Rome: Bonacci Editore, 1986), p. 372.

mark was then entered into the PNF *tessera*, or membership card, on a monthly basis.¹⁹³ The 1929 Decree also required that a solemn ceremony now take place every April 21st for newly inscribed youthful members, which was the anniversary of the birth of Rome. The ceremony, which celebrated the act of becoming a PNF member, occurred in the *Casa del Fascio* building. The celebration was undoubtedly meant to increase membership by reveling in a member's inclusion into the PNF. The increase in membership did occur after the 1929 Decree and affected the size of the assembly space needed for *Casa del Fascio* buildings.

Another policy change in the 1929 Decree affected the *Casa del Fascio* facade and how the years of the building's inauguration were recorded. A new calendar sequence was to begin on the 29th of October as the start of the fascist year, not January 1st. October 29, 1922 was the date of the March on Rome when power was handed over to Mussolini by King Victor Emmanuel III. Year number I (one) began in 1922 on the 29th of October. The date of a *Casa del Fascio*'s inauguration was required to be designated by Roman numerals, similar to the legacy of the Popes from the Catholic Church who had Roman numerals in their titles. In the case of *Casa del Fascio* buildings, the Roman numerals were written on the facade or the balcony of most new *Casa del Fascio* buildings. Building inaugurations often fell on the 29th of October. The letters "E.F.," for *Era Fascista*, would follow the Roman numerals [Fig. 21].

The Conflicts between the PNF and the Vatican

Rome was viewed by many as the center of the world in the 1920s – *Roma caput mundi*. It is coincidental that in 1922 a new Pope, Pope Pius XI, and the new political leader, Benito Mussolini, would begin their tenure in the same year in Rome. The city was the symbolic center

¹⁹³ The fee was not entered on the card.

for both of their institutions, the Vatican and the PNF. Pope Pius XI and Mussolini's overlapping years of leadership were intertwined and often strained, despite compromises and concessions they made on both religious and political sides. Regardless of the Pope's and Mussolini's differing ecclesiastic and political beliefs, they each adopted similar approaches to direct their messages to the Italian public. Both the Catholic Church and the PNF had parallel activity programs for their constituents and parallel rituals. Both the activities and the rituals were manifest in the architecture, interior design and urban placement of new *Casa del Fascio*. Historian Emilio Gentile writes that every local PNF group felt it necessary to have a headquarters "...worthy to host religious ceremonies." Gentile noted that the Turin Federal Secretary suggested that "A Faith needs a Temple."¹⁹⁴ The parallels between the Vatican and the PNF are numerous and require an accounting of Catholic Church decisions along with PNF decisions, during the *Ventennio* (twenty years of fascist rule), to explain the thesis that the PNF had its own "religion," which was then manifest in the architecture of the *Casa del Fascio*. Architectural features, more commonly associated with the Church, were reinterpreted and used for the PNF *Casa del Fascio* building. Scholars of "the modern Christian West from a socio-historic point of view" have discerned that "the political has progressively usurped the place of the religious" during these years in Europe.¹⁹⁵

Tensions between the Vatican and the Italian government had been strained long before the creation of the PNF.

Relations between Italy and the Vatican had been strained since the Risorgimento, during which the Kingdom of Italy had absorbed the Papal States, and the seizure of Rome in 1870 deprived the Vatican of its remaining territory. Pius IX refused

¹⁹⁴ Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 1996, p. 124.

¹⁹⁵ Raimundo Panikkar, "Religion or Politics: the Western Dilemma," in Peter H. Merkl and Ninian Smart, ed., *Religion and Politics in the Modern World* (New York: NYU Press, 1985), p. 48.

to recognize the loss of his state, proclaiming himself a “prisoner” in the Vatican, and his successors followed suit during the next six decades.¹⁹⁶

“The States of the Church, which extended over the whole of Central Italy, had been taken from the Pontiff... In protest, Pius IX returned into the Vatican palaces and closed the doors against the invaders.”¹⁹⁷

During the years between 1870 and 1922, more injustices occurred to the Vatican possessions, which illustrate how two ruling entities – one religious and the other political – were constantly competing for similar territory.

Other difficulties surfaced between Italy and the Vatican during the war [WWI], as the Vatican refused to censor the communications of representatives to the Holy See whose countries found themselves at war with Italy....The Holy See revealed its goodwill toward the Italians by protesting the Austrian bombardment of Ravenna and Venice, criticizing the attacks upon these open and undefended cities and their hapless populations. On the other hand, Pope Benedict was incensed by the Italian seizure of the *Palazzo Venezia*, the seat of the Austrian embassy to the Holy See, in the summer of 1916.”¹⁹⁸

The building, *Palazzo Venezia*, had been formerly owned by the Catholic Church and resided in by the Catholic Church’s Austrian Ambassador. The *Palazzo* had been seized in 1916 by the Italian government, and in 1922, *Palazzo Venezia* became a symbol of Mussolini’s central authority as his PNF headquarters. Mussolini selected the *Sala del Mappamondo* (Globe Room) as his office. The grand piazza, *Piazza Venezia*, was situated in front of the *palazzo* and at the base of the Roman Forum near Capitoline Hill. This prominent location gave Mussolini a central position in the heart of ancient Rome from which to address his constituents [Fig. 22]. The parallels and rivalry between the Catholic Church and the Italian government, depicted by this

¹⁹⁶ Frank J. Coppa, *Controversial Concordats* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999), p. 83.

¹⁹⁷ Morgan, Thomas B. *A Reporter at the Papal Court* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1937), p. 92.

¹⁹⁸ Frank J. Coppa, *Controversial Concordats* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999), p. 84.

change of fortune with *Palazzo Venezia*, are evident in the physical architecture of the *Casa del Fascio* buildings that ultimately represented the PNF. *Palazzo Venezia*, now serving as the face of the central PNF, became an unspoken example for the *Casa del Fascio* building program.¹⁹⁹ The *Palazzo Venezia*'s most obvious features – the grand medieval tower and a central balcony hovering above the *piazza* – were repeated often in the architecture and urban planning strategies of new *Palazzi del Littorio* and on the smaller *Casa del Fascio* in the 1930s.

The most public disagreements between the PNF and the Catholic Church occurred in the late 1920s because of a contentious debate over a Catholic laity-run program called Catholic Action. The *Azione Cattolica Italiana* (Italian Catholic Action Program) was an apolitical organization of Catholic laity that was established in 1867 and unified during the years of Italian Fascism. After decades of discord between the Vatican and the previous Italian government over seized lands and rivalrous programs, Pope Pius XI and Mussolini worked on a settlement called the Lateran Accords in the late 1920s. The final 1929 Lateran Accord included a Concordat, one of three documents in the Lateran Accord, which finally ended the stalemate between the Vatican and the reigning Italian government, the PNF. The Vatican had requested several changes to be included in the 1929 Concordat Agreement: recognition for the Catholic Action organization, legal status for church marriages, the ability to appoint bishops without government consent, and to have lands that were entirely theirs.²⁰⁰ Historian Robin Anderson summarized the negotiations,

Pius XI was soon obliged to protest to Mussolini's Fascist government of Italy, particularly concerning the dictator's claims upon the young men and women of

¹⁹⁹ The idea of the use of *Palazzo Venezia* as a visual precedent for *Casa del Fascio* is not from archival sources, but is conjecture based on the obvious relationship between the two PNF buildings, the *Palazzo Venezia* and the *Casa del Fascio*.

²⁰⁰ Frank J. Coppa, *Controversial Concordats* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999), p. 82.

Catholic Action. But the attitude of Italian Fascism at least left room for negotiation, which had not been possible with preceding governing powers. Pius XI, in his well-known phrase, was ‘ready to deal with the Devil himself if it were in the Church’s interests.’ After more than a hundred meetings between Secretary of State Cardinal Gasparri and Mussolini’s representative, the Lateran Treaty between the Holy See and Italy was signed on February 11, 1929. The Pope was recognized as the independent temporal sovereign of the Vatican state. At the same time, a concordat recognized the Catholic religion as the state religion of Italy and guaranteed the Church’s rights in education marriage, and religious questions. The sixty-year-old roman Question was settled.²⁰¹

After the Holy See and the PNF agreed and signed the Lateran Accord on February 11, 1929, there were still disagreements. The Concordat Agreement had recognized the Catholic Action organization, but required that they carry out their activities outside of activities related to politics, or the PNF, in the exercise of their Catholic principles. The PNF had wanted to completely eliminate the youth education and recreational programs run by the Catholic Action Organization, which did not happen in the Concordat Agreement, so tensions between Mussolini and the Pope remained over this one program. The PNF offered similar programs for youth in the ONB and *Case del Fascio*, which caused a growing antagonism between the Catholic Church and PNF most strongly from 1929 to 1931.²⁰²

The controversy between the Vatican and the PNF existed because the two institutions were constantly seeking the devotion of the same constituents. The parallels between the two dominant belief systems in Italy – of the Vatican and the PNF – were apparent. The parallels are noted in numerous texts which equate religion and fascism. In Giuseppe Bottai’s book, *Il Fascismo e L’Italia Nuova* (n.d.), he discussed religion as an instrument of politics.²⁰³ In Giovanni Gentile’s book, *Che cosa e il fascismo* (1925), he described fascism as a religion and

²⁰¹ Robin Anderson, *Between Two Wars*, (Franciscan Press, 1978), p. 82.

²⁰² See D. A. Binchy, *Church and State in Fascist Italy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1941) and Sandro Rogari, “Azione Cattolica Italiana” and Albert C. O’Brien, “Lateran Pacts” in P. Cannistraro, ed., *Historical Dictionary of Fascist Italy*, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982), pp. 50-52, pp. 298-300.

²⁰³ G. Bottai, *Il fascismo e l’Italia nuova*, (Rome: PNF, n.d.), pp. 70-71.

called for religious spirit to be present in politics.²⁰⁴ ²⁰⁵ Gentile assisted with the character of the text in Mussolini's book, *Fascist Doctrines*, which had a religious tone,

Fascism is a religious conception in which man is seen in his immanent relationship with a superior law and with an objective Will that transcends the particular individual and raises him to conscious membership in a spiritual society. Whoever has seen in the religious politics of the Fascist regime nothing but mere opportunism has not understood that Fascism, besides being a system of government, is also, and above all, a system of thought . . . Mussolini, *Dottrina del Fascismo*, 1932

Historian Paul O'Brien wrote, "Recalling the religious-style language of 'sacrifice' and national 'mission' of Giuseppe Mazzini's Young Italy movement, Gentile went on to aver that this was directly comparable to the youthful ideals, romanticism and heroism of the fascist squads."²⁰⁶ A fascist ritual was established in 1927 called the *Leva fascista* (fascist draft), which was:

...an initiation rite for adolescents who came from the avant-garde organizations and entered the party after it had been decided to close the membership. The *Leva fascista* was similar to the confirmation ceremony in the Catholic Church and was celebrated every year...the young people who wanted to join the party and the MVSN were received at the *Casa del Fascio* ...and after taking the oath of loyalty unto death to the Duce and the cause of the fascist revolution, they received their membership [with the retort "we consecrate you Fascists"] and their musket."²⁰⁷

Historian Emilio Gentile wrote, "...right from its origins fascism had the character of a civil religion and its organization was considered a 'militia' at the service of a 'faith'."²⁰⁸ Therefore,

²⁰⁴ Giovanni Gentile, *Che cosa e il fascismo* (Rome: PNF, 1925), pp. 143-51.

²⁰⁵ Carlo Levi places the Fascists and the Catholic Action Boy Scouts in equal opposition. He wrote "a devout churchman...wore in his buttonhole, instead of the usual Fascist Party emblem, the round badge of Catholic Action" in *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, 1947, p. 34.

²⁰⁶ O'Brien, Paul, *Mussolini in the First World War: the journalist, the soldier, the fascist* (1962. 1st. ed. p. cm., London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2005), includes Mussolini's writings, translated into English. Originally presented as the author's thesis (doctoral)—Trinity College, Dublin.

²⁰⁷ Emilio Gentile, *The Struggle for Modernity: Nationalism, Futurism, and Fascism* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003), p. 101.

²⁰⁸ Emilio Gentile, *The Struggle for Modernity: Nationalism, Futurism, and Fascism* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003), p. 101.

the idea that the PNF could have adopted architectural forms from the rival faith system of the Catholic Church is not implausible.

The PNF, and the architects who interpreted their ideology, transferred the PNF's message into the already established symbolic forms of the Catholic Church and created typological, symbolic and iconographic parallels. Thus many of the elements generally associated with the Catholic Church, such as the pulpit, *campanile*, memorials, balconies, and assembly space – both inside and outside of the building – were also present in the *Casa del Fascio*. The fascists also incorporated activities into the PNF normally associated with the rituals of the Catholic institution. For example, Catholics were required to go to mass on Sunday. Fascists were encouraged to go to their local *Casa del Fascio* on “Fascist Saturday” when their “rituals” occurred, such as the naming of martyrs, the recalling of a history of past glories, and to show devotion to a central figure such as Mussolini. Specific hand gestures, such as blessing, praying, and saluting, and the wearing of uniforms were common to both religious and political institutions.

Both the Catholic Church and the PNF used a balcony, which had a rich historical significance relative to the earlier 1870 period discussed. In 1922, the new Pope Pius XI desired to change the tone of the former hidden Papacy by using his balcony to speak to the people. “...no Pope since 1870 had given his first public blessing from the outside of the basilica.”²⁰⁹ Pope Pius XI declared that “...it is my desire that my first benediction should be extended, as a pledge of the peace desired by humanity, not only to Rome, not only to Italy, but to the whole

²⁰⁹ Thomas B. Morgan, *A Reporter at the Papal Court* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1937), pp. 39-40.

Church and the entire world. This benediction I shall give from the external balcony of St.

Peter's" [Fig. 23].²¹⁰ The Papal reporter, Thomas Morgan, wrote,

Out of the Sistine Chapel Monsignor Respighi and the assistant ceremoniers escorted the Pontiff followed by the cardinals through the Sala Regia and above the loggia to the central balcony. The immense crowd by this time simmered with fervor. Cries of "Long Live the Pope" and "Hail Pius XI" came from all parts. It was exactly one hour since Cardinal Bisleti had announced the election. The wait had tried the patience but had not exhausted the enthusiasm of the crowd. When the Pontiff appeared and got nearer to the tapestry, there was a volley, rapturous and explosive as when the home team scores. "Evvivas" and handclapping reverberated through the columns and against the façade. Pius XI waited and waited. The applause subsided and he intoned the "*Sit nomen Domini benedictus.*" He extended his arm. Two fingers were closed on the palm and two were open. He recited the formula and became the first Pope in fifty-two years to bless the world on that spot."²¹¹

The Vatican reporter rhetorically inquired, "On his very first day had he not demonstrated his versatility by casting aside a fifty-year-old precedent to deliver his first benediction from the outside balcony of St. Peter's?"²¹² The first moments of Pope Pius XI's reign demonstrated the significance of the balcony, as well as its connection to the *piazza* and the roar of the masses.

The Pulpit and the Balcony

Both Pope Pius XI and Mussolini used the balcony, as well as a "pulpit," to speak to the Italian people throughout their reign. St. Peter's Basilica and *Palazzo Venezia* had balconies that protruded from the front façade of each building, which were used to address the masses of people in the *piazza* below. The interior use of both buildings, however, was not a parallel situation. Catholics attended mass at the altar in St. Peter's Basilica and listened to the words of the Pontiff at the pulpit. *Palazzo Venezia* has a large inner courtyard and an adjoining chapel,

²¹⁰ Ibid, p. 41.

²¹¹ Ibid, pp. 41-2.

²¹² Ibid, p.75.

but most speeches occurred at the exterior balcony. Most *Casa del Fascio* were planned primarily around an internal assembly space. *Case del Fascio* generally had a large *sala*, *palestra* or theater with a stage from which PNF leaders would address their *fascist* members, often with an image or a bust of Mussolini centered on the end wall. In some large *Case del Fascio* or *Palazzi del Littorio*, a unique layout developed with an internal “pulpit” that faced the *fascist* members in the *sala* on the interior, with a second “pulpit” or balcony that faced the crowds on the exterior. The unique layout and dual speaking perches allowed the orator to rally the *arditi* (the daring troops) from the inside of the *Casa del Fascio* before the troops marched to the outside – to raise the excitement of the crowd in the *piazza*. The PNF orator would then address all *fascists* in the town from the exterior of the building, speaking from his perch above them [Fig. 24]. The *Case del Fascio* in Como, Turin, Intra, Rapallo and Verona have this unique relationship with the dual speaking perches.²¹³ The early examples of *Case del Fascio*, in the 1920s, had balconies that protruded from the front façade, much like *Palazzo Venezia*.

New *Case del Fascio* in the mid-to-late 1930s, frequently included a tower, called a *torre littoria*, which included a balcony on the tower’s face, rather than being incorporated into the main body of the building. Catholic Churches also had a vertical component, the *campanile* (bell tower), but rarely did it also contain a balcony from which to address the people. Architects grappled with the PNF’s desire to address their fascist members both from inside and outside of *Case del Fascio* and some unique strategies were realized. The Vatican had the solution all along with an interior pulpit facing the assembly space and a balcony perched over an exterior *piazza*.

²¹³ Some speaking perches were raised porches, long horizontal balconies, or open hallways to inner courtyards. Many accommodated space for several people at the same time.

The *Arengario*, the *Arengo*, and the *Broletto*

The architects designing *Case del Fascio* for the PNF occasionally incorporated an exterior raised speaking platform, rather than a balcony, which they called an *arengario* or *arengo*. The *arengario* was located in front of *Case del Fascio* during the 1930s, if the buildings did not already have a balcony. The inclusion of an *arengario* occurred more often with single level *Case del Fascio*. The raised exterior platform was an architectural feature shared by town halls, churches, and the newer PNF headquarters. The *arengario* could easily be confused with a balcony, as both were places from which to address a crowd. Adding to the confusion, are numerous architectural renderings in the PNF files of *Case del Fascio* with their balcony labeled as a balcony, *arengario* or *arengo*.

The *arengario* was often used instead of a balcony, but at times an *arengario* and a balcony were both present. In the 1937 competition proposal for a *Palazzo del Littorio* in Rome, architects E. Rossi, M. Ridolfi, V. Cafiero and E. B. La Padula labeled the central opening in the building of PNF offices an *arengario*. The *torre littoria* in their scheme was connected to the same floor of the PNF office building and had a small balcony protruding from its face [Fig. 25]. De Renzi's submission for the 1934 Rome competition for a *Palazzo del Littorio* included an *arengario* reminiscent of Architect Marcello Piacentini's design for an *arengario* in the *piazza* in Brescia [Fig. 26].

Historically, an *arengario* was part of a government building, generally the town hall, as in Monza. Monza's *arengario* developed as a location from which to speak to the public when government officials were prohibited from using the steps in front of the adjacent *Duomo* to read decrees after 1380. The Monza *arengario* had been attached to the upper level of the town hall, which faced into the *piazza* and was called "la parléra." The entire building in Monza was

referred to as the *Arengario*, appropriately named for a building that “speaks” and an apt model for the *Casa del Fascio* [Fig. 27]. The word *arengo*, meaning assembly, was also often used to name the balcony or the lower exterior platform on or in front of *Casa del Fascio*.

The Monza *Arengario* acquired a clock tower and belfry around the year 1400. Clock towers and belfries were also added to existing buildings to transform them into *Casa del Fascio*; or designed as part of new *Casa del Fascio* buildings in the mid-to-late 1930s. There were multiple historic precursors for Mussolini’s balcony/*arengo*, the assembly hall, the bell and clock tower, which were not all religious in origin, but came from former town hall examples. The function of the architectural components – balcony, tower, and assembly space – in churches and town halls, were closely aligned to the same function in the *Casa del Fascio* – to spread a message to the masses.²¹⁴

Monza did have a *Casa del Fascio*, which was placed into an existing building, the former *Teatro Sociale*, in the 1920s.²¹⁵ The former theater bore great resemblance to the Monza *Arengario*, which was located several blocks way, with its pointed arches and intermittent white stone, placed within the brick arches. Both the medieval Monza *Arengario* and the newly possessed PNF *Casa del Fascio* had perches from which to address the crowds. A nearby church, Santa Maria in Istrada, was also clad with the same materials as the Monza *Arengario* and the *Casa del Fascio*. A photo, circa 1930, shows PNF orators on the balcony of the Monza *Casa del Fascio* speaking to a crowd-filled *piazza* below [Fig. 28]. In 1929, Edoardo Sala and engineer Aldo Varenna began designs for a new *Casa del Fascio* on the new *Via dell’Impero* in the *Piazza Trento Trieste* in Monza. The *Fascisti Monzesi* were hoping to

²¹⁴ Despite the existence of radios, few Italians had them, so assembling at the *Casa del Fascio* to hear news or to use the sole radio in their town was common.

²¹⁵ Relazione sulla Casa del Fascio di Monza, ACS, PNF files, Monza file, no date.

have a final seat for their *Casa del Fascio* that would be the exclusive property of the *Fascio*, as was noted by the local PNF *L'Ispettore Federale* (Federal Inspector), suggesting that their existing *Casa del Fascio* was shared with other entities in the former *Teatro Sociale* building.²¹⁶

A modern *arengario* in the *piazza* in Brescia, designed by Marcello Piacentini as a component of the entire *piazza* in 1931-1932, was indeed a precedent for other architects in their designs of *Casa del Fascio*. The historic architectural feature, the *arengario* platform from which orators would speak, found a new “home” in the PNF’s repertoire of components for their headquarter’s buildings. The Brescia *arengario* was immense in size, detached from the surrounding buildings, and was ornately sculpted by Antonio Maraini, who used the bas-reliefs to tell the history of Brescia. Piacentini, Mussolini’s official architect, set a precedent for other architects with his design of the *arengario*. The Brescia urban layout also included a clock tower, the *Torre della Rivoluzione*, which did not have a balcony, as the *arengario* served as the speaking podium. Piacentini designed a tower dedicated to the “Fallen” in the early years of fascism, 1922-1924, in an urban plan for Bergamo. The tower, with a balcony, presided over *Piazza Vittorio Veneto*, which was surrounded by banking establishments. Piacentini’s architecture and urban planning served as a strong precursor for designs of the *arengario*, the tower, and the *piazza* that architects created for their *Casa del Fascio* [Fig. 29].

The word, *arengario*, was used in 1936 to refer to dual PNF buildings, also referred to as the *Palazzo dell’ Arengario*, built next to the *Duomo* in Milan. A separate balcony was not part of the composition, as the buildings faced into the *Piazza del Duomo* and had a larger upper platform reached by exterior stairs that served as the orator’s perch. Piero Portaluppi, Giovanni

²¹⁶ Ibid, p. 2.

Muzio, Pier Giulio Magistretti and Enrico Agostino Griffini won a competition for the commission, which was part of an urban redesign of the area near the *Duomo* [Fig. 30]. The 1228 Milan *Broletto*, considered an “*arengario*”, was located in its own *piazza* on the opposite side of the *Piazza del Duomo*. The Milan *Broletto* also did not have a balcony [Fig. 31].

The word *broletto* was often used to name Italian town hall buildings that contained an upper floor assembly space with an open market below. The Monza *Arengario* was modeled on the 13th century *Broletto* in Milan. The Como *Broletto* was an influential marker in the city for Architect Giuseppe Terragni, who noted, “that in Como three monuments – the Tower, the *Broletto*, the *Duomo*: three periods, three revolutionary facts – flank one another and form the northern side of the *Piazza del Duomo* in a superb ensemble.”²¹⁷ This particular ensemble, which represented three historic periods, was a precedent for Terragni when he considered the urban placement of his *Casa del Fascio* in Como that represented the fascist period [Fig. 32].

Symbolic Similarities between the *Casa del Fascio* and the Church

After the signing of the Concordat in 1929, the architectural parallels between the two institutions – the Vatican and the PNF – visibly increased. PNF decisions regarding the urban placement of *Casa del Fascio* and the building’s physical appearance reflected similarities to a church’s urban placement and form. Catholic churches were generally located in prominent *piazze* and their call to parishioners came from the bells in their *campanili*. Historian Emilio Gentile notes that the bells in *Casa del Fascio* were to rival those of churches, but that their

²¹⁷ Giuseppe Terragni, “Building the Casa del Fascio in Como,” *Quadrante* 35-36, 1936, translated by Diane Ghirado in Peter Eisenman, Giuseppe Terragni, *Transformations Decompositions Critiques* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2003), p. 268.

towers were to symbolize the “communal towers of the Middle ages.”²¹⁸ The typical placement of a new *Casa del Fascio* building next to a church, and less frequently placement of a *Casa del Fascio* next to a *comune* or town hall, makes the rivalrous tower seem to be that of the church’s rather than the medieval town hall tower. Although some of these parallels do exist in medieval towns such as Arezzo, this assessment is also muddied, as the Arezzo *Casa del Fascio*, with a modified and raised medieval bell-tower rivaling the other medieval towers in the town, sits across from a church.

The *Casa del Fascio* in Castagneto Carducci and San Giovanni in Persiceto were located in prominent *piazze* with their own towers. Each *Casa del Fascio* attempted to inspire the same institutional respect demanded by a church edifice [Fig. 33].²¹⁹ The unbuilt *Casa del Fascio* in Castagneto Carducci was planned in 1939 to be located at the tip of *Piazza Belvedere*, a prominent outlook on one side of the small hill town. The main church, *Parrocchia S. Lorenzo*, was located at the other end of the small town. Visitors to Castagneto Carducci would have seen the *Casa del Fascio* first upon arrival to the town, had it been built on the *belvedere*. The two towers, each at one end of the town, would have bracketed the small city, if the *Casa del Fascio* had been built, as was the case in Montevarchi. The *Casa del Fascio* in San Giovanni in Persiceto, built in 1937, was located next to the church, *San Giovanni Battista*, in the center of town and shared the *Piazza del Popolo* with the church [Fig. 34]. Both the church and *Casa del Fascio* towers were located on the corners of the main *piazza*, easily identifiable from the approaching streets. The church’s tower was taller, had a belfry, a clock, a memorial at its base, and a crucifix at the top. The *Casa del Fascio* tower had a balcony, an *arengario*, a belfry and

²¹⁸ Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 124.

²¹⁹ The Castagneto Carducci *Casa del Fascio* was planned between 1935 and 1943, but never constructed.

two antennae, visible in the architect's sketch. There was also a linear balcony from the second level of the *Casa del Fascio*, which supported many PNF dignitaries during events in the *piazza* below. A *sacrario*, a PNF requirement for *Casa del Fascio*, normally present in the base of the tower, was located internally in the mass of the building. The ground level plan was occupied by five OND rooms, used by PNF members for leisure activities. The ground level spaces that were adjacent to the street and *piazza* were dedicated to shops, thus continuing the normal urban fabric of the town, which was an unusual use of space for a *Casa del Fascio*. The PNF's decisions to locate their *Casa del Fascio* buildings in such prominent locations, as seen in San Giovanni in Persiceto was purposeful, and occurred with great frequency, despite the difficulty in acquiring existing buildings and demolishing them in order to construct a new PNF headquarters.

Religious parallels are present in many PNF sponsored projects. An image from the 1937 competition for a *Palazzo del Littorio*, in Rome, shows the building's potential to inspire devotion as fascists saluted an empty *arengario* that represented their leader, which might parallel religious gestures for praying or blessing [Fig. 35].²²⁰ In parallel to religious buildings with symbolic ornament, the fascist congregation in this winning competition entry was surrounded by symbols of the PNF. Numerous *fasci*, whose origin was from the Etruscan period adopted by Caesar's Rome and then Mussolini, ornamented the façade. A single *fascio* was displayed on a black cloth draped over the *arengario* in the perspective drawing.²²¹ An eagle in the shape of an "M" was centrally placed on the tower, which sat above the *sacrario* that honored the war dead and heroes of the regime. A bas-relief of fascist martyrs embellished the

²²⁰ The winning entry for the second phase of the *Palazzo del Littorio* competition for Rome was designed by E. Del Debbio, A. Foschini and V. Morpurgo.

²²¹ The origin of the *fascio* is detailed in a 1927 book issued by the *Associazione Nazionale Fascista per le Biblioteche delle Scuole Italiane*. See Pericle Ducati, *Origine e Attributi del Fascio Littorio* (Bologna: Stabilimenti Poligrafici Riuniti, 1927).

face of the podium. Most poignant in mixing religion and politics was the projection of Mussolini's face on the façade of the Milan *Duomo* on the eleventh anniversary of the Fascist Revolution [Fig. 36].

Parallels between religious and fascist symbolism are evident outside of the context of decoration and architecture. The fascists imitated their religious predecessors by adopting similar, yet secularized rituals, such as the devotional gesture of the *fascist salute*, the *Giornata della fede* when women gave up their wedding rings at the monument for the "Fallen," and the creation of special days such as "Fascist Saturday" – the PNF's counterpart to Holy Sunday when fascists would convene to honor *il Duce*.²²² In 1924, the PNF had already noted the parallels, which were often conflicts, such as the difference between the Civil and Catholic calendars. The PNF described the situation,

Una gravissima questione di agitava da anni a cause dei contrasti troppo stidenti tra il Calendario civile e quello della Chiesa. Invano le Autorità Ecclesiastiche e i dirigenti dell'Azione Cattolica avevano invocato provvedimenti risolutivi. Così i voti del Clero e dell'Azione Cattolica sono stati accolti solo dal Governo Nazionale e tolti gli stidenti contrasti tra if due Calendari ed agevolato, così, l'adempimento del precetto religioso con la vacanza degli uffici pubblici.²²³

A rivalry was already present before the dialogues between the Vatican and the PNF took place in 1929, and continued throughout the *Ventennio*. Late in the 1930s, the PNF expected members to attend *Fascist Saturday*, as noted in Article 71 in the 1939 regulations of the PNF, which stipulated that activities of military, political, professional, cultural and sportive character were

²²² Both Fascist Saturday and the official introduction of a *sacrario* in the *Fasci di Combattimento* was officially noted in the 1939 Statute. Lucy Maulsby notes the introduction of a plaque for fascist martyrs in the *Mezzanote Casa del Fascio* in Milan in 1927, in *Fascism, Architecture, and the Claiming of Modern Milan, 1922-1943* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), p. 57.

²²³ PNF, *Religione e Clero nell'Opera del Governo Fascista* (Rome: PNF, 1924), pp. 12-13.

[Translation: "A very serious question of years of agitation due to strident conflicts between the Civil Calendar and the Church Calendar. In vain the ecclesiastical authorities and leaders of Catholic Action had called for decisive measures. So the votes of the Clergy and the Catholic Action were received only by the national Government and removed the contrasts between the two calendars and facilitated the fulfilment of religious precept with the holiday of public offices."]

to happen on Saturday afternoons. Article 72 added that optional Sunday activities of “le riunioni sportive e recreative,” were encouraged.”²²⁴

The Catholic Action Program and the Vatican’s focus on youth were major areas of overlap with the PNF. Religious historian Robin Anderson wrote that one of the goals to bolster the Catholic Action Program was to counteract the activities and propaganda of the PNF, as Anderson states,

The renewal of Catholic Action was carried out on a centralizing principle (the Church’s enemies like to divide in every way, the better to gain power). In a short time the Pope’s rousing call to united action in the name of Christ, in dependence on the bishop and parish priest, brought Christian teaching to bear more fully on every department of public life as well as on the family and individuals, and especially the young....the importance of spiritual exercises and retreats was emphasized and they were regularly organized. The catechism, liturgy, and Church history were studied as part of the training imparted to the best qualified....His aim was a Christian mobilization, to afford an impenetrable bulwark countering the closely organized forces of revolutionary propaganda and activity.²²⁵

“Spiritual” exercises, consisting of moral teachings, ritualistic ceremonies, and lessons in history were employed by both the Vatican and the PNF.

Sports and athletics, to develop the strength and mental abilities of the Italian youth, were another area of overlap between the PNF and the Vatican. The PNF used the *palestre* and open *piazza* of the *Casa del Fascio* for group exercise. The Pope, as well, viewed physical activities as a part of the development of a good Christian. A reporter of the *Papel Court* wrote,

...from the fact that Achille Ratti [Pope Pius XI] made alpine climbing a serious sport of his life, we can conclude in justice that he had both the inclination and physical equipment of a great athlete. What he has said and done since have encouraged sport and physical education throughout the Catholic world. “Study, be pure and devout,” he said to a group of students he addressed as Pontiff.

²²⁴ Mario Missori, *Gerarchie e Statute del P.N.F.* (Rome: Bonacci Editore, 1986), pp. 430-431.

[Translation: “sports and recreational meetings”]

²²⁵ Robin Anderson, *Between Two Wars*, (Franciscan Press, 1978), p. 76.

“Preserve and develop all the vigor of your physical forces. *Mens sana in corpore sano.*”²²⁶

Comparisons can be made to the many photographs of Mussolini jousting, horseback riding, and swimming. The construction of the *Foro Mussolini* (now *Foro Italico*) was an immense project demonstrating the PNF’s interest in sports. The modern *Foro Mussolini* was surrounded by athletic sculptures, many in Mussolini’s likeness, in Roman dress. The PNF placed great emphasis on competition and youthful strength. Both the Vatican and the PNF were serious about the physical development of their congregations, particularly among their young members. The architects of the *Casa del Fascio* continued to develop space in which these athletic activities could be carried out, most often planned on the exterior grounds of a new building site. By the mid-to-late 1930s, the interior *palestra* grew steadily toward serving cinematic activities, which required slanted floors that were not conducive to athletic activity. Exercise activity in the front *piazza* of a *Casa del Fascio* was also good publicity for the PNF.

The Vatican was not the only religious entity comparatively explored by the PNF. The Christian sponsored YMCA in America, with its focus on athletics, had been studied as an example for the PNF’s activities. In 1924, the PNF wrote,

...specie Americano, ha tentato e tenta di condurre in Italia una propaganda sottile perseguita in piena solidarietà con le sette massoniche e anticattoliche. Col pretesto della beneficenza e col il ricordo delle benemerienze acquistate durante la guerra, la cosiddetta YMCA s’è messa a capo della campagna novissima e i metodisti americani hanno minacciato di fare di Monte Mario la colina protestante e erigervi su un “tempio? Spettacolo destinato a fare d contraltare a S. Pietro! La sciocca ed ingiuriosa minaccia suscitò e suscita le preoccupazioni e le recriminazioni dei cattolici italiani e il Governo Nazionale non è rimasto insensibile alle giuste rimozioni. L’on. Finzi, a proposito di una interrogazione parlamentare intorno al “tempio” di Monte Mario, esprime le ferme intenzioni del Governo, e l’Agenzia Volta diramava una vibrata nota ufficiosa nei riguardi dell’YMCA.²²⁷

²²⁶ Morgan, Thomas B, *A Reporter at the Papal Court* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1937), p. 88.

²²⁷ PNF, *Religione e Clero nell’Opera del Governo Fascista* (Rome: PNF, 1924), pp. 10-11.

Social activities, social and health assistance, athletic and spiritual camaraderie were characteristics of the YMCAs that were studied by the PNF. *Casa del Fascio* incorporated the same services and activities, which then competed with parallel activities in the Italian Catholic Church.

Urban Confrontation

Clear direction from the PNF to site *Casa del Fascio* buildings in direct confrontation with parish churches was not explicitly spelled out in written documents from the 1920s and 1930s, but evidence of the urban placement of fascist headquarters near churches was overwhelming in the PNF files. There are numerous site plans and photos in the PNF documents at the ACS archive that show the proximity of *Casa del Fascio* buildings to Catholic Church buildings. One prime example was the location of a PNF *Sede Federale* in *Piazza San Sepolcro*, where the *torre littoria*, planned in 1936, visibly rivals the two adjacent church towers in the small *piazza* [Fig. 37]. The location was selected for the *Sede Federale* because of the history of the site as the birth of fascism, not because of the nearby medieval Church of San Sepolcro, however, in Piero Portoluppi's early schemes he designed two balanced "towers" across the *piazza* from the two church towers. Portoluppi designed the final scheme for the *Sede Federale* as one immense tower, easily seen from distance. In smaller towns, both the PNF *Casa del Fascio*, if new, and the Catholic Church would have an exterior space, a "*piazza*," located at their

[Translation: "...American type, tried and still tries to conduct in Italy a subtle propaganda pursued in full solidarity with the masonic and anti-catholic sects. Under the guise of charity and fully aware of the merits acquired during the war, the so-called YMCA put itself at the lead of the very new campaign and the American Methodists have threatened to make Monte Mario the Protestant Hill and erect a spectacular temple intended to be the counterpart of St. Peter's Cathedral. The silly and outrageous threat has risen and will raise the concerns and recriminations of Italian Catholics and the National Government did not remain insensitive to the just grievances.

Mr Finzi, in reference to a parliamentary question about the "temple" on Monte Mario - expressed the firm stance of the government, and the Agency Volta a vibrant unofficial note about the YMCA."]

entry and a bell or clock tower (or both). In most Italian towns, the Catholic Church was already located in the main *piazza*. Finding a location in an already established part of an existing town center by the provincial PNF was difficult, but often accomplished. Obtaining the property to make such a central location occur took years of effort in many cases. In Montevarchi, where the center of town was already densely built, the new *Casa del Fascio* was constructed at one end of the town with an immensely tall tower. A medieval castle, the *Cassero*, with a squat crenelated tower was located at the other end of the town. The Church of San Lorenzo, with a tall bell and clock tower, was located in the center of the main street with its own *piazza*. The two towers, the church tower and the *Casa del Fascio* tower, are clearly visible from a great distance upon entry into Montevarchi [Fig. 38].

The local fascist groups were required to submit location choices for their *Casa del Fascio* to the provincial PNF who would then send it to the Rome PNF Technical Service Department. The documents submitted to the PNF consisted of photos and site plans. In response to the suggested location for the construction of a *Casa del Fascio* in Caraglio, on a donated piece of land in the province of Cuneo, the head of the *Servizi*, Corrado Cerutti wrote, "...l'area in oggetto è risultata perfettamente adatta allo scopo...si trova in un ottimo sito."²²⁸ The new PNF headquarters was planned next to the local church [Fig. 39]. In Castel Vitturi (Spalato), a town of 3,000 inhabitants, the *Casa del Fascio* was to be located on the opposite corner of the central green from the Catholic Church. Three buildings needed to be demolished for the *Casa del Fascio* construction [Fig. 40]. A photo showing the *Casa del Fascio*'s proposed location from the water with a view of the Catholic Church accompanied the

²²⁸ ACS, letter from Corrado Cerutti to *Capo dei Servizi* from Cuneo Federation to *Capo dei Servizi* of PNF in Rome, August 20, 1942, B. 1012, Cuneo, Caraglio.

[Translation: "This area was found to be perfectly fit to scope...it is a great site"]

site plan in the ACS archives [Fig. 41]. In Nona (Zara), the PNF Technical Service Department received written documentation from the Zara PNF Provincial office, which noted the adjacency of the new *Casa del Fascio* to the church, “per la nuova costruzione si è prescelto terreno pianeggiante in vicinanza della chiesa, al centro dell’ abitato” [Figs. 42-43].²²⁹ In Tosi, the *Casa del Fascio* location was planned across a shared courtyard with the church. A photo of the church was included in the submission to the PNF Technical Service Department [Figs. 44-46]. In Riparbella, the site plan submitted to the PNF, consisted of the *Casa del Fascio* with an attached OND, which was located adjacent to the church property [Fig. 47]. The site plan also indicated the location of the train station, another frequent site planning note on *Casa del Fascio* submissions to assist with visibility of the building or *torre littoria* from the station. In 1941, Architect Luigi Ciarlina and Engineer Paola Ferrero submitted a full town square with the *Casa del Fascio* at its center to the 1941 competition for rural *Casa del Fascio*, intended for any location in Italy. The project for the PNF headquarters building included a grand *piazza*, a prominent tower with a huge speaking platform, and a church with a diminutive tower, despite the fact that these submissions were “generic” and had no specified location [Fig. 48].²³⁰

New towns and *borghi*, planned by the PNF, were rich source material, which demonstrated the hierarchy of PNF’s buildings, since the entire site of each community was newly designed. These new enclaves most often included a *Casa del Fascio* and a Catholic Church funded by the PNF. In the new rural center, *Borgo Segezia*, the new *Chiesa dell’ Immacolata di Fatima* was clearly the dominant building within the formal composition of the

²²⁹ ACS, PNF, Serie II, Zara.

[Translation: “...for the new building has chosen flat land near the church, in the center of the village”]

²³⁰ It would appear that this could be a specific town, but the drawings were submitted as a “generic” option for a *Casa del Fascio* in a rural center.

borgo sanctioned by the PNF [Fig. 49].²³¹ The *Casa del Fascio* was diminutive by comparison with a squat stone tower and balcony flanked by sculpted *fasci* [Fig. 50]. The prime feature of the rural center – the eleven-story tower – was questionable as the church’s *campanile* alone. The enormous bell tower clearly stood as a sign of a PNF enclave from a great distance and not just a visual marker of the church. In Adalberto Libera’s competition entry for the new town of Aprilia in the Pontine Marshes, the parallels between the church and the *Casa del Fascio* are rendered as equivalent, in contrast to Borgo Segezia [Fig. 51]. Libera’s central *Municipio* is flanked by a church with a bell tower on one side and the *Casa del Fascio* with its *torre littoria* on the other side.

Most new towns and *borghi* were located south of Rome and a few new towns were located in the North region near rich materials deposits. The PNF’s participation in building towns and *borghi*, which included churches, may seem counterintuitive if the PNF wanted members to follow their political “religion” rather than Catholicism. However, the church did create a unifying factor, which in turn helped the PNF, particularly in the South where there was some mistrust of PNF policies. After the Concordat agreement with the Vatican, the PNF used the church for its own purposes, causing some friction with Pope Pius XI. Historian Agostino Giovagnoli explained, “What mattered to Mussolini was winning the consensus of the Catholic masses and for this reason he initiated a dialogue.”²³² However, the Vatican also hoped that they would be favored by the association with the PNF and believed the Catholic Church had obtained certain benefits too. The two institutions, the Vatican and the PNF, were represented side-by-side in many places where only one of the institutions had been represented before. A

²³¹ Borgo Segezia was designed by Arch. Concezio Petrucci.

²³² Agostino Giovagnoli, “The Popular Party and Catholic Action from 1919 to 1939,” Carlo Pirovano, ed. *Modern Italy, 1900-1939*, Volume Two, (Banca Nazionale del Lavoro), p. 136.

crucifix and a picture of Mussolini were now hung together on the classroom wall. The public school text book from the *Libreria dello Stato* (State Bookstore) in Rome began with lessons on religion, then history, geography, arithmetic and ended with science lessons. A chapter in the history section, "*Il Fascism*," began with the sentence, "L'Italia fu salvata da Benito Mussolini" and noted the founding of the *Fasci Italiani di Combattimento* in the second paragraph who, "sotto la sua guida, a scendere in campo contro i sovversivi ed a salvare l'Italia dal disfacimento." The major merits of *Fascismo* "è quello di esaltare; 'amore di Patria, il rispetto alla Religione, la devota obedinza al Re e alle gerarchie dello Stato..." "L'Italia è grata a Benito Mussolini anche per un altro memorabile evento: la conciliazione fra lo Stato e la Chiesa."²³³ After the signing of the Concordat in 1929, Mussolini gained Catholics as fascist members in church buildings he authorized; and the Catholics practiced both "religions" without reprisal. In the PNF 1932 Statute, the word "Dio" was included for the first time.²³⁴

In small towns, the dialogue about the adjacency of the *Casa del Fascio* to church properties within the existing fabric occurred often. Dott. Ing. Mario Miozzo noted in his 1936 report on the *Casa del Fascio* of S. Giusina in Colle (Padua) that the location selected was the center of activity in the town and that the building would have a *piazza* to its left with the *Municipio* and the church to its front [Fig. 52].²³⁵ In a town also in the Padua Province, Villafranca Padovana, the architects clearly noted on a site plan the proposed *Casa del Fascio* building location and the church location. The architects included two photos, one of the church

²³³ *Il Libro della V Classe Elementare* (Rome: La Libreria dello Stato, A. XIII, 1935), pp. 195-8.

[Translation: "Italy was saved by Benito Mussolini" and noted the founding of the *Fasci Italiani di Combattimento* in the second paragraph who, "under his leadership, were to take to the field against the subversives and save Italy by breakup them up." The major merits of fascism "is to exalt; love of the Country, the respect of Religion, the devout obedience to the King and hierarchies of the State ... " "Italy is grateful to Benito Mussolini for another memorable event: the reconciliation between the State and the Church."]

²³⁴ Mario Missori, *Gerarchie e statute del P.N.F.* (Roma: Bonacci Editore, 1986), p. 384.

²³⁵ Dott. Ing. Mario Miozzo, "*Relazione*," October 12, 1936, XIV, p. 1-2. (B. 1251, Padova)

from the viewpoint of the proposed *Casa del Fascio* site and the opposite, a view of the *Casa del Fascio* from the church location [Figs. 53-55].^{236 237} Numerous architects had submitted *Casa del Fascio* proposals for the Villafranca Padovana site on *Via Vittorio Emanuele*. One building proposed for the site was designed by a Roman architect, Aldo Luchini, who had won the competition for *Casa del Fascio* for *piccoli centri rurali* [Fig. 56]. In a letter dated May 11, 1942, a second Roman architect, Alfio Susino, was also invited to have his project considered for the Padua location. If not selected for Villafranca Padovana, two other communities, Polverara and Campo S. Martino, were noted as possible locations for Susino's design in the 1942 letter from the PNF in Rome. There were no images attached to the letter. Architects who won the competition for rural *Casa del Fascio* were to "lend" their *Casa del Fascio* projects without compensation, until a precise location was determined. The photos of the site from the local PNF were essential for determining which designs worked best. Two local designers from Padua, Architect Gabriele Soligon and Ing. Albino Lazzaro, had submitted one possible solution for the site as well.²³⁸ The scheme included a *piazzette*, a large assembly hall with a link to a tower, which created a L-shaped plan. The tower had an entry at its base for a *sacrario*, with a balcony/*arengario* above [Fig. 57]. No project was ever built, despite all of the design possibilities offered to the PNF. In 2015, a building for the local police occupied the site across from the Catholic Church in Villafranca Padovana.²³⁹

²³⁶ Villafranca Casa del Fascio, Padua, 1942 XX (May 10, 1942) ACS, PNF Files, B. 1252.

²³⁷ Use of photography assisted with the transfer of information from the local PNF Provincial headquarters to the Central PNF in Rome for the discussion of *Casa del Fascio* locations.

²³⁸ Architect Soligon and Ing. Lazzaro were responsible for numerous *Casa del Fascio* designs in the Padua region. ACS, PNF Files, B. 1252.

²³⁹ Police stations frequently took over most *Casa del Fascio* buildings or the land that was acquired for a new PNF building after WWII.

Numerous documents within the ACS PNF archive contain visual documentation of *Case del Fascio* adjacent or near to Catholic churches. Period postcards from the 1920s and 1930s demonstrate the customary adjacency of the two institutions, the PNF and the Catholic Church, in towns throughout the Italian continent [Fig. 58]. Site plans in the ACS PNF archive confirm the prevalent siting of *Case del Fascio* next to town churches, which were often accompanied by corroborating photos of views from one property to the other [Fig. 59].

Worldwide Depression, 1931

By 1931, the worldwide depression complicated the already inefficient economic system in Italy. To appease a restless working class, the PNF formed a public works program and initiated projects that “reached out to the people” by building schools, train stations, aqueducts, hydroelectric projects, electrification, roads, irrigation canals and other public facilities. The PNF public work projects were concentrated in the South where modernization was needed. The PNF was already focused on land reclamation with its 1928 *Bonifica Integrale* program, which increased construction activity in the 1930s by the building of numerous new towns and *borghi*, many of which included a *Casa del Fascio*.²⁴⁰ As the population expanded and moved to more rural areas, at the prompting of the PNF, more *Case del Fascio* were needed.

1932 Decree and the Tenth Anniversary of the Fascist Revolution

In the 1932 Decree, the PNF opened the ranks of the PNF to all Italians and resolved the “distinction between party and nation.”²⁴¹ The Italians, did not have a choice, they were now members of the PNF, if they were part of the Italian nation. The PNF, now including all of its

²⁴⁰ Diane Ghirardo, *Building New Communities* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 59.

²⁴¹ Mario Missori, *Gerarchie e statute del P.N.F.* (Roma: Bonacci Editore, 1986), p. 406. (12 Nov. 1932)

Italian citizens, was a “*milizia civile*” under the command of il Duce (no longer capitalized as DUCE).²⁴² The 1932 Decree noted that the PNF was made of the *Fasci di Comattamento*, (houses or groups of fascists), which were located in every province. The Provincial *Fascio* (the fascist group) was authorized to form *Gruppo Rionali* (outlying *Case del Fascio*) and to install a *Fiduciario* (fiduciary) or *Consulta* (counsel) to command the new outposts. The 1932 Decree also noted that a *Fascio* could not be made or dissolved without the authorization of the central PNF.

A few new dictates in the 1932 Decree affected the PNF member’s code of behavior. The PNF member’s uniform had to be a black shirt and be worn only when prescribed by the PNF. The distinct badge of the PNF must be displayed on the uniform shirt. When a new young member entered into PNF membership they were required to recite, “Nel nome di Dio e dell’Italia, giuro di eseguire gli ordini del Duce e di servire con tutte le mie forze e, se è necessario, col mio sangue, la Causa dell Rivoluzione fascista.”²⁴³ The word “Dio” first appeared in this 1932 PNF Decree.

In 1932, the organization *Comitato Olimpionico Nazionale* (National Olympic Steering Committee) was added to the former Decrees, which demonstrated an increased emphasis on competition and sports.²⁴⁴ A work holiday was added in 1932 in order to celebrate the Birth of Rome on April 21st, which was the same day of the *Leva fascista* for new PNF youth member initiation.

²⁴² There is no explanation in the Decree for the change in capitalization.

²⁴³ Mario Missori, *Gerarchie e statute del P.N.F.* (Roma: Bonacci Editore, 1986), p. 384.

[Translation: “In the name of God and of Italy, swear to follow orders of the Duce and serve with all my strength and, if necessary, with my blood, the cause of the fascist revolution.”]

²⁴⁴ Mario Missori, *Gerarchie e statute del P.N.F.* (Roma: Bonacci Editore, 1986), p. 381.

The year of 1932 was also the tenth anniversary of the March on Rome. The opening up of the *Via dell' Impero* in 1932, a new wide ceremonial road in anticipation of a future “House of Fascism” near the Colosseum, was an event marking the *Decennale*.²⁴⁵ The *Via dell' Impero* also represented a symbolic connection to the area of new towns in the drained Pontine Marshland, a reclamation task that Caesar was never able to complete. Both the anticipated “House of Fascism” in Rome, which would be vetted in two competitions for a *Palazzo del Littorio* in 1934 and 1937, and the PNF new towns in the Pontine Marshlands were milestones in the history of PNF building programs, and in particular, these efforts were significant in the development of *Casa del Fascio*. The projects considered for the *Palazzo del Littorio*, in Rome, which were to follow the construction of the 1932 *Via dell' Impero*, were never consummated on the two proposed sites, but were significant endeavors of the PNF. The noteworthy *torre littoria* in the center of the new town of Littoria (renamed Latina after WWII) in 1932, demonstrated that the PNF was focused on delivering a visual and audible message by the tenth anniversary of the March on Rome, which was accomplished with buildings and towers. A surge of construction activity occurred after 1932. Urban re-planning of major cities by the PNF had characterized the 1920s, whereas, the 1930s touched almost every city and small town in some manner with the visual presence of the PNF, usually with a *Casa del Fascio*.

The *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista* (Show of the Fascist Revolution), celebrating the PNF anniversary in 1932, coincided with the *Via dell' Impero* celebrations, which was also significant to the development of *Casa del Fascio*. The subsequent competitions for the *Palazzo del Littorio* to be placed on the *Via dell' Impero* in 1934, and near to the Pyramid of Cestius in 1937, were to include a permanent museum for the *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista*. The idea

²⁴⁵ Arturo Bianchi, “Il Centro di Roma,” *Architettura*, March, 1933, no. III, pp. 137-156.

for the *Mostra* was conceived by Dino Alfieri, the president of the *Istituto Nazionale Fascista di Cultura* of Milan who initially wanted to celebrate the ten year anniversary of “the founding of the first *fascio di combattimento* [in San Sepolcro, Milan] to be held on March 23, 1919.”²⁴⁶ After a failed attempt to launch the exhibition in Milan, the location was changed to the *Palazzo delle Esposizioni* building in Rome and the emphasis was switched to a celebration of the Fascist decade since 1922.²⁴⁷ The 1932 *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista* in Rome was a grand success lasting until 1934. Architects Adalberto Libera and Mario De Renzi had been given the commission to cover the 1882 *Palazzo delle Esposizioni* façade with a temporary façade. Libera and De Renzi designed an entry with four twenty-five meters tall metal *fasci*. Libera and De Renzi, repeated their design on subsequent exhibitions in Chicago in 1933 and at the Brussels Exposition in 1935.²⁴⁸ The enormous *fasci* were also repeated by other architects on *Casa del Fascio*, as was the case in of the GRF *Vettore Mezzomo*, designed by engineer Leopoldo Parodi, in 1937-1938 [Fig. 60].

The planners of the 1932 *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista* commissioned many architects to do work in the interior of the *Palazzo delle Esposizioni*. These architects had the opportunity to convey the history of Italy prior to fascism, spanning from the 1915 Italian entry into WWI, until the March on Rome in 1922; and then to architecturally represent the decade of the PNF from 1922 to 1932. Giuseppe Terragni designed the interior room, Sala “O,” dedicated to the 1922 March on Rome, while beginning his design work on the *Casa del Fascio* in

²⁴⁶ Marla Stone, *The Politics of Cultural Production: the Exhibition in Fascist Italy, 1928-1942*, Doctoral Dissertation, Princeton University, 1990, UMI, p. 241.

²⁴⁷ Marla Stone, *The Politics of Cultural Production: the Exhibition in Fascist Italy, 1928-1942*, Doctoral Dissertation, Princeton University, 1990, UMI, pp. 247-8.

²⁴⁸ Marla Stone, *The Politics of Cultural Production: the Exhibition in Fascist Italy, 1928-1942*, Doctoral Dissertation, Princeton University, 1990, UMI, p. 266.

Como.²⁴⁹ Terragni wrote, “it fails to indicate how hard and filled with difficulty was the way of framing and sketching out a *casa del fascio* in December 1932 (the year of the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution).”²⁵⁰ 1932 had many overlapping building efforts for architects and for the PNF.

Design Competitions for PNF Buildings, 1932

In the early 1930s, the PNF demonstrated an interest in expanding the awareness of its presence among its Italian constituency through architecture. One example was the desire of the PNF to define the architecture of the *Casa del Fascio* both visually and programmatically. The PNF sought solutions by engaging hundreds of architectural students, architects and engineers in several national competitions, most of which occurred in the decade from 1932 to 1942. Most competitions drew entries from all parts of Italy, demonstrating a national interest in obtaining PNF work, particularly for the design of a PNF headquarters building – a prestigious commission.

In general, architects had no specific guidelines for the design of a *Casa del Fascio*, except for a list of program requirements given to architects from the Provincial PNF headquarters. The national competitions provided visual data in newspapers and publications about *Casa del Fascio*, as well as providing published commentary from the PNF and magazine writers. In 1932, the *Gruppo di Propaganda del Fascio Giovanile* from Bologna and its party newspaper, *L'Assalto*, sponsored a competition that sought prototypical solutions for the *Casa del Fascio* building from students, surmising that the youth could offer fresh solutions for a

²⁴⁹ Borden W. Painter, Jr. *Mussolini's Rome, Rebuilding the Eternal City* (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 26-30.

²⁵⁰ Diane Ghirardo in Peter Eisenman, *Giuseppe Terragni Transformations Decompositions Critiques* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2003), p. 261.

budding PNF building. The Bologna jurors received projects that ranged from modern glass structures to Roman arched buildings and nothing particularly definitive as “the” model for a *Casa del Fascio*. The larger national competitions for architects and engineers amassed hundreds of highly varied architectural schemes for *Palazzi del Littorio* and *Casa del Fascio*. The widely varied solutions offered by architects for the design of *Casa del Fascio* supports the theory that there was a lack of guidance from the PNF to actually state what the representative components and the desired aesthetics should be. The architects Quirino De Giorgio and Ludovico Belgiojoso, whom I interviewed in 1985, designed several *Casa del Fascio* and disagreed on the building’s major architectural components. In my 1985 interview with the two architects, De Giorgio insisted that a gymnasium was essential, whereas Belgiojoso disagreed and claimed that the most important element was a cinema.²⁵¹

Ethiopia, October 1935 and *Autarchia*

When the PNF invaded Ethiopia in October of 1935, it brought dramatic changes to Italy’s territories.²⁵² Mussolini and the PNF received a backlash from other countries in the League of Nations who suggested imposing sanctions to deter the PNF aggression in Africa. In 1935, Ethiopia alerted the League of Nations about an Italian military build-up. In October of 1935, the League of Nations declared that Italy was indeed the aggressor and by November 18, 1935 economic sanctions were imposed on Italy. On March 23, 1936, Mussolini pronounced from the Campidoglio, “La nuova fase della storia italiana sarà dominata da questo postulato: realizzare più breve termine possibile il massimo possibile di autonomia nella vita economica

²⁵¹ Interview by Carol Bentel in 1985 in Milan and Padova.

²⁵² Europeans used the name “Abyssinia” rather than Ethiopia.

della Nazione.”²⁵³ Mussolini’s policy for self-sufficiency, which he titled *Autarchia*, became more pressing in 1936 compared to his self-imposed efforts of the 1920s. The Italians, already burdened with existing *autarchic* policies, felt besieged in 1935-1936. In Mascalucia, Catania, a marble plaque commemorates the events of November 18, 1935. The plaque reads, “In memory of the economic siege; that it may remain documented in the centuries to come, this enormous injustice against Italy, who is responsible for bestowing civilization upon all continents.”²⁵⁴ Symbols of *fasci* were mounted on both sides of the plaque which was posted in major locations throughout Mascalucia. The official sanctions lasted only until July of 1936, the same month that Italy merged Eritrea, Italian Somalia and Ethiopia into a new territory called the *Africa Orientale Italiana* (AOI).

The materials withheld from Italy by the League of Nations during the 1935-1936 economic sanctions were coal and crude oil. A subsequent proposal by the League of Nations was discussed in November of 1935 to include pig iron and steel and to embargo exports. The League of Nations’ proposal was deferred until a conference in January of 1936 and then the proposal was later abandoned altogether. On May 5, 1936, the PNF captured the city of Addis Ababa. The League of Nations ended sanctions on July 4, 1936. However, despite the end of the sanctions from the earlier part of 1936, many countries reduced their exchanges with Italy, and Italy still maintained its policy of self-sufficiency. By April 1938, Britain had recognized the Italian annexation of Ethiopia.²⁵⁵

²⁵³ Mussolini, *Dizionario Mussoliniana* (Milano: Hoepli, 1939), p. 17.

[Translation: “The new phase of Italian history will be dominated by this postulate: achieving as soon as possible the maximum possible autonomy in the economic life of the nation.”]

²⁵⁴ Plaque in Mascalucia (Catania) on Via Etnea, placed on November 18, 1935 (XIV) from Catania, information from Vincenzo Perino.

²⁵⁵ Cristiano Andrea Ristuccia, “1935 Sanctions against Italy: Would coal and crude oil have made a difference?” Linacre college, Oxford, Great Britain.

In 1937, a High Commission of *Autarchia* was established in Italy. The President of the *Confederazioni dell'Industria* spoke about the need for *Autarchia* as a discipline on November 18, 1937, “Gl’Italiani debbono farsi una mentalità autarchia, anzi debbono vivere intensamente nella “mistica dell’autarchia.” La disciplina autarchia risponde per l’Italia alla necessità, alla logica, alla giustizia.”²⁵⁶ The PNF intensified industrial exploration for natural gas, coal and oil in order to remain self-sufficient. New towns such as Carbonia, named for its coal mines, and Arsia, also with coal mines, were outgrowths of this the *Autarchia* program, as well as the new town of Torviscosa, which successfully developed new fibers from plant material.²⁵⁷ Materials were needed for daily life and building construction, but most critical were metal materials that were needed for PNF endeavors abroad. Steel and iron were collected for national foreign interests first, before being allowed to be used for building construction.

Although steel and iron were not part of the short embargo caused by the Italy-Ethiopian War, the two materials were often noted in the architect’s complaints in the PNF files about unavailable building materials caused by autarchic measures. Notes about “*autarchia*” were prevalent in the ACS PNF files. Architects garnered praise from the PNF Technical Service Department or the PNF Federal Secretary if they made an effort to build with brick and local materials. Letters in the PNF Verona file, regarding the building of its *Casa Littoria*, revealed problems with high prices for construction and difficulties with finding steel. In an effort to force designers to follow autarchic policies, the jurors of the Verona *Casa Littoria* competition required that architects of the proposed project use marble exclusively from the quarries around

²⁵⁶ *Dizionario Mussoliniana* (Milan: Hoepli, 1939), p. 9.

[Translation: “Italians must make themselves of the autarchic mind; they must live intensely in the mystical way of autarchy. The discipline of autarchy responds to the need of Italy, to its logic, to its justice.”]

²⁵⁷ P. Cannistraro, *Historical Dictionary of Fascist Italy* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982), p. 43.

Verona.²⁵⁸ In Portomaggiore (Ferrara), when the competition jury was comparing two projects for a *Casa del Fascio*, the judges selected the “autarchic” focused entry over the other. The jurors wrote, “Ragioni autarchiche sconsigliano tale sistema. E’ preferibile l’adozione di solai in cemento armato e forati a grande altezza (in modo da ridurre al minimo il consumo di ferro).”²⁵⁹ In Rome, the PNF Technical Service Department reported that the 1941 *Casa del Fascio* for Monte Mario included, “L’edificio, studiato razionalmente in modo da realizzare il massimo dell’economia, non presenta caratteristiche speciali, per la sua costruzione saranno usati materiali nazionali, e l’impiego del ferro e del cemento risultano ridotti al minimo indispensabile...”²⁶⁰ All architects and contractors were affected by the scarcity of materials in the mid-to-late 1930s and were alerted by the PNF to be vigilant about saving materials and using minimums.

Architectural historian Henry A. Millon noted that “the literature of 1936-1940 is explicit about steel and concrete not being Italian or Roman while brick, terra cotta, and stone were in the tradition of the people of the Italic peninsula.”²⁶¹ Brick and stone became the preferred materials for most *Casa del Fascio* and were used in countless stylistic combinations. Despite the weight of the “Empire” and the direction of the country, which might imply enhancing *Casa del Fascio* with visual connections to Rome and *Romanità*, many *Casa del Fascio* were designed in a relatively modern aesthetic, while using the suggested local materials. A recurring feature on the

²⁵⁸ Letter to *Capo dei Servizi Amministrativi* del P.N.F in Rome, from *Il Segretario Federale* of Verona, Antonio Benino, April 17, 1941 XIIX. B. 1683, Verona, p. 3.

²⁵⁹ Engineer Carlo Savonuzzi, “Relazione for the Concorso per la Costruzione della Casa del Fascio,” Portomaggiore, (Ferrara), January 15, 1939; PNF Files, Serie II, B. 1031, p. 2.

[Translation: “Autarkic reasons against such a system. It is preferable to the adoption of reinforced concrete floor slabs and drilled at great height (so as to minimize the consumption of iron)”]

²⁶⁰ “*Relazione Tecnica del progetto, Casa del Fascio di Monte Mario*,” ACS, B. 1509, Rome, p. 1.

[Translation: “The building, designed rationally in order to achieve maximum savings, has no special characteristics, only domestic materials will be used for its construction, with cement and iron reduced to the very minimum necessary.”]

²⁶¹ Henry A. Millon, “Some New Towns in Italy in the 1930s,” in Henry A. Millon and Linda Nochlin, ed. *Art and Architecture in the Service of Politics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1978), p. 340.

façades of many *Casa del Fascio* was a strong horizontal band created with dark brick at the same height of the windows. The remainder of the PNF building was clad in contrasting lighter-color stucco. The concept of a horizontal “stripped window,” similar to modernist work in Europe, had widespread use on many public PNF buildings, particularly the *Casa del Fascio*, in Italy in the 1930s. The Italians did not have access to steel for columns, which would sit behind a façade to allow for long uninterrupted windows, therefore the darkened brick band stood in as a masonry equivalent for the horizontal window of European modernists.²⁶²

In 1938, the surveyor Cavierea designed a horizontal brick band on the façade of the *Casa del Fascio* in Chieserol del Foso [Fig. 61].²⁶³ The engineer Ferri added a strong brick horizontal band with a dominant sill line beneath the windows on the *Casa del Fascio* in Runco, designed in 1939 and built in 1940 [Fig. 62].²⁶⁴ The brick accent band was not isolated to one specific region in Italy, but was used throughout Italy and was often labeled as the “*Stile Littorio*” (*Littorio* Style). A building elevation from Fiorano (Modena), from a 1930s postcard, had an alternate brick pattern for its *Casa del Fascio* [Fig. 63]. Architect Adriano Marabini designed the Imola *Casa del Fascio* with a stone base and full brick exterior. The sculptor Amelto Beghelli carved bas-reliefs into the brick, depicting fascist history on the face of the Imola PNF building [Fig. 64].

The scarcity of metal products affected PNF decisions about renovating buildings or considering new construction for *Casa del Fascio*. Letters in the PNF archives, for a *Casa del Fascio* in the Padua Federation, illustrated the scarcity of building materials caused by autarchic rules and its effect on decisions concerning the Cittadella PNF headquarters. The local PNF

²⁶² ACS, PNF file, Serie II, B. 1030, Ferrara.

²⁶³ ACS, PNF file, Serie II, B. 1028, Chieserol del Foso; spelling of architect’s name is not fully legible.

²⁶⁴ ACS, PNF file, Serie II, B. 1032, Runco.

group in Cittadella was weighing the costs of building a new *Casa del Fascio* against the acquisition and renovation of two existing buildings. The new building would cost approximately £350.000,00. Despite the high costs, the difficulty was to obtain some of the building materials, such as iron (*ferro*). The local PNF group believed they could obtain donations of £100.000,00 from the *Comune*, £53.043,00 from local citizens (which they had already collected), and an additional amount from new requests for £40.000,00. In addition, the Cittadella *Fascio* needed £102.000,00 for the interiors and furniture, £105.000,00 for heating, and £7.000,00 to pay for the director of the work. In contrast to the construction of a new *Casa del Fascio* was the possibility of renovating two existing buildings near a *piazza* with the capacity to hold 5,000 people in an existing warehouse. The desire for a gymnasium for the *giovani fascisti* made the existing warehouse seem potentially useful for the large spaces the PNF needed.²⁶⁵ The architect and engineer Dott. Giulio Brunetta wrote that adding a new entry, stair, *sacrario* dedicated to the *Caduti Fascisti Cittadellesi*, and a *salone* for 200 seats would cost about £105.000,00, much less than the new construction that needed iron, which was unattainable [Fig. 65].²⁶⁶

The engineer Giovanni Tucci was inspired by Mussolini's autarchic mission in his design for a *Casa del Fascio* in Ardea (Rome). In 1938-1939, Tucci wrote,

...ispirandosi ai principi dell'autarchia, è stata eseguita bandendo da essa l'uso del ferro. Le murature sono di pietra tufo e mattoni; tutti gli ambienti sono coperti con volte in laterizi, la copertura è in tegole romane. L'architettura è pienamente ispirata all'ambiente e più specialmente al prossimo castello medioevale."²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ "Relazione," Dr. Angelo Alessio and Rag. Gelain Giovanni, May 11, 1937, XV (B. 1247, Padua).

²⁶⁶ *Relazione Tecnica* for cost of work for *Casa del Fascio* of Cittadella, Dott. Giulio Brunetta, May 11, 1937, XV (B. 1247, Padua).

²⁶⁷ ACS, PNF files, B. 1511, Rome: Ardea.

[Translation: Drawing inspiration from the principles of autarchy, it was executed banishing the use of iron. The walls are made of tuff and bricks; all the rooms have a vaulted ceiling covered with Roman tiles. The architecture is totally inspired by the surroundings and more specifically by the nearby medieval castle.]

Tucci used the local *tuffo* stone, brick and Roman tiles and was compelled to make reference to the medieval castle in Ardea. In addition, Tucci, a devoted fascist, designed the *Casa del Fascio* without compensation and directed the work himself to save funds for the PNF [Fig. 66].²⁶⁸

Many architects were devoted to the policies of the PNF regime and sought to solve the autarchic construction constraints. Architect Giuseppe Terragni, who willingly joined the PNF on April 26, 1928, before membership was required for employment, developed an autarchic structural solution.²⁶⁹ Architect and historian Alberto Sartoris credited Terragni for a drawing in his 1943 book, *Introduzione alla Architettura Moderna*, which Sartoris captioned “Progetto di struttura autarchica. Granito e cemento armato” [Fig.67].²⁷⁰ Sartoris celebrated the ability of modern architecture to meet the autarchic demands. He wrote that Terragni’s design was, “architettura di spirit nuovo...con la dignità e con il benessere della Nazione.”²⁷¹ Stripped down architecture built with local materials was a solution to the autarchic needs of the Italy and the PNF.

Lack of materials and PNF autarchic constraints did not just affect the Italian mainland in the 1930s, but also caused difficulties for construction in the Italian territories of Africa. Architectural solutions ranged widely to compensate for the lack of construction materials, even considering the substitution of bamboo for iron in reinforced concrete construction. A reporter writing about building construction in AOI wrote,

²⁶⁸ “*Pro Memoria, Dati Riguardanti La “Casa del Fascio” di Ardea,*” ACS, B. 1511, 1939.

²⁶⁹ Diane Ghirardo, “City and Theater: The Rhetoric of Fascist Architecture,” *Stanford Italian Review*, vol. VIII, nos. 1-2, 1990, p. 181.

²⁷⁰ Alberto Sartoris, *Introduzione alla Architettura Moderna* (Milano: Editore Ulrico Hoepli, 1943 –XXI), p. 39. [Translation: “structural autarkic project. Granite and reinforced concrete”]

²⁷¹ Alberto Sartoris, *Introduzione alla Architettura Moderna* (Milano: Editore Ulrico Hoepli, 1943 –XXI), pp. 38-9. [Translation: “architecture of the new spirit ... with the dignity and for the welfare of the Nation”]

Altri problemi edilizi, infine, sono quelli costituiti dai materiali: scelta dei materiali piú adatti in relazione alle esigenze di clima, di autarchia, di economicità, ecc.; calcolo delle loro resistenze, che non sempre si eguagliano a quelle dei materiali in Italia; ricerca di nuovi materiali locali e relativi esperimenti, e via di seguito. Particolarmente importante, anch per i suoi riflessi autarchici, quest'ultimo punto: la ricerca e la sperimentazione di materiali locali che corrispondano alle esigenze tecniche e in pari tempo ottemperino alla necessità di limitare al minimo le importazioni, specialmente di ferro. A questo proposito è molto interessante riportare quanto si è fatto in un settore della massima importanza: quello della sostituzione del ferro col bambú nella preparazione del cemento armato.²⁷²

Designers who followed the PNF policies of autarchy and built their *Casa del Fascio* without steel or iron, but with brick or *tuffo*, or even bamboo, displayed a visual message to the Italian public that pleased the PNF and helped the war efforts.

The Radio in the *Casa del Fascio*: The Building that Shouts

Visual messages conveyed in the PNF architecture were fixed in time, unlike political messages in the daily press or over radio waves. The power of the newspaper, particularly *Il Popolo d'Italia*, and its ability to thrust a message out to the Italian population in the 1920s worked extremely well. Because of Mussolini's efforts with *Avanti!* and *Il Popolo d'Italia*, he understood the power of written communication to mold his own message and to disseminate it to the masses on a daily basis. A French journalist in a 1936 wrote in *Konvolut*,

A perspicacious observer said one day that fascist Italy is managed like a large newspaper, and moreover, by a great pressman: one idea per day, competition, sensationalism, adroit and insistent orientation of the reader toward certain disproportionately vulgar aspects of social life, a systematic distortion of the

²⁷² "Criteri generali e problem dell'edilizia in AOI" *Gli Annali dell'Africa Italiana*, Anno II, no. 4, 1939, p. 445.

[Translation: Other construction problems, lastly, are those regarding the materials: the choice of materials that are most suitable to the climate's requirements, to autarchy, to inexpensiveness, etc.; Calculation of their resilience, which is not always up to that of the materials in Italy; research of new materials and the related experiments, and so on. Especially important, also for the autarkic repercussions, this last observation: the research and experimentation of local materials that answer the technical requirements and at the same time comply with the need to minimize the imports, in particular of iron. In this regard it is very interesting to report what has been done in a very important sector: the replacement of iron with bamboo for the preparation of concrete.]

reader's comprehension, in order to achieve certain practical ends. In sum, fascist regimes are regimes of publicity.²⁷³

As Mussolini's tenure as the leader of the PNF continued into the 1930s, modern inventions for communication, such as the radio, the loudspeaker and the cinema added greatly to the delivery of his message. Historian Enrico Menduni wrote,

Scheduled broadcasting began in Italy in 1924...the State granted a monopoly of all transmissions to a formally private company, the *Ente Italiano Audizioni Radiofoniche*, or EIAR [in 1927]. [The EIAR] was officially constituted as 'a body formed in the national interest' and kept under strict government surveillance.²⁷⁴

In 1937, a division for radio was placed within the Ministry of Popular Culture and the *Ente Radio Rurale* (Rural Radio Corporation) was created to distribute radios to the rural zones of the country, including the popular *Radio Balilla* [Fig. 68].²⁷⁵ By 1939, there were 1,200,000 radios dispersed, which were few by comparable standards in other countries, therefore Italians visited their *Casa del Fascio* to listen to the radio.²⁷⁶

The PNF broadened its methods for mass communication with the new audible components. Audio speakers became symbolic components on *Casa del Fascio* facades and part of their architectural expression, boasting up-to-date technological facilities [Fig. 69]. *Casa del Fascio* "spoke" on two levels: visibly by the appearance of bell towers, visible speakers, balconies, and symbols of fascism; and audibly through the bells, radios, audio speakers and film. The front cover of the journal, *Illustrazione del Popolo*, portrayed a crowd facing a flag with Mussolini's image on it, next to a loud speaker that carried his emanating voice [Fig. 70].

Comparatively, the Catholic Church and the *Casa del Fascio* used similar methods for sending

²⁷³ Susan Buck-Morsers, *The Dialectics of Seeing* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), p. 308.

²⁷⁴ Enrico Menduni, *The Radio Journal. International Studies in Broadcast and Audio Media*, Volume 2, N. 1, 2004, pp. 45-56.

²⁷⁵ Philip V. Cannistraro, Ed. *Historical Dictionary of Fascist Italy*. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), p. 446.

²⁷⁶ Carlo Pirovano, ed. *Modern Italy, 1900-1939*, Volume Two, (Banca Nazionale del Lavoro), p. 512.

audible alerts to their constituents. The Church alerted its congregation with the ringing of a bell prior to upcoming mass services, while the *Casa del Fascio* summoned its members with its bell and its amplified speaker to call fascists to march into the *piazza* to hear Mussolini's words. On the night of the March on Rome, in 1922, the newspaper *Il Popolo d'Italia* wrote, "Fascism has returned to Italian cities that art of human movement and group gathering...standing in formation in the town squares around the belfry and towers..."²⁷⁷ The day before the Italians attacked Ethiopia, the PNF had structured a mobilization of the whole country, so that the audible elements could be tested. It was reported that,

On that day, at 3P.M., sirens, radio bulletins, and the church bells informed the population that they were all mobilized. Work was interrupted, and everybody was required to reach a meeting point at which radios would air Mussolini's speech from 6:45 to 7:10 P.M.²⁷⁸

The loudspeakers were generally attached to the *Casa del Fascio* façade or tower, which sent the PNF's radio message to the town. Historian Franco Venturi noted that "the...regime was the kingdom of the word. Or better...of the loudspeaker."²⁷⁹

Palazzo Venezia, Mussolini's headquarters, was the first user of many of the communication devices that were included on and in *Casa del Fascio*. The loudspeaker and the radio played a huge part in sending messages to the masses from Mussolini's *Sala del Mappamondo* and from his balcony on *Palazzo Venezia*. The *altoparlanti* (loudspeakers) amplified *Il Duce's* voice into the *piazza*, while the radio sent his voice beyond Rome. A reporter described a rally in *Piazza Venezia* and the use of loudspeakers and the radio in *Il Giornale d'Italia* in 1935,

²⁷⁷ Emilio Gentile, *The Struggle for Modernity* (Wesport, CT: Praeger, 2003), p. 112.

²⁷⁸ Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 180.

²⁷⁹ Venturi, "Regime fascista," pp. 186-7 in Franco Antonicelli, ed. *Trent' anni di storia italiani, 1915-1945* (Turin: Einaudi, 1961).

Poi s'è fatto (alto?) il silenzio: il Duce, proteso verso la moltitudine, parla: la sua voce calda e possente si rivolge agli italiani raccolti in tutte le piazze d'Italia, scende sulla folla adunata in Piazza Venezia, giunge attraverso gli altoparlanti alle zone più lontane, a temprare le masse, come il fuoco fa dell'acciaio di buona lega....

La moltitudine non vuole lasciare Piazza Venezia: continua con ritmo incessante ad acclamare Mussolini. Il Segretario del Partito lancia ora il saluto al Duce, cui risponde nuovamente "A Noi!" del popolo, e poi dalla radio di Palazzo Venezia – alle ore 19 precise – annuncia ai venti milioni di Italiani riuniti: "L'adunata generale – dice Starace – è terminata in questo momento. Ripetere il segnale. Viva il Duce!"²⁸⁰

Some *Casa del Fascio* buildings were designed to increase the sound of the message. The entire façade of Luigi Vietti and Giuseppe Terragni et al.'s 1934 entry to the *Palazzo del Littorio* competition in Rome was designed as a loudspeaker.²⁸¹ During my interview in 1985 with Luigi Vietti, he said that the curved form was designed to amplify and shout Mussolini's message to all of Rome [Fig. 71]. The balcony in the *Palazzo del Littorio* scheme that pierced the center of the curved facade was to represent Mussolini whether he was present or not.

The radio was a useful tool for the PNF to reach their constituents in distant zones. Inventory lists for *Casa del Fascio* began including radios in the 1930s along with furniture, plaster sculptures of Mussolini, and framed photos of *Il Duce*. In planning for items to be purchased for the GRF Monte Sacro "*Enrico Maggi*" in Rome, a request was made to the central PNF for an *appaecchio* (radio) for the sum of £900,00. The expensive radio was to be located in the *Ufficio Segretaria* of the *Casa del Fascio*. Three less expensive radios (*Radio Rurale*), for a

²⁸⁰ *Il Giornale d'Italia*, 4 Ottobre XIII, p. 2.

[Translation: "Then he made (loud?)the silence: il Duce, stretching out towards the great crowd, speaks: his warm voice and mighty will appeal to the gathered Italians in all the squares of Italy, descends on the crowd gathered in *Piazza Venezia*, his voice comes through the loudspeakers to the most distant point, to temper the masses, like fire makes good steel alloy. The great crowd does not want to leave *Piazza Venezia*: Mussolini continues with incessant rhythm and accelerated pace. The Party Secretary is now launching the salute to *il Duce*, again responding "to us!" of the people, then from the radio of *Palazzo Venezia* – at the hour of 19 precisely – proclaims to twenty thousand united Italians: "The assembly," says Starace – "is finished now. Repeat the signal. Viva il Duce!"]

²⁸¹ Vietti was the major designer of Project A of the *Palazzo del Littorio* Competition in Rome in 1934. His collaborators were Giuseppe Terragni, Antonio Carminati, Pietro Lingeri, Ernesto Saliva, and Marcello Nizzoli.

sum of £650,00 each, were to be given to three distant fascist sectors in Valle Melaina, Prati Fiscali and Tufello. The less expensive *Radio Rurale* was sold with speakers, which were also suggested for schools – another popular place in which to hear the radio. The central radio would remain in the main office, which sent amplified voices to the *palestra* and to each classroom. The speakers were ornamented with *fascio* symbols – a reminder of where the PNF words originated [Fig. 72].²⁸² The radio, specifically referred to as a *Marelli* – a known brand name – was sold for the sum of £900,00 and was purchased by the GRF Monte Sacro for an exterior location in *Piazza Misurata*. The *Salone Ingresso* (entry room) of the GRF was to receive an *altoparlante* (loudspeaker) for *audizione radiofoniche* for £150,00.²⁸³

The first *Magneti Marelli* radio was tested in 1930 at a trade fair in Milan to the great interest of the Italian public [Fig. 73]. Radios were too expensive for the general Italian population to purchase. A radio price was about a third of the cost of a new Fiat *Balilla* automobile. The public would gather around the radio in their local *Casa del Fascio* to hear concerts or to receive national messages from the central PNF. Those who could afford an automobile had the luxury of a car radio by the mid-to-late 1930s [Fig. 74].²⁸⁴

Pope Pius XI, similar to Mussolini, made use of the new radio device to reach people beyond his central location at the Vatican. Pope Pius XI received a radio in February of 1931 as a donation from inventor Guglielmo Marconi [Fig. 75]. The Vatican radio was powerful and truly of interest to the Pontiff. The radio was not a small machine, and as a result, required several rooms for the radio, its amplifier, a storage battery, and space for the receiving and transmitting sets. The first time the radio was used by the Pope on February 12, 1931, was a

²⁸² ACS, PNF, Serie II, B. 1012, Cuneo: Piasco, Briga Mare.

²⁸³ State Archive, Inventory list to the *Federazione Fascista dell'Urbe*, signed by A. Farnetani, Monte Sacro, Rome, B. 1509, December 23, 1941.

²⁸⁴ <http://www.magnetimarelli.com/company/history/1919-1940#0>

major event. Pope Pius XI's voice could be heard beyond the Vatican by millions of people. Marconi led the Pope through the various rooms and then to a throne set up in the radio room.²⁸⁵ Marconi introduced the Pope in the transmission for a speech in Latin that lasted thirty minutes and was heard in many countries.²⁸⁶ Father Giuseppe Gianfranceschi, the director of the Vatican radio station, noted that the Pope was optimistic about the capability of the radio and continued to research the transmission abilities of the radio in order to reach more people. The Pope said, "our station must be used to enhance the mission of the Church."²⁸⁷ Modern inventions, such as the radio and the telephone, were instruments that both the Vatican and the PNF used to send their messages beyond their immediate locations. Film was also a vehicle for disseminating information, but this was one area that was not utilized by Pope Pius XI.

While the automobile, radio and the telephone have accelerated Vatican tempo, the movie has been able to make but slow progress in breaking through the hard shell of established forms. It does not come entirely free from those influences which make it problematical to a churchman. With its commercialism, its much married and much divorced stars, its occasional appeal to the debaucheries of the mass mind rather than Christian ideals, the movie starts with a big handicap. Even in news features, Pope Pius XI, except twice, has balked on allowing movie cameras into Vatican territory precisely because of the fear that a news reels of some event in St. Peter's or in the Sistine Chapel might be shown at the same time as some amorous drama or a gangster tragedy....Even in the big ceremony of his formal emergence from the Vatican on July 25, 1929...the Pontiff ordered "no movies." He permitted still cameras.²⁸⁸

Movie and sound cameras were prohibited from the Vatican, but loudspeakers were permitted.

Every significant ceremony was amplified throughout St. Peter's Church and in St. Peter's

²⁸⁵ Morgan, Thomas B. *A Reporter at the Papal Court* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1937), pp. 216-7.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

Square during the 1930s. Initially, loudspeakers were placed in the *baldachino* of the altar, but were considered unsightly and soon removed and hidden in other locations.²⁸⁹

Pope Pius XI's introduction as the new Pope was announced to the world in 1922 from the balcony at St. Peter's Basilica. The 1929 Lateran Treaty announcement to Rome followed the as, "the sequel to Pius XI's initial gesture of reconciliation by appearing on the outer balcony of St. Peter's at his election." After the 1929 Lateran Pact, the Pope could walk beyond the walls of his newly formed Vatican City to reach his constituents outside of Rome.²⁹⁰ Pope Pius XI's death was announced on February 10, 1939, at four in the morning in a Vatican Radio broadcast.²⁹¹ The major milestones of Pope Pius XI tenure demonstrates the various means that was required of a leader to reach mass audiences during the years between 1922 and 1939.

Guglielmo Marconi also assisted Mussolini with setting up long-distance radio transmission for the PNF in Italy. Marconi held the rank of officer in the Italian Army during WWI and was given the title of *Marchese* by King Victor Emmanuel III. Marconi became a fascist member in 1923, president of the National Research Council in 1928, and president of the Royal Academy of Italy in 1930. Marconi was a Fascist Grand Council member and supporter of Mussolini until his own death in 1937.²⁹² Some *Casa del Fascio* were named in his honor, such as the *Gruppo Rionale "Guglielmo Marconi"* in Santa Palomba (Rome). The GRF building was designed by the engineer Carlo Forti who added an immense radio tower to his rendering of the *Casa del Fascio* [Fig. 76]. Public squares and streets throughout Italy also bore Marconi's name.

²⁸⁹ Ibid, pp. 229-230.

²⁹⁰ Robin Anderson, *Between Two Wars: The Story of Pope Pius XI (Achille Ratti) 1922-1939* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1978), p. 82.

²⁹¹ Robin Anderson, *Between Two Wars: The Story of Pope Pius XI (Achille Ratti) 1922-1939* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1978), p. 142.

²⁹² Monte S. Finkelstein, "Guglielmo Marconi," in Philip V. Cannistraro, ed. *Historical Dictionary of Fascist Italy*. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), p. 325.

Most *Casa del Fascio* had a radio room, as the plan from the *Gruppo Rionale "Michele Bianchi"* in Mantua and in San Giovanni del Dosso demonstrate. *Casa del Fascio* incorporated exterior speakers on their façades and towers for the radio's amplified uses [Figs. 77-78].

The propagandistic use of the PNF-controlled radio in Italy was increased by a distribution of radios to rural areas in 1937. Germany also had a subsidized radio program of *Volksempfänger* radios (People's receiver), which had dials only set to German State-controlled programming. The Reich added non-government programming to keep their constituents tied to their modern devices, but did not allow for reception beyond Germany. The German propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels, consistently read articles from the government-controlled journal, *Das Reich*, over the radio each week.²⁹³

The Cinema and the *Casa del Fascio*

Cinemas existed before WWI in Italy and the Italians enjoyed the new technological medium long before the advent of fascism. After WW I, the Italians watched films mostly from America, which dominated 70 percent of the film industry.²⁹⁴ In the first decade of fascism, film was not utilized to spread national news or to be used as a political instrument of the PNF. By the second decade, historian Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi noted that in "...1930 there existed 3,225 theaters (including halls with projection facilities)...," many of which were already a part of *Casa del Fascio*.²⁹⁵ *Istituto Nazionale LUCE (L'Unione Cinematografica Educativa)* was developed by the PNF from an earlier 1923 private company and became a state agency in

²⁹³ Jorg Echternkamp, *Germany and the Second World War*, Vol IX/II (England: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 178.

²⁹⁴ Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 143.

²⁹⁵ Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 143.

1925.²⁹⁶ *Istituto Nazionale LUCE* was made “responsible for the compulsory projection of newsreels [called *Cinegiornali*] during cinematographic shows” after a regulation regarding film in the 1926 PNF Decree.²⁹⁷ The *Cinegiornali* were also shown in other countries in order to share the accomplishments of the PNF. The inauguration of *Cinecittà* and the showing of the blockbuster movie, *Scipione l’Africano*, in 1937, demonstrated that film was a valuable instrument for dissemination of the PNF message. By 1938, foreign movies were regulated by the PNF. Foreign language had already been prohibited by 1933 when film was required to be dubbed in Italian.²⁹⁸

Before film was widespread in Italy, the *Dopolavoro* (OND) organized many cultural activities for its members, such as the theater performances. As the cinema became more common, it emerged as the center of activity of *Casa del Fascio*, run by the OND in the previous theater spaces. The OND also offered classes in cinematography, which created a need for properly constructed cinemas with sloped floors, thus changing the character of the space that had earlier been used as a *palestra* for sports or a theater for plays. The PNF realized that film was entertaining – thus boosting membership at PNF headquarters – and served as a means of propaganda, so they encouraged the building conversions.

The *Istituto LUCE* became PNF-controlled after 1934 by the Ministry of Popular Culture. *LUCE* films “depicted Mussolini as, “the sporting Duce, the imperial Duce, the Duce as reaper of corn” and so on.”²⁹⁹ Mussolini’s many images in moving pictures and his voice in film and radio filled the *Casa del Fascio* building. Carlo Pirovano and his scientific committee captured

²⁹⁶ Philip V. Cannistraro, ed. *Historical Dictionary of Fascist Italy* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), p. 313.

²⁹⁷ Carlo Pirovano, ed. *Modern Italy, 1900-1939*, Volume Two, (Banca Nazionale del Lavoro), p. 85.

²⁹⁸ However, languages could still be learned in the *Dopolavoro*, which was contradictory.

²⁹⁹ Carlo Pirovano, ed. *Modern Italy, 1900-1939*, Volume Two, (Banca Nazionale del Lavoro), p. 86.

the essence of the reproduction of Mussolini's voice and image in their text, *Modern Italy*. They wrote,

...meetings held in squares, at which the leader's speech...was theatrically constructed. Increasing and hammering rhythms, allocutions, the production of slogans, meaningful pauses, theatrical poses: these and other elements meant that the speech was *produced to be reproduced*....A further example of the materialization of the word can be found in the creation of emblems in sound, such as the voices of radio and newsreel announcers, characterized by the idea of force, rhythm and loudness.³⁰⁰

Istituto LUCE's not only filmed Mussolini, but filmed the construction of hundreds of PNF buildings, new towns, agricultural achievements, and in particular, inaugurations of *Casa del Fascio*. The *LUCE* inauguration films of *Casa del Fascio* assisted in spreading visual data to architects about new or highly renovated buildings that the PNF wanted to celebrate. Over three hundred reels had been created with PNF related material, mostly about the PNF endeavors and territorial growth, which accompanied the more entertaining movies.³⁰¹ The film reels lasted about fifteen minutes and contain useful documentation about the construction methods employed on PNF structures and the final celebrations of their completion. The Italian audiences could view the functional aspects of a *Casa del Fascio* as ceremonies took place in the newsreels. There was abundant footage of Mussolini on the balconies of many *Casa del Fascio* and *torri littorie*. The filmed *Casa del Fascio* inaugurations began with the procession of PNF dignitaries down the main street of the town with throngs of uniformed spectators cheering in the background. Following the procession, the focus of the filmmaker was on Mussolini, who was generally speaking into a microphone from the balcony of a *Casa del Fascio*. PNF officers aligned the remaining balcony space and roof top of each *Casa del Fascio* filmed. Waving flags,

³⁰⁰ Carlo Pirovano, ed. *Modern Italy, 1900-1939*, Volume Two, (Banca Nazionale del Lavoro), pp. 86 -90.

³⁰¹ <http://www.mostracasedelfascio.it/luce.php>

masses of people in military groupings, and loud cheering were consistently included in the *LUCE* footage.

Articles began to appear in 1932 in the architectural journals about cinemas and acoustics. A modern cinema in Brescia for 500 people was featured in *Architettura* in December, 1932, and in *Domus* in February, 1933, designed by Florence architect Pier Niccolò Berardi. The interior of the cinema was sleek with aluminum and wood details. A twenty-eight page article by Enrico Tedeschi on “*Cinematografi*” was published in *Architettura* in January, 1936, with extensive instructions on the construction of movie theaters. Sectional diagrams and mathematical tables of viewing angles were provided, as well as numerous examples of plans, sections and photos of cinemas from foreign countries. In June of the same year, a twenty page article was written by Luigi Quagliata on “*L’Acustica nelle Sale Cinematografiche*”. The article included reverberation charts, acoustic wall sections, sound reflection diagrams, oscillation diagrams, models using light to test acoustics, and corrective measures for existing rooms that would be transformed into a cinema space. The instructive detail was meant for an architect’s use as they retrofitted large spaces, like former *palestre* or *sale*, or for the construction of new cinemas for the emerging film industry.

The Italian colonies in Africa also enjoyed movies from the Italian mainland, as well as those from foreign countries. Historian Ruth Ben-Ghiat wrote, “by March 1939, there were forty cinemas in Ethiopia...by 1940, this number had grown to fifty-five cinemas...”³⁰² Ben-Ghiat noted that film was used more for entertainment in the African colonies, than for propagandistic purposes. She noted,

³⁰² Ruth Ben-Ghiat, “The Italian Colonial Cinema: Agendas and Audiences,” Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller, *Italian Colonialism* (New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 182.

...despite this outlay of resources, many factors hindered the regime's attempts to use film as a weapon of fascist propaganda in the colonies...Indeed, fewer "national" films were seen in the colonies than at home: in 1938, Asmara filmgoers saw sixty-eight American, eleven Italian, eight French, and six German films....³⁰³

Movie theaters were constructed in several cities, such as Assab, Eritrea, Dessiè, Ethiopia, and Asmara, Eritrea [Figs. 79-80]. There was not enough evidence in the PNF files regarding the showing of film inside *Case del Fascio* in the African colonies, however, there was ample data demonstrating that numerous large cinemas were constructed by private companies solely as movie theaters.

The Declaration of an Italian Empire, 1936

After Ethiopia's defeat to Italy in 1936, Mussolini declared the creation of an Italian "Empire." This declaration and the events of the following years caused the PNF to change from an inward looking country preoccupied with its economy, decentralization, and conflicts with the Catholic Church, to one with grand notions of colonization and expansion within the Mediterranean.

The major construction period of new *Case del Fascio* occurred after 1936 and continued until the end of Mussolini's reign in 1943. The program components of *Case del Fascio* began to be more consistent, but the aesthetic variations by architects persisted. References to foreign modern architecture did mildly decline among architect's solutions for *Case del Fascio*, however, this decline did not create a return to historic references by architects. Giuseppe Terragni and Antonio Carminati's 1937-1939 Lissone *Casa del Fascio* was a shift from Terragni's modern 1932-6 Como *Casa del Fascio*, but the Lissone building was still a modern

³⁰³ Ruth Ben-Ghiat, "The Italian Colonial Cinema: Agendas and Audiences," Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller, *Italian Colonialism* (New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 183.

design, which had not succumbed to an Imperial monumentalism, or an architecture embodying *mediterraneità* or *Romanità*. Terragni had stated in 1936 that “any reference to buildings of a representative character is impossible; we must build on new foundations and not forget that Fascism is an absolutely original occurrence.”³⁰⁴ The Como building had been inaugurated after the “Declaration of the Empire.” Its *piazza* was named the *Piazza dell’Impero*. Terragni and his colleagues of the C.M. 8 Group won the master plan competition in Como in 1934; Terragni wrote in 1936 about his hope for the “not-to-distant realization of the Fascist city...”³⁰⁵ Terragni did have detractors over his built interpretation of a *Casa del Fascio* in Como, which was well documented in Aristotle Kallis’s *The Third Rome, 1922-1943*.³⁰⁶ However, Kallis concluded that, “while artificially united through the use of the terminology of *mediterraneità*, architects such as Terragni,...brought to the discussion significantly divergent aesthetic sensibilities and programmes. The outcome was muddled...”³⁰⁷ Kallis writes that, “...Fascist political discourses in the 1930s produced a kaleidoscope of interpretations, rationales, and hybrid-built outcomes, both in the colonies and in metropolitan Italy.”³⁰⁸ Projects such as Luigi Carlo Daneri’s GRF “*Nicola Bonservizi*” in Sturla (Genoa), built after 1936, demonstrate that modern architecture existed in Italy during and after the “Declaration of the Empire” and added to the variety of responses to the program of the *Casa del Fascio* [Figs. 81-82]. PNF dignitaries stood willingly in the *Casa del Fascio*’s modern horizontal window in a building raised on

³⁰⁴ Giuseppe Terragni, “La costruzione della Casa del Fascio di Como,” *Quadrante* 35-36 (1936), translation by Diane Ghirardo in Peter Eisenman, *Giuseppe Terragni Transformations Decompositions Critiques*, (New York : The Monacelli Press, 2003), p. 261.

³⁰⁵ Giuseppe Terragni, “La costruzione della Casa del Fascio di Como,” *Quadrante* 35-36 (1936), translation by Diane Ghirardo in Peter Eisenman, *Giuseppe Terragni Transformations Decompositions Critiques* (New York : The Monacelli Press, 2003), p. 267.

³⁰⁶ Aristotle Kallis, *The Third Rome, 1922-1943* (England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 57, p. 67.

³⁰⁷ Aristotle Kallis, *The Third Rome, 1922-1943* (England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 69.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

pilotis in Genoa, despite the “Declaration of the Empire,” which might have caused the return to a Roman or Imperial classicism.

Several *Casa del Fascio* designed in the mid-1930s by architect Luigi Vietti demonstrate a slight change in strategy after the “Declaration of the Empire,” but not a rejection of modernism nor an abandonment of Vietti’s own highly individualized solutions. The *Casa del Fascio* in Intra, designed by Luigi Vietti in 1933, was considered an example of modern architecture because it openly referenced the foreign architecture of the Swiss born architect, Le Corbusier. The building was glass clad, raised on *pilotis*, and included a fascist “modular man” submitted in Vietti’s renderings to the PNF [Figs. 83-84]. In 1937, Vietti designed a very playful rendering of the plan for the *L’Esposizione Universale di Roma del 1942* (EUR) that could not be confused with a Roman inspired solution [Fig. 85]. Vietti designed a *Casa del Fascio* for the coastal city of Rapallo between 1937 and 1938 [Fig. 86]. Several of Vietti’s renderings included full exterior walls of glass. The final design for Rapallo included a faux painted façade, a regional tradition, but the sides of the building were still made of glass curtain wall. Vietti’s design did not follow any established direction, but one of his own.³⁰⁹ Vietti’s design concept, still visible in his 1938 Rapallo *Casa del Fascio*, was consistent with other PNF work that he did years before, from the early 1933 Intra building, to the 1934 Oleggio *Casa Littoria* project with Ignazio Gardella, to the 1934 project “A” for the *Palazzo del Littorio* in Rome that he did with Terragni and others. Vietti’s buildings strove to solve a particular circulation path that would address the PNF’s ceremonial path and his projects included the expected balconies and towers, but none were the same, nor conventional, compared to other PNF projects for *Casa del Fascio*. None of Vietti’s designs followed a set template of PNF guidelines, nor did he follow a direction

³⁰⁹ Vietti with Terragni et al. designed two schemes for the 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* competition for Rome, one scheme for the 1937 competition and designed several public buildings for the regime. Vietti worked as part of the official team, along with Marcello Piacentini, for the planning of EUR '42.

that spoke of “Empire.” Vietti, regardless of working with Italian architects considered modernists, was favored by the PNF, as he continued working on significant PNF projects, including the initial designs for l’EUR along with Piacentini.

A few architects did follow the aesthetics of monumentalism, *Romanità*, and *mediterraneità*, prompted by the “Empire” building of the PNF, but this was unique within the thousands of *Casa del Fascio* designed after 1936. Quirino De Giorgio designed numerous monuments and buildings for the PNF beginning in 1930. He began designing futurist monuments for the “Fallen” and for the PNF show of the Revolution that included enormous *fasci* symbols [Fig. 87]. De Giorgio designed his first *Casa del Fascio* in Montà in 1932 with a stone clad tower and an *arengario*. The bulk of his constructed work for the PNF occurred between the years of 1936 to 1938. The character of De Giorgio’s buildings, after 1936, was monumental with engraved fascist quotes, arches with deep shadows, and dramatic relief sculptures. The engravings occurred on his buildings clad in stone, as in Cappellozza [Fig. 88]. The sculptural figures occurred on most projects, including the brick-clad *Casa del Fascio*/GIL in Pontelongo and the brick-clad GRF “*Bonservizi*” in Padua [Figs. 89-90]. De Giorgio sketched ten eagles in *altorilievo* (high-relief) on the stone façade of his Piazzaola sul Brenta project.³¹⁰ The eagles were a Roman sign of “*volo trionfale*” (triumphal flight); De Giorgio added that the eagles were visibly singing the praises of fascism.³¹¹ The “Proclamation of the Empire” was inscribed above the entrance [Fig. 91]. De Giorgio used simple Roman arches on his designs for the 1936 Vigonza *Casa del Fascio* and for the 1939 GRF “Arnaldo Mussolini” [Fig. 92]. De Giorgio used massive brick columns with little detail in the 1938 Piazzola sul Brenta *Casa del*

³¹⁰ ACS, PNF files, “*Relazione*” by architect Prof. Quirino De Giorgio, Padova, December 21, 1939, B. 1249.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*

Fascio [Fig. 93].³¹² Enrico Pietrogrande's book, *L'Opera di Quirino De Giorgio*, with the subtitle, "*Architettura e classicism nell'Italia dell'impero*" aptly describes the buildings of De Giorgio, who sought a monumental architecture which visually portrayed Fascist Italy as an "Empire."³¹³

De Giorgio's work is also very contextual, which would explain its consistency in Padua. His design for the 1938 *Gruppo Rionale "Bonservizi"* in Padua, includes a huge complex with a theater for 10,000 people.³¹⁴ The massive brick building was laid out linearly, as if part of the existing brick wall of the city with its own medieval tower as the *torre littoria*. The tower included De Giorgio's dramatic eagle head sculptures at its top. All details, except for the sculptures, were constructed in red brick, the local material of Padua. De Giorgio explained during an interview with me in 1985 that many new PNF buildings were built on the edges of established cities, therefore they were often located near the medieval walls that surrounded the cities. He proposed that his buildings were part of the urban language of the city and a segment of the actual brick wall.

De Giorgio's monumental and classically stripped-down designs were precursors of the stark and repetitive use of arches and columns in the designs of l'EUR, however, his designs were unique to this one architect in 1938 and were tied to the Padua context. Despite their historic gestures, De Giorgio's designs still bore a stripped-down quality that could be considered modern. Other *Casa del Fascio* in the same zone in Padua, outlined in Enrico Pietrogrande's book, *Trentaquattro case del fascio, Settant'anni dopo*, were unlike De Giorgio's *Casa del Fascio* and showed no propensity for historic references. The *Casa del Fascio* in

³¹² De Giorgio's first project for the *Casa del Fascio* in *Piazzola sul Brenta* was not fully brick, but the columns were rendered as stone.

³¹³ Enrico Pietrogrande, *L'opera di Quirino De Giorgio (1937-1940)* (Milan: FrancoAngeli s.r.l., 2011).

³¹⁴ www.artefascista.it

Cervarese Santa Croce (Fossona, Padua) from 1938-1939 was a rectangular building with square windows highlighted with travertine. The *Casa del Fascio* included three *fasci* symbols, Roman numerals for the year of its inauguration, and a large “M” over the balcony, which represented Mussolini [Fig. 94]. The *Casa Littoria* in Candiano from 1937-38 designed by Giuseppe Stoppato and Procolo Odoni, was equally without historic references. Two “autarchic” horizontal windows with recessed brick adorned one of the *Casa Littoria*’s facades [Fig. 95]. The 1937 *Casa del Fascio* addition to an existing building in Cittadella, Padua, demonstrated a lack of concern for historical precedent all together. The designer abandoned the historic arched openings of the existing building, and opted for an addition with a stark white grid and an arcade with rectangular openings, which stood in contrast to the existing arched arcade [Fig. 96]. Pietrogrande’s book, *Trentaquattro Case del Fascio*, which is a study conducted in the Province of Padua, is replete with examples of *Casa del Fascio* with flat roofs, corner windows, rectangular rather than arched openings that were all designed after the 1936 “Declaration of the Empire.”

Despite the common assertion by many historians that architecture changed toward the monumental and the classical after the 1936 “Declaration of the Empire” – this dissertation finds more evidence to the contrary. Italian architectural history from 1936 to 1943 did not follow this historicist path. Rather, the bulk of *Casa del Fascio* designs after 1936 remained widely varied and aesthetically non-committal toward a historicist language.

Case del Fascio in Libya and Italian East Africa

The period between 1935 to 1941 saw the colonization of numerous areas of Italian East Africa and the “*Fascistazione*” of Libya. As with the new towns and *borghi* in Italy, existing

African cities and new towns received *Casa del Fascio* with their own form of political rhetoric as a reminder to the African population of the Italian stronghold.³¹⁵ As soon as the proclamation of the “Empire” was made on May 9, 1936, by Mussolini, the PNF *Opere Edilizie* (Building Works Department) was planning new roads and buildings for existing cities and new villages in the territories of Somalia, Eritrea, and particularly for the newest territory of Ethiopia – all newly defined as AOI (*Africa Orientale Italiana*).³¹⁶ After 1936, PNF growth in Libya and the colonization work by the *Ente per la Colonizzazione dell Libia* was accelerated.³¹⁷ The ONC was also working on new settlements in the new colonies.³¹⁸

African-Italian cities and new villages were given PNF buildings similar to the Italian mainland and almost all master plans included a *Casa del Fascio*. The needs and functions of a *Casa del Fascio* in the African-based areas varied from those in the new towns and *borghi* on the Italian mainland. First, new *Casa del Fascio* built in the Italian colonies were shared by the Italian and African populations, however many *Casa del Fascio* were located in segregated zones. New areas were planned with distinct separation between Italians and “*indigeni*” (indigenous people), as can be seen on the Addis Abeba map [Fig. 97]. New cities were constructed next to the old cities, as shown on the Dire Dawa map, where the *Casa del Fascio* was located at the point of intersection between the new gridded city and the old angled street layout, which represented the existing city [Fig. 98]. Cities and villages were often developed with two centers, two markets, and two residential zones. Secondly, new towns and *borghi* on

³¹⁵ The Italian guide books prepared by the *Consociazione Turistica Italiana* include maps of villages and cities in Libya, which include *Casa del Fascio* locations. The ACS PNF file B.1700 and B.1722 at the Archivio Centrale dello Stato include *Sedi Federale* and *Casa del Fascio* locations in Africa.

³¹⁶ *Gli annali dell’Africa Italiana*, Anno II, No. 4, 1939, pp. 446-7.

³¹⁷ Diane Ghirardo, *Building New Communities*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 89. [Translation: Institute for the Colonialization of Libya]

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

the Italian mainland included a town square with a fascist headquarters, a state-constructed Catholic Church, a school, a store, occasionally a *Comune* and a hotel. By comparison, the Italian colonies in Africa often included similar civic centers, but frequently built more than one religious building, “*per gli indigeni d’ogni religione,*” as Muslims and Orthodox Christians coexisted in the new territories before the Italians invaded.³¹⁹ In Adama, Ethiopia, the city plan showed a position for the Catholic Church, a Mosque, and a Coptic Church [Fig. 99]. The city of Adama had only one *Casa del Fascio*, which was located in the square with the Catholic Church.

The hierarchy of buildings in the Italian-African enclaves, and the status of the *Casa del Fascio* within the group of buildings, is not easy to ascertain, because the relationships between the various buildings were generally different from the Italian mainland.³²⁰ The role of the PNF was also modified in the African colonies as social assistance was one the PNF’s primary activities, besides developing programs to enhance the growth of the agricultural industry. Propagandistic ambitions existed, but cultivating productivity was the first concern of the PNF.

As was the case in the new towns and *borghi* on the Italian mainland, no two *Casa del Fascio* in the Italian colonies were alike and certainly none were identical. The article titled, “*Criteri Generali e problem dell’edilizia in AOI,*” in the publication, *Gli Annali dell’Africa Italiana*, from 1939, noted that there was no universal application,

I piani regolatori, pur differenziandosi in base a circostanze particolari, sono informati, in fondo, a principî comuni; ma – come osserva l’architetto Plinio Marconi, uno di quelli che si sono creati una specializzazione coloniale e l’hanno applicata alla costruzione dell’Impero – non altrettanto accade dell’edilizia, per la quale le grandi diversità di clima esistenti nelle varie regioni, ed in parte la diversa disponibilità dei materiali da costruzione, esigono una notevole

³¹⁹ *Gli annali dell’Africa Italiana*, Anno II, No. 4, 1939, pp. 446-7.

[Translation: “for the indigenous people of every religion”]

³²⁰ *Gli annali dell’Africa Italiana*, Anno II, No. 4, 1939, pp. 446-7.

differentiazione delle norme costruttive a seconda che si tratti del bassopiano somalo,³²¹

Plinio Marconi, an architect working in the new territories, remarked that there were great differences in altitude and climate from one city to the other, with some buildings located in the mountains and others by the sea, which had to be considered in the building construction, thus creating variation. Contrary to the possible variation that Marconi witnessed because of climate and construction differences, architectural historian Diane Ghirardo noticed similarities in the Libyan architecture, because three architects – Florestano Di Fausto, Giovanni Pellegrini, and Umberto di Segni – had been responsible for most of the urban and architectural design work, rather than many.³²² Comparing *Case del Fascio* in the AOI to those in Libya demonstrates a visual variety of building aesthetics in the newly formed AOI, as compared to the aesthetic consistency of Libyan *Case del Fascio*, which were white stucco buildings with multiple arches and deep shadows [Figs. 100-101]. Di Fausto had worked on public architecture in Rhodes in the late 1920s and tourist architecture in Libya in the early 1930s, before working on the public architecture in Libya in the later 1930s.³²³ He had earlier developed his own vision of contextualism using the building traditions and forms of the Mediterranean.³²⁴

There were urgent needs of the PNF that preceded the building of civic centers in the African villages, such as the construction of the railway and its railway stations, hospitals, and

³²¹ Ibid, p. 443.

[Translation: “The planning regulations, while differentiating according to particular circumstances, are informative, in the end, to principal communities; but – as the architect Plinio Marconi observes, one who has created a specialization in colonial architecture and has applied it to empire-building – it is not applicable for buildings universally, but one has to take into account the great diversity of existing climate in various regions, and deal with the different availability of construction materials, building requires considerable differentiation of construction standards depending on whether one finds oneself in the Somalian plain,”]

³²² Diane Ghirardo, *Building New Communities*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 90.

³²³ Brian L. McLaren, “Architecture of Tourism in Italian Libya,” Ruth Ben-Ghiat, Mia Fuller, ed. *Italian Colonialism*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 170.

³²⁴ Ibid.

post offices. However, in many villages, the church and the cinema were built before the public buildings, such as the PNF's *Casa del Fascio*. Large companies hoped to benefit by the expansion of Italy's kingdom and aided in the construction of new villages with numerous non-public buildings, such as banks and cinemas. In Gondar, the *cinema-teatro*, with a capacity of 1200 seats, and a cathedral were high on the "*edifice importanti*" (important building) list along with the hospital and post office.³²⁵ Every town had a unique list of buildings, as each situation was treated singularly.

The PNF renewed their call for "*autarchia*" (autarky), because of the 1936 "Declaration of the Empire," after the 1935 Italian invasion of Ethiopia. Use of local materials was enforced by the PNF in the new Italian territories, when it could intervene. The inefficiency of the local construction methods complicated the building of new edifices. A compromise was to let, "le nuove costruzioni dell'Italia imperial saranno di spirit italiano, ma di forma sanamente moderna."³²⁶ To build rapidly, at such a vast scale, required quickly realized urban plans and simple modern buildings; forcing the architects and PNF to ask the "questioni architettoniche" about how to represent the new "Empire."³²⁷

The Ministry of the AOI and the PNF *Opere Edilizie* had planned numerous small villages. The urban master plans were published in 1939, in "*Le Opere Pubbliche*," in the fourth volume of *Gli Annali dell'Africa Italiana*, one of several volumes celebrating PNF progress in the African territories. On May 5, 1941, the Italian colonial empire ended; therefore many of the

³²⁵ Ibid., p. 474.

³²⁶ Ibid., p. 444.

[Translation: "The new construction of imperial Italy will be of the Italian spirit, but of a wholesome modern form."]

³²⁷ Ibid., p. 443.

[Translation: "Architectonic questions"]

proposed plans, still in preliminary stages, were not completed. The published master plans reveal locations of *Casa del Fascio* and their relative importance with respect to other buildings within the new African villages.

The small town of Decamerè, in Eritrea, made up of about 430 hectares, had two principal *piazze*, one for the governmental center, which was elevated, and the other for the commercial center. The “*ottima ubicazione*” (best site) was given to buildings of “public utility”: the *Casa del Fascio*, the Post and Telegraph Office, a hotel, a school, the *Sanità Pubblica* (public health care building), a *Duomo* and the office of the *carabiniere*. [Fig.102].³²⁸ The plan of Decamerè was laid out as a European city with axial placements, boulevards and a hierarchy of streets in a grid. A park with a large residence for the governor faced the *Piazza Littorio* and was central to the zone of the *Casa del Fascio* and the Post Office. A market was located in its own *piazza*, named the *Piazza Impero*. The governor’s building and the *Duomo* were more prominent than the *Casa del Fascio*, which was not dissimilar to the hierarchy of buildings in the new towns on the Italian continent.

In very small enclaves such as Alomatà, the *Commissariato* (police station) was most prominent. Alomatà did not have a governor’s building, nor even a church, but there was a *Casa del Fascio* and also a prison [Fig. 103]. In Quoram, an industrial town with two main squares, the residents had a church, a *Casa del Fascio*, a Post Office and a hotel. The Quoram residents were connected to nearby Dessie by a railway line and the industrial zone was within walking distance on the southeast side of the town [Fig.104].

In the village of Adua, whose plan was approved by the PNF on July 17, 1937, the *Casa del Fascio* was placed in an equivalent position to that of the Post Office. The *Commissariato*

³²⁸ Ibid., pp. 422-5.

was the main focus on one side of the main square and an art and trade school was featured on the other side [Fig. 105]. The author of the book section on Adua described the new village,

La nascente città è formata da un gruppo di costruzioni provvisorie, da una zona edilizia italiana e dall'aggregato indigeno. Il nucleo principale di Adua sta sorgendo sul pendio a monte della carrozzabile. Nella spianata ove gli indigeni erano soliti tenere il mercato all'aperto ogni sabato, sorge ora una piazza di forma rettangolare, sulla quale, per tre lati, sono stati costruiti edifici di stile modernissimo, dove s'aprono bei negozi ariosi.³²⁹

The church in Adua was located off the main square in steep terrain.

In the small village of Adigrat, the *Casa del Fascio* and OND were located on tree lined *piazza*, yet the village emphasis was on the church and seminary approached by double tree-lined avenue, culminating into a grand *piazza* [Fig. 106]. The village for the indigenous population was located south of the new village of Adigrat.

In Macallé, the *Casa del Fascio* was the first building the indigenous population would encounter coming into town from their organically laid-out village. An old market marked the center of the indigenous residential area and a new hotel, commissary, and Coptic Church was planned near the zone. The Italian zone was planned on a grid with a Catholic Church at its head. An enormous *piazza* for the new market was planned in between the two centers [Fig. 107].

The village of Axum, approved by the PNF on July 17, 1937, was an entirely different plan arrangement than Adua, which was approved on the same day. The Axum *Casa del Fascio* was located at the head of the village with an ONB included at the front of the building. The *Casa del Fascio* formed an exterior square with the arms of the building. A restaurant and café were located on the other side of the square, with the church located in a minor square to the

³²⁹ Ibid., p. 426.

[Translation: "The young city is formed by a group of temporary buildings, within the Italian construction and indigenous areas. The core of Adua is rising on the slope above the road. On the grounds where the natives used to keep an outdoor market every Saturday, there is now a rectangular square, around which, on three sides, there are ultra-modern style buildings, where there are open-air shops."]

side. The *Casa del Fascio* was situated near the archeological zone, which had its own museum and laboratory. A theater, a large central hotel and pool, a golf course, and car garages were planned to accommodate the tourist who would visit this village to view the archeological structures [Fig. 108].³³⁰

The *Piano Regolatore* of Gondar, the capital of the region of Amhara in Ethiopia, included a *Casa Littoria*, which was to be located adjacent to the Gondar archeological zone. The new Gondar city, planned by architect Gherardo Bosio, was started next to the existing city in 1938 after deciding to preserve the existing ancient capital of Gondar, which included the Castle of Fasiladàs from 1635, and archeological sites.³³¹ The *Uffici del Governo* and the *Casa Littoria* were located next to the *piazza* nearest to the most important monuments after *Il Duce* intervened. Architectural historian, David Rifkind, wrote that “party and state leaders could address the assembled crowds from the castle of Bacafà, ... which was renovated for use as the local Fascist party headquarters.”³³² ³³³ Preserving old Gondar and locating PNF buildings near to the ancient monuments was a visual benefit to the regime [Figs. 109-110].³³⁴ The style of the new buildings next to the old was also discussed, “con accorgimenti architettonici la semplicità delle linee dello stile moderno con la imponenza dei castelli”³³⁵ Bosio separated the new district by locating the new colonial area on elevated land to the north, which also implied a separation of

³³⁰ Ibid, p. 425.

³³¹ David Rifkind, “Gondar: Architecture and Urbanism for Italy’s Fascist Empire,” *JSAH* 70, no. 4 (December 2011), p. 495.

³³² David Rifkind, “Gondar: Architecture and Urbanism for Italy’s Fascist Empire,” *JSAH* 70, no. 4 (December 2011), p. 497.

³³³ *Gli annali dell’Africa Italiana*, Anno II, No. 4, 1939, p. 474.

³³⁴ *Gli annali dell’Africa Italiana*, Anno II, No. 4, 1939, p. 403.

³³⁵ Ibid., p. 404.

[Translation: “architectural simplicity of line with a modern style with the grandeur of the castles”]

the Italian settlers from the indigenous population.³³⁶ Different ethnic and religious groups had already been separated in distinct areas before the Italian settlement. These prior divisional practices continued to be employed in the 1930s planning efforts for the new Italian areas of Gondar.³³⁷

One of the most celebrated *Casa Littoria* of the Italian colonies was in Addis Abeba, the capital of the AOI. The *Casa Littoria* was a rounded building with multiple arches, from which fascists could exit, and congregate in the large intersection in Addis Abeba. The building was covered with loudspeakers. Signs and images of Mussolini were draped across the *Casa Littoria* for the visit of the former PNF General Secretary, Augusto Terati.³³⁸ No other *Casa del Fascio* building had this configuration. A second building, titled *Casa del Fascio* in Addis Abeba, also had a unique form, similar to Luigi Vietti's diagram for the 1934 Rome *Palazzo del Littorio* competition. The *Casa del Fascio* building consisted of wide curving arms, which culminated with grand *fasci*. A huge *arengio* was located in the center of the "arms" and was the foundation for the semicircular-shaped *Casa del Fascio* above [Fig.111].

A large urban study had been conducted for a new city plan of grandiose proportions for Addis Abeba, which included a 1939 *Municipio* design by Plinio Marconi. The *Municipio* project was sketched with a central *torre littoria* and a grand *piazza*, similar to a *Casa del Fascio*. Many architects had been involved with the design, including Marcello Piacentini,

³³⁶ David Rifkind, "Gondar: Architecture and Urbanism for Italy's Fascist Empire," *JSAH* 70, no. 4 (December 2011), p. 496.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 402.

³³⁸ Turati was the PNF National Secretary from 1926-1930.

Ignazio Guidi, Cesare Valle, Vittorio Cafiero, Guglielmo Ulrich and even Le Corbusier offered his own proposal in 1936.³³⁹

Unlike the grand plans for Addis Abeba, most villages in the Italian colonies had modest buildings. The *Casa del Fascio* in Olettà offered multiple services, including a school. Signs of the Italian presence were occasionally part of the façade, as was the case in Olettà, with the addition of three tall *fasci*, a flag, and the slogan “*credere, obbedire, combattere*” [Fig. 112].³⁴⁰

Casa del Fascio in the African territories, except for those in Libya, were all singular designs. Expediency was needed and building space for PNF activities and social assistance were the first order of business. Representative aesthetics of the political ideals of the PNF and making a *Casa del Fascio* fit precise program requirements were not of primary concern to the PNF leaders in the African territories. The fact that Florestano Di Fausto, Giovanni Pellegrini, and Umberto di Segni were able to synchronize their designs with a Mediterranean appearance, thereby contextualizing the foreign PNF buildings, did not contribute to the solidification of one representative example for a “*Casa del Fascio*” that could be used on the mainland as well.

The *Mostra Triennale d’Oltremare*, 1940

On the Italian mainland in 1940, the PNF had planned a public exhibition in celebration of the new Italian territories. The grounds of the exhibition included a *Casa Littoria*, which was monumental – in height only – and did not exhibit any attachment to a historicist architectural language. The *Mostra Triennale delle Terre Italiane d’Oltremare* was planned by the PNF in 1940 to celebrate the expansion of Italy’s claimed territories across the seas in Africa and to educate the Italian population about their conquests [Fig. 113]. The *Mostra*, or exhibition, was

³³⁹ Giuliano Gresleri, “Architettura per le città dell’impero,” in “Architettura nelle colonie italiane in Africa” in *Rassegna*, 51, September 1992, p. 39.

³⁴⁰ [Translation: “believe, obey, fight”]

planned for the city of Fuorigrotta near Naples.³⁴¹ The *Casa Littoria* was strategically positioned to have maximum visibility by the masses attending the exhibition. The specifics of the physical building, its location, and the materials used were outlined in a report written on September 29, 1938 [Fig. 114].

The *Casa Littoria* at the *Mostra Triennale delle Terre Italiane d'Oltremare*, named GRF Fuorigrotta, was designed by architect Renato De Martino in 1938. The site for the building was rectangular, 40 meters by 60 meters, and was located near the main entry *piazza*. The building occupied 1,488 square meters of the site, while reserving the remaining land for an uncovered athletic zone. The proper massing of the building was critical to meet the demands of the PNF's desire for visibility, therefore De Martino designed a building with four floors, as the description in the archive notes, "in modo da creare in questo punto di massima visibilità un volume di importanza maggiore".³⁴² The tallness of the building and the location of the *arengo* were sited with the expectation that exhibition-goers would immediately view the GRF, nicknamed the *Torre del PNF*, from the entry point.

The plan of the GRF Fuorigrotta housed three programs of the PNF, each with its own separate entry: the local PNF was located at the front of the building; the GIL and the OND were located behind the *arengo*, with entries in the secondary facades [Fig. 115]. The local PNF, the GIL, and the OND shared the conference room, projection hall and the gymnasium. A driveway was located at the rear, since the main face was for pedestrian traffic from the exhibition mall. The number of people planned for each office was carefully noted in the 1938 documents: 16 local PNF employees, 13 GIL employees, 3 OND employees, and 4 additional office spaces; for

³⁴¹ Giovanni Arena, "The City of the Colonial Museum: The Forgotten Case of the Mostra d'Oltremare of Naples" in *Great Narratives of the Past*, Conference proceedings, Paris, 29 June-1 July, 2011, p. 268.

³⁴² ASC, PNF Serie II, Naples, B. 1229, September 29, 1938 XVI-R/m.

[Translation] "In order to create in this area of maximum visibility – a space of greater significance."

a total of 36 people to handle the various PNF activities. Other spaces included an armory, a deposit for holding bags, and an apartment for the custodian of the building.

The GRF Fuorigrotta was constructed from tufo and brick. The walls had divisions of “*tipo Brukner*” construction consisting of stripes of concrete and terracotta tiles. The exterior of the building was covered in *litoceramica* and *Apuano* marble for the ground floor and *intonaco* for the upper floors. White travertine was used for the cornices and window edges. The *arengo* was constructed from black marble with a carved bas-relief image. *Apuano* marble was used for interior cladding of the major floors and stairs and *Trani* stone was used for the entry atrium. A cork-linoleum product was used for the gymnasium floor. All other floors were made from small pieces of marble in cement (terrazzo). The total cost for the building was estimated to be £896.026,00 and the interior furnishings had cost £50.000,00. With some additional items, the overall building cost was £1.122.026,00.³⁴³ The 1938 building proposal was greatly modified by 1940 by adding several more floors to the structure and changing the name of the building to the “*Torre Littoria*.” Rather than a *Casa del Fascio* with a *torre littoria*, the Fuorigrotta PNF building, representing the “Empire” and its African conquests, was now solely a *torre littoria*, albeit a massive glass one [Fig. 116].

Oversized towers on *Casa del Fascio* were more frequent in the designs in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The 1940 six-story *torre littoria* in Tirana was the largest part of the *Casa del Fascio* building [Fig. 117]. The 1940 tower in Messina was six stories tall with massive proportions and a wide balcony [Fig. 118]. The tower for the *Casa del Fascio* in Arsia, Istria had squat proportions despite being five stories tall [Fig. 119]. The six-story Carbonia *Torre* had similar stone cladding and massiveness with windows on all sides [Fig. 120]. The detached tower

³⁴³ Ibid.

in Cavalese, Trento, designed by Arch. Giovanni Lorenzi in 1943, was a massive windowless structure, which had a much greater presence in the architect's rendering than the building [Fig. 121]. Pietro Portaluppi's tower for the *Casa del Fascio* in *Piazza San Sepolcro* was eight stories high with 17 windows on its front face, a balcony door, and a belfry [Fig. 122]. The tower of the *Casa del Fascio* in Vercelli overpowered the diminutive building below [Fig. 123]. The *Casa del Fascio* in Imola was an actual skyscraper in 1933, towering over the narrow streets of the city [Fig. 124]. Mario Palanti's skyscraper project for Mussolini in Rome was called the *Mole Littoria*. When Cass Gilbert learned about the proposed Italian skyscraper in 1924, which was inspired by his design for the Woolworth Tower in New York, he wrote to Mussolini to reconsider his idea in defense of the height of the dome of St. Peter's to not be exceeded by the tower [Fig. 125].

Case del Fascio or *Palazzi del Littorio* were no more Roman or classical than *Case del Fascio* had been before the 1936 "Declaration of the Empire," they were simply larger and taller. The designs of PNF sponsored buildings continued to follow the design aspirations of their Italian architects.

1936 Rome-Berlin Axis and the 1939 "Pact of Steel"

Concurrent with the Italian 1935 expansion into Africa, was the development of Italy's ties with Germany created by the 1936 Rome-Berlin Axis and the 1939 "Pact of Steel." Mussolini visited Hitler in Germany in September of 1937. Hitler had been in power for four years, while Mussolini had been in power for fourteen years with a massive building program that had been underway for over a decade. Buildings in Nazi Germany were understated by comparison to Italy's PNF building program, which often used the building as a prop for its

slogans and fascist symbols. By comparison, in Germany there was often an eagle symbol and/or swastika on their major government buildings and although the symbols were colossal in size, they were not as visually expressive as on an Italian PNF building, but much subtler. The equivalent Nazi buildings to possibly rival the *Casa del Fascio* in Italy, would have been the Hitler Youth Camps, which were vernacular in character and fit aesthetically into their existing context.

The 1936 Rome-Berlin Axis did affect a change in the tone of the PNF's architecture in the areas of Rome where Hitler visited in 1938. Hitler arrived at the Ostiense train station in May of 1938. The train station was designed for the occasion of Hitler's arrival by architect Roberto Narducci [Fig. 126]. The building was clad with white travertine, the same material as the Pyramid of *Cestius* nearby, which was adjacent to a brick medieval city wall and building that briefly housed a *Casa del Fascio*. The adjacent Post Office, designed by Adalberto Libera in 1933-1935, was clad in the same white travertine and although modern, was symmetrical and monumental [Fig. 127]. The major Rome *Palazzo del Littorio* building had been proposed for a triangular site nearby to the zone of the Ostiense train station in 1937, although it was never built in that location. This assembly of PNF buildings, mostly clad in white travertine, would have completed a political enclave representing the mature years of the PNF. The Ostiense train station included bas-relief sculptures and mosaic floors depicting Roman history to connect the PNF to its Imperial past, much like the architecture of the *Foro Mussolini* in Rome designed from 1928-1938. The white stone and spare, but monumental, architecture of the Ostiense train station was an architectural display for the outside world; however the majority of PNF buildings, outside of Rome, did not copy this aesthetic.

The 1939 linkage of Italy to Germany prompted the PNF to increase their military potential by increasing the enrollment of Italians into the PNF. To aid in this recruitment, the Ministry of Public Works organized a competition in 1940 for designs of three types of “prototypical” *Case del Fascio* for the plains, hills and mountains – zones earlier neglected for the construction of *Case del Fascio* [Figs. 128-129]. Although militarism was emphasized, the competition brief’s main objective suggested that each building be well adapted to its environment and in harmony with local architecture, thus creating a plethora of aesthetic choices rather than singular “prototypes.” Ministry officials promoted fifty-one competition entries, with varying degrees of diversity, as “prototypes” for use in rural communities.³⁴⁴ Architects designed in a vernacular aesthetic and rendered their competition entries often with traditional building materials. Despite the vernacular approach by many architects, their solutions revealed that aesthetic variations were still widespread in the 1940s [Fig. 130].

ACS PNF archival material from 1941 revealed that the next development proposed for the *Casa del Fascio* was the idea to share space with schools, promoting fascist education and demonstrating the need of classrooms for the PNF adult members. Luigi Mancini presented the idea to the Secretary of the central PNF, who thought it to be a wise economic decision to construct *Case del Fascio* and schools in the same building to save funds, since the country was at war.³⁴⁵

³⁴⁴ Dianne Yvonne Ghirardo, Ph.D. dissertation, “Architecture and the State: Fascist Italy and the New Deal in America,” Stanford University, 1983, pp. 86-89.

³⁴⁵ ACS, PNF, SERIE II, B. 1498, June 12, 1941.

1938 Decree and the 1939 *Regolamento*

The 1938 Decree and the 1939 *Regolamento* affected the *Casa del Fascio* building program in minor ways. The words “*Credere, Obbedire, Combattere*” from Article Four of the 1938 Decree was the new chant for the fascists, which was carved in stone and hung on balcony tapestries of *Casa del Fascio*. The 1938 Decree required that *Fascio* centers be built in the “Empire,” in Libya and on the islands of *Egeo* (Dodecanese Islands). The Decree legally incorporated the *Ente Radio Rurale* under the control of PNF and made the radio a requirement in *Casa del Fascio*, but gifted by the PNF.

The tone of the 1939 *Regolamento* was unlike earlier Decrees. First, the gestures described and titles followed Roman precedents. The Fascist salute was called “*il saluto romano*” and the King was “RE IMPERATORE”— in capital letters. Secondly, the words were literally written as a dialogue in the text of the Decree. Actions and responses were required, by the 1939 *Regolamento*, during mass gatherings and were prescribed in the 1939 document as: “Eja Eja Eja.,” Le forze adunate, saltando romanamento, rispondono: “Alalà”... “Saluto al DUCE!”.... “A NOI!”³⁴⁶ These were the words shouted in the *LUCE* newsreels in repetition around the balconies of the *Torri Littorie*.

Preparation for 1942 XX

While preparing the Italian country militarily in the late 1930s, the PNF was eager to display its status and power to the world. By the late 1930s, the PNF had obtained the permission for a World Exhibition in 1941. Postponement until 1942, because of the war, allowed the Italian planners to shift the emphasis of the exhibition to one which celebrated

³⁴⁶ Mario Missori, *Gerarchie e statue del P.N.F.* (Rome: Bonacci Editore, 1986), pp. 418-9.

twenty years of PNF rule in view of a worldwide audience. The Central PNF suggested that photos for all public works projects be displayed at the exhibition and requested them from the Provincial PNF headquarters. Photos of *Casa del Fascio*, among other PNF buildings, were sent from many PNF Provincial headquarters to Rome's central PNF offices. The photographic material sent was the graphic material used for study in this dissertation. The data is now located at the Archivio Centrale dello Stato at l'EUR (Esposizione Universale Roma) – the location of the proposed 1942 exhibition, which never occurred. The ACS PNF Files are rich with material on *Casa del Fascio* from the late 1930s, which verify the vast amount of planning and construction that took place under the PNF.

A *Casa del Fascio* was not ultimately planned for l'EUR, but all of the components for mass assembly and architectural rhetoric were present in two major buildings planned for the new zone. The column-clad *Palazzo dei Ricevimenti e Congressi*, designed by Adalberto Libera was a huge assembly hall with a sloped *piazza*. The interior of the building included a massive hall, cinema space with projection and rooftop cinema/assembly space [Fig.131]. The *Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana*, located on axis with the *Palazzo dei Ricevimenti e Congressi*, was designed by architects Ernesto La Padula, Giovanni Guerrini, and Mario Romano in 1938. The *Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana* was the primary monument of l'EUR's design. The *Palazzo* was a “*torre*” of arches, in the same spirit as the repetitiveness and colossal size of the eleven-story *campanile* in Borgo Segezia [Fig.132]. The *Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana* was the *Torre Littoria* of l'EUR and the symbol of the “Third Rome” as l'EUR was often called – the ultimate and most colossal fascist city of the PNF [Fig.133]. The design of the l'EUR zone was never completed by 1942 and was planned as a business district after WWII in the 1950s.

The Italian Social Republic, 1943- 1945

In September 1943, the Nazi Germans positioned Mussolini in northern Italy to head the Italian Social Republic (*Repubblica di Salò*). In November 1943, Mussolini prepared an eighteen point manifesto, which included provisions for public works and continued exploitation of Africa.³⁴⁷ The Italian Social Republic lasted only until April 1945.

Case del Fascio were vandalized after July 25, 1943, when the Fascist Regime fell. Unlike the fall of Nazi Germany, the Italians, for the most part, did not destroy the PNF buildings. They stripped the *Case del Fascio* of *fasci* symbols and any literal reminder of the PNF. The Italians, after 1943, removed the balconies of many ex-*Case del Fascio* and modified the towers. Most PNF headquarters buildings were then occupied by the Italian police or the *carabinieri*. A few ex-*Casa del Fascio* turned into schools.

The legacy of the Fascist Regime may be the massive PNF building program that produced train stations, hospitals, large summer camp facilities, port buildings, airports, and headquarters buildings among others. Once the visible political signs were removed from the PNF headquarters building, the functional part of the building remained, which was reused. The ex-*Casa del Fascio*'s location in the center of most towns and cities was well suited for an outpost for policing after 1943.

Viewing the *Casa del Fascio* building in parallel with the political, religious, and cultural history from 1922 to 1943 revealed that the building grew from a simple gathering space to a politically adorned building, with some new or renovated buildings receiving tower and balcony attachments. The program requirements grew, which mostly defined the interior activities of the "assembly" of fascist members, which grew to become "assembly with exercise and sports," and

³⁴⁷ Brian R. Sullivan, "Italian Social Republic," in P. Cannistraro, ed. *Historical Dictionary of Fascist Italy* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982), pp. 287-289.

grew again to include full cinemas with raked floors. The office program grew as more programs were added by the PNF. The ceremonial aspects of the building connected the inner workings of speech-giving to the *milizia* to the grand oratorical events in the exterior *piazza*, which included the *milizia* and the townspeople.

Several historical moments, between 1922 and 1943, affected the architectural form, components, and urban placement of the *Casa del Fascio*. The emphasis on self-sufficiency and autarky, caused the *Casa del Fascio* buildings to be most often built with brick and minimal iron, if needed. Glass and steel buildings, as the student competitors for the 1932 competition for a *Casa del Fascio* proposed, were never realized. Architects, such as Terragni and Vietti, did propose *Casa del Fascio* with modern glass and steel materials to reveal the honesty and the “bones” of the PNF, which could be seen from the outside of the building, as was proposed in their 1937 proposal for a *Palazzo del Littorio* building in Rome. The focus on self-sufficiency, which increased the need for agricultural land, and the desire by the PNF to lower the density of overcrowded cities, caused the growth of many new towns and *borghi*, which had *Casa del Fascio* that had to tend to a rural constituency and represent the national PNF. Conflicts between the PNF and the Vatican caused careful urban placement of new *Casa del Fascio* buildings by the PNF and increased the rhetorical language in the architectural forms of the *Casa del Fascio*, as was seen with the addition of *torri littorie*. The use of new media equipment, such as the radio, loudspeakers, and film, required the buildings to include inner rooms to accommodate the new equipment and exterior structures to assist with loudspeaker systems to spread audible PNF messages to the Italians. The “Declaration of the Empire,” after the Italian occupation of Ethiopia, caused fewer changes in the *Casa del Fascio* building than I had anticipated. *Casa del Fascio* did not become more imperial, monumental, Roman, or Mediterranean, rather the

buildings continued to be designed with contemporary and modern exteriors. *Case del Fascio* did get larger and more numerous after the “Declaration of the Empire,” because of the need for more *milizia*. The locations of *Case del Fascio* spread to remote rural areas in order to reach more fascist members and to connect to the non-urban population. L’EUR was ultimately designed in a classical and monumental aesthetic, but the smaller *Case del Fascio* continued on the same non-monumental course, despite the “Imperial” developments in 1936.

Chapter Three: Paper Rhetoric: The Visual and Programmatic Development of *Casa del Fascio* Designs for PNF sponsored Competitions

Architectural Competitions and the *Casa del Fascio*

Architettura, the magazine of the *Sindacato Nazionale Fascista Architetti*, directed by Marcello Piacentini, was the official resource of news from the PNF regarding architecture. Competitions for government buildings were listed in the “*Calendario dei Concorsi*” at the end of the journal, which was the central source for an architect to gain a national commission. Membership in the *Sindacato Nazionale Fascista Architetti* was required to do any professional architectural work for the PNF. Competitions for PNF headquarters buildings – *Casa del Fascio*, *Casa Littoria*, GRF buildings, or *Palazzi del Littorio* – were announced in the magazine along with many urban planning projects and other building projects. The results of these PNF-sponsored competitions were generously covered in subsequent issues, often illustrating all of the entries – not just the winning solutions. Wide coverage in magazines of the solutions for a *Palazzo del Littorio* in Rome (1934 and 1937), a *Casa Littoria* in Asti (1934), a *Palazzo Littorio* in Verona (1937-43, two phases) and the competitive program to design rural *Casa del Fascio* (1939-41) provided visual chronological data of the developing PNF requirements for fascist headquarters buildings. Other national magazines, *Casabella*, *Quadrante*, *Architettura e Arti Decorative*, *Rassegna di Architettura*, and the French architectural periodical *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* also announced competitions and published results from the design contests, including a significant student competition for a *Casa del Fascio* in 1932.³⁴⁸ Most architects got their news regarding their profession, possible work, or design examples from these periodicals, newspapers, newsreels, or the construction of a nearby PNF building. The

³⁴⁸ “Il Concorso per La Casa del Fascio “Tipo,” *Rassegna di Architettura* No. 6, June 15, 1932 X, pp. 271-4.

Italian newspapers, *Il Popolo d'Italia*, *Il Corriere della Sera*, *La Stampa*, *Giornale d'Italia*, and *la Nazione*, also published national competitions, local building contests, and construction news. In addition, there was the occasional convention for architects of the *Sindacato Nazionale Fascista Architetti*, such as the one on the tenth anniversary of the *Rivoluzione Fascista*, noted in the magazine, *Rassegna di Architettura*, on December 15, 1932 in Rome. This chapter traces the evolving design strategies and the changing PNF requirements for the *Casa del Fascio/Palazzo del Littorio* buildings that were manifest in the solutions for these PNF-sponsored competitions, which remained mostly on paper. These high profile competitions created a national dialogue, which had an effect on the many singular proposed and constructed *Casa del Fascio* representing the PNF throughout the country and its Italian colonies. It should be noted that there were significant foreign competitions, such as the competition for the League of Nations Building and the Palace of the Soviets, which had their own impact on the work of the Italian architects and likely on the politicians of the PNF.

Student Competition, 1932: Seeking a “Typical” Definition for the *Casa del Fascio*

In the tenth year of PNF rule, the *Gruppo di Propaganda del Fascio Giovanile* from Bologna and its party newspaper *L'Assalto* sought original ideas the design of a typical PNF headquarters building. The Bologna *Gruppo di Propaganda del Fascio Giovanile* sought answers from their own generation, the competition organizers explained that they wanted “young students of the Schools of Architecture [to compete], because it’s from them that original ideas will be born” for the design of *Casa del Fascio* of various sizes.³⁴⁹ The locally issued competition received forty entries from students from every architecture school in Italy. The

³⁴⁹ Translation of Competition Statement, Bologna, 1932, ACS, PNF, Serie II, Bologna.

students' solutions for new *Casa del Fascio* designs were widely published in their own newspaper, *L'Assalto*, and in the national architectural periodicals *Casabella*, *Rassegna di Architettura* and *L'Architettura d'Aujord'hui*.³⁵⁰ The student competition was one of the first attempts to seek a common, or "tipo" solution, as the competition brief stated, for this national building. The competition statement defined a generic *Casa del Fascio* as a,

...typical institution that no city or town, however small, can do without...even if consisting of a small rundown room, that the new spirit of Italy emanates through the provisions of the Fascist government...the symbol of the Regime...by the tenth year a spacious and stress-free *Casa del Fascio* should be available to all populated areas...³⁵¹

The jury for the Bologna student competition was composed of Giulio Ulisse Arata; Pietro Aschieri, a Roman architect; Alberto Legnani, the Bologna Provincial Secretary of the *Sindacato Nazionale Fascista Architetti*.³⁵² ³⁵³ Giuseppe Pagano, the director of *Casabella*, and P.M. Bardi, one of the directors of *Quadrante*, were also jurors of the student competition.³⁵⁴ The juror and architect, Giulio Ulisse Arata, had worked on the first major *Casa del Fascio* in Italy, from 1923-1924. This first *Casa del Fascio* was located in Bologna, the same city that sponsored the student competition.³⁵⁵

The PNF saw the tenth year of fascism as an opportunity to celebrate their accomplishments and to make adjustments for the coming years. This was the year of the Rome *Mostra della Rivoluzione* where architects offered diverse interpretations of regime architecture

³⁵⁰ The competition was published in *Casabella*, June 5, 1932 and in *L'Architettura d'aujord'hui*, *L'Assalto*, 21 & 26 May 1932, and exhibit at the Milan Polytechnic in 1933. See Lucy M. Maulsby *Fascism, Architecture, and the Claiming of Modern Milan, 1922-1943* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 2014), p. 112.

³⁵¹ Translation of Competition Statement, Bologna, 1932, ACS, PNF, Serie II, Bologna.

³⁵² Notes from Federica Legnani. DIALOGHI DI ARCHITETTURA – *Ordine degli architetti di Bologna*, Friday, June 19, 2009, "La casa del fascio di Borgo Panigale," by Federica Legnani.

³⁵³ The *Sindacato Nazionale Fascista Architetti* was a professional organization.

³⁵⁴ "Il Concorso per La Casa del Fascio "Tipo," *Rassegna di Architettura* No. 6, June 15, 1932 X, p. 271.

³⁵⁵ Giulio Ulisse Arata. *Architetture per Bologna (1923-1934)*, tenuta a Palazzo Fava. URL consultato il 20 febbraio 2016. Palazzo was known as *Palazzo Ghisilardi Fava*.

in its many interior rooms – viewed by thousands of visitors. In an attempt to change from the norm of the previous ten years, the tone of the Bologna student competition guidelines suggested the need to stay away from traditional styles, which rendered fascism as an antiquated political and moral system. The jurors did not want “more hybrid and insignificant *Fascio* Houses” and asked that “the *Fascio* House showcase architectural lines that are themselves the messengers of our faith.”³⁵⁶ The Bologna competition statement asked that the *Casa del Fascio* be immediately recognizable in every city and town without the aid of signs or emblems, which had characterized the buildings before 1932. Most early buildings were existing structures and the *fascio* symbol, slogans, flags, and the actual name of the building in huge letters were the normal embellishments to identify the buildings. The Bologna competition statement noted that town halls and churches are “typical” architecture and recognizable at a distance; and that the *Casa del Fascio* should have its own recognizable architecture, easily read from afar. This competition was significant because it gave concrete data to the population of designers, albeit students, grappling with the physical embodiment of the message of the PNF, which caused notable changes from the previous ten years.

The jurors of the Bologna competition requested three types of buildings based on the population size: a town with population of 5,000 to 10,000; a small city of 10,000 to 50,000; and a city no bigger than 300,000.³⁵⁷ The winners of the competition were four students from the *Politecnico* of Milan and one from the *Scuola Superiore d'Architettura* of Turin. Peresutti and Rogers from Milan won in the small “town” category, with a long glass office building with an entry accented by a large *Fascio* and balcony above. The front façade, which consisted of a single-loaded corridor, was almost entirely made of glass, while the rear facades were rows of

³⁵⁶ 1932 Competition statement translation, Bologna, 1932, ACS, PNF, Serie II, Bologna..

³⁵⁷ The category population amounts vary in the published magazine documents.

horizontal windows. A taller two-story volume created a T-shape to the whole composition with a gymnasium below and a light filled auditorium above. The exterior areas included gardens and a swimming pool [Fig.1]. The students Banfi and Belgiojoso, also from Milan, won in the “small city” category, with a long bar building filled with offices off of a single-loaded glass corridor. The southwest facing rooms in the Banfi and Belgiojoso *Casa del Fascio* had smaller horizontal windows. The entry was enlarged in a perspective by the two students, with an immediate view of the war memorial and the option to enter the auditorium to the right or the vertical stair system to the left. The swimming pool and gym were located at the far end of the site. Banfi and Belgiojoso created generous exterior areas by dividing the square site with a bar-shaped building and two rectangular ends. The small end façade of the bar building was tower-like, had a balcony and a prominent flag [Fig. 2]. Giuseppe Pagano wrote in the 1932 issue of *Casabella*, which included the Bologna competition submissions, that Banfi and Belgiojoso had won because their plan was simple and clear. The winning entry for a “city” *Casa del Fascio* was won by Renzo Biachi from Turin, who created a three pronged building with two wings five-stories in height and a third wider wing, which contained the auditorium and gymnasium [Fig. 3]. Biachi’s submission also included glass enclosed single-loaded corridors, similar to the other two winning entries by the Milanese students. Biachi placed the name “*Casa del Fascio*” and three *fasci* symbols on the top level of his project’s facade. Pagano noted that the student submissions displayed an excessive use of glass, which was proof to him that modern architecture had entered into the schools, and added that it had not entered yet into Italian life.³⁵⁸ The three winning schemes had similar design approaches by constructing the form of their *Casa del Fascio* with additive building blocks to create exterior spaces in asymmetrical configurations. The winning

³⁵⁸ Giuseppe Pagano, *Casabella*, V. 5, June, 1932, pp. 19-24.

students did not submit “*palazzo*” forms with inner courtyards, as had been the norm by architects in years prior to 1932. The editors of *Rassegna di Architettura* commented that the focus of the student entries was on the function of the building and standardized components, such as glass, because it was to be a “tipica” building to be multiplied throughout the country.³⁵⁹ The editors of *Rassegna di Architettura* wrote that the students had captured the essence of fascism such as “educazione spirituale delle masse, organizzazione e infine esaltazione della forza fisica degli individui.”³⁶⁰

Roman student Ettore Ricotti submitted an entry to the Bologna competition that was a scheme with tall repetitive arches. Pagano characterized the *Casa del Fascio* project of Ricotti as “reminiscenze mediovali,” as it included the only tower of the winning entries [Fig. 4].³⁶¹ Several *Casa del Fascio* designed in the late 1930s for Libya closely resembled Ricotti’s competition submission, which predate the arched architectural designs for l’EUR [Fig. 5]. Student A. Bronzini, submitted a monumental scheme rendered with a heavy stone texture. Bronzini added a large central *fascio* to the symmetrical façade that let into an open courtyard [Fig. 6]. The solutions by Ricotti and Bronzini were closer in character to the many *Casa del Fascio* actually designed and built in later years rather than the winning entries. The three winning submissions resembled office buildings with spatial configurations reminiscent of the Bauhaus. Publication of the competition in *Casabella* and *Rassegna di Architettura* was the newest visual material that many architects, who were working on actual buildings for the PNF, might view.

³⁵⁹ “Il Concorso per La Casa del Fascio “Tipo,” *Rassegna di Architettura* No. 6, June 15, 1932 X, p. 272.

³⁶⁰ “Il Concorso per La Casa del Fascio “Tipo,” *Rassegna di Architettura* No. 6, June 15, 1932 X, p. 274.

[Translation: “spiritual education of the masses, organization and finally triumph of physical strength of individuals”]

³⁶¹ Giuseppe Pagano, *Casabella*, V. 5, June, 1932, pp. 19-24.

One of the jurors, Alberto Legnani, designed several *Casa del Fascio* during and after the student competition. His design for a *Casa del Fascio* in Borgo Panigale in 1933 was published in *L'Architettura d'aujourd'hui*, *Domus* and *Architettura* [Fig. 7]. In *Domus*, Legnani's *Casa del Fascio* was described as, "Una derivazione medioevale alleata a una linearità razionalistica...un senso scenografico, decorativo,... un che di 'pittorresco' (i motivi fuori asse e simmetria) fa appartenere anche questo genere di architettura a quei 'prodromi di nuovo romanticismo.'"³⁶² The medieval comment referred to the tower, as few *Casa del Fascio* included towers in the early 1930s. Similar to the student competition entries, Legnani assembled many separate volumes in his design (a theater was added in 1940 by Legnani's engineer Querzoli). The separate volumes were individually articulated, rather than embedded in a *palazzo* form that filled the perimeter of the site. The asymmetry made the recognition of the various parts – office, tower, gymnasium – more visible. The magazine reporters noticed the thirty meter distance of the façade from *Via Emilia*, an ancient Roman road. The space in front of the *Casa del Fascio* was needed as a *piazza* for PNF rallies with a significant setting. The façade was the theatrical backdrop for PNF events.³⁶³

Legnani won a competition several years later for a *Casa del Fascio* in Sesto Calende, where he separated the assembly hall/theater from the office component and connected the two building afterwards, he noted, with a covered walkway for ease of the execution of construction and function.³⁶⁴ Building in stages was an essential consideration later in the 1930s, particularly

³⁶² *Domus*, 1933. <http://rivista.ibc.regione.emilia-romagna.it/xw-200904/xw-200904-a0009/#null>

[Translation: "A medieval derivation allied with rationalist linearity...a theatrical sense, decorative...one that is 'picturesque' (because it is off-axis and asymmetrical) does also belong to the kind of architecture in those 'harbingers of new romanticism.'"]

³⁶³ DIALOGHI DI ARCHITETTURA – *Ordine degli architetti di Bologna*, Friday, June 19, 2009, "La Casa del Fascio di Borgo Panigale," by Federica Legnani.

³⁶⁴ DIALOGHI DI ARCHITETTURA – *Ordine degli architetti di Bologna*, Friday, June 19, 2009, "La Casa del Fascio di Borgo Panigale," by Federica Legnani.

when money was scarce and the need for PNF meetings was critical. Legnani's tower for Sesto Calende, which was detached and located between the two volumes, was not constructed.

The Asti *Casa Littoria* Competition, 1934

The *Amministrazione Comunale* of the city of Asti organized a competition among local architects for a large complex called the *Casa Littoria*, which would include offices for the local PNF. The competition was published in *Architettura* in October of 1934 in an eleven page article. The project was complicated, as it had to include and transform a long existing structure called "*Alla*" located between the *Piazza Alfieri* and the *Piazza Emanuele Filiberto*. The "*Alla*" was deemed noteworthy as a historic building that would give value to the new national presence and already included an internal space near a *piazza*, which was deemed useful to the functioning of a PNF headquarters [Fig. 8].³⁶⁵

On one side of the *Casa Littoria* site in Asti was a large triangular *piazza* with arcaded walkways and on the other side of the "*Alla*" was a large field for *palio* (horse) races and weekly markets [Fig. 9]. The train lines were adjacent to the site, located to the south of the field. The editors of the magazine *Architettura* made it clear that they disapproved of adding to or covering up the historic "*Alla*" building, however most competition entries ignored *Architettura's* suggestion. The competition brief listed the cost of the new building at £3.500.000, which drew twelve architectural firms to enter. The jury was made up of Prof. Vincezo Buronzo, the *Podestà* and President of the *Commissione*; Prof. Michelangelo Peretti, the *Secretario Politico* of the *Fascio di Combattimento* di Asti; Dr. Annibale Richard, the *Vice-Prefetto* of Alessandria; Dr. Ing. Gino Cipriani, the representative of the *Sindacato Nazionale Fascista Ingegneri*, Architect

³⁶⁵ Ma. Pa., *Architettura*, October, 1934, XII, p. 602-613.

Gino Levi Montalcini, the representative of the *Sindacato Nazionale Fascista Architetti*; and Ing. Domenico Schiavinato, head of engineering for the *Comune* of Asti. The magazine reported that the jury was impressed with the seriousness of the endeavor and the well prepared competition documents. The authors of the competition guidelines were concerned about the circulation of both automobiles and people, and questioned how people would transverse through the multiple courtyards that were submitted as designs by the architecture firms. The authors were particularly concerned about rapid “sfollemento del salone del Fascio” toward the exterior, which was a major functional feature of the *Casa Littoria*.³⁶⁶

Arch. R. Fagnoni and Ing. E. Bianchini, of the company Alberti Ercole, designed the second winning entry for the Asti *Casa Littoria*, which included an asymmetrical solution consisting of a circular and semi-circular *cortile* and an asymmetrical tower [Fig. 10]. The jurors noted that this scheme created, “una Casa Littoria degna dell’Era Fascista, essenzialmente novatrice, antiretorica e viva.”³⁶⁷ The editors commented about the evolution of the “architettura nostra, che ha lasciato tracce significative specialmente nella Asti delle epoche romana e romanico-gotica.”³⁶⁸

Competition entrant E. Sotsas designed a separate tower and two symmetrical facades, both with large balconies [Fig. 11]. Arch. C. Costantini designed a project with an apse at the end of the existing building, added arched buttresses and an asymmetrical tower, reminiscent of an ecclesiastic structure [Fig. 12]. Ing. Chevalley created four separate rectangular buildings

³⁶⁶ Ma. Pa., *Architettura*, October, 1934, XII, p. 609.

[Translation: “exiting of the crowds from the hall of the Casa del Fascio”]

³⁶⁷ Ma. Pa., *Architettura*, October, 1934, XII, p. 607.

[Translation: “a Casa Littoria worthy of the Fascist Era, essentially innovative, anti-rhetorical and alive”]

³⁶⁸ Ma. Pa., *Architettura*, October, 1934, XII, p. 608.

[Translation: “our architecture, which left significant traces especially in Asti of Roman and Romanesque-Gothic”]

placed radially around an arcaded courtyard, with a focus on a central tower [Fig. 13]. Architect Dezzutti, Perona and Ing. Benzi wrapped the “*Alla*” and created a semi-circular building on one side and a rectangular courtyard on the other, with balconies at the middle points of the courtyards. A tower was located off-axis from the semi-circular building [Fig. 14].

The Commission selected the project by Arch. Ottorino Aloisio from the company of Luigi Caiano because the concept was, “chiaro e moderno nella concezione, risulta armonico e monumentale nelle masse.”³⁶⁹ The description was similar to the competition brief for the *Palazzo del Littorio* Competition in Rome during 1934 when the jurors requested a modernly monumental building. The Asti jurors noted that the tower was an original design and that the architect fused the concept of a “forza base” (strong base) with a “spirituale” (spiritual) elevation [Figs.15-16].³⁷⁰ The design incorporated a contemporary language with strong horizontal accents, while at the same time the building referenced a medieval fortress. The plan was in the shape of an “M”, but there is no evidence that this was intentional as in other buildings, such as the later 1938-1942 *Casa del Fascio* in Littoria, where the symbolism of the “M” was meant to be visible and celebrated [Fig. 17].

The publication of the Asti competition was accessible to architects in October of 1934 in *Architettura*. Architect Aloisio’s scheme was a strong example of a streamlined aesthetic, with traditional references to a fortress. The tower was monumental, twice the height of the building. The importance of the two adjacent *piazze* was reinforced with circulation to and from the building’s grand spaces. The new brick cladding was harmonious with the local material of the “*Alla*” and the preferred material of the PNF. The *arengario* was ample, but also subdued in its

³⁶⁹ Ma. Pa., *Architettura*, October, 1934, XII, p. 612.

[Translation: “clear and modern in conception, harmonious and monumental in massing”]

³⁷⁰ Ma. Pa., *Architettura*, October, 1934, XII, p. 612.

location above the entry facing into the major *piazza*. The visual rhetoric was largely implied as a modern fortress, and not a “house of glass.”

The impact of the Asti competition was not a factor in the *Palazzo del Littorio* competition for Rome, which was due several months earlier on June 30, 1934, however, the *Casa del Combattente* (ONC) in Trieste had been published in May of 1934, before the Rome PNF headquarters competition was due. The Asti *Casa del Fascio* and Trieste *Casa del Combattente* (ONC) bear some similarities, because the immense height of their towers; both were designed with a heavy stone base and brick cladding with horizontal stone ribbing [Fig.18]. The *torre littoria* was not solely used by *Casa del Fascio* buildings, but was incorporated on other PNF buildings, such as the *Casa del Combattente* in Trieste, as well as some GIL and Balilla buildings.

The Oleggio *Casa Littoria* Competition, 1934

A competition for a *Casa Littoria* in Oleggio had been issued by the Novara PNF Federation. Data is sparse of the various Oleggio competition entries, but in December of 1934 (XIII) *Architettura* published the Oleggio *Casa Littoria* project by architect Luigi Vietti and engineer Ignazio Gardella.³⁷¹ Although their project was not the winning entry in the competition, the author of the article, Marcello Piacentini, praised it for its concept and wrote that it should inspire other architects to create a “ardito edificio” (bold building).³⁷² Piacentini called it organic and structural – an unusual combination. The *Casa Littoria* was noteworthy for revealing the function of the buildings as visible additive elements. The building was essentially an office block and a theater, whose form was easily read from the exterior [Fig.19]. The site was

³⁷¹ Gardella does not list Oleggio among his projects in his publications.

³⁷² Marcello Piacentini, “*Casa Littoria ad Oleggio*,” *Architettura*, December, 1934 XIII, p. 740.

originally a market, so the designers, Vietti and Gardella, lifted the building up on columns to create open space, allowing for the continuous use of the *piazza*, which was praised by Piacentini.³⁷³ No tower was included, although an *arengario* of massive proportions was a feature of the backside of the theater's curved façade. Unique to this project was a "perch" located in the interior, at the back of the theater.³⁷⁴ The fascist speaker could address the crowd inside and then could march out of the theater onto the large exterior *arengario*. The fascists from the interior theater would descend the sculptural stairs to become participants with the crowd in the *piazza*. The PNF dignitaries, still in command, would address the crowd then from the exterior podium. Marcello Piacentini noted that the competition submission included a phrase from Il Duce:

Il fascismo italiano rappresenta una reazione all'andazzo democratico per cui tutto doveva essere grigio, mediocre, livellatore. Il fascismo riporta lo "Stile" nella vita del popolo; cioè una linea di condotta; cioè il colore, la forza, il pittoresco, l'inaspettato, il mistico; insomma, tutto quello che conta nell'animo delle moltitudini.³⁷⁵

Piacentini called the Oleggio *Casa Littoria* project by Vietti and Gardella "Lirico" (lyrical) and monumental.³⁷⁶

Luigi Vietti designed several *Casa del Fascio* in the 1930s, a GRF "Giordana" in Genova in 1933, a *Casa del Fascio* in Intra, also in 1933, and a *Casa del Fascio* project in Rapallo in 1936-7. Vietti's first PNF headquarters in Genova was a rectangular building called GRF "Giordana," with three equal size doors at the street, a horizontal shared balcony and a roof

³⁷³ Marcello Piacentini, "Casa Littoria ad Oleggio," *Architettura*, December, 1934 XIII, p. 737.

³⁷⁴ Marcello Piacentini, "Casa Littoria ad Oleggio," *Architettura*, December, 1934 XIII, p. 739. The word "L'arengario" was used in the article.

³⁷⁵ Marcello Piacentini, "Casa Littoria ad Oleggio," *Architettura*, December, 1934 XIII, p. 740.

[Translation: "Italian fascism is the reaction to the democratic blandness where everything is grey, mediocre, on a leveled plane. Fascism reintroduces "style" in people's loves; that is to say, a way of life, color, strength, the picturesque, the unexpected, the mystic; In short, all the things that matter in the soul of the masses."]

³⁷⁶ Marcello Piacentini, "Casa Littoria ad Oleggio," *Architettura*, December, 1934 XIII, p. 740.

terrace. The façade was dominated by four flags [Fig. 20]. The built Intra *Casa del Fascio* was closest in concept to the 1934 Oleggio *Casa del Fascio* competition design with an oversized *arengario* [Fig. 21]. The immense perch was suspended from the wall of the building with a massive supporting column below, meant to also support a commanding sculpture at the upper level, which was never added [Fig. 22]. The *arengario* was so large that it could hold at least sixty people. There was an internal balcony that faced into a large hall, which functioned in a similar way to the Oleggio *Casa Littoria* project. PNF officials could command their fascist members from the inside and outside of the *Casa del Fascio* [Fig. 23]. The *adunate* inside were roused to march out to engage the larger crowds outside. The Intra *Casa del Fascio* was also raised on *pilotis* and the roof of the building was used as a place to gather during rallies. Both the “*pilotis*” and the use of the roof were concepts discussed in international circles of which Vietti was a part. Vietti was interviewed by *L’Ecomomia Nazionale* in 1932 in an article titled “Vuole parlarci della Architettura Razionale?” He responded with examples of a glass skyscraper project of Le Corbusier’s for Paris and the constructed Villa Savoy and noted that European architects used concrete, steel and crystal materials.³⁷⁷ Initially, the Intra *Casa del Fascio* was planned in 1933 as a fully glass building, but the final construction in 1935 was made of solid walls with some horizontal windows [Fig. 24]. Vietti explained to me, in 1985, that the massive wall was added for security reasons, a curious statement while Terragni, Vietti’s colleague, was in the midst of the erection of the Como *Casa del Fascio*, which was a “glass house.” Le Corbusier’s 1926 failed proposal for the League of Nations building in Geneva was certainly known to Vietti and included a massive focal wall with its own large podium and sculpture [Fig. 25]. Unlike Vietti and Gardella’s Oleggio *Casa Littoria* project, the Intra *Casa del Fascio* had a

³⁷⁷ Luigi Vietti, “Vuole parlarci della Architettura Razionale?” *L’Ecomomia Nazionale*, 1932, pp. 33-39.

tower, which was made of open platforms on the entry side of the building. The Intra building entry facade also included a sculptural stair embracing a second, yet smaller balcony. Achille Starace, the Secretary of the PNF, inaugurated the building, which was filled to capacity in June of 1935 [Fig. 26].

The winning entry for a *Casa Littoria* in Oleggio, completed in 1936, was designed by Arch. G. Franzi, Engineers M. Martelli and W. Torri and was published in *L'Architettura Italiana* in January of 1938. The *Casa Littoria* was comprised of an office block and a 300 person theater. The office block included a tower with an entry and balcony. The lines of the building, which faced the public *piazza*, were rectangular except for the upper level of the theater wall [Fig. 27]. Both the constructed Oleggio *Casa Littoria* of Franzi, Martelli and Torri, and the failed Oleggio proposal by Vietti and Gardella, demonstrated that the design methods of these architects were an additive process: the office block was attached to the theater block – each with its own distinctive qualities. The Oleggio competition showed the strong emergence of the cinema component, which dominated the form of the *Casa del Fascio* building, rather than the multipurpose *sala*. The rise of the cinema for the PNF agenda caused the elimination of the gymnasium in many new *Casa del Fascio* in the mid-to-late 1930s.

The *Palazzo del Littorio* Competition in Rome, 1934

In 1934, a national PNF headquarters competition was announced by the central PNF to be located in the heart of the Roman Forum. This *Palazzo del Littorio* competition was unlike any other competition, as the PNF headquarters was to include a museum, the *Mostra della Rivoluzione*, to celebrate the first ten years of PNF rule.³⁷⁸ The 1934 competition was more

³⁷⁸ The museum component was eliminated from the program in the 1937 second phase of the Rome competition.

significant than any other competition in disseminating visual information about PNF headquarters buildings. The competition material was widely published. A special publication, solely for the competition entries, was published in *Architettura* in 1934, which featured 43 submissions with 390 illustrations.³⁷⁹ The competition entries were also published in the August-September 1934 issue of *Quadrante*, in the January, July, and October 1934 issues of *Casabella*, and *Rassegna di Architettura* ran a 34 page spread, among publications in other magazines and newspapers. In the January 1935 issue of *Architettura* two diverse submissions were published: the ultimate winning scheme in Phase II for the *Palazzo del Littorio* Competition by Del Debbio, Foschini and Morpurgo (project “A”) and by contrast, a modern proposal by Carminati, Lingeri, Saliva, Terragni, Vietti (project “A”).³⁸⁰ These were the only two schemes printed in the magazine. A book with the fourteen competitors selected for a second round was published in *Il Nuovo Stile Littorio* in 1936 – clearly suggesting that these entries were the new fascist style, despite their varying aesthetics.³⁸¹ It was a significant milestone in the discussion of an architectural response to the propagandistic and programmatic needs of a PNF headquarters building.

The Context of the 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* Competition in Rome

The 1934 competition for a PNF headquarters, or the *Palazzo del Littorio*, in Rome and its second phase held in 1937 bracket the years in which the ideological framework for Italian Fascism began to solidify and the search for a representative “art” of the PNF was sought. The political implications of the proposed construction of a new building representing the PNF in the

³⁷⁹ “Concorso per il Palazzo del Littorio,” *Architettura*, Fratelli Treves Editori, Rome, Annata XIII, 1934, Numero Speciale.

³⁸⁰ *Architettura*, January, 1935.

³⁸¹ Marcello Piacentini, *Il Nuovo Stile Littorio* (Milan-Rome: S.A. Arti Grafiche Bertarelli, 1936- XIV).

Roman Fora, directly across from the Basilica of Maxentius and between the Colosseum and the Foro of Augustus and Trajan, were obvious. Eager to legitimize his aspiration to lead a modern colonial Empire, Mussolini attempted to portray the PNF as the rightful inheritor of the legacy of Imperial Rome. However, even if the political goals were clear, the proper means of representing these goals in architecture were not as was demonstrated by the one hundred projects submitted in the first competition in 1934.³⁸²

In anticipation of the building of a new *Palazzo del Littorio*, Mussolini authorized massive alterations to the Forum. The *Via dell'Impero* (Street of the Empire), completed in 1932, opened a new axis between *Piazza Venezia*, the location of Mussolini's existing headquarters, and the Colosseum. The "Street of Empire," which celebrated the tenth anniversary of PNF rule, was a permanent concrete boulevard, which covered over many still unexcavated temples [Fig. 28]. Built to sustain the weight of army tanks for the 1932 celebrations, the road completed a connection from Rome to the sea. Because of the excavations and roadwork, monuments such as the Basilica of Maxentius and the Arch of Constantine were now free of rubble and standing in a new environment. Architects viewed the *Palazzo del Littorio* competition as a great challenge, yielding an unprecedented opportunity to plan the zone of the Fora in its new configuration.

The pressures of the ancient site, laden with historical significance, and the need to create a contemporary building symbolizing fascist values, made the architectural resolution of the *Palazzo del Littorio* competition difficult. These contradictions were so vividly problematic to one architect, Giuseppe Pagano, the editor of *Casabella*, that he refused to enter the competition.

³⁸² The Archivio Centrale dello Stato, PNF, B. 132a and M. Piacentini, *Il Nuovo Stile Littorio* (Milano-Roma: S.A. Arti Grafiche Bertarelli, 1936- XIV).

He stated that in the zone of the Fora, “where all history’s cadavers lie,” it was impossible to construct a modern building of so much importance.³⁸³

The contradictions were most evident in the stylistically diverse *Palazzo del Littorio* solutions submitted. These variations were brought about, in part, by disagreements within the PNF itself. Should a classical style be adopted, in deference to the proximity of the ancient ruins? Or, did the PNF’s commitment to achieving technical superiority for Italy imply a modern style? Whereas Parliament was against anything recognizably modern, with one deputy declaring that the “Florence railway station should not be placed on the *Via dell’Impero*,” Mussolini himself officially received the architects of the Florence railway station and the modern new town of Sabaudia.³⁸⁴ For the architects of this 1934 competition, the two stylistic messages – classical vs modern – were contradictory. This contradiction was ultimately reflected in the competition submissions, which covered a large stylistic range.

Requirements for the 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* Competition in Rome

The planning of the PNF headquarters in the Fora was begun by two architects, Armando Brasini and Marcello Piacentini, who were later jurors of the competition.³⁸⁵ They proposed a “*Foro Fascista*” across from the Basilica of Maxentius and on the newly constructed *Via dell’Impero* in November, 1933. The program for the building consisted of an exhibition hall of the Fascist Revolution, a headquarters building for the Fascists, a Fascist Temple, a bell tower and a Fascist tower, and a house for Mussolini [Figs. 29-30].

³⁸³ G. Pagano, *Casabella*, July 1934, p. 3.

³⁸⁴ “*L’Arte alla Camera. Casa Littoria*,” *La Sera*, 28 May 1935.

³⁸⁵ Archivio dello Stato, P.C.M., B. 956, f. 208. Also see V. Vannelli, *Economia dell’Architettura in Roma Fascista* (1980), pp. 254-255.

In December 1933, a competition statement was presented in *L'Architettura*, a magazine edited by Piacentini. The program for the competition differed slightly from the former Brasini/Piacentini scheme with the inclusion of three meeting halls for 1000, 500, and 200 people, and in the omission of Mussolini's house and the towers. Also, the perimeter of the site was slightly modified to extend behind the medieval *Torre dei Conti*, which permitted the new PNF building to include a historic monument on its site. This modification also allowed for the continuity of the structure across *Via Cavour*, which increased both the potential size and impact of the façade on the *Via dell'Impero* [Fig. 31].

Several requirements were added to the *Palazzo del Littorio* competition statement. The height of the new building was not to exceed the height of the adjacent Basilica of Maxentius; color and materials were to be sympathetic with the monuments of antiquity; the plan was to be functional; and the structure was to be technically modern. The new building was to demonstrate the potential of the PNF to rule Italy with the implication that the fascists were the natural inheritors of the traditions of the governance and military prowess established by Imperial Rome. Through its grandeur and technical achievements, the new PNF building was to inspire awe just like the neighboring monuments in the centuries before did. Il Duce requested a “modernly monumental” building, which would represent the idea of a “spiritual continuity” between Fascist Rome and Imperial Rome.³⁸⁶

The 100 Submissions for the 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* Competition in Rome

In 1934, one hundred proposals were submitted for the *Palazzo del Littorio* in Rome competition. On September 10th, the projects were reduced to seventy-two, eliminating those

³⁸⁶ *L'Architettura*, 1933, p. 4.

that were missing documents or were considered “absolutely insufficient”. The seventy-two projects were then displayed for public viewing from September 23rd to October 31st. During this time, the jury took account of the articles published about the competition and ranked them according to their favorable or unfavorable critiques. By this analysis, the jury noted that the concave, angled, or curved schemes were favored by the public. On October 16th, the jury met again to eliminate the “mediocre” schemes, reducing the entrants to twenty-five. On October 18th, the jury divided the twenty-five projects into three separate groups for which the jury left no written explanation.³⁸⁷ The first of the three groups included schemes by Del Debbio, Vaccaro and De Renzi, which were all projects that filled the site as a *palazzo* with courtyard space within the block. The Del Debbio scheme, designed with Foschini and Morpurgo, was the ultimate winner of the competition after a second phase, so this list may have represented the preferred schemes. All three entries were subtle, low, repetitive in their fenestration and logically planned. The second list included a wide variety of solutions, while the last list only included the two schemes of Moretti and Torres, which represented the extremes of the design range of the whole competition – from a smooth streamlined design to a classical *palazzo* filling the site to the edges [Figs. 32-33].

Amongst the competition entries, a common strategy was to create an outdoor space between the new building and the older context, which would bind the new and old into a single urban complex. Vincenzo Fasolo angled his project away from the street at the same angle as the Basilica of Maxentius thus creating a new spatial environment within the Forum. He labeled the space between the two buildings the “*Foro del Littorio*” [Fig. 34]. Other entrants went outside the site for images of historical significance, which recalled other Roman urban space types.

³⁸⁷ Archivio dello Stato, PNF, Fed. Rome, B. 132a.

Ridolfi, Cafiero, La Padula and Rossi selected one arm of Bernini's arcade as a model, which they transformed into a smoothly curved modern structure [Fig. 35].³⁸⁸ Others adopted shallower representations of ancient Rome to draw parallels between new and old. Mario Palanti chose the image of an ancient Roman ship helmed by Mussolini, which he combined with a soaring tower [Fig. 36].³⁸⁹ Giulio Gra created a fortress in the image of a Roman aqueduct [Fig. 37].

Adalberto Libera, a Roman architect and former member of the Milanese-Comasco *Gruppo Sette*, designed a building that simultaneously responded to the program for this new PNF building and to the context established by the nearby Fora. Libera's *Palazzo del Littorio* was set back into the site in order to form a *piazza* for fascist rallies [Fig. 38]. In the center of the massive curved wall was the office and balcony from which Mussolini would address the masses. Under the *piazza* was a circular memorial sanctuary with a large cross surrounded by the repetitive words "*Presente! Presente!*," memorializing those who died in WWI and were the "Fallen" of the Fascist Revolution [Fig. 39]. Centered directly above, in the *piazza*, was an enormous seven-story high *fascio*, the historic Roman symbol for power, now the adopted symbol of the PNF with its own balcony at the second level [Fig. 40].³⁹⁰

Libera's *Palazzo del Littorio* proposal for Rome maintained its own dialogue with the adjacent antiquities. In form, use and orientation, it recalls the curves of Trajan's market and the Forum of Augustus. Moreover, in Libera's treatment of surfaces, openings and edges, the

³⁸⁸ Mario Ridolfi and Mario Fagiolo's 1933-1935 Post Office in *Piazza Bologna* is a curving brick building. The architects won a government-sponsored competition in 1933.

³⁸⁹ Mario Palanti had been selected by Mussolini in 1924 to design the tallest skyscraper in the world in Rome named "Lictoria" after the lictors and fasces," which was reported in "Mussolini to Build Highest Skyscraper; To rise 88 Floors, 1,100 Feet, Above Rome," *New York Times*, September 30, 1924. This article prompted Cass Gilbert, architect of the Woolworth Tower, which was noted as Palanti's inspiration in the NYT's article, to write a letter to Premier Benito Mussolini on October 16, 1924 to dissuade him from building the tower as "anything that would rise higher than the dome, or even as high, would entirely change the scale of the city. It would make all of the great things there seem small and low and would reduce the apparent height and scale of St. Peter's dome itself." Nicholas M. Butler Papers, Columbia University, Butler Library, NYC, October 16, 1924, p. 2.

³⁹⁰ The *fascio* was incorporated as the official symbol of the PNF in the December Decree of 1926.

architect mimicked the characteristics of Roman masonry techniques. The edges of the building recalled wall fragments remaining on the site, giving the appearance that it, like many ancient monuments, had been partially destroyed by the construction of the *Via dell'Impero* in 1932 [Fig. 41].

The groups Bravetti and Giordani, Nordio and Cervi, and the *Gruppo Universitario Fascista del 'Urbe*, consisting of architects Petrucci, Muratori, and Tedeschi, all followed similar form manipulations to create an open urban space at the front of the *Palazzo del Littorio*. The cone of vision to the Colosseum was maintained, a new *piazza* was created and ample space was given to view the Basilica across *Via dell' Impero*. No one within this group was selected in the final fourteen to compete again at a new *Palazzo del Littoria* site in 1937.

The majority of entries proposed filling the entire site and treated the building as a *palazzo*. Del Debbio, Foschini, and Morpurgo, the ultimate winners years later, designed what Piacentini called “*un blocco unitario – vero Palazzo*” [Fig. 42].³⁹¹ The triangular site was filled to its perimeter with rectangular spaces on the edges and the auditoriums and irregular plan forms were placed within the center with light filled courtyards in between [Fig. 43]. The architects placed an *arengario* at ground level near the entry facing the Basilica of Maxentius and a grander balcony in the façade at the acute end of the building facing the Colosseum near to Mussolini’s office. Four uniformly spaced doors were part of the main *Vial dell' Impero* façade. The door closest to the Colosseum was for Mussolini and the large entry near the *Torre dei Conti* was the museum entry [Fig. 44]. The articulation of the façade was simple and subdued. The walls of the *sacrario* received lines of carved reliefs [Fig. 45]. Other “*palazzo*” concepts were

³⁹¹ “Concorso per il Palazzo del Littorio,” *Architettura*, Fratelli Treves Editori, Rome, Annata XIII, 1934, *Numero Speciale*, p. 16.

[Translation: “a unitary ensemble – a true palace”]

carried out by Giuseppe Vaccaro who created a symmetrical solution centered on the apse of the Basilica of Maxentius. Fasolo, Frezzotti, Rapisardi, Palanti, Coppedè and the groups Torres, Keller, Bonzio and Dioguardi, Lopopolo, Favia filled the site with variations of this approach.

A second method for distributing the PNF program into the angular site was to create a long building of rectangular spaces at the *Via dell'Impero* street face and to place the oddly shaped rooms, such as the auditoriums and/or *sacrario*, at the rear of the site. Some architects placed the oddly-shaped spaces on the larger end of the triangular site next to the *Torre dei Conti*. These schemes had ample internal courtyards that resulted from the unused space between the formal geometric shapes.

Some entrants attempted to make the *Palazzo del Littorio* a monument. Bruno Ferrati designed a symmetrical form with a tall central core [Fig. 46]. Piacentini described it, “Come ogni monumento della zona possiede una sua forma tipica, così il progettista tende ad attribuirne una al monumento, la quale deriva dalla forma dell’area triangolare assegnata.”³⁹² Pietro Lombardi’s group created a monument with a tall central mass on axis with the Colosseum rather than on axis with the Basilica of Maxentius [Fig. 47]. Palanti’s monumental ship on the *Via dell'Impero* was not lost on Piacentini, who noted that the scheme was rhetorical and symbolic reminding the *Architettura* magazine readers not to miss the ship reference by writing, “vedi la prau di nave ond’è condotto a terminare l’edificio” [Fig. 48].³⁹³

³⁹² “Concorso per il Palazzo del Littorio,” *Architettura*, Fratelli Treves Editori, Rome, Annata XIII, 1934, *Numero Speciale*, p. 96.

[Translation: “Like any monument in the area, all possessing a unique shape, so the designer’s decision was to create a monument, which flows forth from the shape of the triangular area allocated.”]

³⁹³ “Concorso per il Palazzo del Littorio,” *Architettura*, Fratelli Treves Editori, Rome, Annata XIII, 1934, *Numero Speciale*, p. 67.

[Translation: “see the ship’s bow where the building ends”]

Proposals by “Rationalist” Architects

The starkly “modern” submission of Banfi, Belgioioso, Danusso, Figini, Peressutti, Pollini and Rogers was a striking contrast to the “*palazzo*” or “monument” strategies of the other architects.³⁹⁴ Piacentini wrote that the Banfi group’s *Palazzo del Littorio* scheme was, “che si ispira al più schietto purism plastic modern.”³⁹⁵ The building consisted of five separate edifices, four rectangular and one circular in form that was placed at the rear of the site [Fig. 49]. Each building component had a different surface articulation. The *sacrario* was located at the street front and was dedicated to the “Fallen” fascists.” The *sacrario* was designed as a thin rectangular building made with two solid walls and two narrow glass walls, with an opening to the sky in the center [Fig. 50]. The nearby *Torre dei Conti* was similar in scale to the new *sacrario* across *Via Cavour*. The *Mostra della Rivoluzione* edifice was raised on *pilotis* and placed close to the Colosseum. The longer dominant central building, with striped horizontal floors and glass walls, held the required offices, including Mussolini’s, and two of the assembly halls. The largest hall for 1,000 people was placed in the circular building at the rear of the triangular site. A fifth building was located behind the *Torre dei Conte* with a façade that repeated the small holes of ancient construction copied from the historic tower in the foreground. Parking was located below the plaza, which created a platform for the individual modern buildings above. A two-story high horse and rider sculpture stood singularly on the abstract gridded plaza. Neither a balcony nor *arengario* are apparent in the Banfi group’s competition submission [Fig. 51].

³⁹⁴ The group is often referred to as the BBPR or *Gruppo Quadrante*. The *Gruppo Quadrante* consisted of BBPR plus Figini, Pollini, and the engineer Danusso.

³⁹⁵ “Concorso per il Palazzo del Littorio,” *Architettura*, Fratelli Treves Editori, Rome, Annata XIII, 1934, *Numero Speciale*, p. 58.

[Translation: “inspired by the most evident modern plastic purism”]

International Dialogues, 1933-1934

Two of the participants in the Banfi group's design for the 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* competition, Gino Pollini and Luigi Figini, were part of the earlier 1926 *Gruppo Sette* whose members were Giuseppe Terragni, Guido Frette, Sebastiano Larco, Giuseppe Pagano Carlo Enrico Rava, and Ubaldo Castagnoli (replaced by Adalberto Libera in 1927). The *Gruppo Sette*, and Pollini and Figini in particular, were ardent followers of the concepts of Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier. Gino Pollini, along with Giuseppe Terragni, Pietro Maria Bardi, and Piero Bottoni, were on the *Patris II* voyage for the 4th CIAM conference in 1933, from July 29th to August 13th, with Le Corbusier.³⁹⁶ Bardi, editor of *Quadrante* magazine "covered the 1933 CIAM conference aboard the SS *Patris II*, building on the earlier CIAM participation of Sartoris, Rava, Bottoni, Pollini and Figini."³⁹⁷ Gino Pollini recalled the trip that went from Marseille to Athens and back, saying, "So we went up to the Acropolis – us, with emotion, as it was our first time – with Le Corbusier..."³⁹⁸

Prior to the 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* competition, Pollini, Terragni, Bardi, and Bottoni had been focused on the CIAM theme of the "functional city," which was part of the agenda for the Marsailles to Athens voyage. Analyses of the cities of Como, Rome, Verona and the new town of Littoria were included in the conference proceedings. The C.M. 8 group, consisting of Bottini, Cattaneo, Dodi, Guissani, Lingeri, Pucci, Terragni, and Uslenghi, had won a national

³⁹⁶Carol Bentel interviewed Gino Pollini in 1985.

³⁹⁷"MODERNIDADE LATINA" Conference, os Italianos e os Centros do Modernismo Latino-americano, April 9-11, 2013; David Rifkind, "Pietro Maria Bardi, Quadrante, and the Architecture of Fascist Italy," p. 9.

³⁹⁸ Gino Pollini, "Il IV CIAM," in *Parametro*, no. 52, December, 1976.

competition in 1934 to do the Master Plan in Como.³⁹⁹ C.M.8 group were eager to receive the feedback from the 1933 voyage, where their Como Master Plan proposal was discussed.

In June of 1933, an article was featured in *Architettura* on Le Corbusier which included a discussion about his entry, with Pierre Jeanneret, for the Palace of the Soviets competition. The editor noted the use of *pilotis* to assist with automobile traffic and featured Le Corbusier and Jeanneret's suspended auditorium for the Soviet competition with its visible structural members above.⁴⁰⁰ The use of *pilotis* and visual structural members were features in two entries of the 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* competition. The Figini/Pollini group and the Terragni/Vietti group were both very aware of Le Corbusier's competition projects.

The competition brief for the *Palazzo del Littorio* in Rome competition had not yet been issued by the June publication of Le Corbusier's Palace of the Soviets competition drawings, but the Rome competition would be announced in December of 1933. The *Palazzo del Littorio* submissions were due after the young "rationalist" Italian architects had their second encounter with Le Corbusier during his June 1934 trip to Italy. Le Corbusier had been invited to Italy by *Quadrante*'s directors Pietro Maria Bardi and Massimo Bontempelli in June of 1934. He attended two conferences in Rome and then visited Milan. During the month of June, Le Corbusier drew two sketches of a proposed Rome *Palazzo del Littorio* in the company of the Colosseum and the Basilica of Maxentius. One of the drawings was published in 1935 in his book, *Aircraft*, with a note about harmony and modern times [Figs. 52-53].⁴⁰¹ Le Corbusier's new glass "*Palais Littorio*" with an *arengario* at the street level was balanced on the page with

³⁹⁹ Giuseppe Terragni in Peter Eisenman, *Giuseppe Terragni: Transformations Decompositions Critiques* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2003), p. 267. (Translation by Dianne Ghirardo)

⁴⁰⁰ Guido Fiorini, "L'Inventore Le Corbusier Poeta-architetto della presente Civiltà Macchinista," *Architettura*, June, 1933 XI, pp. 357-372.

⁴⁰¹ Le Corbusier, *Aircraft*, 1935, p. 47.

the Basilica of Maxentius as its equal. Architectural historian Marida Talamona wrote that Le Corbusier made the sketch while having a discussion with the young *razionalisti* about the rapport of modern architecture with the classical.⁴⁰² The Le Corbusier's sketch of a *Palazzo del Littorio* on the *Via dell' Impero* was similar to the main building of the *Palazzo del Littorio* submission by Banfi, Belgioioso, Peressutti, Rogers, Danusso, Pollini and Figini.

Architects Figini and Pollini's own work, prior to 1934, included the 1930 *Casa Elettrica*, which was exhibited at the IV *Esposizione Triennale Internazionale delle Arti Decorative and Industriali Moderne* in Monza. The *Casa Elettrica* exhibited an efficient and functional house with new electric appliances. A floor to ceiling glass window served as a greenhouse and allowed exhibition viewers to see into the house where the new appliances were displayed [Fig. 55]. Bottoni, Frette and Libera assisted with some of the internal designs for the house. The *Casa Elettrica* was included in Hitchcock and Johnson's *The International Style* book published in 1932.⁴⁰³ In 1933, Figini and Pollini designed a villa-studio for an anonymous artist for the *V Triennale* in Milan, which bore a strong resemblance to Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion mixed with aspects of his brick country house [Fig. 56]. The architects placed sculpture under an open ceiling, which mimicked the sculpture placement and exterior areas of Mies van der Rohe's 1929 Barcelona Pavilion. After the 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* Competition, Figini and Pollini designed the *Casa Figini* in 1934-1935, which was strongly inspired by Le Corbusier's 1927 Weissenhof houses – if not a smaller replica of the precedents [Fig. 57]. The *Casa Figini* was the second time that Figini and Pollini had designed a building raised on *pilotis*. Their first attempt was for the *Palazzo del Littorio* competition in 1934, when

⁴⁰² Marida Talamona, *L'Italia di Le Corbusier* (Maxxi, Electa, Milano, 2012), p. 244.

⁴⁰³ Henry- Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson's *The International Style* (New York.: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1932), pp. 138-9.

Figini, Pollini, Banfi, Belgioioso, Peressutti, Rogers, and Danusso raised the *Mostra della Rivoluzione* building above the plaza level. Their 1934 scheme did not get elevated to the next phase to compete again in 1937 for the second round of the Rome competition.

The Banfi group, and the Terragni/Vietti group had strong ties to the magazine *Quadrante*, which did publish the 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* competition results.⁴⁰⁴ Historian David Rifkind wrote that, “many of the period’s most fertile collaborations, including designs submitted to the 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* competition by two teams of *Quadrante* contributors, began with friendships forged through mutual association with the journal.”⁴⁰⁵ Rifkind, through his study of the magazine *Quadrante*, notes how the “modern” architects believed they could achieve an architecture representing the PNF on the *Via dell’Impero*.

...*Quadrante* presents many clear examples of how Italians adapted international modern architecture to the political context of fascist Italy by emphasizing modernist tendencies which they saw as sympathetic to, or at least consistent with, the fascist regime’s rhetoric. Order, hierarchy, the importance of classical precedent, and technological innovation as a sign of industrial progress could all be readily exploited to give concrete form to abstract political values.⁴⁰⁶

The purity of classical symmetries and simple geometries mixed with technical innovation was the hallmark of the schemes deemed “modern.” The scheme of Banfi, Belgioioso, Danusso, Figini, Peressutti, Pollini and Rogers was not selected by the *Palazzo del Littorio* jurors, but the Terragni/Vietti submission was elevated to the next stage of the competition.

⁴⁰⁴ “MODERNIDADE LATINA” Conference, os Italianos e os Centros do Modernismo Latino-americano, April 9-11, 2013; David Rifkind, “Pietro Maria Bardi, Quadrante, and the Architecture of Fascist Italy,” p. 9.

⁴⁰⁵ MODERNIDADE LATINA” Conference, os Italianos e os Centros do Modernismo Latino-americano, April 9-11, 2013; David Rifkind, “Pietro Maria Bardi, Quadrante, and the Architecture of Fascist Italy,” p. 8.

⁴⁰⁶ “MODERNIDADE LATINA” Conference, os Italianos e os Centros do Modernismo Latino-americano, April 9-11, 2013; David Rifkind, “Pietro Maria Bardi, Quadrante, and the Architecture of Fascist Italy,” p.4.

The Milanese-Comasco Submission to the *Palazzo del Littorio* Competition in 1934

The jury for the *Palazzo del Littorio* competition had selected twenty-five projects from the initial 100 entries in 1934 and had placed the majority of those in “Group Two,” with no recorded explanation. “Group Two” included projects labeled “A” and “B,” by the Milanese-Comasco Group of architects of Antonio Carminati, Pietro Lingeri, Giuseppe Terragni, Luigi Vietti and engineer Ernesto Saliva, and artists Marcello Nizzoli and Mario Sironi. Their project “A” submission was the only other project published in 1935 in *Architettura* with the ultimate winners, Del Debbio, Foschini, and Morpurgo. The Milanese-Comasco Group’s “A” and “B” entries differed greatly from the Del Debbio group’s proposal. The Milanese-Comasco Group referred to the immediate context as a source for their solutions, seeking to represent historical continuity by borrowing principles, rather than ornamental motifs, from the past.⁴⁰⁷

The first scheme of the Milanese-Comasco Group, project “A,” was aligned with the Forum of Augustus and sustained the same relationship to the street as the Basilica of Maxentius [Figs. 58-59]. This created the necessary visual cone to the Colosseum requested by the competition guidelines. The facade, curved back into the site, created a *piazza*, which was to serve as an outdoor theater [Fig. 60]. The facade would also function as a backdrop for Mussolini, who would use the “*arengario*,” or podium, in the center to address the crowds. The curved surface of the facade was created as a gigantic megaphone to amplify Mussolini’s voice, explained Luigi Vietti who directed project “A,” during an interview with me in 1985 [Fig. 61].⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁷ Carol Rusche, “Ancient and Modern: The Palazzo del Littorio Competition,” *Architecture Today*, November, 1989, pp. 30-33.

⁴⁰⁸ Luigi Vietti in 1985, working in his studio in Milan, stated that project “A” was his project and that project “B” was Terragni’s, but in the beginning they worked as a group, came upon two solutions and decided to develop the schemes in separate studios. These facts are corroborated by a 1943 statement by Terragni’s draughtsman and assistant Luigi Zuccoli (See L. Zuccoli, *Quindici Anni*, Como, 1981, p. 39.) Despite numerous 1934 articles that had

Aside from the urban arrangement, which suited the functional needs of the project, an effort was made by the Milanese-Comasco Group to clearly demonstrate their project's connection to antiquity for the jury. For example, the form of the memorial chapel, the "*sacrario*," mirrors the apse of the adjacent Basilica. The chapel was to be covered with red porphyry stone, similar to the main *Palazzo del Littorio* facade, clearly marking the structural stresses, purposely imitating the Pantheon's revealed construction methods. Furthermore, the architects included ancient examples of sacred monuments on their presentation boards with the identical plan configuration of their chapel to establish a historical connection. This cylinder within a square plan was also identical to the temple proposed by Brasini and Piacentini prior to the national competition.

The tectonics of the facade of project "A" reveals additional links to antiquity. The facade was a large curved wall made of red porphyry hewn-stone raised above the ground by two steel trusses that were internally supported by four granite pillars [Figs. 62-63]. The stone veneer was set against a large sheet of galvanized iron and arranged to indicate the tension and the compression stresses of the suspended wall. The visible tension lines imitated the Roman tradition of showing the exposed structure, which revealed the internal stresses. The architects also intended that the structure represent the symbolic aspects of the program. The two-dimensional depiction of force was necessary to visibly reveal in the architecture of their

separated the projects "A" and "B" clearly between Vietti and Terragni ("Italia Letteraria-Roma", "Il Messaggero", and "L'Artigiano", 1934) Manfredo Tafuri (*Oppositions*, 1977, p.3) and Daniele Vitale (*9H*, 1985, p.5) credited Terragni for project "A." Vietti's other projects – the 1928 Theater project exhibited at the first exhibition of Rational Architecture, the *Casa del Fascio* in Intra and in Rapallo, the project for a *Casa del Fascio* in Oleggio with Ignazio Gardella, the "*la Roccia*" house and l'EUR sketches – reveal his architectural prejudices, which parallel those of project "A" for the *Palazzo del Littorio*. His expertise in designing sailboats, which was consistent with engineering necessary for determining the stresses on curvilinear surfaces, adds possible credibility to this theory. Furthermore, project "A" is inconsistent with the remainder of Terragni's work, which shows a repeated interest in rectangular forms and shifted grids rather than curvilinear geometries.

project.⁴⁰⁹ The Milanese-Comasco Group said the tension lines were to demonstrate the power and importance of this new “Monument” as compared to the others in the Fora. Internally, the space behind the curved facade was planned as a series of suspended glass volumes, also held up by the steel trusses. The trusses, suspended volumes, and the curved suspended wall were believed to be an engineering triumph equivalent in 1934 to that achieved under Constantine in 306 AD, when the grand space of Constantine’s Basilica was spanned with concrete vaults. Thus, in the minds of these architects, they had created a structure that was the modern equivalent of the monumental Basilica. By identifying the principles and meaning of a former architectural model, such as the Basilica of Maxentius, and by manipulating the site and program for the *Palazzo del Littorio* given to them, the Milanese-Comasco project “A” revived ancient meanings in their contemporary design in 1934.

The second project, project “B,” was presented by the Milanese-Comasco Group, directed by Giuseppe Terragni. In this scheme, the architects drew inspiration from the entire Fora conceived as a single fabric of spaces and buildings rather than as a singular monument. Project “B” confronted the *Via dell’Impero* without regard for the urban configuration of the Basilica or the Forum of Augustus [Fig.64]. The front facade did not respond to the existing heights of the nearby Basilica. The main exhibition hall also ignored the competition requirements and exceeds the height of the nearby *Torre dei Conti* [Fig. 65].

Its rejection of the context notwithstanding, project “B” was tied to the adjacent buildings and space through its geometry and ordering systems, which stemmed from Terragni's knowledge of archaic proportioning systems. Pursuing his interest in the mathematical principles of Greek art, Terragni took up Hambridge's theory of “dynamic symmetry” based on

⁴⁰⁹ Vietti Archivio – Milanese-Comasco group recorded in a French text located in Vietti's studio.

the relationships between the golden section and the root five rectangle embodied in Greek vases.⁴¹⁰ For Terragni, these numerical associations represented a fundamental ordering system whose use represented continuity between ancient civilization and the new era – The Fascist Era. Early in 1927 the *Gruppo Sette*, which included Terragni as a member, wrote,

What is more, just as from the **formal** point of view the analogy of straight and fine elements, the simplicity of the plans and the calm rhythm of solids and voids where the alternation of geometric shades creates a composition of spaces and values recall the periods of the beginning of Greek architecture; so from the point of view of its **development**, we can recognize all the characteristics of a new ARCHAIC PERIOD in the history of architecture: standing at the beginning of a great future...⁴¹¹

These ideas are embodied in the shifted rectangles of Terragni's early work of the 1930s and in his use of numerical systems evident in his increased use of grid paper [Fig. 66]. In the *Palazzo del Littorio* project there are the same numerical shifts in both plan and section. For Terragni, the rectangles in project "B" expanded upon an archaic language of pure geometries and proportion. Thus, project "B" was intended to become part of the very fabric of temples, meshing with the existing Foro [Fig. 67].⁴¹²

⁴¹⁰ Matila Ghyka wrote of these numerical relationships in *The Aesthetics of Proportions in Nature and in the Arts* (1927) and in *The Golden Number* (1931), a book found in Cesare Cattaneo's archive. In a 1985 interview by Carol Bentel with Mario Radice, the artist for the Como *Casa del Fascio* mural, he stated that 'dynamic symmetry' was important to the work of the artists and architects in Como.⁴¹⁰ And Carlo Belli, friend of the Como group, wrote *Kn* in 1935 (text sections were advertised in 1933), which also notes these numerical associations and their relationship to creativity.

⁴¹¹ E. Shapiro, *Oppositions*, Spring 1978, p. 97; See *La Rassegna Italiana*, May 1927.

⁴¹² Terragni confronted this site once again in 1938 with the Danteum, a project commemorating Dante and Italy's past while also celebrating Italian Fascism. The proposed site for the *Palazzo del Littorio* was considered three years later to be appropriate for recalling the past simultaneously with the modern age of fascism. As in the *Palazzo del Littorio*, the Danteum does not engage the existing context or monuments. Terragni, however once again maintains a discourse with the context. The Danteum had the same proportions as the Basilica. More importantly, the plan consisted of shifted golden sections, which represented the origins of an archaic language that were the basic foundation of classical architecture for Terragni, and the foundation from which Terragni tried to create the architecture appropriate for the Fascist Era.

Design Strategies for the 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* Competition and PNF Decisions to Relocate the Site

In the 100 schemes for the 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* competition, the competitors chose their models from historically significant buildings and derived new solutions from the construction techniques, building types, nearby artifacts, city plans and even the organizational principles, which they interpreted in the work of a former age that they deemed relevant. Had any of these projects been built, they would have ranked among the most significant buildings to give architectural form to a political system on a heavily laden historical site of former empires.

The Forum site proved too problematic for the jurors and a subsequent competition, for a reduced group of entrants, was organized for a site away from the Forum, relocated near the Pyramid of *Cestius* [Fig. 68]. Fourteen groups were selected to enter the second phase in 1937.⁴¹³ The 1934 proposals of the fourteen groups selected to enter the second competition were displayed in a book, *Il Nuovo Stile Littorio*, in 1936. The projects represent a mixture of styles. At least half of the projects were considered "modern," which were now labeled as the "new style" of the Regime. Architectural groups not accepted in the final group of fourteen included architects Ludovico Belgioioso, Luigi Figini, Gino Pollini, Banfi, Peressutti, Rogers, Ponti, and Cosenza.⁴¹⁴ Architects from both extremes – from the ardent modernism of the Terragni/Vietti group to the “*palazzo*” approach by the Del Debbio group – were invited to compete again in 1937. Some elements used in the initial 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* competition were repeated in subsequent *Casa del Fascio* designs in Italy, demonstrating that the visibility of the 1934 competition had an impact on the architectural community.

⁴¹³ *Casabella*, Anno VII – Nubero 82, Ottobre 1934 – XII.; “*Concorso per il Palazzo del Littorio*,” *Architettura*, Fratelli Treves Editori, Rome, Annata XIII, 1934, *Numero Speciale*; *Rassegna di Archtettura*, December, Milan, Anno VI, 1934 – XIII.

⁴¹⁴ Marcello Piacentini, *Il Nuovo Stile Littorio*, (Milan-Rome: S.A. Arti Grafiche Bertarelli, 1936-XIV), pp. 395-396.

Characteristics of *Case del Fascio* following the 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* Competition

Following the 1934 national competition to place Italy's main PNF Headquarters in the Roman Forum, other PNF Federations sought locations near monuments of significance for their new *Case del Fascio*. Sites with an ancient ruin ranked high for PNF selection, but urban locations in the heart of a city with access to a large open *piazza* or park were also highly valued. New *Case del Fascio* plans were organized to allow for an open exterior space in front or at the back of the building, thus not taking up the entire site with built-form. Large halls were an element needed early in the formation of *Case del Fascio* that was expanded to three spaces of varying sizes in the 1934 competition. The large *sala* remained necessary in the smaller local buildings as a multi-purpose space for meetings, movies, exercise and rallies. Multiple portals were requested in the 1934 Rome competition guidelines to allow the *Palazzo del Littorio* to house many different programs of the PNF. The smaller *Casa del Fascio* had an identical list of organizations it had to house, with the exception of a museum, although with smaller room quantities. Most often *Case del Fascio* were designed with at least three different entry points: a main entry for the *Casa del Fascio* itself, a second entry for the OND, and multiple doors from the *palestra* so that fascists could march into the *piazza* or exercise zone in unison [Fig. 69]. Most of the 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* examples had *arengari* or balconies, and some had both. Mario De Renzi's 1934 proposal included an enormous *arengario* at the street, reminiscent of Piacentini's 1931-1932 *arengario* in *Piazza della Vittoria* in Brescia [Fig. 70].⁴¹⁵ De Renzi also designed a balcony at the acute end of his triangular building facing the Colosseum, plus he added an internal balcony facing into the *Piazza delle Adunate* courtyard [Fig. 71]. The new PNF headquarters building would be replacing *Palazzo Venezia*, Mussolini's existing headquarters,

⁴¹⁵ Antonio Maraini was the sculptor for the *arengario*.

which was located at the other end of the *Via dell' Impero*. Mussolini's existing *palazzo* and its balcony were strong precedents for the 1934 competition and for subsequent *Case del Fascio*. In order to function as a building from which PNF dignitaries would address the masses, most small *Case del Fascio* had an *arengario* or a balcony.

The *sacrario* – a memorial to the deceased of Italian wars and the Fascist Revolution – remained a constant in the PNF buildings with a noble position in the sequence of each building's entry, usually at the ground level of the tower or in the entry vestibule. The 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* competition did require a *sacrario*. The 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* was also sited in a religious zone, which was a common strategy of the PNF. When possible, *Case del Fascio* were sited near their town's religious centers, which was often the political and cultural center as well. Because new *Case del Fascio* buildings regularly included a bell tower, they seemed to confront the existing church, rather than any other pre-existing buildings, such as the *Comune*, which did not always have a tower. In many instances, this may just have been a consequence of securing a spot in the center of town, but many *Casa del Fascio* files within the PNF archives indicated that finding a central location in an existing town was not simple, was costly, and often required time to secure a site from several owners. So why did the PNF make the effort? The PNF files are filled with site plans for new *Case del Fascio* locations that also include notations about the location of the existing town church, which was often in the heart of the community. Photos of proposed *Case del Fascio* sites photographed from the church location are also part of the architect's submissions of material sent to the PNF Technical Service Department in Rome. In comparison, in the 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* competition, the *Basilica of Maxentius* was regarded as an ancient meeting hall, but also as a basilica in the religious sense, having housed numerous devotional statues over the ages. Many 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio*

competition submissions noted that their proposed building was the modern equivalent of the Basilica of Maxentius or regarded it as an equivalent “sacred” building across a newly formed fascist *piazza*.

After 1934, symbols of fascism such as the *fascio* continued to be used on subsequent PNF buildings in a variety of quantities, from singular to three *fasci*. Art depicting fascist history in relief sculpture, statues and frescos would remain part of subsequent PNF headquarters designs if money or offers of donated work were available.

Towers or the *Torri Littorie*, however, were not a consistent component of the 1934 competition, as there were relatively few. Towers were not a requirement in the competition guidelines, even though two towers were part of Piacentini and Brasini’s original project for the site. Frezzotti, Mongiovi, Tarchi and Mancini all incorporated towers in their competition projects. Del Debbio’s group included a tower in their second alternative solution for the 1934 competition, but in general, the towers were as sparse as were other vertical components such as flag poles, obelisks and gigantic *fasci* [Fig. 72]. In honor of the short *Torre di Conti* on the site, perhaps an additional tower requirement was avoided by those who wrote the guidelines. Mario Ridolfi’s team created a *sacrario* in the same shape and scale as the *Torre di Conti* and placed the *sacrario* in the center of their *piazza*, however it did not read as a tower, but rather as a featured chapel [Fig. 73]. Frezzotti’s tower was noted in the magazine *Architettura*, by Piacentini, as a shining beacon to be seen from *Piazza Venezia*, but few others attempted adding anything that may have exceeded the height of the Basilica of Maxentius, a warning in the competition’s instructions [Fig. 74].

The site of the 1934 Competition for a *Palazzo del Littorio* on the *Via dell’Impero* in Rome proved too difficult for the realization of a new PNF headquarters building. The exterior

area was too narrow for the large crowds that the PNF expected and the amount of rooms needed internally was too immense and complex. The *Palazzo del Littorio* headquarters building was to include the Museum for the Show of the Fascist Revolution, its necessary parking garages, and an auditorium, which was deemed too much for the site.⁴¹⁶ More challenging, however, was the significance of the zone of the ancient fora.

Most architects attempted to provide solutions to please the regime, as demonstrated by the numerous entries to the national *Palazzo del Littorio* competition in 1934 in which entrants tried to architecturally represent the PNF. The competition entries also demonstrated that a general confusion prevailed – a wide range of design concepts were submitted that attempted to reference historical artifacts or exhibit newer technical achievements, or both.⁴¹⁷ These contradictions were also evident in the *Casa del Fascio* planned outside of Rome, which ranged from less-referential or “modern” styles to those that invoked an architectural imagery derived from Roman antiquity.

Publications of *Casa del Fascio*, 1935

In 1935 alone, there were numerous articles about PNF headquarters in the magazine *Architettura*. In April 1935, a *Casa del Fascio* in Varese by Arch. Mario Loretì was published with similarities to the Asti *Casa del Fascio* because it was placed on a corner with the entry tower at the apex [Fig. 75]. The Varese *Casa del Fascio* had a central glass entry tower with a clock and open accessible top, a large circular *arengario* over the entry, a base of travertine and upper floors of brick. Curved edges encased the plan ends of the building and the *salone* was nestled in the shape of an egg in the inner courtyard with a clear path to the exterior in both

⁴¹⁶ ACS, B. 132a .

⁴¹⁷ “Concorsi,” *Architettura*, December, 1933, p. 811.

directions – one for the PNF authorities and *gerarchi*, and the other for the public [Fig. 76]. A *sacrario* was placed opposite the main staircase.

In a special publication of *Architettura* in 1935 on the *Città Università* in Rome, the publishers included the university's *Dopolavoro-Circolo del Littorio*, designed by architect Gaetano Minnucci [Fig. 77]. The focus of the campus was on Piacentini's central building, therefore the PNF-related building, the *Dopolavoro-Circolo del Littorio*, was architecturally treated as a peripheral building. The PNF building was designed with simple brick and the windows were outlined with travertine. The *Dopolavoro-Circolo del Littorio* included a *salone-palestra*, which could seat 236, a billiard and game room, a bar, a *Salone delle Feste* in the shape of an apse, and a *campo dei giuochi*. An upper terrace and balcony encircled the *Salone delle Feste*.

In December of 1935, *Architettura* featured a combined Post Office and *Casa del Littorio* in Nota by Architect Francesco Fichera [Fig. 78]. The Post Office occupied the lower floor of the rectangular block and the *Casa del Littorio* occupied the second floor accessed off the shorter side of the building. A noble façade with a balcony and sign “*Casa Littoria*” made its presence visible [Fig. 79]. The upper floor included a library, offices, and a *Dopolavoro* space that was also called the *Sala Adunate*. There was no tower.

A Competition for a *Torre Littoria* in Milan, 1935

In August of 1935, a competition solely to place a *Torre Littoria* in the *piazza* of the *Duomo* in Milan was published as an eleven-page article in *Architettura*.⁴¹⁸ The new tower was intended to be a symbol of the birth of fascism in Milan. The *Podesteria* (office of the *Podestà*)

⁴¹⁸ “Il Concorso per La torre Littoria sull’Area della “Manica Lunga” di Palazzo Reale in Piazza del Duomo a Milano,” *Architettura*, August, 1935, pp. 475-486.

launched the competition for a *Torre Littoria* on November 1, 1934. The tower would be connected to the *Palazzo Reale* so that the *arengario* could be reached through the *Palazzo*, but the tower itself was to appear visually separate. The entrants were to determine the height of the new tower. The tower project was to be constructible and in keeping with the surrounding materials of the *Duomo* and *Palazzo Reale*. The jury consisted of the president of the *Podestà*, the vice president; architects Marcello Piacentini, Diego Brioschi and Duilio Torres; engineers Giuseppe Gorla, Giannino Ferrini and Cesare Chiodi; Prof. Antonio Morassi, *Sorpiendente all'Arte*; and Dott. Antonio Bodino, head of the office the *Piano Regolatore* (master plan of the city). The jurors received fifty projects on April 23, 1935 and examined them for two months. Some towers were as tall as the *Duomo* itself facing into the *piazza* from the *Palazzo Reale* location. Entries were submitted by architects Aldo Zacchi, Mario Bacciocchi, M. Faravelli, Ing. A. Cristofori and architect B. Sarti, architect Antonio Carnimati and Ing. Ernesto Saliva, architect Paolo Rossi De Paoli, Arch. Felice Pasquà, architect C. E. Rava, Ing. Ignazio Gardella, Ing. Garavaglia, and architect Minoletti among others.⁴¹⁹ Three prizes were awarded to three Milanese architects: Aldo Zacchi, Ottavio Cabiati, and Mario Bacciocchi [Figs. 80-82]. Other prizes were also awarded to six other solutions, including one designed by Antonio Carminati and engineer Ernesto Saliva, who often collaborated with Terragni [Fig. 83]. Ignazio Gardella designed an open structural frame with an internal abstract stone-covered tower, which was not included in the *Architettura* article. Gardella's tower was in sharp contrast to the winning tower entries that had a classical bases and tops, fascist symbols and sculpture [Fig. 84]. *Casabella* also published the competition in July of 1935 including a dizzying photo of the Eiffel tower and two modern entries by architect G. Ginatta and Ing. R. Maona and a shorter tower by Giulio

⁴¹⁹ Gardella's tower was not included in the publication.

Minoletti [Figs. 85-86].⁴²⁰ Two years earlier, the editor of *Casabella* had celebrated the steel *Torre Littoria* designed by Cesare Chiodi, Ettore Ferrari and Gio Ponti, on grounds of the *Palazzo dell'Arte* for the *V Triennale* in Milan in which all of the architects and designers experimented with metal structures to demonstrate their technical abilities [Fig. 87]. The August-September 1933 issue of *Casabella* was focused on buildings, furniture and products “Costruite in Acciaio,” which was strongly curtailed in later years because of autarchic policies and the need to use metal only for war purposes.⁴²¹ Although metal was used sparingly, by 1935 many *Case del Fascio* included very tall towers as a regular feature, which needed a capable structural system.

1937 Palazzo del Littorio Competition in Rome, Second Stage

A second site was selected in 1937 for the second phase of the *Palazzo del Littorio* competition in Rome in the area of Porta San Paolo near the Pyramid of Cestius and behind the recently built Post Office designed by Adalberto Libera and Mario De Renzi. The new competition site, in the Aventino Quarter, was also near the Ostiense Train Station that had recently been re-planned to serve as the central arrival point for foreign dignitaries, including Adolf Hitler's arrival in May, 1938.⁴²² The new site was triangular in form [Fig. 88]. The competition brief suggested that the competitors face the principle façade toward the Colosseum allowing it to front on to the *Piazza Raudusculana* (now *Piazza Albania*) and the *Viale Aventino*, thereby suggesting some connection to the imperial ruins without being in the Fora.⁴²³ Although

⁴²⁰ Minoletti's tower had also been published in *Architettura*, but was not awarded.

⁴²¹ *Casabella*, No. 68-9, August- September, 1933.

⁴²² The Ostiense Station was designed in 1938 by Roberto Narducci.

⁴²³ FGT, #4/27/2. p.4.

the site selected was less controversial, Italy's focus had changed dramatically since 1934. The 1937 competition followed the 1936 "Declaration of the Empire" and Italy's new association with Germany.

The 1937 competition brief omitted the Museum of the Fascist Revolution, which had been a principle component of the 1934 program with the expectation that the exhibition would be housed in the Villa Giulia instead.⁴²⁴ The budget for the new 1937 *Palazzo del Littorio* was not to exceed £72.000.000,00 and the building was to be designed as a "modern construction." It was to consist of offices for the PNF and other associated public services, a *torre littoria* with an internal *sacrario* and a second tower connecting all floors to a secret refuge area for Party members and important documents (most competitors hid this tower within an internal courtyard or within the body of the building), a school for political preparation, a covered gymnasium, three large meeting halls, and a garage.^{425 426}

Twelve groups of architects were selected from the 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* competition entrants to enter a second design competition for the new *Palazzo del Littorio* on the new site.⁴²⁷ Fourteen groups of architects were initially selected; however three of these groups formed one group making a total of twelve entries for the 1937 *Palazzo del Littorio* competition.⁴²⁸ Ten of the twelve groups of selected architects wrote a letter to Achille Starace, Secretary of the PNF, on January 12, 1937, with requests for the upcoming second phase competition. The competing architects requested to know the names of the jury members before the start of the competition

⁴²⁴ FGT, # 7/4/14: July 16, 1937.

⁴²⁵ ACS, B. 1507, *Bando di Concorso*.

⁴²⁶ A secret refuge was unique to this project.

⁴²⁷ ACS, B. 1507, "Realazione," p. 1.

⁴²⁸ The fourteen original groups were: Carminati, Lingeri, Saliva, Terragni, Vietti; Del Debbio, Foschini, Morpurgo; Del Giudice, Errera, Folini; De Renzi; Fasolo; Frezzotti; Libera; Moretti; Palanti; Rapisardi; Ridolfi, Cafiero, La Padula, Rossi; Samonà; Torres D.; Vaccaro.

and for the allowance of a least five months and £20.000,00 to complete a new design. The letter was signed by all of the invited competitors except for the architects Frezzotti and Palanti.⁴²⁹ The participants in the competition did not get five months and were ultimately paid only £15.000,00 for their expenses.⁴³⁰

The competition began on April 10, 1937 and the final design was due by 12:00 noon on July 15, 1937. It was examined by numerous jury members including Gustavo Giovannoni, Giovanni Muzio, and Pietro Aschieri on August 23, 1937. These three jury members were considered to be representative of “le tre età dell’uomo; l’antica con Givannoni, la media con Muzio e la nuova con Aschieri.”⁴³¹ The architectural requirements for the competition were described as follows:

L’architettura, per rispecchiando la evoluzione artistica dell’attuale epoca storica, dovrà collegarsi alle nobili tradizioni della grande arte italiana, e dovrà esprimersi in elegante ed efficace sobrietà di linee, tenendosi tuttavia lontana da ogni eccessiva e chiassosa fastosità; dovrà avere in pari tempo caratteristiche di romana monumentalità.⁴³²

Most of the twelve projects submitted responded to the competition directives with symmetrical, solid massive blocks that filled the perimeter of the site. All architectural competitors included towers and huge separate *arengarios* in their proposals. Seven of the twelve entrants placed the *Torre Littoria* in the center front of the acute angle of the site, some massive as in Mario Palanti’s proposal [Fig. 89]. Frezzotti, Samonà, the Ridolfi and the Terragni-Vietti groups

⁴²⁹ FGT, 5/9/6.

⁴³⁰ ACS, B. 1507, *Bando di Concorso*.

⁴³¹ FGT, 34/4/1; “Il Popolo di Brescia” August, 1937.

[Translation: “The three periods of mankind: the ancient with Giovannoni, the middle with Muzio and the modern with Aschieri.”]

⁴³² ACS, B. 1507, *Bando di Concorso*, Art. 2, p. 3.

[Translation: “The Architecture, while giving due respect to the artistic evolution of the current period in history, must be tied to the noble traditions of the great Italian art, and must be expressed with lines of elegant and efficient sobriety, but steering clear of any excessive and loud pomp; at the same time it must carry the characteristics of the Roman monumentality.”]

placed their towers asymmetrically on the site. Vincenzo Fasolo's project was the only entry that had an asymmetrical building designed as a series of triumphal arches stacked to form a tall building tower, which was located on the site near to the Pyramid of *Cestius* [Fig. 90].

The entries that were favored by the jurors followed the "*palazzo*" concept with a massive base, *piano nobile* and repetitive fenestration on the upper floors. Common to this design strategy was the architect's placement of the *arengario* symmetrically in front of the entry with a tower at the pinnacle of the angular site. The winning entry by Del Debbio, Foschini and Morpurgo followed this layout [Fig. 91]. The building by G. Rapisardi most closely followed the "*palazzo*" concept while adding a tall building as the tower within the front mass of the building. Rapisardi added a pyramidal form at the rear [Fig. 92]. The group of Del Giudice, Errera and Folin; Dulio Torres; and Luigi Moretti all submitted a similar massing with curved building forms. Both groups placed a symmetrical tower at the front with the Del Giudice group adding a large balcony in the tower under a monumental sculpture [Figs. 93-95].

The group of Ridolfi, Rossi, Cafiero, and La Padula strayed far from the streamlined design of their 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* entry. Rigid, rectilinear and repetitive window patterns characterized their new 1937 *Palazzo del Littorio* entry, which was strikingly different from the soft curving forms formerly planned for the *Via dell'Impero* site in 1934 [Fig. 96].

Milanese-Comasco Submission for the 1937 *Palazzo del Littorio* and a "House of Glass"

The Milan-Comasco group of Giuseppe Terragni, Luigi Vietti, Antonio Carminati, Pietro Lingeri, Ernesto Saliva, and artists Marcello Nizzoli and Mario Sironi was among the 14 groups selected from the 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* competition to compete in the second phase in 1937. For their 1937 reprise, the Milanese-Comasco group of architects, engineer, and artists worked

together on one singular project, rather than on two schemes as they had for the 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* competition. They were forewarned by the competition brief that only one project per group was to be presented and no schematic variations would be accepted.⁴³³ In their 1937 solution, they relied on the earlier design concepts of projects “A” and “B” from 1934 with the use of glass volumes.

By contrast to all of the entries to the 1937 competition, the Milanese-Comasco group offered a unique solution, breaking with the common method of creating one large palazzo form and cladding the building with stone [Fig. 97]. The group assembled the building components into several clearly delineated slab buildings, creating a small city of glass slabs joined by low glass clad horizontal wings. These low buildings formed the requisite courtyards described in the program guidelines, such as the *Cortile d' Onore*. The Milanese-Comasco group believed that they had created in architectural terms a physical diagram of the PNF. They wrote that their massing, “*si presenta l'ossatura del Partito*” [Fig. 98].⁴³⁴

The submission by Terragni and his collaborators differed from the other entries not only in its massing, but mostly dramatically in its cladding. The Milanese-Comasco group proposed a glass sheathed *Palazzo del Littorio*, which was in striking contrast to the stone and brick buildings of Rome, in particular, the nearby Pyramid of Cestius and the recently built Post Office clad in white travertine. The transparent solution was proposed in response to the guidelines of the competition brief that requested a “modern construction.” The Milanese-Comasco group wanted to create architecture that supported Mussolini’s statement that “Fascism is a house of

⁴³³ ACS, B. 1507, *Bando di Concorso*.

⁴³⁴ FGT, #4/27/2.

[Translation: “It presents the backbone of the Party.”]

glass into which all can see.”⁴³⁵ In Como, in Lissone, and in Rome for both project “A” and “B” for the 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* competition and for the 1937 proposal, Terragni and his collaborators created transparent enclosures, which allowed the public to view the internal workings of the PNF, implying that the fascist government was an open and honest one.

Despite the preponderance of glass, the 1937 *Palazzo del Littorio* project by Terragni et al. included a few solid internal walls used as necessary visual dividers between the auditoriums. A non-load bearing wall was also located in front of the glass wall of the main façade and a tall wall of stone was designed for the front elevation of the *Torre Littoria*. Luigi Vietti explained, during an interview in 1985, that the front walls on the projects “A” and “B” by the Milanese-Comasco group for the 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* competition were developed in response to criticism that their glass enclosures would have security problems and allow too much sunlight to penetrate to the interior.⁴³⁶ In 1937, The Milanese-Comasco group again created a transparent *Palazzo del Littorio* with a symbolic wall of stone applied to the front face and added double panes of glass with air conditioning to combat the sun. The stone wall on the low building facing the *piazza* was applied as an isolated slab, rising above the actual height of the glass enclosure to which it was attached. As in projects “A” and “B” from 1934, the 1937 façade was also suspended and was intended to be sculpted with a stone relief describing the historic events of fascism [Fig. 99].

The idea to contrast glass and stone in the 1937 *Palazzo del Littorio* proposal was most strongly articulated on the glass *Torre Littoria* with a free standing stone block wall at its front

⁴³⁵ Giuseppe Terragni in Peter Eisenman, *Giuseppe Terragni: Transformations Decompositions Critiques* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2003), p. 266. (Translation by Dianne Ghirardo) from *Quadrante 35*, “Documentario della Casa del Fascio di Como,” October, 1936, p. 15. Terragni is referring to Mussolini address in Milan from July, 1929.

⁴³⁶ Carol Bentel interviewed Luigi Vietti in 1985.

face. A dark block of granite stone rose several stories from the base of the *sacrario* into the upper interior of the tower [Fig. 100]. Similar to the exterior vertical planes of stone on the *Torre Littoria*, the interior block of dark stone in the *sacrario* does not touch the glass enclosure.⁴³⁷

In their design for a *Casa del Fascio* in Lissone from 1937 to 1939, Terragni and Carminati had also placed a large stone slab in the interior of the Lissone *Torre Littoria*.⁴³⁸ The Lissone tower included a *sacrario* at its base. The side glass window of the tower reveals the massiveness of the stone inside of the *sacrario* [Fig. 101]. The hidden transparent roof allowed light to penetrate into the *sacrario* and increased the contrast between the light glass surfaces and the massive stone. The transparency of the 1937 Rome *Torre Littoria* proposal would have allowed the public to see the strong contrast of the white stone wall on the tower shielding, but not touching the tower of glass and the monolithic black stone in the tower's interior. The 1937 Rome *Torre Littoria*'s proposal was bold in its use of glass compared to that constructed in Lissone, however, the two concepts were similar. The design of the Lissone *Casa del Fascio* quite likely preceded or coincided with the design of the 1937 *Palazzo del Littorio* competition proposal.

The Milanese-Comasco Group's plan for the 1937 *Palazzo del Littorio* was situated symmetrically on the triangular site, while the tower and *arengario* were placed asymmetrically relative to the overall massing of the building. The off-center placement of the tower was not unusual as five of the twelve submissions had a *torre littoria* on the right side of the site.

Terragni and his collaborators wrote about the arrangement of the front massing of the building:

Questi tre elementi giocano armonicamente dando senso di potenza e di forza ed esaltazione nella torre, commemorative nel frontone orizzontale, e di apoteosi nell'Arengario; tali concetti, oltre che per la massa, sono espressi anche per il

⁴³⁷ Bruno Zevi, *Giuseppe Terragni* (Bologna: Zanichelli Editore S. p. A.), pp. 144-145.

⁴³⁸ The stone was a twelve-ton piece of granite.

valore delle sculture bassorilieve ricavati nei blocchi di porfido e graniti dell'Impero."⁴³⁹

The plans of the multi-leveled glass buildings were arranged with single-loaded corridors. In plan, two courtyards were created by the surrounding glass buildings. The courtyard at the front of the site was the *Cortile d'Onore*, similar in concept to the plan formation of the *Casa del Fascio* in Como, completed one year before in 1936. Auditoriums were nestled into the building's second open "courtyard." An exposed truss covered the central auditorium of the 1937 project. Similar to the Como *Casa del Fascio*, the 1937 *Palazzo del Littorio* submission of the Terragni/Vietti group was a modern glass *palazzo*, albeit with a double courtyard.

The Winning Entry and the Final Location for the *Palazzo del Littorio* in Rome

On April 10th, 1937, Terragni/Vietti group's project was eliminated along with the projects of Fasolo; Palanti; Samona; Vaccaro, Libera, and De Renzi. The jury of the 1937 Rome *Palazzo del Littorio* competition explained that the eliminated projects had defects and fundamental problems with some of their design judgements, making their building proposals difficult to consider as winning entries. The next *Palazzo del Littorio* projects to be eliminated had functional problems, costly construction, or an incorrect artistic expression relative to the stated theme of the competition. These discarded entries were those of Folin, Errera, Del Guidice; Frezzotti; Moretti; Rapisardi; Ridolfi, Cafiero, La Padula, Rossi; and Torres. The

⁴³⁹ FGT, # 4/27/2.

[Translation: "These three elements interplay harmoniously exuding a sense of potency and strength and exultation in the tower, the commemorative horizontal facade, and of apotheosis in the *Argentario*; besides for the masses, these concepts are expressed also for the artistic value of the Empire's sculptures etched in the porphyry and granite blocks."]

remaining and winning project, designed by the team of Del Debbio, Foschini, and Morpurgo, was praised for its modernity and for retaining the character of an Italian *Palazzo* [Fig. 102].⁴⁴⁰

The winning entry of the competition represented the jurors' attitude about an appropriate architectural expression for the main PNF headquarters building for Rome and all of Italy, one which openly referenced the traditional *palazzo* form. However, the jury for the 1937 *Palazzo del Littorio* also praised the winning entry for its modernity, a description that did not change since the 1934 competition guidelines were issued. In general, the addition of signage, propagandistic messages, Roman references and fascist symbols were held at bay in 1937. Symbols were used in a restrained fashion. *Fasci* were used as a façade texture, if at all, and sculpture was minimal. If not for the monumental *Torre Littoria*, most of the schemes could have been mistaken as office buildings, unusual given the PNF's desire to visibly communicate the message of a national centralized government to the public and to foreigners. The fact that the neighboring structures – the Ostiense train station, the post office and the Pyramid of *Cestius* – were strongly linked by white travertine cladding could have accounted for the new *Palazzo del Littorio* building to have remained slightly subdued, except for its massive size. The *Palazzo del Littorio* was considered as a part of a new PNF zone and not a singular building with the need to proclaim its mission. The 1934 entries were loudly visible by comparison. The *Torre Littoria*, not the building, was the component of the 1937 *Palazzo del Littorio* building that visibly communicated to the public that it was a PNF headquarters.

The rejected scheme of the Terragni/Vietti group had offered the PNF one of the only modern alternatives, which did take cues from their own 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* proposals situated in the Fora. The Terragni/Vietti group had offered another type of classicism

⁴⁴⁰ ACS, PNF, Serie II, B. 132a, “*Relazione a sua eccellenza il segretario del PNF.*”

representing the past and present, purist rectangles of glass with *palazzo* courtyards. Parallels can be observed in the contemporaneous work at l'EUR. The glass clad blocks of the 1937 *Palazzo del Littorio* proposal by the Terragni/Vietti group coincided with the early studies of projects in glass for l'EUR from December 1937 that used materials openly associated with a "modern age" and building technologies derived from the airplane and automobile production. Vietti was involved with the early designs for l'EUR as were Pagano, Piacentini, Piccinato and Rossi [Fig. 103]. These first studies of l'EUR were also discarded for a stripped-down classicism defined by exteriors of repetitive columns and arches, however, glass enclosed interiors were concealed behind the classical sheathing.

The history of the *Palazzo del Littorio* did not end in 1937 as it was relocated once again, this time to the *Foro Mussolini* near the gymnasium for the *Giovani Fascisti* [Fig. 104]. The construction was started in 1938, but was suspended because of the war in 1943. Surprisingly, in 1940, the PNF decided that the *Palazzo del Littorio* building should become the new Italian Foreign Ministry, because the PNF thought the proper symbolic location for a *Palazzo del Littorio* would be in the area of l'EUR in 1942, as well as having a functional concern about ample automobile circulation near the *Foro Mussolini*.⁴⁴¹ Construction of the Italian Foreign Ministry was completed in 1959 [Fig. 105]. The site of the 1937 *Palazzo del Littorio* competition remained empty. However, the need for a PNF outpost at the juncture of the Testaccio, S. Saba and the Aventino quarters – the site of the 1937 competition – proved necessary, so the Porta S. Paolo itself, an actual gatehouse, was renovated to become the zone's *Casa del Fascio*.⁴⁴²

⁴⁴¹ ACS, PNF, B. 1507, letter to Colonnello Giuseppe Bodini, *Vice Comondante Generale della G.I.L.*, p. 1.

⁴⁴² ACS, PNF, B. 1510.

The jurors of the *Palazzo del Littorio* competition expressed a preference for Roman ruins in 1934, the Pyramid of Cestius combined with the efficiency of the train station and post office in 1937, and the Foro Mussolini in 1938, and then l'EUR in 1940 as the suitable location of the new PNF headquarters. The ruins proved to be too sacred and *Via dell' Impero* too cramped in 1934. The Pyramid zone was thwarted in 1938 for the Roman inspired *Foro Mussolini* zone, where Del Debbio, the winner of the *Palazzo del Littorio* competition, had been working as the design architect since 1928. By 1940, the idea to relocate the *Palazzo del Littorio* at l'EUR, even though it was neither fully planned nor constructed, seemed appropriate to the efforts of the jurors to find a location for a “modernly monumental” building for the PNF.⁴⁴³ At l'EUR, the architects could create their own interpretation away from antiquity all together and finally create their fascist city without any encumbrances.⁴⁴⁴

The 1937 winning “*palazzo*” building form, designed by Del Debbio, Foschini, and Morpurgo, and the importance of a *Torre Littoria* in the second competition in 1937 did inspire other architects designing smaller *Casa del Fascio*. The larger provincial *Casa Littorie* or *Palazzi del Littorio* in large cities used the “*palazzo*” form more frequently than did the architects of the smaller *Casa del Fascio*. In many cases, the provincial PNF buildings were created with “*palazzo*” forms with a grand *piazza*, but often without a tower; whereas the smaller *Casa del Fascio* buildings often were designed with a tower, which made their presence known in their townscape. In most cases, after 1937, the PNF provincial heads continued to seek central locations with Roman ruins and open *piazza* as a primary site, if the opportunity existed.

⁴⁴³ *L'Architettura*, 1933, p. 4.

⁴⁴⁴ An office building was constructed at l'EUR to the north of the *Palazzo della Città Italiana* that had some program elements that would have suited a *Palazzo del Littorio*, but this author has no documentation from the PNF files to support this.

The Competition for a *Casa Littoria* in Verona, 1937

Verona was a perfect city for the PNF to make a physical connection to Roman history with its own Roman amphitheater dated from 30AD [Fig. 106]. In June of 1937, there was a discussion at the national PNF level of reorganizing the urban plan of Verona and the addition of a *Casa Littoria* would serve as an important anchor in the re-planning. A site for the *Casa del Fascio* in *Piazza Cittadella* was noted in the July-August 1937 issue of *Urbanistica*, along with an image of the *piazza* with the new building [Figs. 107-108].⁴⁴⁵ The PNF authorities considered the construction of a *Casa Littoria* in Verona an urgent matter because of the many fascist activities in the city. The PNF suggested *Piazza Cittadella* for its location near the public gardens, which was away from the traffic.⁴⁴⁶ They wrote,

Di tale natura è la Casa del Fascio: essa deve essere nel centro vitale della città, ma deve anche avere avanti a se uno spazio libero per adunate, sosta dei veicoli ecc., ed appunto per questo deve essere fuori dal grande traffico, in modo che le adunate, le soste di auto, non lo disturbino e non ne siano disturbate....con un grande spazio libero avanti ad essa, ed in vicinanza del giardino pubblico che occuperà parte di Piazza Cittadella.⁴⁴⁷

Despite the ongoing study of the urban plan, another site, angular in form, was selected in 1939 next to *Corso Vittorio Emanuele* and the *Via Pradavalle* for the *Casa Littoria* [Fig. 109].

The Verona PNF Provincial office was eager to get a new building quickly, but because of its importance they planned a national competition for its design, which would take several months for an architectural solution. The competitors had four months to present their solutions after the competition guidelines were presented on February 1, 1939. The architects were

⁴⁴⁵ Paolo Rossi De Paoli, "Giardini e Zone Verdi a Verona," *Urbanistica*, July-August, 1937, p. 257-261.

⁴⁴⁶ "La Casa del Fascio a Verona." June 1, 1937, ACS, B. 1683 Verona, p. 1.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 2.

[Translate: "The *Casa del Fascio* is of such a nature: it must be in the heart of the city, but must also have clear space next to it for gatherings, for parking of vehicles etc., and for this reason it must be out of the highly trafficked areas, the gatherings with the cars halted will not be disturbed and the traffic will not be disturbed....with a large free space next to it, and close to the public garden it will occupy part of Piazza Cittadella."]

required to submit a general site plan, plans of every floor, two sections, one perspective of the front stair, two perspectives of the exterior, one perspective of the interior of the *salone* and one of the *sacrario*. The architects had to include a brief description of their project, a structural report, an indication of materials, and the sums of area covered as well as cubic measurements. The jury for the Verona *Casa Littoria* competition would state their decision sixty days from the closing of the *Casa Littoria* competition. The prizes for the winning architects would be £20.000,00 for first place, £10.000,00 for second place, £7.000,00 for third place and £3.000,00 for the fourth and fifth positions.

The Verona *Casa Littoria* competition program consisted of:

- Salone for 600 seated people, a *sala* for 60 people
- *Sacrario* for Fascist Martyrs
- The office component consisted of 21 rooms for the office of the *Segretaria Politica* (*Segretario Federale, Vice-Federali, Office for Discipline, Istituto di Cultura Fascista, Comando GIL*);
- 14 rooms for the *Segretaria Amministrativa*
- 1 office for the *Centro di Mobilizzazione Civile*
- 11 rooms for the O.N.D. (includes rooms for *Segretario Provinciale* and *Vice Segretario Provinciale*, offices for organized sports and organized cultural activities)
- 2 rooms for the *Fascio* of the city
- one room for the *Gruppo Rionale "F. Baracca"*
- one room for each of the *Associazione Fascista Invalidi Feriti per la Rivoluzione, Associazione Famiglie Caduti per la Rivoluzione, Istituto Coloniale Fascista, Centro per Stranieri*
- 14 rooms for the *Fasci Femminile* (including a laboratory for 30 people and a hall for teaching courses for 150 people)⁴⁴⁸
- one room for the Radio
- one room for the G.U.F.
- *Ufficio Stampa*
- U.N.U.C.I.
- *Lega Navale*
- *Associazioni d'Arma e Combattentistiche*
- *Sezione sportiva*
- Several rooms for the *Associazioni Dipendenti*
- Space underground for four automobiles and 30 bicycles.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁸ The type of laboratory was not described.

On February 10, 1939, Giovanni Marinelli from Rome sent a note to the PNF Secretary of Verona with a concern about the irregularity of the competition site and its view toward *Piazza Vittorio Emanuele*. Marinelli wrote "...portrà riuscire difficilmente rispondente ad una buon estetica, dato il suo limitato sviluppo (m. 22) in confronto all' altezza."⁴⁵⁰ Marinelli also reminded the PNF Secretary of Verona to alert competitors to locate the *arengario* in the most effective position for addressing the *adunate* (gathering).⁴⁵¹

On May 26, 1939, Enrico Del Debbio, *Secretario Nazionale* of the *Sindacato Nazionale Architetti*, nominated Dr. Arch. Gian Luigi Giordani, a resident of Bologna, to represent the *Sindacato dei Architetti* on the jury for the Verona *Casa Littoria* competition.⁴⁵² Giordani had designed one *Casa del Fascio* in 1933 that was constructed prior to the Verona competition and had been a participant in the *Palazzo del Littorio* competition in 1934 with Saul Bravetti [Fig. 110]. Arch. Giordani's constructed *Casa del Fascio (part renovation)* included a Theater/*Cine* and a brick *Torre Littoria* in Minerbio, Bologna [Fig. 111]. Giordani also designed two *Casa del Fascio* following the Verona competition. In Soliano-Cesena in 1941, he designed a *Casa del Fascio* with a stone façade, which supported a grid of eagle sculptures across its face. The Soliano-Cesena *Casa del Fascio* was located at one end of a large *piazza* across from the *Comune* and did not include a *torre littoria* [Fig. 112]. Giordani designed a sleek *Casa del Fascio* in Santarcangelo di Romagna with large glass windows, bold geometric forms and a

⁴⁴⁹ *Bando di Concorso from Rome*, ACS, B. 1683 Verona, September 23, 1938 XVI.

⁴⁵⁰ Letter from Giovanni Marinelli, Rome PNF, to Seg. Verona, February 10, 1939, ACS, B. 1683 Verona, p. 1. [Translation: "...it will hardly respond to good aesthetics, considering its limited size (22 meters) compared to its height."]

⁴⁵¹ Letter from Giovanni Marinelli, Rome PNF, to Seg. Verona, February 10, 1939, ACS, B. 1683 Verona, p. 1.

⁴⁵² Letter from Enrico Del Debbio to *Consigliere Nazionale Giovanni Marinelli*, *Seg. Amministrativo del PNF*, ACS, B. 1683 Verona, letter - Rome, May 26, 1939, p. 1.

massive tower (no date recorded) [Fig. 113]. In addition, Arch. Giordani was the architect of the Linate airport, a major commission, in 1937.

On July 3, 1939, a handwritten letter was sent to the *Segretaria Particolare* di Benito Mussolini regarding the location of the *Casa del Fascio* at *Piazza Vittorio Emanuele* noting that the land being considered for the competition site did not belong to the *Comune* and was to remain a garden.⁴⁵³ On August 22, 1939, the Federal Vice-Secretary of the Verona PNF, Avv. Luigi Betteri, wrote to the Administrative Secretary of the PNF in Rome to say that “l’area in cui sorgerà la Casa Littoria è competament errata.”⁴⁵⁴ Betteri suggested that the location at the gardens of *Piazza Cittadella*, earlier considered in the urban plan, would be closer to the center and would be a vast and thus preferable space.⁴⁵⁵ Included with the Betteri’s letter were the results of the jury for the 1939 Verona *Casa Littoria* competition on the triangular site. The jury reported that the Commission for the competition at the PNF headquarters in Verona had received twenty-three entries. The jury concluded that none of the projects had responded fully to the “particolari esigenze dell’ edificio e dell’ambiente,” resulting in no winners.⁴⁵⁶ Two projects of distinction, however, were noted. The groups of Dott. Arch. Emilio Dori, Dott. Arch. Ettore Rafanelli, Dott. Arch. Giovanni Stralanchi and of Arch. Giovanni Guerrini, Arch. Bruno La Padula, Arch. Mario Romano were each given £10.000,00 as a reimbursement.⁴⁵⁷ The change in site was a factor in the jury’s decision not to award any winners for the Verona *Casa*

⁴⁵³ ACS, B.1683. Signature of the letter writer was illegible.

⁴⁵⁴ Letter from Il Vice Segretario Federale Avv. Luigi Betteri from the PNF Verona, 22 Agosto 1939 XVII, p. 1. ACS, PNF Serie II, B. 1683 Verona.

[Translation: “the site where the Casa Littoria will be erected is completely wrong.”]

⁴⁵⁵ Letter from il Vice Segretario Federale Avv. Luigi Betteri to Fascista seg. Ammin. del PNF, Rome, 22 agosto 1939, ACS, B. 1683 Verona #14495, p. 1.

⁴⁵⁶ [Translation: “specific building and environmental requirements”]

⁴⁵⁷ Letter from Il Vice Segretario Federale Avv. Luigi Betteri from the PNF Verona, 22 Agosto 1939 XVII, p. 2. ACS, PNF Serie II, B. 1683 Verona.

Littoria competition. The jury's decision was noted in *Architettura*'s 1940 article on the Verona competition.

Regardless of the competition outcome, many *Casa Littoria* entries designed for the angular site in Verona, were published. The two schemes preferred by the jury were published in *Architettura* in a 1940 feature story, written by Augusto Baccin, along with several others proposals from the competition. The first group of Guerrini, La Padula and Romano created a monolithic fortress with battered sides, highly textured walls and repetitive windows [Fig.114]. A columned cornice adorned the top of the building. The *arengario* faced the acute angle of the site with doors below. A massive eagle supported the *arengario*. As in most schemes for the *Casa Littoria*, the numerous offices were stacked on the long sides of the site and the auditorium was located in the space between the office walls. The major entry to the auditorium was in a curved wall at the rear of the site [Fig. 115]. Baccin called the project "nobilmente austere" (nobly austere).⁴⁵⁸ The project by Dori, Rafanelli and Stralanchi, considered as the second of the two projects of interest to the jury, was simple by comparison, unadorned and rendered with dark materials [Fig. 116]. The architects did not create equal office wings like most other competition entries, but uniquely created an inner accessible courtyard that could be entered from the streetside. Other entrants, such as the group of Pasquale Marabotto, Luigi Orestano, Dante Tassotti and Luigi Vagnetti designed a rectangular *palazzo* with a detached tower at the front of the site [Figs. 117-118]. Bruno Maria Apolloni and Claudio Balierio proposed a bilaterally symmetrical building with offices on the sides of the site and the auditorium centered at the rear of the site. An arcade cut across the center of the building from street to street. Sculptures adorned the upper open arcade of Apolloni and Balierio's *Casa Littoria* proposal [Fig. 119].

⁴⁵⁸ Augusto Baccin, "Concorso per il Progetto della Nuova Casa Littoria a Verona," *Architettura*, no. 6, 1940, p. 299.

Ettore Fagioli, Ing. Italo Mutinelli and Enea Ronca created a *palazzo* with an embedded tower and positioned the auditorium uniquely toward the long street's façade [Fig. 120].

In February 1940, *L'Architettura Italiana* also published one of the projects from the Verona 1939 *Casa Littoria* competition by architects Cesare Emidio Bernardi, Adriano Cambellotti, Francesco Chiaramonte Bordonaro.⁴⁵⁹ The triangular-shaped five-story brick building included a five-story open arched rectangular block at its entry, which read as unoccupied space and was called a "*massiccia torre Littoria*" [Figs. 121-123].⁴⁶⁰ The monolithic open grid of arches is reminiscent of the *Palazzo della Civiltà* under construction at l'EUR by 1939, which was published by December 1938 in *L'Illustrazione Italiana* [Fig. 124]. In Baccin's *Architettura* article, he wrote that the Verona *Casa Littoria* proposal of Bernardi, Cambellotti, and Bordonaro had "*una austerità veramente romana.*"⁴⁶¹ The architects centered an *arengario* on the arched-covered block, which was focused on the intersection and urban plaza at the acute end of the angular site pointing toward the Roman Arena. The main entry was placed under the *arengario*, which led into the arched block. Openings on both sides led through to the *sacrario* and to the large covered hall in the center of the courtyard. Circulation was organized first with respect to ceremony and visual effect. While a fascist orator stood on the balcony under the sculpture of the eagle, the *adunate* would march out from the building on both sides and enter the *piazza* from the auditorium below. By comparison to the earlier 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* project for Rome, the circulation patterns to enhance spectacle were more clearly delineated in the Verona *Casa Littoria* competition, which had a less complex spatial program.

⁴⁵⁹ "Concorso per La Casa Littoria di Verona," *L'Architettura Italiana*, No. 2, February, 1940 XVII, p. 41-43.

⁴⁶⁰ "Concorso per La Casa Littoria di Verona," *L'Architettura Italiana*, No. 2, February, 1940 XVII, p. 41.

[Translation: "massive fascist tower"]

⁴⁶¹ Augusto Baccin, "Concorso per il Progetto della Nuova Casa Littoria a Verona," *Architettura*, no. 6, 1940, p. 299.

[Translation: "a truly Roman austerity"]

The Second Phase of the Verona *Casa Littoria* Competition, 1940-1941

The second competition for the Verona *Casa Littoria* was planned for a new site in 1940. The site was rectangular in form and closer to the Roman Arena, but separated from the Arena by the medieval wall [Fig. 125]. The competition was announced on February 1, 1940 and was due on July 31, 1940, but the due date was postponed on July 1, 1940, with a note from Rome prolonging the presentation of the entries for three more months because of the Italian state of War.⁴⁶² The due date, “scadenza venne fissato,” was reset for October 31, 1940 (XIX) and the verdict of the Commission would be published in *Il Popolo d'Italia*, *Il Corriere della Sera*, *La Stampa*, *Gionale d'Italiana* and *La Nazione*.⁴⁶³

The requirements for the 1940 Verona *Casa Littoria* competition were similar to the previous 1939 competition. Notes about materials were repeated in the competition guidelines regarding the encouragement to competitors to use local materials – marble from the Verona province, and the elimination of “ferro” (iron) with a preference for “*tipo murario, limitando il cemento armato*.”⁴⁶⁴ In particular, the competition guidelines asked for a construction that will, “*eseguita nell’architettura del tempo fascista, esprimere attraverso la funzionalità delle sue parti la sua destinazione, e dovrà avere in pari tempo caratteristiche di romana monumentalità*.”⁴⁶⁵ The jury was composed of:

President: Bonino Antonio, *Segretario Federale* of Verona

⁴⁶² Letter from Giovanni Montfusco, *il Capo dei Servizi Amministrativi* on Rome 1 July 1940 to *il Capo dei Servizi Amministrativi della Federazione dei Fasci di Combattimento* di Verona.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.* [Translation: “expiration date has been set”]

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.* [Translation: “a type of building, limiting the reinforced concrete”]

⁴⁶⁵ *PNF Federazione dei Fasci di Combattimento*, Verona, Guidelines for “Concorso per il progetto della nuova “Casa Littoria,” February 1, 1940, p.2, ACS, Serie II, B. 1683, Verona.

[Translation: “perform in the fascist era architecture, to project through the functionality of its parts its final purpose, and will have at the same time, the characteristics of the Roman monumentality.”]

Ing. Ernesto Pedrazza Gorlero, *Sindacato Nazionale Ingegneri*
Arch. Giovanni Ponti, *Sindacato Nazionale Architetti*
Ing. Francesco Meloni, *Ingegnere Capo del Genio Civile* of Verona
Ing. Raffaello Nicoli, *Sovrintendente all'arte medioevale e moderna* of Verona
Ing. Gianni Boccoli, *Podestà* of Verona
Arch. Marino Padovani, *Fiduciario Sindacato Architetti della Provincia* of
Verona
Segretario: Virgilio Tommasi, Capo dei Servizi amministrativi

The competition jury finished their work on December 31, 1940, after examining twenty-nine projects. The report of the results of the Verona competition came from the head of the Technical Service Department of the PNF, Tullio Nicoli. Competition winners were announced in the newspaper, *L'Arena*, on January 1, 1941. First place, with a monetary prize of £60.000,00, was awarded for a project called "Verona 3" designed by architects Pasquale Carbonare, Dagoberto Ortensi, Giulio Roisecco from Rome (Lungotevere Flaminio n. 26). An award of £15.000,00 went to the project called "G.N.R.3" by architects Emilio Dori and Ettore Rafanelli from Florence (Via 5 Giornate n. 46), who had been cited for promise in the first competition in 1939. An award of £10.000,00 went the project titled "Impero 1949 A" by architects Barbera Lillo and Pierotti Egisto from Rome (Viale Milizie no. 106). Two awards of £5.000,00 were given to "Picchiatelli" by engineers Aldo and Leonardo Del Bufalo and architect Paride Magris from Rome (Via Merulana 19) and for project "Verona Romana" by Architect Mario De Stefani from Padova (Via Dalmazia no. 2). Other merits were also cited.

Architettura's September-October, 1941 (XIX-XX) publication included an article by F. Fariello on the "*Concorso per la Casa Littoria di Verona,*" which featured ten projects. Fariello claimed the competition to be a grand success with most of the architects deciding to create a "sobrio" (sober) *palazzo* block in the Italian tradition. The architects of the winning scheme titled "Verona 3" designed a *palazzo* form with a sloped auditorium in the center of the plan. Fariello wrote that it was clear "Verona 3" merited first place with a serene monumentality and a respect

for the atmosphere of the city of Verona. The architects of “Verona 3” described their *Casa Littoria*’s character and its spirit. They wrote,

Se la funzione della Casa del Fascio fosse limitata a soddisfare soltanto esigenze di ordine pratico ed amministrativo, l’espressione dell’edificio non potrebbe differire gran che da quella di un comune palazzo per uffici di amministrazione pubblica o privata. Ma la funzione della Casa del Fascio è più vasta: superati i limiti dell’utilità tecnica e delle necessità pratiche, essa investe il campo dello spirito. In termini di architettura ciò vuol dire: per soddisfare le esigenze pratiche basta costruire un edificio che risponda bene allo scopo per cui è progettato, per soddisfare le esigenze dello spirito occorre non solo che si rispetti la funzione pratica, ma che nell’opera aliti la poesia.⁴⁶⁶

The architects of “Verona 3” created an arcade of arched openings at the ground level and a loggia filled with sculptures in each opening on the *piano-nobile* level with a central balcony. Ornamental crenulations accented the top of the building in the spirit of *Palazzo Ducale* in Venice [Fig. 126]. The second place proposal, titled “G.N.R.3,” was a *palazzo* plan with a gridded open façade filled with sculpture. Three deep entry portals led to an inner courtyard. The grand *sala* was located at the top of the building in the rear. Fariello admired the triple open loggias and the deeply shadowed entry portals. Fariello encouraged the readers of his article in *Architettura* to imagine the beautiful luminosity that the “G.N.R.3” scheme would provide on the *piazza* [Figs. 127-128]. The third place winners titled their project “Impero 1949 A,” which was a mixture of the former two *Casa Littoria* proposals with a classic block form, open loggia at the *piano-nobile* level and a central balcony [Figs. 129-130]. Other entries were

⁴⁶⁶ “Relazione: Concorso per il progetto della Casa Littoria,” by competition entrants “Verona 3”, ACS, B. 1683 Verona, p. 3.

[Translation: “Were the *Casa del Fascio* function limited to only meet practical or administrative needs, the appearance of the building would not differ greatly from that of an ordinary public or private administrative office building. However, the function of the *Casa del Fascio* is far more vast; above the limits of the technical utility and practical requirements, it involves the realm of spirituality. As pertains to architecture, this means: to meet practical needs it suffices to erect a building that satisfies the ultimate purpose of its design; to meet the spiritual needs it not only must satisfy the practical function, but poetry must be present in it.”]

variations of *palazzo* strategy with only one of the published entries including a *torre littoria* with a curved columned façade as the tower's backdrop [Fig. 131].

The last project in Fariello's article on the Verona 1940 competition by architect Mario Fagiolo, uniquely orchestrated the circulation path of the *adunate*, which was evident in a few projects in the late years of fascism. Fagiolo's project followed the initial circulation concept of Terragni's Como *Casa del Fascio*. The "courtyard" found in most *palazzi* and many *Palazzi del Littorio*, began as a traditional courtyard and became multifunctional for the activities of the PNF. As the theater/cinema became the PNF's choice for an assembly space, courtyards vanished from the PNF headquarters, as did the *sala* in the smaller L-shaped *Casa del Fascio*, which had functioned also as a *palestra*. Mario Fagiolo's scheme for the Verona *Casa Littoria* demonstrates the mature *palazzo* version of a PNF headquarters for a major size city, like Verona. The masses of "black shirts" would listen to a PNF orator inside the *Casa Littoria*, and then would march out to the exterior *piazza*. Fagiolo provided an austere interior auditorium, painted with clouds on the ceiling, reminiscent of the open courtyard of the *palazzo* precedent. He designed an internal balcony at the same level as the balcony facing into the *piazza* for a seamless political march of the PNF dignitaries. The sectional drawing's intent is clear, as Fagiolo sketched it with a PNF official facing the internal crowd with his fist raised. Fagiolo's design followed the needs of the PNF, which he molded into architecture [Figs. 132-134]. Fagiolo did not win the Verona *Casa Littoria* competition, but he did win the 1939 competition for a *tipo edilizio* in the *media collina* category for rural *Casa del Fascio*, which coincided with his Verona competition proposal.

The construction of the winning entry, "Verona 3," began in earnest in 1941. The cost of the project was calculated at £8.000.000,00 with the Federation's responsibility for

£6.500.00,00 with a contribution from the PNF of £1.500.000,00. A memo was sent from the Technical Service Department in Rome on May 29, 1941, from Luigi Mancini, who gave the notice to the PNF Secretary that the project was approved. Along with Mancini's memo was a note suggesting that the new *Casa Littoria*, located in the north of Italy, be a worthy seat of government, as it may “ospita numerose rappresentanze del Reich.”⁴⁶⁷

While plans were being made for construction of the *Casa Littoria* in the center of Verona, concerns were raised on April 2, 1941 by the head of the PNF Service Administration, Dr. Vito Pedretti, about the lack of coverage of PNF buildings in the rural and border areas of the Verona province.⁴⁶⁸ Plans were being organized for thirteen *Gruppi Rionali Fascisti* buildings, to be located around the city of Verona. Dr. Pedretti urged the PNF Technical Service Department to quickly cover the furthest outlying tourist areas of the Verona province with PNF representation.

The *Casa Littoria*, planned for the center of Verona, was never built. Letters were exchanged between the Minister of Finance in Brescia and the Verona contractor Attilio Veronesi regarding the liquidation of the remaining construction materials on August, 25 1944.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁷ Luigi Mancini of *Servizi Tecnici*, memo to the Secretary of the PNF regarding the *Nuova Sede Littoria di Verona*, Rome, May 29, 1941, ACS, Serie II, B. 1683 Verona.

[Translation: “host numerous representatives of the Reich.”]

⁴⁶⁸ Letter from Dr. Vito Pedretti to the *Segretario Federale of the Servizi Tecnici* of the PNF, Rome on April 2, 1941. ACS, Serie II, B. 1683 Verona.

⁴⁶⁹ Letter from *Impresa Costruzioni Attilio Veronese & Figlio*, Agosto 25, 1944 to *Ministero delle Finanze*, Brescia. ACS, Serie II, B. 1683, Verona.

1937-41 “Tipo” *Case del Fascio* for Rural and Border Areas

The PNF's need to build more *Case del Fascio* to reach the rural and border areas of Italy was accomplished by issuing a series of competitions that had numerous categories based on variations of topography and climate. The Federal Secretary of Cuneo, Antonio Bonino, wrote to Achille Starace about a way to increase the number of *Case del Fascio* in June of 1937.⁴⁷⁰ Starace wrote a note to Marinelli on July, 8 1937, indicating that the Federation of Cuneo had sent him drawings of “un progetto-tipo di ‘Casa del Fascio’ per piccoli e medi Comuni,” which proposed four buildings to be built in a series, each increasing in size and price from a cost of £70.000,00 for the smallest and £200.000,00 for the largest.⁴⁷¹ The designers of the concept to build *Case del Fascio* in a series were engineer P. Vaccaro and surveyor T. Crosetti of Cuneo [Fig. 135].⁴⁷² The smallest *Casa del Fascio* consisted of a rectangular two-story building with a tower. Both of these components remained in all schemes in the series. The rectangular two-story building consisted of a lower floor with an open room, a bathroom, an upper floor with three offices, and a second floor bathroom. The tower consisted of an entry in its base, an internal stair, a balcony, a *fascio* symbol, the name of the building “*Casa del Fascio*,” and a flagpole. The tower was the same width as the rectangular building. Both the tower and the main building had flat roofs. The next stage in the series consisted of the addition of another rectangular block located on the opposite side of the tower, making the complete design symmetrical with the tower in the center [Fig. 136]. The third stage in the series was an alternative design with a rectangular block of stacked offices on one side and a single-level

⁴⁷⁰ ACS, PNF Serie II, B. 1016.

⁴⁷¹ ACS, PNF Serie II, B. 1016.

⁴⁷² ACS, PNF Serie II, B. 1016.

[Translation: “a project-type of ‘Casa del Fascio’ for small and medium towns”]

salone-palestra with a taller ceiling on the other side of the tower [Fig. 137]. The fourth drawing in the series was a larger alternative, which consisted of three floors of offices stacked symmetrically around the tower and a *salone-palestra* attached to one side, accessed through an internal hallway. The *salone-palestra* exited into a rear yard. The tower was identical in all four schemes [Fig. 138]. On July 12, 1937, Giovanni Marinelli wrote back to Antonio Bonino to note that the “building as a series” idea had merit and deserved study. Marinelli suggested in his letter that young architects should follow the design concepts of Vaccaro and Crosetti and that the architects should add some local traditions to the architecture that the people of the area would value.⁴⁷³ Vaccaro and Crosetti’s study of *Case del Fascio* architectural components and their assemblage was the closest the PNF ever progressed toward developing a building “typology.” Instead, the *Casa del Fascio* building grew to have a variety of possible architectural representations. Following Vaccaro and Crosetti’s study, the PNF created a competition program that added visual variation to the building’s requirements, rather than standardization, by requesting that unique *Case del Fascio* be designed for diverse climatic situations.

A series of competitions were initiated by the PNF to add *Case del Fascio* to outlying areas in Italy beginning in 1939. Two competitions in 1939 and 1940 for *Case del Fascio* in rural and border areas resulted in numerous examples of *Case del Fascio* projects. Architects throughout Italy submitted designs that could be dispersed by the PNF to rural areas distant from the designer’s location.

In the first “rural” *Casa del Fascio* competition, two sizes of buildings were requested of the competitors: one for small centers and a second for *comuni rurali* (rural communities) of

⁴⁷³ Note from Marinelli, Roma to Antonio Bonino, Cuneo, 12 Luglio 1937 XV, ACS, PNF Serie II, B. 1016.

medium importance.⁴⁷⁴ The location of the building in the plains, hills or mountains needed to be stated by the designer. The required tower, now a frequent feature on many *Case del Fascio*, was prescribed as needing to be, “distaccata from the l’edificio e collegato con esso, mediante un porticato.” The tower was to be simple and austere and of the dimensions 5x4 meters and 16 meters in height. The *sacrario* was to be located at the bottom of the tower and would include the *Aquila Imperiale sul Fascio Littorio* (Imperial Eagle on the Fascio). The use of local material was stressed. The preferred aesthetics of a modern character and of mediterranean art was requested. The competition guidelines noted, “...Case Littorie su accennate, che pur dovendo avere carattere di modernità, dovrebbero però allacciarsi alle tradizioni dell’arte mediterranea.”⁴⁷⁵ The *Case del Fascio* for the small rural centers had four to seven offices consisting of offices for the Secretary and the Vice-Secretary, the *Milizia*, *Fascio Femminile*, GIL, OND, assistance services and a *sala* for gatherings. The medium size *Case del Fascio* would receive an additional space for a *palestra-cinema*.⁴⁷⁶

In 1940, with an increased need for more *Case del Fascio* in the rural and border areas, the PNF issued another competition only for professional architects or engineers who were registered with the PNF.⁴⁷⁷ The architects and engineers had the option of presenting one or more *Case del Fascio* projects. The spatial program described in the competition guidelines was modest consisting of one room of 50 square meters and one room of 60 square meters, which

⁴⁷⁴ *L’Architettura italiana*, September, 1941, p. 275.

[Translation: “detached from the building and connected with it by a portico”]

⁴⁷⁵ *L’architettura Italiana*, Settembre 1941, p. 275.

[Translation: “Case Littorie, while having the character of modernity, they should connect to the traditions of Mediterranean art”]

⁴⁷⁶ Flavio Mangione, “*Case del Fascio nei centri rurali dell’entroterra e di confine*,” *Le Case del Fascio* (Pubblicazioni degli Archivi di Stato, Roma, 2003), p. 79.

⁴⁷⁷ ACS, PNF Serie II, B. 1498.

was divisible into three offices, a *torre littoria* with a balcony to be located on the front facade, a war memorial near the *torre littoria* in the atrium, and an “out-in-the-open” space for dancing, playing bocce, or post-work activities.⁴⁷⁸ The plans were to include designs for a possible future expansion, along the lines of the 1937 concept suggested by Vaccaro and Crosetti.

The aesthetic direction of the new *Case del Fascio* was also suggested by the PNF to have “simple and austere lines” and the PNF building was required to, “have a welcoming look both inside and outside, in tune with the location and the noble end purpose.” Money constraints were obvious and autarky was a factor highlighted in the competition guidelines. “Buildings must adhere to all criteria of absolute simplicity and budgetary constraints” and “construction....must be planned in such a way as to be realized by using autarchic materials ...with the total exclusion of iron” using “the more readily available and competitive material in the individual locations (stone, pumice, bricks, etc.).”⁴⁷⁹ Priority was “given to types that will present the most autarchic characteristics.”⁴⁸⁰ Ludovico Belgiojoso, who participated in the competition for rural *Case del Fascio*, said the three most important concepts were “autarchia, semplicità, economia.”⁴⁸¹

The rural *Case del Fascio* competition submissions were to be delivered to the Central Technical Service Department of the Ministry of Public Works located on Via Monzambano in Rome and were judged after November 18, 1940 by the Minister and Secretary of the PNF Ministry for Public Works. The architectural submissions were required to include a detailed

⁴⁷⁸ *L'architettura Italiana*, September, 1941, p. 275.

⁴⁷⁹ *L'architettura Italiana*, September, 1941.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸¹ Carol Bentel interviewed Ludovico Belgiojoso in 1985. Note in E. Bonfanti and M. Porta, *Città, Museo e Architettura*, 1973.

[Translation: “Autarchy, simplicity, economy”]

technical report and a metric calculation estimate, which made them ready for distribution and construction. Unlike earlier competitions, the architects of the rural *Casa del Fascio* competition were required to indicate if they had previously designed other *Case Littorie*, which highlights the seriousness of the PNF's need for more buildings. The winning *Casa del Fascio* projects were offered as "ready-to-go" designs to many rural areas around the Italian mainland.

One hundred groups of architects from Brescia, Roma, Palermo, Trento, Viterbo, Naples, Lucca, Treviso, Padua, Parma, Milan and many other cities entered the competition for rural *Casa del Fascio*. Architects such as Sotsas, Banfi, Belgioioso, Peressutti and Fagiolo were among the names of entrants [Fig. 139].⁴⁸² Many architects submitted more than one project for the two categories and designed the projects for multiple climatic and geographic locations, so the variations of size and contextual conditions did not create equally comparable documents. The competition winners were declared on September 10, 1941 in Rome with the first prize awarded to entry number 51 by architects Ernesto Puppo and Alfio Susini from Rome. The second prize was awarded to entry number 49 by engineer Giovanni Lorenzi from Trento [Figs. 140-141].

Most project submissions for the rural *Casa del Fascio* were generally simple and austere, consisting of a large assembly space, an office wing, a tower and a *piazza*. Missing were the modern glass and steel of the 1932 student entries, replaced by austere stucco walls with punched window openings and stone towers, with minimal, if any, fascist symbols. By 1941, it was clear to architects that the modern materials of the 1932 competition were not possible because of the Autarky Program and that the buildings needed to be affordable. Arch. Ernesto Puppo and Arch. Alfio Susini's first place *Casa del Fascio* was very modest as a stucco building

⁴⁸² Name spellings were often misspelled in the competition lists.

with simple window openings, an arched entry, tower and balcony. The perspectival sketch shows the deep width of the tower, which was required to be the same width as the building. Giovanni Lorenzi's second prize *Casa del Fascio* was not simple and austere, consisting of a large pitched roof which included covered exterior space. His *torre littoria* was massive, despite competing in the small *Casa del Fascio* category. A mountainous landscape was rendered behind Lorenzi's perspective of the rural *Casa del Fascio*. One competition entry was published in *L'Architettura Italiana* in November 1940 by Ferruccio Grassi for a northern area of the Piedmonte region. Grassi included pitched roofs on the office block, the assembly wing and on the *torre littoria*. The tower was incorporated into the body of the building with the entry and *sacrario* at its base and the *Fascio* office and *arengo* located at the top of the tower [Figs. 142-143]. In general, the *torre littoria* was large and out-of-scale, when relatively compared to the size of most of buildings proposed in the competition.

Records in the ACS show that selected competition entries, often done by architects from other cities, were proposed for small centers or rural border areas distant from the architect's studio. In March of 1942, for example, Federal Secretary G. Ramaccioni of the province of Palermo, representing the *Comune* of Terrasini and of Vicari selected a project designed by Virgili Dominco of Rome. In the Bari file, there is a document from Luigi Mancini, the head of the *Servizi Tecnici* department of the PNF from June 1941 that states that four locations would receive a building from the various projects that won the National competition for *Casa Littorie nei Piccolo Centri Rurali e di Confine*.⁴⁸³ Luigi Mancini sent identical letters to many communities in August 1941 asking the local PNF Federations to take two to three photographs of a potential *Casa del Fascio* sites, to prepare a site plan at a 1:500 scale, and to note the

⁴⁸³ ACS, PNF Serie II, B. 867, Bari.

characteristics of the land in the area of interest for one or more *Casa del Fascio*. The head of the local PNF was to mail the material to Rome for the Technical Service Department to decide which project would be most appropriate for their particular sites, or the head of the local PNF could travel to Rome to select the appropriate projects themselves.⁴⁸⁴ The letters from Mancini included a blank line for the Technical Service Department to fill in the number of *Casa del Fascio* each community would be given. Cosenza, for example, was to receive five new *Casa del Fascio*. Each city or town had a different number in the filled in blank in the letter. The cost for each new building was calculated to be £350.000,00.⁴⁸⁵ A set of measured plans by architects A. Susini and E. Puppo, winners of one of the rural competitions, were included with copies of the letters in the Italian State Archive, suggesting that their design was sent to many locations for construction. Another *Casa del Fascio* design that was included with the letters in the archive was a perspective drawing by Architect Basile, marked as a second place winner. Basile's design could have won this distinction in one of many size and location categories of the competition. Basile's design consisted of two identical one-story buildings, which were on opposite sides of a stone covered tower and *arengario*. The architect connected the two buildings and tower with low roofs [Fig.144].⁴⁸⁶

By 1940, the emphasis on the design of the *torre littoria* of the rural *Casa del Fascio* dominated the written material regarding the nationally shared designs. In a description of one of the submitted *Casa del Fascio* designs from a Roman architect in 1941 – signed only as “il progettista” – the characteristics of the tower and the shape of the building to allow future extensions was discussed.

⁴⁸⁴ ASC, PNF Serie II, Identical letters are in B.999 Cosenza and B. 867 Bari among others.

⁴⁸⁵ ASC, PNF Serie II, B. 999 Cosenza 19 May 1941.

⁴⁸⁶ ASC, PNF Serie II, B. 999 Cosenza, May 19, 1941.

La disposizione degli organismi di fabbrica tenuta presente la necessità di contenerla nel minimo sviluppo di superficie, per evidenti ragioni economiche, è stata basata sul concetto di concentrare nella Torre Littoria la parte più rappresentativa della “Casa del Fascio.” Pertanto, disposto nel piano rialzato della Torre l’atrio d’ingresso, si è ubicato il sacrario in asse all’ambiente (?) onde dare ad esso un posto eminente di visibilità e d’importanza estetica. La Torre Littoria, ne racchiude in modo appartato il sacrario stesso, contiene nei piani superiori l’ambiente di arengario e l’archivio del Fascio. Dalla ubicazione della torre e del Sacrario ne è conseguita la distribuzione degli ambienti richiesti che si sviluppano in corpi di fabbrica formanti una “L” offrendo la migliore condizione per successivi ampliamenti. Tale concetto planimetrico si completerebbe con una modesta ala di portico che nel collegare direttamente i due corpi di fabbrica, che circoscriverebbe degnamente l’ambiente esterno del Sacrario.⁴⁸⁷

The *Torre Littoria* also dominated the square footage of these small buildings and required the majority of funds. Most towers were made of stone, as was the *arengario* and *sacrario*, which were components of the tower. The tower’s symbolic need notwithstanding, they also served to house the *sacrario*, the balcony, the entry, the archive, and at times, water to create pressure for the bathrooms. In 1940-1941, the location of the *sacrario* changed from being required in the bottom of the tower to other locations that would make it visible from the open entry and from the exterior of the building. The rural projects with detached towers experimented with other locations for the *sacrario*, which were often placed in the open corridor between the building components. An architect who designed a rural *Casa del Fascio* in Pianura Segnalato, described how to deal with the new *sacrario* location, which was included in the PNF competition file. He wrote,

⁴⁸⁷ “Concorso per Progetti tipo di Edifici da destinarsi a “Casa del Fascio” in piccoli Centri rurali e di confine,” *Relazione Tecnica*, for Lazio region, p. 2; ACS, PNF Serie II, B. 1498.

[Translation: “the placement of the construction components, considering the need to contain it within the minimum usage of space, for obvious economic reasons, was based on the concept of concentrating on the Littoria Tower as the most representative part of the House of Fascio. For this reason, the shrine is placed in the elevated area the entrance hall intoned with the surroundings in order to convey an eminent sense of visibility and aesthetic prominence. The Tower itself, enclosing the shrine in a secluded way, contains in the upper levels the area of the Arengario (Gallery) and the Fascio Archives. From the location of the Tower and of the Shrine is derived the arrangement of the required rooms which evolve into a block of building forming an “L” offering the best conditions for future extensions. This planning concept would be fully complemented by a modest arcade wing, which, by directly connecting the two building structures, would properly circumscribe the external area of the Shrine.”]

...dal punto di vista funzionale che estetico. Planimetricamente si è disposto la torre, che è il fattore più aulico e rappresentativo, in posizione dominante creandole dinanzi uno spazio libero adeguato, che possa servire per le adunate e che permetta di abbracciare le visuali dell'insieme. Alla torre fanno capo con disposizione ad L l'ambiente degli uffici, tramezzabile in tre locali, a quello della sala della feste. Essi sono riuniti tra loro da un piccolo passaggio coperto di minore altezza,Un vestibolo coperto, chiuso sul fondo da un basso muro avvivato da un affresco ed aperto competentemente sul piazzale, riunisce la torre agli uffici e dà un nobile e comodo accesso al Sacrario ed alla Casa del Fascio.. Nello spazio racchiuso dalle due braccia di fabbricato è sistemata una pista per il ballo ed il campo per le bocce..⁴⁸⁸

A winning project for a rural *Casa del Fascio* by Mario Fagiolo demonstrated the clearly separated blocks of the *Casa del Fascio* that the Pianura Segnalato's architect described in his project description. Fagiolo designed two separate buildings – an office wing and a palestra/theater/cinè wing – only connected by a low hallway. The *torre littoria*, completely separate and quite enormous, was a five-story tall stone tower, which included the *sacrario* in its base. Fagiolo's *Casa del Fascio* building components were clad in stucco and had punched window openings. The palestra no longer had multiple exit doors, but had an ample exterior piazza [Figs. 145-146]. Fagiolo designed two other rural *Casa del Fascio*, one for Avezzano (L'Aquila) with Ing. Renato Rosa in 1940, and another in Borgo Grappa in 1942. Both *Casa del Fascio* have similar brick *torre littoria* and stone balconies, which were minimally attached to stucco-faced buildings [Figs. 147, Fig. 148].

The placement of rural *Casa del Fascio* encountered issues of siting, because the designs were created before knowing the actual site conditions. The Roman architect, “il progettista,”

⁴⁸⁸ ACS, PNF Serie II, B. 1498, *Relazione*.

[Translation: “...from an aesthetic and functional view. Planimetrically, the Tower, which is the most aulic and representative factor, is placed in a dominant position, creating in front of it an adequate open space that can be used for gatherings and allow a global view of the ensemble. At the head of the Tower, forming an "L" shape are situated the office areas, which can be subdivided into three separate units, and the festivities hall. These are connected by a small lower walkway. A covered vestibule, enclosed by a low wall enlivened by a mural and completely exposed to the open space, connects the tower with the offices and provides a convenient and dignified access to the Shrine and to the House of Fascio. In the space enclosed by the two wings of the building are situated a dancing floor and a bocce court.”]

suggested that the contractor needed to determine the wind direction before placing a new *Casa del Fascio* on a site, since the plans were given to a town without the architect's knowledge of the sun or wind orientation. Open areas around the *Casa del Fascio* were essential for these new buildings, which had minimal interior space. "Il Progettista" suggested adding plenty of flowers and gardens, as the exterior spaces were considered as the center of activity in these new PNF outposts. A space for dancing and a bocce court was suggested by the Roman architect to be included in the open air around the building.⁴⁸⁹

Casa del Fascio after the War

In June 1941, Luigi Mancini wrote two letters to the Secretary of the PNF describing his thoughts about future *Casa Littorie*. The letters focused on locating *Casa Littorie* in centers of *bonifica, minerari, industriali* and of *colonizzazione*; and suggested ideas about PNF building programs for the period "il dopo Guerra"(after the War).⁴⁹⁰ He suggested that as new *Casa del Fascio* were built, older *Casa del Fascio*, often in pre-existing structures, could be used for housing after the war.⁴⁹¹ In addition, Mancini had some ideas about how to develop future *Casa del Fascio*.

In the first letter, Mancini suggested that there would be an aesthetic advantage if, rather than building two small buildings, one for a *Fascio* and the other for a school, that the two buildings be united as one, thus making them visually grander. Mancini wrote that the new building – a *Casa del Fascio-Scuola* – would present a better architectural character "of dignità e

⁴⁸⁹ "Concorso per Progetti tipo di Edifici da destinarsi a "Casa del Fascio" in piccoli Centri rurali e di confine," *Relazione Tecnica*, for Lazio region, p. 2; ACS, PNF Serie II, B. 1498. Rome, January 18, 1941.

⁴⁹⁰ ACS, PNF, SERIE II, B. 1498, June 12, 1941.

⁴⁹¹ ACS, PNF, SERIE II, B. 1498, June 12, 1941.

di decoro.”⁴⁹² The school segment would consist of six to seven classrooms. Mancini suggested amending the Decree of May 27, 1940, to make this change. The national Italian Minister of Education was in favor of the idea, which would be handled on a case-by-case basis. Mancini suggested developing the *Casa del Fascio-Scuola* concept with a *Concorso dello Stato* [State Competition]. In a second letter regarding the combining of these two buildings, Mancini stressed the economic advantage of sharing *radiofonici* equipment and the *palestra*, which both institutions needed. Other groups, such as the GIL and OND, could share space in the building as well. Mancini wanted to add this new concept to future competitions for “Case Littorie nei piccolo centri rurali e di confine” and wanted to report this in his yearly summary, which he would present on October 29, XX (1942) from Rome.⁴⁹³

Luigi Mancini sent a six page summary of the past year’s work and for proposed future work to the Secretary of the PNF on October 29, XX (1942).⁴⁹⁴ The total expenditure currently needed was £268.021.000,00. These funds would pay for the completion of suspended work for £62.000.000,00, for small rural *Casa del Fascio* for £100.000.000,00, funds for maintenance for £8.000.000,00, new work approved by the Secretary of the PNF for £83.021.000,00, and unforeseen work for £15.000.000,00. The PNF building program needed an estimated sum of about 410 *milioni lire* to cover new work and existing work in progress. In the prior year (since October 29, 1941), Mancini listed the completed construction work as:

3 New *Sedi Federali* in Novara, Salerno, Trento
9 new GRF
45 new *Casa del Fascio*

⁴⁹² ACS, PNF, SERIE II, B. 1498, June 12, 1941.

[Translation: “of dignity and decorum”]

⁴⁹³ ACS, PNF, SERIE II, B. 1498, June 12, 1941.

[Translation: “completion of the contest of Littorie Houses in the small rural towns and border”]

⁴⁹⁴ The Fascist Calendar starts on October 29th.

Work still underway:

5 Federal Seats in Bolzano, La Spezia, Sondrio, Trieste, Littoria

3 new GRF

40 new *Case del Fascio*

In honor of the “*biennio*” (1942) the proposal for new *Case del Fascio* buildings, authorized by Mancini, included:

349 new *Case del Fascio* in small rural centers

77 existing buildings, which would be acquired or “donated”

26 New Federal seats for Agrigento, Apuania, Avellino, Bari, Beluno, Benevento, Brindisi, Bologna, Campobasso, Catanzaro, Chieti, Foggia, Genova, Gorizia, L’Aquila, Macerate, Matera, Milan, Piacenza, Perugia, Pescara, Rieti, Teramo, Torino, Verona and Viterbo

14 Federal Seats *ampliamenti* (building extension)

102 new *Sedi* “*più importanti, escluse dal programma dell’ Case dei centri rurali*”⁴⁹⁵

20 new GRF

16 GRF *ampliamenti* (building extension)

Despite the ambitious list of new work to be started in honor of 1942, Mancini wrote that the actual authorization to move ahead would be announced later. Materials needed for war were still urgent; therefore most construction projects were on hold, except for the rural town *Case del Fascio*, which were located in places where fascist support was necessary. Construction projects of minimal work were also allowed to be completed. Mancini explained,

per tutti questi lavori, l’inizio effettivo verrà tempestivamente autorizzato, sempre compatibilmente alle più importanti esigenze della Nazione in guerra: si pensa che in effetti per il momento solo le Casse del Fascio nei piccoli centri rurali, gli adattamenti degli edifici esistenti e altre costruzioni di piccola mole....potranno avere normale corso, in q?sto in questi casi si prevee l’uso di materiali completament autarchici e possibilmente locali. Per le nuove Sedi Federali, si procederà cautamente e sempre d’intesa col Ministero dei LL.PP. che dovrà, per ogni case rilasciare la deroga al divieto per le nuove costruzioni.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹⁵ ACS, PNF, SERIE II, B. 1498, June 12, 1941.

[Translation: “most important, not counting the Case del Fascio for rural areas”]

⁴⁹⁶ ACS, PNF, Serie II, B. 1498, 29 Ottobre XX, p. 3.

[Translation: The effective date to begin all these undertakings will be authorized shortly, always consistent with the more urgent needs of a nation at war: in fact we believe that, for the moment, only for the House of Fascio in small

For the projects deemed “più importanti,” Mancini wrote that it is, “sempre più e meglio si affermi che l’architettura del nostro tempo sia, anche per il future, un segno dell’epoca di Mussolini.”⁴⁹⁷

The Effect of the Competitions on the Development of the *Casa del Fascio*

The majority of architectural competitions for *Palazzi del Littorio*, *Case Littoria*, or *Case del Fascio* did not result in many actual constructions, therefore the design proposals of hundreds of architects, regardless of winning or losing a competition, were the major source of visual data for all architects designing PNF headquarters. Hundreds of *Case del Fascio* projects were permanently available for viewing in the many magazines and newspapers that published them.

In the 1920s, many competitions were organized for the urban re-planning of cities throughout Italy; new *Case del Fascio* were not generally part of the urban renewal. Instead, most *Case del Fascio* found locations in existing *palazzi* or in ordinary buildings and added signage and symbols to announce the PNF presence. In the early 1930s, national competitions for *Case del Fascio* were standard affairs for architects to obtain work and to gain notoriety from the PNF. From the 1932 student competition, to the 1940s rural *Casa del Fascio* competitions for professional architects, the development of ideas for the design of *Case del Fascio* was easily accessed by architects. The 1932 student competition provided adventurous *Casa del Fascio* solutions by suggesting large panels of glass and steel, which indicated what materials were

rural towns, modifications to the existing buildings and other small scale construction will proceed normally; in this instance we estimate usage of economic materials, possibly available locally. For the new Federal sites we will proceed with caution and always in agreement with the Department of Public Works, which will have to make an exception to the rule about new constructions.”]

⁴⁹⁷ ACS, PNF, Serie II, B. 1498, 29 Ottobre XX, p.3.

[Translation: “always more and better aligned with the architecture of our times, also for the future, as a symbol of the Mussolini era.”]

being studied inside the architecture academies. The student entries were dominated by designs with separate building components, revealing their function in their forms, rather than designs of traditional *palazzo* forms. By the 1940s, rural *Casa del Fascio* were no less modern, but appeared to be, as they were rendered in local standard materials. By the middle 1930s, Italy was filled with major national competitions for large and significant *Casa del Fascio*, as was revealed in the 1934 and 1937 *Palazzo del Littorio* competitions, when hundreds of architects competed; and were educated by one another about the various interpretations that were possible for a PNF headquarters. From 1937 until 1943, the variety of architectural solutions continued to be part of every competition. In the end, by 1943, the marker for the PNF was its *Torre Littoria*, which had grown larger than many actual *Casa del Fascio* buildings. The last competitions of the PNF focused on rural *Casa del Fascio*, where the guidelines specifically said to build the tower first and then add on the other components as money became available. The competition for the *Torre Littoria* facing *Piazza del Duomo* in Milan was a turning point, as the tower was sufficient to represent the PNF. The tower served as a marker for an exterior “House of Fascism” – which was the *piazza* – and the place to assemble to hear the PNF orator.

Chapter Four - City Case Studies in Northern, Central and Southern Regions of Italy: Milan, Arezzo, and Bari

Three Diverse Cities and the *Casa del Fascio* Program

The Technical Service Department of the Central PNF in Rome often sent out identical letters to all PNF Provincial Secretaries, however, the political message emanating from the Central PNF in Rome did not always function equally for all Italian cities. Disparities between the different regions from North to South existed long before the Fascist era, back to the time of the *Risorgimento* in 1871, if not earlier. A comparison of the PNF city framework in three diverse cities – North, Central, and South – provides information about the PNF's management of the different regions in Italy from 1922 to 1943. In addition, examining the compositional structure of the PNF's *Casa del Fascio* program in each city adds to the knowledge of the roles played by the different types of *Casa del Fascio* – including *Palazzi Littorio* and GRF buildings – within the localized environment of a city.

A criterion for the selection of the three specific cities to study was to first locate adequate source material in the ACS, which determined my selection of Milan, Arezzo, and Bari as city case studies. Each city also had to be a good representative of the northern, central or southern regions of Italy. Milan, Arezzo, and Bari were all cities, not towns; therefore, each city would receive varying levels of *Casa del Fascio*, which was comparatively analyzed in this document. Bari and Milan were placed in Category I for Federations by the PNF, despite Bari's much smaller population size. The Bari Federation had the fastest growing birthrate of any city in Italy in the late 1920s, thus the PNF included Bari in Category I, despite having the smallest population of the eight Category I cities.⁴⁹⁸ Bari was also a port city used for Italian expansion

⁴⁹⁸ The Category I cities were Bari, Florence, Genoa, Milan, Naples, Palermo, Rome and Turin. See F. Mangione, *Le Case del Fascio*, (Rome: Pubblicazioni degli Archivi di Stato, 2003), p. 179.

efforts in Africa. Category I cities would receive the largest central PNF Federation building. Arezzo was selected as a Federation III city by the PNF, but despite the lower designation, Arezzo had one of the most celebrated *Case del Fascio* in all of Italy. In addition, the Arezzo PNF had the distinction of having created the first *torre littoria*, as was reported by *LUCE* films in 1933. The Milan PNF Federation was recognized as the birthplace of fascism in *Piazza San Sepolcro*. The three cities, Milan, Arezzo, and Bari, had diverse economies, cultures, climates and terrain, which made the my analysis of their *Case del Fascio* program not a perfect case study, but the equal shadow of the central PNF in Rome was worth the investigation.

North and South Quantity Comparisons of *Case del Fascio* and GRF Buildings

The North region of Italy had the majority of *Case del Fascio* on the Italian continent by the end of the 1930s. Alessandria had the highest quantity of *Case del Fascio* at a total of 332 buildings, with Cuneo occupying 298, Bergamo with 235, Milan with 279, and Como with 228 buildings. By comparison, the South region of Italy had fewer *Case del Fascio* than the North, with Taranto occupying 31 *Case del Fascio*; other cities such as Naples had 202, Palermo had 91, and Bari had 57 buildings. The North region, overall, had a larger population than the South region, but Naples had a larger population than Como, yet had fewer *Case del Fascio*.

The quantity of GRF buildings was based on city size. Naples had 149 *Case del Fascio* and 53 GRF buildings; whereas, Como had 208 *Case del Fascio* and 20 GRF buildings. Naples would need more GRF buildings, which were buildings serving as outreach for the central Naples PNF. Como was a much smaller city, thus towns within the Como Federation would each get a single *Casa del Fascio*, therefore the demand for GRF buildings was less, since the outskirts of Como was not as immense as the outskirts of Naples. The distribution of *Casa del*

Fascio verses GRF buildings was not entirely consistent, as in Milan, which had a thriving GRF program. Milan had only 33 GRF buildings and was twice the size of Naples, which had 53 GRF buildings.

The quantities of *Case del Fascio* and population did not comparatively balance out in many cases. Local enthusiasm for the PNF and grass-root efforts to donate buildings or to join the PNF membership was stronger in the North and could have accounted for the discrepancy. Two-thirds of the Naples' *Case del Fascio* were in rented space, rather than in space owned by the local PNF, compared Como's PNF Federation, which owned fifty percent of their *Case del Fascio*. Economics also played a part in the disparity between North and South.

Milan and the Birth of Fascism

The study of *Case del Fascio* in and around Milan is significant, because Milan was the birthplace of Italian Fascism and the location of the first planned PNF headquarters building.

Milan fell to fascism before Rome and the rest of the country, as a result of being the central location for the organization and motivation of fascism. Urban centers – in particular, Milan – were cradles where fascism was initially forged and where its early ideals took shape.⁴⁹⁹

Milan was in a Category I Federation zone with a total of 279 *Case del Fascio* in its Federation zone – a combination of 246 *Case del Fascio* and 33 GRF buildings. Milan had the fourth largest quantity of PNF headquarters in Italy by the end of the 1930s.⁵⁰⁰

Approximately fifty *Case del Fascio* examples were examined in Milan for this study [Fig. 1]. A large number of *Case del Fascio* in the Milan Federation were not newly constructed,

⁴⁹⁹ Federico Caprotti, *Mussolini's Cities; Internal Colonialism in Italy, 1930-39*, Youngstown, New York: Cambria Press, 2007, p. 58.

⁵⁰⁰ See Table 1 for map with quantities of *Case del Fascio* (overlay on map by author). Alessandria was a *Federazione Categoria II* city.

but were donated or purchased to satisfy the rapid growth of PNF membership in the Milanese communities. *Casa del Fascio* located in existing buildings, offered members social programs, assistance, and enhanced recruitment for the PNF, but fell short of creating a visible PNF presence, other than with attached flags or other regalia. New *Casa del Fascio* or GRF buildings made grander statements of the PNF's national presence and were more commonly placed in prominent locations with exterior space for members to assemble outside of the building. A few of the new *Casa del Fascio* in the Milan Federation, mostly built in the 1930s, had a tower, *arengario* or balcony, and inner facilities such as a large *sala*, *palestra*, theater and/or cinema. The new *Casa del Fascio* in Milan represented a group of highly individualized architectural solutions. The newer Milanese PNF buildings, mostly GRF buildings, were located in the northwest quadrant of Milan.⁵⁰¹

Master planning efforts in Milan were dissimilar from other Italian cities in the late 1920s and early 1930s.⁵⁰² Historian Lucy M. Maulsby covered the urban strategy in *Fascism, Architecture and the Claiming of Modern Milan, 1922-1943*. Maulsby wrote that the engineer, and head of Milan's planning office, Cesare Albertini, had a strategy for designing Milan's new master plan, a result of a 1926 competition, which was ratified in 1934.⁵⁰³ The master planning strategy differed from Gustavo Giovannoni's urban clearance in Rome or Marcello Piacentini's master planning work in Rome, Bergamo and Brescia.⁵⁰⁴ The commercial character of Milan and Albertini's view that existing monuments were not worthy of preservation, led to a

⁵⁰¹ The PNF Federation Seat built in Piazza San Sepolcro was an exception.

⁵⁰² Marcello Piacentini, "Il concorso nazionale per lo studio di un progetto di piano regolatore e d'ampliamento per la città di Milano, *Architettura e Arti Decorative*, 1927, pp. 132-182.

⁵⁰³ Ing. Cesare Albertini, *Il Piano Regolatore del Centro di Milano*, (Milan: Pirola Publishing, 1931).

⁵⁰⁴ Milan master plan by Cesare Albertini, 1933 complete (ratified 1934) - work already started in early 30s

(Architect Piero Portaluppi and engineer Marco Semenza won the competition and Albertini had the task of refining it. See Lucy M. Maulsby, *Fascism, Architecture, and the Claiming of Modern Milan, 1922-1943*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014, p. 34.)

reconfiguration of the central city of Milan with a continued focus on the center, rather than the addition of whole new urban centers or satellite extensions.⁵⁰⁵ Despite the late 1934 ratification of the Milan master plan, urban construction work had already started in the early 30s in Milan.⁵⁰⁶ In addition, Milan's periphery was extended by adopting smaller nearby existing towns into the city limits, instead of developing new satellite cities. These newly adopted towns were ripe for the addition of new *Case del Fascio* or GRF buildings to make them a part of the PNF network of Milan.⁵⁰⁷

Maulsby outlined the early 1920s of the PNF in Milan and the sequence of spaces used by Mussolini in the early formation of the Fascist Party. Maulsby wrote that in the early 1920s, Mussolini had been working on the formation of the PNF from his office at the newspaper, *Il Popolo d'Italia*, on *Via Paolo da Cannobio*. Mussolini moved, in 1920, to rented rooms on *Via Monte Pietà*, then to a larger headquarters building on *Via San Marco*, at the corner of *Via Borgonuova*.⁵⁰⁸ The building at *Via San Marco* contained the PNF groups of the *Avanguardia Giovanile* (PNF Youth Group) and the *Circolo Universitario* (PNF University Club), a reading room, a fencing hall and a large meeting hall, among other spaces.⁵⁰⁹

In 1923, the Milan Provincial PNF purchased a *palazzo* on *Corso Venezia*, an elite location on a wide street, for the Provincial PNF headquarters until 1927. The PNF *palazzo* was renovated to include a concert hall, restaurant, fencing hall, library and a room for the Institute of

⁵⁰⁵ Lucy M. Maulsby, *Fascism, Architecture, and the Claiming of Modern Milan, 1922-1943*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), pp. 31-35.

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁷ Boundaries of Milan extended September 2, 1923 by Mangiagalli (13 nearby towns: Affori, Baggio, Chiaravalle Milanese, Crescenzago, Gorla-Precotto, Creco Milanese, Lambrate, Musocco, Niguarda, Trenno, and Vigentino; 23 December, 1923: Ronchetto sul Naviglio, Lorenteggio) from Reggiori, *Milano*, p. 45-6 and Dario Franchi and Rosa Chiumeo, *Urbanistica a Milano in Regime Fascista* (Florence: La Nuova Italiana Editrice, 1972), p. 5. Noted in L. Malsby, p. 30.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

High Culture.⁵¹⁰ The *palazzo* was a four-story symmetrical stone building with a central balcony and 125 rooms [Fig. 2].⁵¹¹

One of the first official buildings for the PNF in Milan was established by the *Sciesa* Group in 1922. The group took its name from Amatore (Antonio) Sciesa, who had been executed by the Austrians in 1851 for distributing revolutionary material.⁵¹² The first *Sciesa* PNF headquarters was located in rented space in *Palazzo Senato* on *Via Senato* (to the northeast of the center of Milan), near a *piazza* from 1922 to 1923 [Fig. 3]. An article in *Il Popolo d'Italia* noted positively that the PNF headquarters was in a central location and not encroached by tight streets.⁵¹³ The PNF's association with a neighborhood of stately *palazzi*, the gain of visibility within a central part of the growing city of Milan, and access to a plaza for mass rallies accomplished the PNF's political and physical needs. The *Palazzo Senato* was a multi-storied building with a centrally located balcony.

The *Sciesa* Group had acquired a new PNF headquarters building on *Via Silvio Pellico* in 1923, which Mussolini inaugurated.⁵¹⁴ Mussolini's speech at the inauguration was significant because, as Maulsby noted, the speech "represents Mussolini's only documented commentary of the architectural form and character of *case del fascio*," where Mussolini said that *Case del Fascio* should be "house[s] of beauty" that "evoke emotions of strength, of power, of beauty, and of love."⁵¹⁵ The *Sciesa* group made several moves to other buildings after their first acquisition

⁵¹⁰ Ibid, p. 43.

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

⁵¹² Maulsby, p. 41.

⁵¹³ Ibid.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid, p. 180.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid, p. 44, p. 180.

at *Via Silvio Pellico*, to *Via Santo Spirito*, and then to *Palazzo Erba-Odescalchi* on *Via Unione 5* [Figs. 4-5].⁵¹⁶

Other significant PNF building efforts followed the example of the *Sciesa* Group by other neighborhood fascist groups to establish their own *Casa del Fascio*. The *Baracca* Group's members, Paolo and Vittorio Mezzanotte, designed their own group's PNF headquarters in 1925 on *Via Boninsegna* [Fig. 6]. Paolo was an architect and engineer and was said to have donated his professional services to the local PNF.⁵¹⁷ The *Baracca Casa del Fascio* was a symmetrical two-story building with a rusticated base, a central entry and balcony, topped by a central pediment. A modern GIL building was added between 1937 and 1940 by architect Piero Portaluppi to the neighboring site, which was a former garden [Fig. 7]. The later addition of the GIL building to the *Casa del Fascio* building demonstrates the dramatic change that occurred in architectural aesthetics between the two decades. Two *fasci* ornamented the entry portal of the *Baracca* Group's PNF headquarters, which identified the building as a *Casa del Fascio*. The *Baracca Casa del Fascio* housed the OND, the ONB, a gymnasium, a billiard table, a library, a lounge and a hall.⁵¹⁸ The *Casa del Fascio* was completed in 1926 and served as a model for other *Casa del Fascio*, including the new PNF Provincial headquarters, also designed by Paolo Mezzanotte.⁵¹⁹

Paolo Mezzanotte designed the PNF Provincial Federation headquarters between 1926 and 1927 on *Via Nirone*, which would replace the PNF Provincial Federation building on *Corso Venezia* that the Milan PNF had outgrown [Fig. 8]. A site for the PNF Provincial headquarters

⁵¹⁶ Fausto Sparacino, *I Gruppi Rionale Fascisti di Milano*, (Milan: Ritter, 2013) p. 274.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 45-47. See Maulsby, p. 47 for more specific information about the *Baracca* Group.

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

was selected by purchasing four residential buildings on *Via Nirone* (later named *Via Fascio*), which included an open space in front of the site.⁵²⁰ The new PNF Provincial headquarters was located in a prominent part of the city that was undergoing redesign.⁵²¹ Mario Giampaoli, a *Sansepolcristo* and participant in the March on Rome, was named as the Federal Secretary of the Milan PNF Federation from 1926 to 1928.^{522 523}

The new PNF Provincial headquarters was a *palazzo* with a neoclassical Milanese façade. The façade was four stories with three large openings symmetrically placed within the stone base of the building. The upper façade, including the four pilasters surrounding the balcony, was made of brick, but the structure was reinforced concrete. A simple triangular pediment capped the central composition. Two obelisks with *fascies* and militaristic shields decorated the sides of the façade. Maulsby noted that the traditional façade, with the added symbols of fascism, helped the new PNF organization to fit in with existing architectural norms.⁵²⁴ The architecture of the PNF building would not offend the social elite, and at the same time, the added symbols would speak of the forward momentum of the PNF.⁵²⁵

The plan by Mezzanotte was a precursor of other *Casa del Fascio* designs in the Milan region, including Terragni's *Casa del Fascio* in the Como Federation, whose design started in 1932, and the GRF "*Crespi*" building on *Corso Sempione* in Milan, which was built from 1937 to 1939 [Figs. 9-11]. The symmetrical exterior of Mezzanotte's façade disguised a less symmetrical interior; however, the central hierarchy of spaces was maintained [Fig. 12]. Entry

⁵²⁰ Ibid.

⁵²¹ Ibid., p. 50.

⁵²² Ibid.

⁵²³ Sansepolcristi were participants in the foundation of *Fasci Italiani di Combattimento* on March 23, 1919. 147 people were considered Sansepolcristi.

⁵²⁴ Maulsby, p. 53.

⁵²⁵ Ibid.

into the Mezzanotte design was through two layers of columns before arriving at a two-story internal skylit space, with an overhanging mezzanine floor. The internal space was defined by columns, which contributed to an open appearance, with ample room for expansion if needed for large groups. The second floor had a *Sacrario* (memorial), which was known as the first example of the inclusion of a memorial to the “Fallen.”⁵²⁶ The PNF Provincial headquarters, designed by Mezzanotte, only served its purpose for three years, from 1928 to 1931. The headquarters moved to *Palazzo Besana* in *Piazza Belgiojoso* and remained there for the next nine years, from 1931 to 1940 [Fig. 13].⁵²⁷ The inadequate size of Mezzanotte’s previous design for the *Via Nirone* PNF Headquarters was cited as the reason for the move to *Palazzo Bresana*.⁵²⁸

The addition of a bronze *fascio* and PNF sign turned the majestic *Palazzo Bresana* into the new home for the Milan PNF Provincial Federation. The location of the PNF Provincial headquarters in the historic *Piazza Belgiojoso* was significant, because Mussolini had spoken to early supporters in the *piazza* and the location was a favored meeting point for PNF rallies.⁵²⁹ The interior of *Palazzo Bresana* was renovated to meet the demands of the ever-expanding PNF program. There were meeting rooms, an entry atrium, a memorial chapel, and a lecture hall for 1,000 people. Similarly, the PNF Provincial headquarters in Rome was in a significant *palazzo*, the *Palazzo Braschi* from 1927 to 1943, which faced the *Piazza Navona* and the *Corso Vittorio Emanuele* [Fig. 14].⁵³⁰ In 1940, the Milan Provincial headquarters moved again to a new building and partial renovation in the heart of the Milan in *Piazza Sepolcro*, which was the birthplace of the PNF. The *Palazzo Sede del Fascio Primogenito*, as the Milan Provincial

⁵²⁶ Ibid, p. 57.

⁵²⁷ Belgiojoso is also spelled Belgioioso.

⁵²⁸ Ibid, p. 58.

⁵²⁹ The Belgioioso family was a well-established aristocratic family.

⁵³⁰ Ibid, p. 63.

headquarters was called, was designed by Pietro Portaluppi in 1936 [Fig. 15]. Portaluppi had also designed the GIL extension to the *Casa del Fascio* for the Baracca Group on *Via Boninsegna* in 1939 and the GRF “L. Montegani” on *Via Tabacchi*.⁵³¹

Beyond the major Milan Provincial seat, there were thirty-three GRF buildings scattered throughout the city of Milan. GRF buildings were generally given a name of one of the “Fallen” of the *Rivoluzione Fascista*, from a list of twenty-eight men from the province of Milan, or named after a hero from earlier battles [Fig. 16]. Benito Mussolini, Arnaldo Mussolini, and Gabriele d’Annunzio were also the names of three GRF buildings in Milan. There were several new designs for GRF buildings that deserve study.

The new GRF “*Mario Asso*,” designed by architect Cairoli, embodied many of the typical features of *Casa del Fascio* from the late 1930s, such as a wide *torre littoria*, which had internal rooms, and an *arengario*. The 1938 GRF “*Mario Asso*” was located on *Via Jacopino da Tradate* on a corner site [Fig. 17]. The *torre littoria* of the GRF faced the corner, which was oriented toward a public park, giving the PNF’s headquarters building great visibility [Fig. 18]. The *torre littoria* was five to six stories tall, not including the flagpole at its top. The tower and base of the GRF “*Mario Asso*” was clad with a rough stone. The base of the tower contained large round portal windows, similar to the *Casa del Fascio* in *Borgo Segezia*, also designed in the late 1930s. The side elevations on both streets were brick covered, which conveyed a strong horizontal character, with large square window openings that were framed on all four edges with white travertine. The main façade included a slight curve in plan near the tower. The entry was defined by a two-story glass opening flanked by two stone columns, and a wide stone entry stair. The U-shaped stone *arengario*, which protruded from the front of the tower, was accessible from the top

⁵³¹ Two different fascist groups used the GRF Montegani building. The Gruppo Pozzi was present in 1941. See Sparacino, p. 213 and p. 255.

of the main entry stairs. The apartment buildings on the sides of PNF headquarters were two and three stories tall, except at the corners of the block, where the apartment buildings were five stories tall. The mass of the GRF “*Mario Asso*” fit into the neighborhood, while the tower dominated over the area. In 2015, the GRF was a police station, which was the common fate of most *Casa del Fascio* in Milan after WWII [Fig. 19].

The GRF “*Loris Socrate*” was located on *Piazzale Santorre Santarosa* in an existing building, a former *Comune* of the Musocco District. The GRF building was situated at a transportation point on the outskirts of the city to the northwest of central Milan [Fig. 20]. The GRF building, made of stone with traditional ornamentation and a heavily rusticated base, had a symmetrical façade with a central balcony. The building had a slight curve, which followed the circular plan of the urban *piazza*. A monument to the WWI “*Fallen*” of the Musocco District in Milan was inaugurated in 1924. The monument dominated the center of the *circular piazza*.

The GRF “*Edoardo Crespi*,” built from 1937- 1939, was architecturally the most adventurous of the GRF buildings in Milan. The “*Crespi*” Group began their fascist meetings in a building on *Via Revere*, No. 8, through 1938 [Fig. 21]. The new GRF “*Crespi*” was located on a major thoroughfare northwest of central Milan [Fig. 22]. The new PNF headquarters was designed by architects Gianni Angelini, Giuseppe Calderara, and Tito B. Varisco as the result of a winning a design competition for the site.⁵³² The GRF “*Crespi*” building was designed and built after Terragni’s *Casa del Fascio* in Como, which does not support the general thesis by several architectural historians that buildings designed after Italy’s “*Declaration of the Empire*” were more traditional in character. Plan layout and the façade grid of GRF “*Crespi*” follow Terragni’s earlier example in Como, as well as the *Casa Rustica*, also designed by Terragni with

⁵³² *Architettura*, September-October, 1941 and *Costruzione-Casabella*, May, 1940.

Pietro Lingeri, which was located two blocks away on the other side of the street. The *Casa Rustica* was built between 1933 to 1935, and although it was an apartment building, it had a similar entry vestibule as the GRF “Crespi” building, and an “open courtyard” concept. The GRF “Crespi” building faced the double tree-lined street with the main façade, a tower and a balcony. The tower and base of the building were clad in a rough gray stone. Both faces of the building and the balcony were clad in a white stone, which contrasted with the darker gray stone of the tower. The front façade was positioned in front of the tower and the balcony appeared as a horizontal band that slipped out from the gridded façade to curve out beyond the tower [Fig. 23]. The entry to the GRF “Crespi” was on the opposite side of the tower, thus allowing the tower to be visibly solid on the corner of the site. A series of glass doors opened into the main hall, which displayed a large mural on the opposite inner wall within the two-story light-filled space [Fig. 24]. Open hallways facing into the hall were on the other three sides of the inner hall. A *palestra* occupied a large space at the rear of the site, which was articulated on the side elevation as a two-story volume.

The GRF “B. Mussolini,” designed by Mario Bacciocchi and built from 1936 to 1937, was located at the corner of *Via Ceresio* on a highly visible site across from the main entrance to the *Cimitero Monumental* (1863). In addition, the GRF “B. Mussolini” was located in the same neighborhood as the church of *St. Antonio di Padua*. The GRF building was designed as a fully brick-clad building consisting of a geometrical façade with a gridded pattern of windows on one side and no openings on the other side, except for an entrance [Figs. 25-26]. The original design for the GRF “Mussolini” had no windows above the entrance door, but had a relief sculpture in white stone. The *torre littoria* was situated on a prominent corner facing *Cimitero Monumental*’s entrance. The *torre littoria* was one of the tallest towers in Milan with a height

twice the height of the main façade, with an additional flagpole at the top. The cemetery entrance was clad with stripes of white and “terracotta” colored marble, but the adjoining walls of the cemetery were made of the same brick as the GRF “B. Mussolini.” The brick in Milan was generally a short brick (not a Roman brick) measuring 6 x 12 x 24 centimeters. The GRF “B. Mussolini” was near to an old brick city wall, as if the PNF headquarters were a continuation of the existing fabric of the urban plan and a gatehouse for Milan.

The GRF “Antonio Cantore” was located near one of the stone gatehouses in Milan on *Piazza Generale Cantore* and was designed before 1932 with a stone arched entryway [Fig. 27]. The GRF was constructed earlier than many other PNF headquarters in Milan and did not have a *torre littoria*. GRF “Cantore” was inaugurated on October 28, 1932. The building was massive and contained four floors of offices, a large assembly space, and had access to a large urban *piazza* [Fig. 28].

The GRF “*Fabio Filzi*,” built from 1936 to 1938, was architecturally unique compared to other *Case del Fascio* in Milan and in Italy. The group “Filzi” was located in a modest pitched roof building until 1938 [Fig. 29]. The new building was designed by Eugenio Faludi and was originally planned as a square plan, which was extended to form a larger rectangular plan with the longest face on its front façade [Fig. 30]. The GRF was four stories high and did not include a tower, however, the stone relief and balcony added a vertical emphasis similar to a tower, which was embedded into the strong rectangular brick block. The relief sculpture was dominated by three men holding *fasci* walking toward the entry [Fig. 31]. The front façade was a series of repetitive windows on four floors. The side elevation of the building was visible from the side of the train station and contained a *palestra* at the top and a grand theater/cinema at the bottom, which opened through 18 doors directly to the street [Fig. 32].

On September 6, 1937, engineer Nicoli Tullio sent a Technical Report from Rome to the Federation of Milan in regard to the new GRF “Filzi” building.⁵³³ Tullio reported that the building would cost a total of £1.650.000,00, which included the land and the furniture. Tullio wrote that the GRF “Filzi” project had merit and was approved by the PNF. Tullio requested that the *Casa del Fascio* project maintain a spirit of “Modernità” (Modernity) and the character of “Italianità” (Italian-ness).⁵³⁴ Tullio added in an underlined section of the approval letter that the construction for the new GRF could not use ferro (iron).

Casa del Fascio, not GRF buildings, located beyond the city of Milan, but still in the Milan Federation, were given similar critiques by the PNF Technical Service Department in Rome. On September 20, 1938, the local PNF group in the town of Codogno (southeast of Milan) received an approval from Rome for the construction of new *Casa Littoria* [Fig. 33]. The approval letter noted, “...conferendo ad essi il carattere di modernità, sia mantenuto, specialmente nelle parti decorative, il richiamo alla romanità.”⁵³⁵ The report included notes about the orientation of the new building toward a new *Piazza dell’Impero* in Codogno and that the tower needed to be constructed with concrete and clad in brick [Fig. 34]. Notes about restrictions regarding the use of metal, particularly about the use of iron, were in most ACS PNF building files from 1937 to 1943.⁵³⁶

In March of 1938, the *Gruppo di Rionali* of “Filzi” wrote directly to Benito Mussolini, “DUCE d’ Italia.”⁵³⁷ The *Gruppo* “Filzi” reported that the Pirelli Company would be

⁵³³ Nicoli Tullio, letter from Rome, September 6, 1937. ACS PNF Serie II, B. 1200.

⁵³⁴ Ibid.

⁵³⁵ [Translation: “giving them the character of modernity, is maintained, particularly in the decorative pieces, the reference to the Roman world”]

⁵³⁶ ACS PNF Serie II, B. 1191, Cormanano.

⁵³⁷ ACS PNF Serie II, B. 1200.

contributing £1.500.000,00 to the construction of the new *Casa del Fascio*, as would several other companies such as Breda, Stigler, Lepetit-Ledoga, and Franzi. On May 16, 1938, a list of incoming money for the new building was issued by *Gruppo “Filzi.”* The list included the donations from the various companies, anticipated rent from the theater at £30.000,00 for one year and from the bar at £10.000,00 for one year, anticipated money for inauguration tickets for 600 people at £50,00 each and other minor contributions.⁵³⁸

Several GRF buildings were sited next to community churches in Milan. The GRF “*Guglielmo Oberdan*” was located on *via Cadamosto* and was an example of careful site selection. The new GRF “*Oberdan*” building, built as a symmetrical *palazzo* with a central balcony, was adjacent to a major church and *piazza*. The new GRF was in clear view of the open *piazza* in front of the church. Both the church and the building were clad in similar stone and stucco [Figs. 35-36]. The GRF “*Francesco Baracca*” was located on the private street, *Via Privata Duccio di Boninsegna* No. 21, and was similarly near to a large church with a *campanile*. The GRF “*Augusto Beretta*” fronted a *piazza* at *Via Forze Armate*, which was nearby a large church as well [Fig. 37]. GRF “*Augusto Beretta*” was occupied by a police station in 2015 [Fig. 38].

The Group “*Montegani*” was originally located on *Via De Sanctis*, No. 11, in Milan until 1937. The new GRF “*Lodovico Montegani*” building was constructed on *Via Tabacchi*, a wide street with a deep sidewalk [Fig. 39]. The GRF was designed by architect Piero Portaluppi and was a mixture of architectural languages. The main building was a stucco-clad block with horizontal windows, which wrapped the corners of the building. The entry had an implied tower that morphed into an *altana* (roof deck) above the roof. The tower included portal windows. The

⁵³⁸ ACS PNF Serie II, B. 1200.

balcony faced into the side street, making the actual front of the building ambiguous. The left side of the building had a stone base with two attached *fasci* symbols and large square windows. A setback on the upper floor had a row of arched windows. Similar to many other GRF buildings, The GRF “Montegani” was a police station in 2015 [Fig. 40].

Several other planned GRF designs did not get constructed because of the war efforts in the early 1940s. GRF “*Piave*,” designed in 1941 by Architects Alberto Alpago Novello and Ottavio Cabiati, was a large brick building with a tower rivaling the size of the *torre littoria* of the San Sepolcro *Sede* [Fig. 41]. In 1939, architect G. Nerlo designed the GRF “*Indomita-Bernini*,” on a corner site. The corner stone entry was designed as a short tower with a balcony [Fig. 42]. Both buildings had numerous repetitive office windows, which reflected the many programs that the PNF sponsored in the early 1940s.

The PNF Federation headquarters in *Piazza S. Sepolcro*, designed by Architect Pietro Portaluppi, was the final home for Milan’s Federal Seat. Mussolini founded the PNF in 1919 in *Palazzo Castani*, which was located in *Piazza San Sepolcro*. Portaluppi began the design of the new PNF Provincial headquarters between 1935 and 1936, which included a restructuring of the nearby medieval streets. Noteworthy buildings surrounded *Piazza S. Sepolcro* and the “new” *Palazzo Littorio* faced the Church of San Sepolcro, which had two towers [Fig. 43]. Portaluppi’s initial designs showed variations of taller symmetrical extensions of the *Palazzo Castani* aesthetic to a modern building with horizontal windows and a tower that embraced the lower existing *palazzo* [Fig. 44]. Documents and drawings in the ACS PNF file showed numerous studies of internal spatial arrangements for the various PNF programs to be housed in the joint buildings [Fig. 45]. The final building, occupied by 1940, included an eight-story stone tower

with eighteen windows, a balcony and a belfry. The tower dominated the *piazza* and the views into the *piazza* were coordinated with new building's design [Fig. 46].

Milan's Provincial headquarters, *Case del Fascio*, and GRF buildings had some distinctions not strongly represented in the same PNF structures in Arezzo or Bari. Milan's *Case del Fascio* often followed the *palazzo* plan, with a large inner space. Block sizes accounted for the need for inner "courtyard" spaces, as well as the desire of the PNF to be in a building of distinction, such as a *palazzo*. More new buildings were constructed in Milan than in the Arezzo or Bari Federations. The three types of *Case del Fascio* built in the late 1930s, in Milan, were modern and unornamented. The *Casa del Fascio* buildings in Milan generally lacked the addition of large PNF symbols.

The city hierarchy of PNF headquarters in Milan was consistent with other cities throughout Italy, with the central Provincial headquarters located in a noble *palazzo* in the early years, advancing to a modern building with a tall tower in the later years before 1943. GRF buildings were characteristically scattered around the periphery and *Case del Fascio* were located in the far-flung towns [Fig. 47]. Both GRF headquarters and *Case del Fascio* in Milan are evidence of the countless designs that were called PNF headquarters buildings.

Arezzo and the Medieval *Comune* and Tower

Arezzo proved significant as the selected city in the central zone of Italy for the study of the *Casa del Fascio* building. The Arezzo PNF had boasted of creating the first *torre littoria* in Italy in 1933. In addition, the region of Tuscany provided the "medieval town hall" as an urban and architectural model for the new *Casa del Fascio* building. The medieval town hall, with a *piazza*, an inner courtyard plan, a speaking platform, balcony or *arengario*, and an urban tower was an apt example for the designers of *Case del Fascio*. Furthermore, Tuscany had a large

majority of fascists in the early years of the PNF formation, which made the region around Arezzo an appropriate part of the country to examine from 1922 to 1943.

As early as May 1922, a group of 411 fascists from a total of 2,129 fascists in Italy were from the Tuscan region. After 1922, the percentage of fascists in Tuscany remained between 1/5th and 1/6th of the total number of Fascists in the whole country.⁵³⁹ In Tuscany, the largest expansions of membership happened in two droves, one in April and May of 1921, and then in late 1922. In one month alone in 1921, the number of fascists in the province of Arezzo rose from 19 to 58, then late in 1922 from 1,403 to 7,000; in the province of Florence the number of fascists rose from 39 to 133 in 1921, then late in 1922 the number of fascists rose from 6,353 to 20,880; in the province of Lucca the number of fascists rose from 15 to 36, then from 1,901 to 4,159; in the province of Pisa the number of fascists rose from 41 to 49, then from 2,548 to 5,421.⁵⁴⁰

Tuscan fascists had a distinct disposition. There were distinctions made in numerous histories regarding the “*fascisti cittadini*” (city fascists) and the “*fascisti rurali*” (country fascists) and many of the Tuscan strongholds were in the rural farmlands, as compared to the more industrialized areas of the north of Italy.⁵⁴¹ The early formation of fascism in the Tuscan region did originate from the Florentine area, with a particularly “leftist” character in the regions of Arezzo, Siena, and Pisa.⁵⁴² The fascist disposition that developed in Tuscany was considered militaristic compared to other regions in Italy.

⁵³⁹ “Il Partito Fascista,” *La Toscana nel regime fascista (1922-1939)*, Convegno di studi promosso dall’Unione Regionale delle Province Toscane, dalla Provincia di Firenze e dall’Istituto Storico per la Resistenza in Toscana, Firenze, Palazzo Riccardi, May 23-24, 1969, Leo S. Olschki Editore-Firenze, p. 59.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid. P. 60.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid, p. 61.

⁵⁴² Ibid, p.62- 64.

In the fortified walled-city of Arezzo, the PNF established their presence with a *Casa del Fascio*, a *Casa della GIL* (new building) and a GRF named “*Aldo Roselli*”.⁵⁴³ On the outskirts of the central city of Arezzo and throughout the nearby region, at least fifty *Casa del Fascio* were planned [Fig. 48]. The planning included discussions, mostly documented in letters between the local fascist groups with offers of land and/or buildings, the Secretary of the PNF of Arezzo, and the national Secretary of the PNF in Rome. An example from the Arezzo PNF Federation of the typical acquisition for land or buildings for a PNF headquarters was captured in a letter from 1937. Giovanni Marinelli, the Federal PNF Secretary, responded on July 6, 1937 to a note from June 30, 1937, regarding the acceptance of land in Monte Sopra Rodine from Signora Adele for the construction of a *Sede Littoria*.⁵⁴⁴ Adele wrote a letter by hand later, on November 20, 1939, to the Secretary of the PNF in Rome about the contribution of her land, her admiration of *Il Duce*, and the desire to construct a *Casa del Fascio*.⁵⁴⁵

The Federal Seat for the PNF headquarters in Arezzo was situated in an existing building from 1934-1943, called the *Palazzo Camaiani-Albergotti*, a fourteenth-century building, which was the *Cassa di Risparmio* (Savings Bank) from 1901-1928.⁵⁴⁶ The PNF headquarters was located in the heart of the medieval city behind the main *piazza* in Arezzo, near the cathedral and the house of Petrarch [Fig. 49]. The building was a four-story *palazzo* with an adjacent

⁵⁴³ Aldo Roselli was “a young Aretine soldier killed at the battle of Groizia”. A monument was dedicated to the soldier, which was designed by Castellucci, the architect of the renovations of the Sede Federale of Arezzo. D. Medina Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected: Architecture, Spectacle, and Tourism in Fascist Italy*, p. 161.

⁵⁴⁴ Letter from Giovanni Marinelli to Giannino Romualdi from Arezzo, July 6, 1937. ACS, PNF Serie II, B. 844, Monte Sopra Rodine. (Adele’s last name was illegible.)

⁵⁴⁵ Letter to Secretario del PNF Roma from Adele ----, Monte Sopra Rodine, November 20, 1939. ACS, PNF Serie II, B. 844, Monte Sopra Rodine. (Adele’s last name was illegible.)

⁵⁴⁶ ACS, PNF, Serie II, B. 844, Arezzo.

crenelated tower called the *Torre della Bigazza* [Fig. 50].⁵⁴⁷ It was typical for the PNF leaders to select a noble building in the city center for the Federal Seat of the PNF, for the rapid establishment of the Party. A quickly established PNF headquarters in an existing building would provide immediate services for the growing number of fascist members. In contrast to constructing a new PNF headquarters building, an existing structure of merit would create a sense of permanence and stature for the PNF. Unique in the acquisition of *Palazzo Camaiani-Albergotti* for the new PNF headquarters in Arezzo was the adjacency of a medieval tower, which was not a normal component of a PNF Federal Seat.

Late in the 1930s, the national PNF revisited the status of existing PNF Federation headquarters to review the quality and spatial constraints within the buildings, which resulted in the design of newer facilities for many PNF Federation headquarters. Newly designed buildings would accommodate the growing programs of the PNF and would provide interior and exterior space that the older *palazzi* could not provide. A *raccomandata* (registered letter) from Luigi Mancini, the head of the Technical Services Department of the PNF, was sent from Rome, in February 1942, which noted that several cities – Arezzo, Perugia, Abetone, Ferrara, Lucca, Burano and Rieti – were being discussed as candidates for new *Palazzi del Littorio* by the “technical-artistic arm” of the PNF.⁵⁴⁸ In regard to Arezzo, the *Consultore*, E. C. Oppo, issued a report in December 1941 prior to the 1942 registered letter. Oppo noted that the new PNF Federal Seat being planned for Arezzo was too “sober” for the intentioned grandness and importance of the PNF Federation of Arezzo. Oppo added that the design for Arezzo should be

⁵⁴⁷ Archivio Storico Fotografico di Arezzo, Schede Fotografia 530; ID 04.530 “Corso Vittorio Emanuele”; info@fotoantiquaria.com.

⁵⁴⁸ Raccomandata from Il Segretario Federale, Capo dei Servizi Tecnici del PNF, Luigi Mancini, Roma, February 27, 1942, XX, ACS, PNF Serie II, B. 847, Arezzo. The “technical-artistic arm” was not often noted in the PNF archival material.

brought more in line with the elegance of the city.⁵⁴⁹ Arezzo's history with the PNF and building acquisition or new construction was indicative of the process of obtaining a PNF headquarters building in most Italian cities. The local PNF Federation would obtain an existing *palazzo* in the center of the city in the 1920s or early 1930s; plans for a new building would be done by the late 1930s for a new building in a new area of the city, which was not directly in the center. The funds and character of the design would often be discussed by the national PNF for a year or two. The end result for many cities would be that they had no new PNF Provincial headquarters building by 1942-1943, due to the war and the late planning of the PNF headquarters during the last years of the Fascist Regime.

The first PNF headquarters in Arezzo was occupied after modest renovations and adornments, which were necessary to transform the *Palazzo Camaiani-Albergotti* into a Federal PNF building. In anticipation of its inauguration, the building was quickly occupied, which was documented in the local papers. The new *Palazzo del Littorio* was named "Arnaldo Mussolini" after Mussolini's deceased brother and inaugurated by the Vice-Secretary of the PNF, Arturo Marpicati.⁵⁵⁰ One novelty for the event was the creation of a new bell, called the "*Campana Littoria*," for the tower. The bell was reported to be the largest bell created during the Fascist Era and was celebrated during its installation in the tower [Fig. 51].⁵⁵¹ In February 1933, the PNF Federation in Arezzo received the price for the "sopraelevazione della Torre e innalzamento della Campana" for the sum of £48.379,00, which included the bell, plus the electrical and

⁵⁴⁹ Consulta Tecnico Artistica del 22/12/XX from Il consultore, E.C. Oppo, dated December 21, 1941, XX, ACS, PNF Serie II, Arezzo, B. 847. (Oppo was referring to the *Palazzo del Littorio* designed by Ubaldo Cassi in 1939.)

⁵⁵⁰ D. Medina Lasansky notes that Achille Starace attended the inauguration in *The Renaissance Perfected: Architecture, Spectacle, and Tourism in Fascist Italy*, p. 160.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

mechanical systems needed for the bell's operation.⁵⁵² The adornment of the medieval tower, which was adjacent to the existing *palazzo*, followed the “*disposizione impartita*” (advised regulations) from Achille Starace, who emphasized the importance of towers for PNF headquarters.⁵⁵³ The tower in Arezzo was discussed in D. Medina Lasansky's book, *The Renaissance Perfected: Architecture, Spectacle, and Tourism in Fascist Italy*, as one of six towers undergoing modifications in Arezzo in the 1930s. Three of the Arezzo towers were restored and/or heightened to enhance the scenographic aspects of the main *piazza* of the city to attract tourists.⁵⁵⁴ The PNF tower was extended to a height of 105 feet.⁵⁵⁵ The architect Giuseppe Castellucci was responsible for the urban redesign and restoration of existing buildings within the city, which was noted in the 1937 periodical, *L'Illustrazione Toscana*, as creating the most “characteristic [city] and suggestive of Italy” and a superb Tuscan example.⁵⁵⁶ The PNF tower was, “rededicated as a memorial to three young Aretine soldiers killed in battle.”⁵⁵⁷ “The tower

⁵⁵² [Translation: “raising of the Tower and raising of the Bell”]

⁵⁵³ Letter from Il Segretario Federale of Arezzo, Giannino Romualdi to Giovanni Marinelli, Segretario Amministrativo del PNF in Rome, ACS, PNF Serie II, February 17, 1933, XI. B. 847 Arezzo.

References to Starace's comments are also found in the following:

Lucy M. Maulsby, *Fascism, Architecture, and the claiming of Modern Milan, 1922-1943*: “Indeed, in 1932 Starace issued a decree that all new case del fascio should be equipped with bell towers.” 20th footnote: (Emilio, Gentile, “Fascism as Political Religion,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 25, nos.2-3, 1990, p. 240)

Enrico Pietrogrande, *L'Opera di Quirino De Giorgio*, p. 397 (footnote no. 5: L. Di Nucci, Voce, Casa del Fascio, in V. De Grazia, S. Luzzatto (a cura di), *Dizionario del fascismo*, vol. 1, Torino, Giulio Einaudi editore, 2002, p. 255.)

“Achille Starace” in www.thule-italia.net/fascismo/starace.html

“Going toward the People, 1933” by Achille Starace, in Marla Stone, *The Fascist Revolution in Italy*, Boston: Bedford /St. Martin's, 2013. In discussing the achievements of the OND Starace notes “bring them back to the glorious and sweet traditions of their people...in a religious procession...or in a churchyard guarded by a noisy bell tower, ever calling to the faithful,” p. 88.

⁵⁵⁴ D. Medina Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected: Architecture, Spectacle, and Tourism in Fascist Italy*. (Penn State University Press, 2005), p. 159.

⁵⁵⁵ D. Medina Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected: Architecture, Spectacle, and Tourism in Fascist Italy*, (Penn State University Press, 2005), p. 160.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

quickly gained fame throughout Italy as a monument to the Fascist Party cause. The Arezzo tower was quickly termed Italy's first *Torre Littoria*.^{558 559} The newly bronzed bell, adorned with engravings of the "Fallen," arrived with great fanfare to be installed in the *Torre Littoria*.

The addition of the *torre littoria* as a component of the *Casa del Fascio* building has been discussed in many histories of fascism or Italian architectural history of the 1930s. Lasansky noted that "it is clear that by 1933 Arezzo had already laid the foundation for *littorio* rhetoric. More precisely, Arezzo's newly designated House of Fascism legitimized the use of the medieval tower type to symbolize the PNF."⁵⁶⁰ The national *Palazzo del Littorio* competition for Rome in 1934 had been credited by historians, Lasansky wrote, with developing the *littorio* rhetoric.⁵⁶¹ However, less than one third of the entries had any semblance of a tower, and a tower was not requested in the 1934 *bando del concorso*. A tower was requested in the second phase of the Rome competition in 1937. The 1934 competitors were dissuaded to let any design exceed the height of the *Basilica of Maxentius* or offend the *Torre dei Conti*, which was an existing tower already on the competition site in Rome. The 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* scheme designed for Rome, by the final winners of a second phase in 1937, Enrico Del Debbio, Arnaldo Foschini, and Vittorio Morpurgo, proposed a *Palazzo del Littorio* in 1934 with no tower, except in their version "B" solution [Figs. 52-53].⁵⁶² Mussolini's own nearby headquarters in *Palazzo Venezia* was a more appropriate "medieval tower" precedent for architects designing *Casa del*

⁵⁵⁸ D. Medina Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected: Architecture, Spectacle, and Tourism in Fascist Italy*. (Penn State University Press, 2005), p. 159.

⁵⁵⁹ LUCE Film, March, 1933, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CXBjaiaPSzo>

LUCE Film title: "La prima torre littoria costruita in Italia sormonta la Casa del fascio "Arnaldo Mussolini."

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶¹ D. Medina Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected: Architecture, Spectacle, and Tourism in Fascist Italy*, (Penn State University Press, 2005), p. 160.

⁵⁶² "Concorso per il Palazzo del Littorio" *Architettura*, Milano, Fratelli Treves Editori, Roma 1934, p. 19.

Fascio with towers. Several early *Casa del Fascio* designed by Adolfo Coppedè in Vaglia (1928-1930) and in Vinci (1928) used the medieval tower before Arezzo's tower was considered [Fig. 54].⁵⁶³ Ottorino Aloisio's 1934 design for the Asti *Casa del Fascio* incorporated a tower over twice the height of the base building. The aesthetic employed, although streamline, referred to a brick fortress with medieval ramparts [Fig. 55]. The 1932 student competition, *Concorso per una Casa del Fascio "tipo,"* stated clearly that the *Palazzo Comunale* and the church were architectural types, so the *Casa del Fascio*, the jurors wrote, should also be able to be distinguishable as a type, at a distance.⁵⁶⁴ The jurors wrote, "allo stesso modo del campanile, del Comune, della Chiesa."⁵⁶⁵ A tower for the *Casa del Fascio*, a rival to the "campanile" of the Town Hall and church, was implied by the juror's statement.⁵⁶⁶ Several proposals to the student competition included designs with taller elements, which included an elevated speaking perch. Ettore Ricotti's competition proposal incorporated a tall tower with medieval references, submitted in the first student category for 5,000 to 10,000 inhabitants, which was published in *La Casa Bella* in June of 1932 [Fig. 56]. Overall, there were few towers submitted by students to the 1932 competition and the three winning entries by the students Peressutti, Rogers, Belgioioso, Rogers and Bianchi did not have towers.

The identity of the Tuscan region, as different from Rome, with a *Casa del Fascio* clad in medieval clothing may have been purposefully employed to enhance the regional identity of the PNF and to celebrate the region. Lasansky wrote, "The architecture and spectacle of these towns

⁵⁶³ Flavio Mangione, "Le Case del Fascio in Italia e nelle Terre D'Oltremare," *L'Architettura delle Case del Fascio*, Alinea Editrice, Firenze 2006, p. 59, p. 64. The Vaglia *Casa del Fascio* was a renovation. Adolfo Coppedè designed the *Casa del Fascio* in Signa (Florence) that was not a "castle," but was a classical building covered in over-scaled *fasci* and PNF symbols.

⁵⁶⁴ "Concorso," *L'Assalto*, 12 March 1932, p. 12.

⁵⁶⁵ [Translation: "in the same way as the church bell tower, of the Municipality, of the Church"]

⁵⁶⁶ "Concorso," *L'Assalto*, 12 March 1932, p. 12.

was celebrated as part of *toscanità*, a term that first appeared in 1923. This was Tuscany's answer to the *romanità* in Rome....the Middle Ages were to Arezzo what antiquity was to Rome...”⁵⁶⁷

Medieval precedents for the *Casa del Fascio* tower can be found in the history of towers as part of a city's defense and surveillance system. Architectural Historian David Friedman describes how the tower at Scarperia was,

...built at the intersection of the two main streets to improve the vantage point of the guards. This direct connection between the center of town and the gates also facilitated the reinforcement of the perimeter. Similar direct access could strengthen intermediary towers; at San Giovanni every street ended at a tower, inside were the stairs that gave access to the battlements.⁵⁶⁸

PNF *torri littorie* rose to great heights in the late 1930s, primarily to be seen from a distance and to serve as a sign for the PNF, rather than as surveillance. Mia Fuller noted that the tower was an “explicit allusion to the towers of medieval northern Italian towns.”⁵⁶⁹ She discussed how the aesthetics of the tower appeared “traditional” and continued to represent the *comune* as in the past, which represented civic power and that the balcony, often part of the tower, was an interpretation of the *arengario* and a repeat of Mussolini's own balcony of the *Palazzo Venezia*.⁵⁷⁰

Other cities outside of Tuscany had *Casa del Fascio* that inhabited medieval structures, such as the *Casa del Fascio* in Binasco (Milan), in 1941, which included a crenelated wall [Fig. 57]. The GRF “B. Mussolini,” designed by Arch. Mario Bacciocchi in Milan, was a brick building with an immensely high brick tower at one of the entry points to the city of Milan [Fig.

⁵⁶⁷ Lasansky, p. 164.

⁵⁶⁸ David Friedman, *Florentine New towns: Urban Design in the late Middle Ages*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1988, p. 64.

⁵⁶⁹ Mia Fuller, “Tradition as a means to the end of tradition: Farmers' houses in Italy's fascist-era new towns,” in *The End of Tradition?* Edited by Nezar AlSayyad, (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 175-6.

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

58]. The GRF “B. Mussolini” acted as a medieval gate house. The desire by the PNF, and Mussolini in particular, to reconstruct of the crenelated gateway in Rimini in front of the PNF headquarters, demonstrated the interest of the government to tie new PNF headquarters, and other PNF buildings, to a historic past – whether medieval or Roman – when possible [Fig. 59]. In Rimini, the gateway was named “*Arco d’Augusto*.”⁵⁷¹

Further additions and improvements occurred in the mid-1930s to the PNF Provincial headquarters building in Arezzo, such as upgrading the internal chapel to the “Fallen.” Decorating the chapel took on great importance, as a prize winning artist was considered for the commission. A note from the artist Gisberto Ceracchini, from Rome, in April, 24, 1935, discussed the addition of a painting dedicated to the “Fallen” that would be placed in the *cappella* of the PNF headquarters “Arnaldo Mussolini.” The painter asked for £25.000,00 for the artistic work and noted that he had won second place in a competition for the *Quadriennale d’Arte*. The PNF Provincial Federation offered the £8.000,00 left over from the construction funds of the *sacrario* and £5.000,00 from other contributions. The painter agreed to take the full sum in two yearly payments in order to help the project move forward.⁵⁷²

A new PNF Provincial headquarters building for Arezzo was planned in May of 1939 in the location of the former meat slaughtering house of the city. The project was designed by Arch. Ubaldo Cassi, who also designed the *Casa del Fascio* in Anghiari and Castiglion Fibocchi in the Arezzo Province. The new PNF Provincial headquarters building, located at the edge of the city of Arezzo, would be spacious compared to the existing PNF building location in the celebrated *Palazzo Camaiani-Albergotti* in the center of Arezzo. The new building would be

⁵⁷¹ Rimini. See www.artefascista.it.

⁵⁷² Letters from May 25, 1935 and from April 24, 1935 regarding interior decoration of *Casa del Fascio*, Arezzo, ACS, PNF Serie II, B. 847 Arezzo.

located near the new political center of Arezzo, close to the seat of the GIL and the newly constructed *Palazzo del Governo*. The new location for the PNF Provincial headquarters was between *Via Petrarca* and *Porta Buia* in Arezzo, the crossroads to other major cities [Fig. 60]. The new *piazza* would have the capacity to hold 50,000 people.⁵⁷³

The total cost for the new Arezzo PNF Provincial headquarters, a *Palazzo Littorio*, would be £1.335.000,00. The Rome PNF Technical Services Department suggested that the building be covered in “*pietrame arenario locale in modo da essere in armonia al carattere della città.*”⁵⁷⁴ The new *Palazzo Littorio* would be composed of three floors, a *sacrario* with a *sacello circolare* (memorial with a circular chapel), and a *torre littoria*, 48 meters high, with the plan dimension of 4 meters x 7 meters, which had the character of a *stela* (slab or upright stone), than that of a tower, “*intesa come usualmente si riscontra nei vecchi edifice.*”⁵⁷⁵ The building was to rise from the new *piazza* of the *adunate*. The letter was written by Nicoli Tullio from Rome in May 1939 and contained small drawings in the margins. The sketches indicated that the new building would occupy a corner site and had a symmetrical facade [Fig. 61]. The new PNF headquarters was to have an apse shape at the rear of the building. The tower, 4 meters x 7 meters, was to be in front of the facade, which was 33 meters wide.⁵⁷⁶ The final sketch of the PNF headquarters included an isolated tower over twice the height of the building and a generous *arengario* made from the same stone as the building base. The new *Palazzo del Littorio* faced into the *piazza*, also shared by the new GIL building, and was located near to the *Palazzo del Governo*

⁵⁷³ Relazione of Progetto dei Lavori per la costruzione della Casa Littoria di Arezzo, p. 1-8. ACS, PNF Serie II, B. 847, Arezzo, Sede Federale.

⁵⁷⁴ Letter from Nicoli Tullio, Rome 26 Maggio 1939 –XVII. ACS, PNF Serie II, B. 847 Arezzo, Sede Federale. [Translation: “local sandstone rocks so as to be in harmony with the character of the city”]

⁵⁷⁵ Letter from Nicoli Tullio, Rome 26 Maggio 1939 –XVII. ACS, PNF Serie II, B. 847 Arezzo, Sede Federale. [Translation: “like that which usually occurs in older buildings”]

⁵⁷⁶ Letter from Nicoli Tullio, Rome 26 Maggio 1939 –XVII. ACS, PNF Serie II, B. 847 Arezzo, Sede Federale.

completed in 1939 [Fig. 62].⁵⁷⁷ It was notable that the *Palazzo del Governo*, with a traditional aesthetic, including arches and white marble sculpture, was recognized by Marcello Piacentini as a beautiful and serene building. The *Palazzo del Governo* was designed by architect Giovanni Michelucci with the *Gruppo Toscano* in 1937, who designed the more controversial modern train station in nearby Florence between 1932 and 1934 [Fig. 63].⁵⁷⁸

The Arezzo *Palazzo del Littorio* building, the PNF Federal Seat, was never completed. Work was suspended in July of 1940, because of difficulties with the war.⁵⁷⁹ The design appropriateness of the Federal Seat had been questioned in December of 1941 by E.C. Oppo, of the *Consulta Tecnico Artisitca*, who suggested a change of architect to Arch. Vitellozzi.⁵⁸⁰ ⁵⁸¹ Annibale Vitellozzi was a notable Arezzo architect, who won several national competitions, including a 1929 competition for a *Casa del Fascio* in Arezzo at the time when the urban plan, the *Piano Regolatore e di ampliamento della città*, was being analyzed.⁵⁸²

The Arezzo Federation region had 117 *Casa del Fascio* and 12 *Gruppi Rionali* by the early 1940s.⁵⁸³ The PNF owned approximately half of the buildings and rented the others. The ACS PNF files had limited data on the 12 GRF buildings, but had ample information regarding the *Casa del Fascio* in towns in the province of Arezzo, beyond the central city. The PNF outposts in the towns in the Arezzo province were called *Casa del Fascio* and were most often located in existing buildings. For example, the *ex-Palazzo Corsi* on the major thoroughfare of

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁸ Marcello Piacentini, "Recenti opera di Giovanni Michelucci," *Architettura*, XIX (October 1940), 2, p. 55-60.

⁵⁷⁹ Report from Servizi Tecnici #06209, Rome, October 6, 1941 XIX, ACS, PNF Serie II, B. 847, Arezzo.

⁵⁸⁰ Consulta, Arezzo – Sede Federale, 22 Dicembre XX, ACS, PNF Serie II, B. 847, Arezzo.

⁵⁸¹ <http://www.architetiroma.it/monitor/d/profilo.asp?id=00041>

⁵⁸² "Montuori Eugenio," *Collezioni XX secolo*, MAXXI Architettura, fondationmaxxi.it.

[Translation: "Master plan and expansion of the city"]

⁵⁸³ Mangione, p. 172.

Via Roma became the *Casa del Fascio* in the town of Anghiari [Fig. 64]. The use of an existing *palazzo* for the PNF headquarters building was common in most towns. The plans were labeled for the organizational needs of the PNF [Fig. 65]. Early in the 1940s, work was needed to repair various areas of the Anghiari PNF headquarters. The building specifically needed roof work, which was approved by the Arezzo PNF in December of 1940. The contractor, Nespoli Gaetano of Anghiari, completed the work in March of 1941. The total cost of the roof project was approximately £27.000,00.⁵⁸⁴ Ubaldo Cassi, the architect of the proposed *Palazzo del Littorio* in Arezzo, was noted in the ACS PNF files to have also designed a new building for Anghiari.

As in other Italian cities, the PNF sought donations of buildings, but in particular, needed buildings which had a large assembly space. A *geometra* from the town of Badia Agnano, west of Arezzo, prepared plans in 1943 to modify an existing simple stone building, near the *piazza* of the market, called the *Teatro di Badiagnano*. The plans were of a building approximately 23 meters long by 11 meters wide and included an entry, ticket booth, grand *sala/palcoscenico*, and two bathrooms. The existing Badia Agnano building was being used by the local Philharmonic Society for cinema, dances, public festivals and reunions. The value of the property was listed as £90.000,00, while the price offered as a donation was £23.641,90.⁵⁸⁵

There were minimal letters and drawings of PNF headquarters in the ACS PNF files for several towns in the Arezzo province. In 1934, in Castelnuovo dei Sabbioni, the *Società Mineraria* building was donated by the *Società* to the *Circolo Dopolavoro*.⁵⁸⁶ In 1941, there were letters discussing the idea of building a new *Casa del Fascio* in Castelnuovo dei Sabbioni,

⁵⁸⁴ Work statement from the Ufficio Tecnico of the PNF, *Fascio di Combattimento* of Anghiari, March 21, 1941. PNF Serie II, b. 843.

⁵⁸⁵ ACS, PNF Serie II, B. 843, Badiagnano, 1943.

⁵⁸⁶ ACS, PNF Serie II, B.844, Castelnuovo dei Sabbioni, 1934.

because of a visit by *il "DUCE."*⁵⁸⁷ In Castiglion Fiorentino, in 1939, there was a discussion about bank fees, the need for a sports field for the GIL, and help with modifying the façade and stairs of the *Casa del Fascio*.⁵⁸⁸

In Fiorano della Chiana, a tower was added to an existing building in the town square to transform the building into a *Casa del Fascio* [Fig. 66]. A noble *palazzo* of four floors with a large arched entry was under consideration as a *Casa del Fascio*. The *palazzo* was located in *Piazza Cavour* in Fiorano della Chiana [Fig. 67]. Documents in the ACS PNF file included a real estate report from September 21, 1938 from a *geometra*. The property examined by the *geometra* was located on the corner between *Piazza Cavour* and the *Via della Scalinata della Torre*, which was to the left of the building under consideration for the *Casa del Fascio*. The ground-level floor was accessible from *Piazza Cavour*.⁵⁸⁹

On July 20, 1939, Giovanni Marinelli, an earlier Secretary of the PNF, sent a note to the Secretary of the Federation in Arezzo alerting him to a note written on June 24, 1939, that was sent directly to *Il DUCE* from *balilla*, Lino Capecchi, asking for financial help to complete the work for the *Casa del Fascio* in Fiorano della Chiana. The young boy wrote that his father, a *squadrista* (part of a fascist squad), was very happy that Fiorano della Chiana now had a *Casa del Fascio*, but the child reported that the town had no extra money to transform the existing building and render it "bella" (beautiful).⁵⁹⁰ Lino Capecchi noted his family gave all they had, but it was not enough.⁵⁹¹ Photos of the *Casa del Fascio* in Fiorano della Chiana show a tower,

⁵⁸⁷ ACS, PNF Serie II, B.844, Castelnuovo dei Sabbioni, 12 Agosto 1941, letter from the Sec. Giannino Romualdi of the PNF of Arezzo to the National Director of the Rome PNF, p. 1.

⁵⁸⁸ ACS, PNF Serie II, B.844, Castiglion Fiorentino.

⁵⁸⁹ ACS, PNF Serie II, B.844, Fiorano della Chiana.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹¹ Letter from Lino Capecchi to *Il DUCE*, June 24, 1939, ACS, PNF Serie II, Arezzo.

which is the most prominent in the city and a balcony on the main façade closest to the tower. The modifications indicated in the photo were enhancements to the existing building as per the young boy's wishes [Fig. 68].

In Monterchi, a small two-story building, with an arched entry portal under a balcony, was acquired for a PNF headquarters. Often the transformation of an existing building into a *Casa del Fascio* occurred solely with signage as in Monterchi. Signs of OND, PNF, *fasci* and slogans adorned the façade. A photo of Mussolini hung over the balcony doors. The existing building in Monterchi was an ex-theater and had some issues with ownership, which were discussed between the Secretary of the PNF in Arezzo and the national PNF Secretary in 1939.⁵⁹²

Correspondence on February, 27 1937, to Giannino Romualdi in Arezzo from Giovanni Marinelli noted that Mr. Marinelli had examined some previous information regarding the project for a new *Casa del Fascio* in Montecchio Vesponi. Marinelli wrote that the project was in “*un piccolissimo centro*” (a very small center) and did not correspond well to the scope needed for the PNF. Marinelli noted that the room in the proposed building that measured 5x8 meters was fine, but that the other spaces were not large enough for offices and that the bathroom was missing. He suggested further study and asked why the project was missing a *Torre Littoria* and noted that this inclusion was stipulated in 1932.⁵⁹³

A building in the heart of the town of Poppi was considered for a new *Casa del Fascio* in 1941. In 1942, difficulties were cited in finding a location for a new building, because of the dominant monumental castle in Poppi [Fig. 69]. The area near to the newer part of Poppi, called

⁵⁹² Letters in ACS, PNF Serie II, Monterchi, B. 844, September 2, 1939 and March 11, 1939.

⁵⁹³ Letter to Giannino Romualdi from Giovanni Marinelli, February 27, 1937. ACS, PNF Serie II, B. 844, Arezzo: Montecchio Vesponi.

Poppi Stazione, was considered. By March of 1943, a letter suggesting that the design of the new *Casa del Fascio*, possibly designed by Arch. Aldo Luchini, was not approved because it did not have “carattere architettonico” (architectonic character).⁵⁹⁴ The architectural drawings in the ASC PNF file show an L-shaped building, forming its own *piazza*, with a clock tower placed in the inner angle of the building form [Fig.70].⁵⁹⁵

Montevarchi was one of the largest towns in the province of Arezzo and was located at the midpoint between Florence and Arezzo. Montevarchi received one of the few new buildings in the Arezzo province [Fig. 71]. A report was written in March of 1942, by Dr. Ing. Raffaello Maestrelli, the designer of the Montevarchi *Casa del Fascio*.⁵⁹⁶ The *Casa del Fascio* project was presented to the central PNF in May 1937 and construction began one year later. By January 1940, the brickwork for the *Casa del Fascio* had been completed, however work was suspended because of a lack of funds. The construction on the PNF building started again with renewed energy in the spring of 1941. The mechanical and electrical systems were installed in the second half of 1941, while some issues occurred regarding man power and materials because of world conflicts. The *Casa del Fascio* in Montevarchi was finally occupied in April of 1942.⁵⁹⁷

The location of the Montevarchi *Casa del Fascio* was in a historic district off *Via Roma* in *Piazza Garibaldi* that was bordered by *torrente* (river) “Dogana”. The view of both the *Casa del Fascio torre littoria* and the *Duomo campanile* can easily be seen at a great distance [Fig.72]. The *Duomo* was also situated on *Via Roma* with its own *piazza* north of the *Casa del Fascio*.

⁵⁹⁴ Letter to *Segretario della Federazione dei Fasci di Combattimento* di Arezzo from *Il Segretario Federale*, Luigi Mancini, March 9, 1943, Roma, ACS, B. 845, Arezzo: Poppi and Poppi Stazione.

⁵⁹⁵ Letter to *Segretario della Federazione dei Fasci di Combattimento* di Arezzo from *Il Segretario Federale*, Luigi Mancini, March 9, 1943, Roma, ACS, B. 845, Arezzo: Poppi and Poppi Stazione.

⁵⁹⁶ *Relazione Generale* by Dr. Ing. Raffaello Maestrelli on the *Casa Littoria* of Montevarchi, ACS, PNF Serie II, March 31, 1942, B. 844 Arezzo, Montevarchi, p. 1.

⁵⁹⁷ *Relazione Generale* by Dr. Ing. Raffaello Maestrelli on the *Casa Littoria* of Montevarchi, ACS, PNF Serie II, March 31, 1942, B. 844 Arezzo, Montevarchi, p. 1.

The *Duomo* had a *campanile* on its left side, which included a clock and bell. The façade of the *Duomo* included a balcony over the entry [Fig.73]. The tall red brick *torre littoria* and the apse shape of the *Casa del Fascio* were in clear view on *Via Roma*, as one traveled south from the *Duomo* [Fig. 74]. An existing obelisk was present in the *piazza* bordered by two streets and in clear view from the *Casa del Fascio* [Fig. 75]. The opposite end of *Via Roma* was occupied by a medieval garrison with a crenelated tower [Fig. 76].

The fascists in the town of Montevarchi provided most of the financing for the *Casa del Fascio* by March 31, 1942. The Montevarchi fascists paid £253.234,20, which was 65% of the total costs of £410.218,20.⁵⁹⁸ The local fascist group in Montevarchi paid for the following work:

Building construction:	£ 194.125,00
Electric:	£ 21.600,00
Heating and Sanitary:	£ 14.615,00
Decorative work:	£ 19.309,00
Administrative:	£ 3.585,20 ⁵⁹⁹

The Montevarchi *Casa del Fascio* was located on an open market area, which was only partially used. The placement of the *torre littoria* was discussed in the PNF report of the project, which noted that the *torre littoria* was situated to be visible “interamenta da tutta la Via Roma e verrà così a dominare esteticamente la strada principale della città, per tutta la sua lunghezza, quale simbolo preenne della Azione animatrice del Partito in tutti I campi della vita locale e nazionale.”⁶⁰⁰ The architecture was considered modern and expressive, “di sobrietà e di

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 3.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁰ “Costruzione della Casa del Fascio di Montevarchi,” Relazione, allegato I, p.2. ACS, PNF Serie II, B. 844, Arezzo: Montevarchi.

[Translation: “completely from all of Via Roma and will dominate aesthetically the city's main street, along its entire length, as a symbol of the benevolent Action of the Party in all walks of life locally and nationally”]

austerità.”⁶⁰¹ Several iterations of the window system were examined by the PNF Technical Service Department [Fig. 77]. The *Casa del Fascio* and *torre littoria* were clad with brick, with the details emphasizing horizontal lines with alternating recessed courses of brick. Stone accents and the building’s cornice were constructed with travertine. The original drawings of the elevations indicated a rusticated stone face. The *torre littoria* was 28 meters high, had an accessible belfry that was topped by three *fasci*. The words of *Il Duce* in *litoceramica* (ceramic panels) were to be included on the exterior, but no other decoration was planned for the outside of the building.⁶⁰² The original drawings indicated a balcony over the entry door, but the completed building had an extended balcony that reached to the tower. An internal fresco was done by painter Arrigo Dreoni and a relief sculpture by Ottone Rosai, both artists who worked on the Florence train station.⁶⁰³

In August of 1942, Giovanni Montefusco, the head of Administrative Service in Rome sent a note to to the *Capo dei Servizi Amministrativa Federazione Fasci Combattimento* in Arezzo. The note was titled “*Lavori Case del Fascio*” and recorded that a sum of money was placed into the *Banca Nazionale del Lavoro* to reimburse the Arezzo PNF Federation for anticipated work on several *Case del Fascio*. The letter noted that twelve *Case del Fascio*, from the Arezzo region, were in various stages of completion.⁶⁰⁴

Most *Case del Fascio* in the Arezzo Federation were modified existing buildings, with the most extensive renovations occurring at the PNF Federal Seat, in the heart of the city of

⁶⁰¹ Ibid.

[Translation: “of simplicity and austerity”]

⁶⁰² Ibid.

⁶⁰³ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁴ Note from Servizi Amministrazione, Rome, August 24, 1942. ACS, PNF Serie II, B.844, Arezzo: Fiorano della Chiana.

Arezzo. The medieval precedent of the Arezzo PNF Federation building did influence other communities and their architects. *LUCE* Film produced a movie of the inauguration of the Arezzo *Palazzo del Littorio* and of the “first *Torre Littoria*” in March of 1933 that Italians witnessed throughout Italy and perhaps beyond. The *Casa del Fascio* in Monteverchi, which was designed in 1935 and inhabited by 1940, showed the effect of the medieval precedent on the design of a PNF building in the province of Arezzo. The Monteverchi *Casa del Fascio* had “medieval” roots in its masonry exterior and high reaching tower, with a nod toward the historic obelisk in its foreground.

Bari’s PNF Buildings on *Lungomare* and the *Casa Littoria* in *Città Vecchia*

Bari is a coastal port in Southern Italy that had a Provincial PNF headquarters located on the edge of the Adriatic Sea, *Casa del Fascio* in each town aligning the coast, and GRF buildings radiating beyond the center of Bari [Fig. 78]. The Administrative Secretary from the Bari Federation noted that by 1941, Bari had 51 *Fasci di Combattimento* and 14 GRF buildings. The Administrative Secretary added that the Bari Federation would soon have four new *Casa Littorie* in outlying areas. The four new *Casa Littorie* were from a national PNF program that would send architectural drawings for pre-designed *Casa del Fascio* to be constructed in rural areas. The pre-designed architectural drawings came from a national competition for rural *Casa del Fascio* designs that was sponsored by the PNF in Rome.

The *Consociazione Turistica Italiana* published the guidebook, *Italia Meridionale e Insulare-Libia, Guida Breve, vol.3*, in 1940, which noted the locations of PNF buildings along with historic sites and tourist destinations.⁶⁰⁵ The guidebook included maps and information for

⁶⁰⁵ [Translation: “Southern and Islands of Italy-Libya, brief guide”]

the “*Italian Meridionale*” (Italian South), which is the southern area of Italy below Rome. The guidebook also included guide information for the islands of Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, and the colonial areas of Libya. Most guidebooks for the Central and Northern regions of Italy located *Case del Fascio* on the maps and occasionally included the addresses for *Case del Fascio* and *Palazzi Littorio* in the guidebook text. Bari’s *Palazzo della Provincia* on *Lungomare* (road by the Adriatic Sea) was listed in the 1940’s guidebook along with the *Piazza dell’ Impero*, located at the base of *Città Vecchia*, off the *Corso Vittorio Emanuele* [Fig. 79]. No other PNF buildings were noted.

The 1936 *Palazzo della Provincia* for the Bari PNF Federation was located on the *Lungomare Nazario Sauro* and designed by Luigi Baffa, the director of the Provincial Technical office, with the architect S. Dioguardi [Fig. 80]. The five-story *palazzo* was symmetrical, clad in *Trani* stone and brick, and had an open loggia reminiscent of Venetian *palazzi*. The Bari *palazzo* had a sixty-two meter high *torre littoria*, which was dedicated to the martyrs of WWI and to the Fascist Revolution. The tower had several bell levels, an elevator, machinery levels dedicated to the elevator and the clock, and a viewing platform at the tower’s pinnacle. The tower was placed asymmetrically into the mass of the symmetrical *palazzo*. The Bari *Palazzo della Provincia* was primarily an office building for the Bari PNF Federation and was not used regularly as a *Palazzo Littorio* that would have had facilities for mass assemblies and exercise. The PNF leaders of Bari spent several unsuccessful years discussing the design and construction of a central *Casa Littoria* building in Bari.

Piazza dell’ Impero was located south of the *Castello Medioevale* and the medieval streets of *Città Vecchia* in Bari, whose land mass jut out between *Porto Nuovo* and *Porto Vecchio*. South of *Piazza dell’ Impero*, the city was a gridded street plan. Urban plans for a reworking of

the medieval area of *Città Vecchia* were designed by architect Concezio Petrucci and issued in 1931 by the *Comune* of Bari. Since 1929, Bari's technical planning office had studied *Città Vecchia* for possible architectural and urban interventions.⁶⁰⁶ The 1931 urban plan designated buildings of historic or artistic value and areas where demolition or new construction was suggested by Petrucci and the technical planning office in Bari.

In April, 1933, an architectural competition was announced for a new *Casa del Fascio* in Bari at the south end of *Città Vecchia* in *Piazza S. Barbara* on *Via Filippo Corridoni* [Fig. 81]. The announcement was made in the newspaper, *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, which noted that the competitors should study the area around *Piazza S. Barbara* well and the designers should note the good view from the proposed site to the Cathedral.⁶⁰⁷ The architectural challenge was to use the new structure to close-in the new *piazza* and symbolically create a “*fusione*” (fusion) between the old and the new cities of Bari with the new Seat of the PNF. The new *Casa del Fascio* was to have an *arengo*, offices, cinema, radio room, billiard room, and *palestra*, among other spaces.⁶⁰⁸

Architects Concezio Petrucci and S. Giancaspro submitted their design for a *Casa del Fascio* and won the Bari competition in 1934. The Petrucci and Giancaspro design was a modernized version of a similar scheme that Petrucci had designed for the same *Piazza Santa Barbara* location, three years earlier in 1931, when he was in charge of the urban restructuring of

⁶⁰⁶ Ennio Corvaglia, Maruo Scionti, *Il Piano Introvabile* (Bari: Edizioni Dedalo spa, 1985), pp. 89-90.

⁶⁰⁷ ASC PNF Serie II, B. 867, Bari; note of concorso for Casa del Fascio, Bari.

⁶⁰⁸ ASC PNF Serie II, B. 867, Bari; note of concorso for Casa del Fascio, Bari.

Città Vecchia [Figs. 82-83].⁶⁰⁹ The *Casa del Fascio* design was an L-shaped building of four stories, which included a lower arcade/loggia and a clock tower with a belfry.

In 1936, the *Podestà*, Prof. Michele Viterbo, wrote that the citizens of Bari were unanimous in their enthusiasm for a new *Casa del Fascio* in Bari.⁶¹⁰ Viterbo wrote,

Riconosciuta la necessità che la “Casa del Fascio” sorga nella zona di confine fra l’antico nucleo dell’abitato, testimone dell’antica grandezza di Bari romana e medioevale, ed il borgo Murattiano, quasi a ricongiungere le varie epoche storiche nella formidabile sintesi dell’Italia Mussoliniana, che ha assegnato a Bari una lungimirante missione nella espansione oltremare;...⁶¹¹

Locating a *Casa del Fascio* in historical zones was a preference for the PNF, however, questions arose from the central PNF about the lack of space for possible expansion and exterior activities in the historical zone of *Città Vecchia*. Five years after the announcement of the competition for the new *Casa del Fascio*, letters were exchanged between the Bari PNF and the central PNF in Rome regarding the lack of a proper central *Casa del Fascio* in Bari and the inability to solve the issue.⁶¹² In 1938, Giovanni Marinelli, the Secretary of the Federal Administration of the PNF in Rome, contacted Raffaele Russi, the Secretary of the Bari PNF Federation, about the resolution of the “*eventualità di acquistare una nuova sede per la Federazione*” (underlined by Marinelli).⁶¹³ The delayed process disturbed the Rome PNF, but the local Bari PNF was equally

⁶⁰⁹ Arturo Cucciolla, *Vecchie Città/Città Nuove, Concezio Petrucci, 1926-1946* (Bari: Edizioni Dedalo srl, 2006), pp. 138-143. Also see Ennio Corvaglia, Maruo Scionti, *Il Piano Introvabile* (Bari: Edizioni Dedalo spa, 1985), pp. 87-92.

⁶¹⁰ ACS PNF Serie II, B. 867, Bari, “Deliberazione del Podestà,” 1936.

⁶¹¹ ACS PNF Serie II, B. 867, Bari, “Deliberazione del Podestà,” 1936.

[Translation: “The need for a “Casa del Fascio” is recognized, arising in the border area between the historical nucleus of the town, among the ancient Roman and medieval greatness of Bari, and the walled hamlet, almost reuniting the various historical periods in the formidable synthesis of Italy’s Mussoliniana Period, which assigned to Bari the forward-looking mission in the overseas expansion...”]

⁶¹² ACS PNF Serie II, B. 867, Bari.

⁶¹³ ACS PNF Serie II, B. 867, Bari. Letter from Giovanni Marinelli to Raffaele Russi, March 18, 1938.

[Translation: “the eventuality of the acquisition of a new seat for the Federation”]

disturbed by the delay and noted that discussions about adding a GIL to the building had complicated the *Casa del Fascio* project. Two large entities in one building, in the historic zone, with exterior exercise activities, would not fit well in the medieval urban location.

On April 11, 1940, Davide Fossa, the new Federal Secretary of the Bari PNF, wrote to the Secretary of the *Sevizi Amministrativa* of Rome informing them that he had received Ignazio Caltagirone, who presented a project for a *Casa Littoria* for Bari, but that Fossa had not requested the visit.

In riscontro alla nota emarginata, si comunica che dalle informazioni fornite dal precedente Segretario federale risulta che l'architetto Ignazio Caltagirone presentò, senza avere avuto specifico incarico, il progetto della Casa Littoria.⁶¹⁴

On May 22, 1940, Caltagirone sent a bill to Giovanni Montefusco, the *Capo Servizi* of the Administration of the PNF at the *Palazzo Littorio* in Rome. The invoice recorded that Caltagirone, an architect from Rome, billed for his trips to Bari, for drawings, models and photographs. It was not clear who sent Mr. Caltagirone to Bari – the previous Bari PNF Secretary, Raffaele Russi, or the Rome PNF.

Following the initial letter about the architect Caltagirone's arrival in Bari, a letter was sent April 24, 1940, from David Fossa, the Federal Secretary of Bari, to Ettore Muti, the Secretary of the PNF in Rome, noting that there was a “problema abbastanza importante della Casa Littoria di Bari.”⁶¹⁵ Fossa wrote, with frustration, about the fact that Bari had spent “*milion?*” on *palazzi* for the Italian State: a Seat for the *Carabinieri*, the huge building for the

⁶¹⁴ACS PNF Serrie II, B. 867, Bari. Letter from Davide Fossa, Segretario Federale, April, 11, 1940 to Capo dei Servizi Amministrativi, Rome, April 11, 1940. [Translation: “In response to the note, please be advised that information provided by previous Federal Secretary resulted in the arrival of the architect Ignazio Caltagirone, who showed up without having a specific assignment, with a project of the House Littoria.”]

⁶¹⁵ ACS PNF Serrie II, B. 867, Bari. Letter from the Federal Secretary of Bari, David Fossa, to Ettore Muti, the Secretary of the PNF in Rome, April 24, 1940.

[Translation: “problem important enough about the Casa Littoria in Bari”]

PNF Administration of the Province, a *Comando Zona* for the *Aeronautica* Department, a *Questura* building, a Finance building, and a building for the *Milizia*, which were all massive edifices on the *Lungomare*, facing the Adriatic Sea [Fig. 84]. Fossa curtly wrote,

La Casa Littoria non è stat costruita. Noi siamo allogati in un brutto palazzo d'affitto e spendiamo per l'affitto stesso circa settantamila lire all'anno. Con l'intenzione di arrivare a costruire per il Partito una sede che superasse per mole ed imponenza tutte le altre, si sono fatti passare venti anni e non si è costruito niente. Il problema assume spesso a spetti di polemica per i confronti, i paragoni, le critiche.⁶¹⁶

Fossa complained that his predecessor had left the building of the *Casa Littoria* unresolved and that the local Bari PNF were still in ugly rented quarters. In conclusion, Fossa reported that from a mixture of financial sources, the Bari PNF had two *milione* of *lire* left to use for the construction of a new *Casa Littoria*.

On December 29, 1942, Concezio Petrucci and Sergio Giancaspro, the winners of the 1934 Bari competition, wrote a letter to Giovanni Costantino, the newest Federal Secretary of Bari, and to Luigi Mancini, the head of Technical Services of the PNF in Rome, regarding their 1934 *Casa Littoria* competition proposal. The letter followed a meeting between Sergio Giancaspro and Luigi Mancini in Rome. Petrucci and Giancaspro wrote that they understood the problems of finding a proper location for the Bari *Casa Littoria*. They wrote that they were aware of the need for a location that would allow the building to expand, as well as a location that would have space for a GIL and exterior area for playing sports. The architects outlined the history of the failed Bari *Casa Littoria* in their letter. Petrucci and Giancaspro recalled the 1934 competition, the selection process in 1935, and the suspension of the *Casa Littoria* project

⁶¹⁶ Ibid.

[Translation: "The Casa Littoria is not built. We are contracted out with a lease on an ugly building and spend rent money that is nearly seventy thousand lira per year. With the intention to construct a Casa del Fascio for the Party, one that exceeds and has grandeur over all others, 20 years have passed and we haven't built anything. The problem assumes there will be controversy because of confrontations, comparisons, criticisms."]

because of difficulties in Africa with no date of resumption. By August 1942, the PNF decided that the *Casa del Fascio* would not include a GIL. The winning designers, Petrucci and Giancaspro, requested £20.000,00 in reimbursements for their seven years of work waiting for the *Casa Littoria* project to proceed. Petrucci and Giancaspro wrote that they would be happy to return to the “*primitive progetto vincitore del Concorso*” and that they were interested in the realization of the Bari *Casa del Fascio*.⁶¹⁷ In handwriting at the bottom of their received letter, dated June 3, 1943, Giovanni Costantino wrote that the architects would get only a sum of 8/10 *mila lire*.⁶¹⁸ Typed letters from both Giovanni Costantino and Luigi Manzini to the designers confirmed the compensation of 8/10 *mila lira*, dated June 3, 1943 and July 7, 1943 respectively.⁶¹⁹ The Bari *Casa del Fascio* was never built, but other PNF buildings did get constructed. The Rome PNF was still heavily involved in the decisions regarding *Casa del Fascio* locations.

A list of all of the *Comuni* (municipalities) in the Bari Federation and their population count was compiled in 1940 after a request for a list from the central PNF in Rome. An “A” list and a “B” list were amassed by the local Bari PNF. There were 19 *Comuni* on the “A” list with population amounts from 17,000 to 60,000; 36 *Comuni* on the “B” list with population amounts from 700 inhabitants to 14,000. Each community had a note that gave the status of their PNF activity, followed by a column of comments of action to be taken regarding each community’s physical location – and whether the community was with or without a *Casa Littoria*. Notes varied from “*E indispensabile la Casa Littori,*” “*Costruzione di corpo di fabbrica,*” “*per*

⁶¹⁷ [Translation: “primitive project of the competition winner”]

⁶¹⁸ ACS PNF Serie II, B. 867, Bari. Letter from Concezio Petrucci and Sergio Giancaspro to Luigi Mancini and Giovanni Costantino, December 29, 1942.

⁶¹⁹ ACS PNF Serie II, B. 867, Bari. Letter from Giovanni Costantino, June 3, 1943, and from Luigi Mancini, July 7, 1943, to Concezio Petrucci and Sergio Giancaspro.

ampliare la Casa Littoria,” to “*Costruire una appropriata Casa Littoria.*”⁶²⁰ The “column of action” on the lists was fairly similar for both the “A” list and the “B” list, despite the size of the town’s population. “C” and “D” lists existed, but were not in the PNF files; the remaining two lists were referred to in a letter on August 17, 1941, with the suggestion of putting the GIL and the *Fasci di Combattimento* together in one building. The communities on the missing lists may have been very small, which gave the PNF the idea to combine services and institutions.

A form letter, also sent to other PNF Federations, was sent to the Secretary of the Bari Federation on May 19, 1941, promising that work in Bari would start in two years for four new *Case Littorie*. The building plans for the new *Case del Fascio* would be selected from the results of the national competition for “*Case Littorie nei piccolo centri rurali e di confine,*” sponsored by the PNF in Rome.⁶²¹ The letter came from the *Servizi Tecnici* Department of the Rome PNF, signed by Adelchi Serena. The PNF in central Rome would contribute half of the construction costs for the new PNF buildings. A note stressing the need for the contractor to use local materials was underlined in the letter.⁶²²

The Bari Federation suggested locations to the Rome Technical Services Department that would be good candidates to receive new *Case del Fascio*. The communities selected by the Bari PNF for a new PNF building were Barletta (population 55,000), Canosa (population 29,000), Castellana (population 12,000), Gioia (population 30,000), and Spinazzola (population 12,500).⁶²³ On September 11, 1941, a form letter was sent to Bari from Luigi Mancini, the head

⁶²⁰ ASC PNF , B. 867, Bari, *Elenco of Comuni*, 1940.

[Translation: “the Casa Littoria is essential,” “construct a building,” “expand the Casa Littoria,” to “build a proper Casa Littoria.”]

⁶²¹ [Translation: “ Case Littorie in the small rural towns and border areas”]

⁶²² ACS PNF Serie II, B. 867, Bari, letter May 19, 1941 from Adelchi Serena, Technical Service Department, Rome.

⁶²³ ASC PNF , B. 867, Bari, Letter from Bari Federation to the Secretario Federale, August 17, 1941.

of the Technical Service Department of the PNF, asking that the Federation in Bari prepare site plans at 1:500, photographs from three view points and notes about the characteristics of the locations of each of the proposed *Case del Fascio* sites. A note was again included in the document regarding the need by contractors to only use local materials, because of concerns of autarky. An express letter was sent on September 29, 1941, by Luigi Mancini, asking more precisely for accurate information about the possible building locations. On December 12, 1941, a letter was sent from Luigi Mancini, in Rome, with approvals for four Bari communities to receive *Case Littorie* and the names of the engineers who would direct the work. The list was:

Alberobello	Ing. Cozzolongo, Giovanni
Cassano	Ing. Basile, Giuseppe
Locorotondo	Ing. Scattarelli, Michele
Sannicandro	Ing. Andriola, Nicola

The building proposals for the new *Case Littorie*, were designed by four different architectural or engineering studios in Rome:

Ing. Granelli, Ettore
Architect Ligini, Nicolini and Barletti
Architet Mezzina, Sergio
Architect Savelli, Lodoli, Cetrilli, Catalano

The four communities selected by the Technical Service Department in Rome were not on the list suggested by the Bari PNF Federation. The four selected by the Rome PNF – Alberobello (population 9,000), Cassano (population 7,000), Locorotondo (population 10,000), and Sannicandro (population 8,800) – were all from list “B,” which had lower population counts than the communities on the list initially sent by Russi. All four towns selected by the Rome PNF were not on the coast and were located near intersecting roads. Two of the towns were west of Bari and two of the towns were at the southern-most point of the Bari Federation.

Two sets of drawings of two different *Casa del Fascio* designs were sent to the Bari PNF in October 1942 for the Sannicandro site [Fig. 85].⁶²⁴ The *Casa del Fascio* proposals were designed by Prof. Dott. Architect Pasquale Carbonara from Rome. One design was a rectangular plan consisting of an assembly space and four rooms. The *Casa del Fascio* design included a truncated tower made of rustic stone that was detached from the building. The second scheme was an L-shaped building with an exterior assembly space. The second choice building also had a detached tower. A site plan was included, which located the L-shaped *Casa del Fascio* to the left of a larger U-shaped building, indicating that the second scheme had been the likely selection for the Bari site.

Casa del Fascio were planned for numerous towns around the center of Bari before the offer of “pre-designed” *Casa del Fascio* came from Rome. Each *Casa del Fascio* was treated uniquely by the local and national PNF for their particular locations. *Casa del Fascio* in Gravina in Puglia, Acquaviva delle Fonti, and Bisceglie were described in the ACS PNF files in Rome, therefore there had been an exchange of information from the local to the national administration regarding the Bari *Casa del Fascio*. The GRF buildings had minimal information in the ACS PNF file. The *Gruppo Rionale “A. Mussolini”* had the most complete GRF file and the GRF “Domenico Capozza” had preliminary floor plans, which had been reviewed by the PNF in 1937. Neither GRF building was built in Bari.

In Gravina in Puglia, a *Casa del Fascio* was built as part of the *Torre dell’Orologio* (clock tower designed by Antonio Polini in 1890-1892), a rare example of neo-Gothic architecture in Puglia. A monument for the “Fallen” was located and inaugurated in 1926 in front

⁶²⁴ ACS PNF, Serie II, B. 866.

of the *Torre dell' Orologio* in the public park.⁶²⁵ The *Casa del Fascio*, designed in 1937 by Ing. Dott. Francesco Ortona, was attached to the historic clock tower [Fig. 86]. The connection of the 1892 tower to the 1937 building was inharmonious, but gave stature and a ready-made *torre littoria* to the local *Casa del Fascio*.

In January of 1937, the Secretary of the Administration of the PNF Federation of Bari, Raffaele Russi, wrote to Giovanni Marinelli with a proposal for a *Casa del Fascio* for the *Comune* of Acquaviva delle Fonti. The existing building proposed by Russi, which would be transformed into a *Casa del Fascio* for Acquaviva, was a sixty-year-old theater building. The restoration of the existing building would cost £200.00,00. The Bari PNF Federation suggested to the Rome PNF that a loan was necessary to do the renovation work. Russi's letter added that there were 13,500 inhabitants in the town, of which 500 were fascists, 400 were *Dopolavoristi*, and 90 were in the *Soci del Circolo Littorio*, which were not huge numbers of devoted PNF members. Russi received a response in February 1937, from Giovanni Marinelli, who suggested that Russi abandon the project on the basis that the Bari PNF would not receive such a loan, on a building that needed so much restoration.⁶²⁶

In Bisceglie, engineer Alfredo La Gioia designed a *Casa del Fascio* between 1937 and 1942. Archival records note that there was a subterranean cinema planned, but that the contractor had encountered rock on the site. The cinema space was designed to be multi-functional and would also serve for “*riunioni, conferenze ed altro del Partito...a sedere 750...*”⁶²⁷ The

⁶²⁵ Simone De Bartolo, *Architettura e Scultura Monumentale del Ventennio Fascista in Terra di Bari*, (Bari: L'Arco e la Corte, 2015), p. 178.

⁶²⁶ ACS PNF Serie II, B. 866, Bari, letter from Raffaele Russi from Bari, January, 15, 1937 and letter from Giovanni Marinelli in Rome to Raffaele Russi on February 3, 1937.

⁶²⁷ ACS PNF Serie II, B. 866, Bari, *Relazione Tecnica* of Bisceglie, 1942.

[Translation: “meetings, conferences and other seating for the Party ...to seat 750”]

Bisceglie *Casa del Fascio* design included a tower on the corner and was adjacent to a chapel [Fig. 87].

Other *Casa del Fascio* not documented in the ACS PNF file included the 1938 *Casa Littoria*, on *Via Dante*, in Cisternino, designed by engineers Salvatore Ambrosi and Ing. Mauro De Gennaro. The Cisternino *Casa del Fascio* was a two-story symmetrical building with a crenelated bell tower [Fig. 88]. The 1933 *Casa del Fascio* in *Palazzo Mastropasqua*, on *Corso Umberto* in Molfetta, was designed by engineer Felice Mezzina [Fig. 89]. The Molfetta *Casa del Fascio* may have been an interior renovation in an existing *palazzo*. The *Casa del Fascio* in Margherita di Savoia (Barletta) designed in 1942 by Architect S. Mezzina had the characteristic detached *torre littoria* from the late years of the Fascist regime. The tower was not higher than the building and had the same width as the building footprint. The Margherita di Savoia *Casa del Fascio* project was a rectangular building that was deeply set back into the site to gain a large *piazza* for visible PNF activity in the front of the site [Fig. 90].

Gruppo Rionale “*A. Mussolini*” was designed in 1939 by engineer Vincenzo Danisi. The PNF’s goal was to create a PNF center in Bari off *Corso Mazzini*. The PNF planned the GRF “*A. Mussolini*” to be built next to a block-long GIL building. The architectural plan for the GRF was very open with an *arengario* between two separate building components and centered on the open field behind building [Fig. 91]. The exterior “room” was planned “*per le adunate all’aperto*.”⁶²⁸ The building was never constructed.

The GRF “*Domenico Capozza*” was to be located on *Via Trento* and *Via Emanuele De Deo* in Bari. The GRF “*Domenico Capozza*” building was L-shaped and consisted of the required offices. The *Salone delle adunate* was unusually small [Fig. 92]. Large exterior sports

⁶²⁸ ASC PNF, Serie II, B. 867, Bari.

areas were planned for *Palla Canestro* (basketball) and *Bocce*. A note on the architectural plans reported that work was started on January 18, 1937, and ended on February 28, 1937. No building was in this location in 2015.

Several “*Circolo del Littorio*” were built in the Bari province. Documentation exists for a *Circolo* in Barletta and another in Fasano designed by the engineer Giuseppe Attoma in the 1930s [Figs. 93-94]. There were numerous *Sede dell’OND* built in Bari that functioned as *Casa del Fascio*, therefore photos are included in this document to demonstrate the wide variety of architectural designs. The OND in Santeramo in Colle and in Capurso were both designed by the engineer Raffaello Lolli Ghetti, yet had quite different designs interpretations for an OND building [Figs. 95- 96].

Case for GIL were also numerous in the Bari archival files. A *Casa del GIL* constructed by 1939, in Adelfia, a town west of Bari, had many typical features of a *Casa del Fascio* [Fig. 97].⁶²⁹ The Adelfia GIL building included a flat-topped tower with a belfry and an *arengario* at the front entrance. An “M” was written on the portico cornice. No other distinguishing features mark the GIL building to distinguish it from a *Casa del Fascio*.

The Bari PNF never received a central *Palazzo del Littorio*, but did have a large PNF Provincial headquarters on *Lungomare*. The PNF buildings on *Lungomare* were used by PNF dignitaries traveling to and from Africa and were an impressive assembly of PNF buildings at the port of Bari. The PNF facilities for the inhabitants of the city of Bari were meager by comparison. Most *Casa del Fascio* and GRF buildings in the ACS PNF files were not built. The designs of the PNF headquarters in Bari were all unique, with no similar characteristics. The

⁶²⁹ Simone De Bartolo, *Architettura e Scultura Monumentale del Ventennio Fascista in Terra di Bari*, (Bari: L’Arco e la Corte, 2015), pp. 40-41.

Rome PNF did exchange information quite regularly with the Bari PNF, but the discussions were primarily about location and the programs included, not about design.

Regional Comparisons

A map from 1942 was compiled by the Bologna PNF Federation with locations of *Casa del Fascio* in the Bologna Federation [Fig. 98]. Pictorial representations for the various types of *Casa del Fascio* were used for the map location marker. I have used similar pictorial images, which I overlaid on 1930s period maps of Milan, Arezzo and Bari with the locations of *Palazzi del Littorio*, *Casa del Fascio* and GRF buildings. The maps are at different scales. The PNF Seat was located in the heart of each city, with GRF buildings radiating from the centers. *Casa del Fascio* were located in the smaller towns on the outskirts of the metropolitan city lines. *Casa del Fascio* were located in towns at major road intersections or in towns along major highways. The Bari Federation had *Casa del Fascio* located in each major coastal town [Fig. 99].

Milan's PNF Federation headquarters moved several times during the *Ventennio*, with its final home occupying a new building in the symbolic location, *Piazza San Sepolcro*, where Fascism began. Arezzo's PNF Federation headquarters remained in the celebrated *Palazzo Camaiani-Albergotti* with the raised *Torre Littoria*, despite plans for a new building on the edge of the medieval city in a new urban PNF zone. Bari's PNF Federation headquarters was constructed on the *Lungomare* with a Federal program that attended to dignitaries and training for people traveling to Africa, while the local PNF longed for a *Palazzo del Littorio* in the heart of the medieval area of the city, which did not come to fruition.

The *Casa del Fascio* and GRF buildings in Milan were more numerous and newly built by comparison to Arezzo and Bari's *Casa del Fascio* program. The designs were varied with a

fair percentage of modern architecture, which was not dismissed by the PNF in the Milan region. The new *Casa del Fascio* in the Arezzo Federation emphasized their Tuscan heritage with towers and brick cladding, however, most *Casa del Fascio* in the Arezzo Federation were located in existing buildings and modified. In some cases, the sole addition of a *torre littoria* made an existing building a *Casa del Fascio*. The Bari *Casa del Fascio* and GRF buildings were highly varied and were less consistent regarding their PNF titles. In Bari, there were many OND and *Circolo del Littorio* buildings, as well as *Casa del Fascio* and GRF buildings and combinations thereof.

The Rome PNF sent similar letters to all three cities requesting a list of all PNF locations, the population of the city or town, and the status of the rental or building representing the PNF. All three cities received a similar letter from the national PNF in the 1940s, suggesting the concept of sending ready-made *Casa del Fascio* building plans for rural areas in their Federation. The North, Central, and South regions of Italy were treated identically in these cases.

The differences between the resulting *Casa del Fascio* in each city were mostly material differences, although not strictly a defining difference. Brick was a material favored by the PNF, which was often employed in all regions, yet the PNF also stressed the use of local materials, which was followed by local architects and contractors as well. A few plans from the warmer Bari region indicated that mass gatherings happened outside of the *Casa del Fascio*, however few other distinctions would mark a building as a Bari *Casa del Fascio*. It would be difficult to place any of the singular *Casa del Fascio* buildings solely in their particular city, except for the characteristic *palazzo* plan in the Milan region, and the Tuscan brick building and tower, as in Montevarchi in the Arezzo region. The examples cited, such as the Montevarchi or *palazzo* examples, are too few to make a case that *Casa del Fascio* were treated architecturally similarly

within their regions, except by the same architect, as in the case of Quirino De Giorgio in the Padua Federation. The GRF “B. Mussolini” from Milan, designed by Mario Bacciocchi in 1936-1937, for example, could be placed in Arezzo, since it was a fully brick building with a tall tower, similar to Montevarchi. Two *Casa del Fascio* in two diverse regions, with material and form similarities, and references to medieval architecture, demonstrate the irregularity of the aesthetic selection for *Casa del Fascio* designs from region to region. Milan also had a medieval heritage, but other *Casa del Fascio* in Milan did not follow the aesthetic choice of Bacciocchi. The similarity between the two buildings, one in Milan and one in Arezzo, could constitute a “national” identity for the *Casa del Fascio*. The *Casa del Fascio* was a “national” building of the PNF. The *Casa del Fascio*, however, in the three case studies of PNF headquarters in Milan, Arezzo, or Bari, did not strongly demonstrate their national identity. Most *Casa del Fascio* designs were neither regionally nor nationally convincing. Most *Casa del Fascio* were approved by the National PNF for location and size, but the majority of designs were the singular result of local architects, engineers, or surveyors, and local PNF leaders.

Chapter Five: *Case del Fascio* in New Communities: New Towns and *Borghi*

Idealized “Fascist Towns” and the *Casa del Fascio*

Most *Case del Fascio* were located in existing buildings, or if new, the *Case del Fascio* were built into existing urban situations. Numerous new *Case del Fascio* were built as a component of master plans for new towns and *borghi* (rural neighborhoods or hamlets), demonstrating what an idealized *Casa del Fascio* might be, since the building was designed anew with no existing encumbrances. The *Case del Fascio* in the master plans, however, were not purely singular building designs, but were a piece of an overall ensemble of buildings, often designed by one architect or one studio. The new towns were developed and funded by the PNF’s Veteran’s Organization, the *Opera Nazionale per i Combattenti* (ONC) and were built between 1928 and 1943. The new enclaves were visual evidence of the PNF’s idealized “fascist town” with the PNF buildings – particularly the *Comune* and *Casa del Fascio* – in their idealized positions.

This section of the dissertation is an analysis of the *Casa del Fascio* in significant Italian new towns and *borghi*.⁶³⁰ The hierarchy of the town and *borghi* buildings and their relationship to one another, in the small rural centers, is also examined to determine the rank of the *Casa del Fascio* in an idealized situation with other PNF buildings. The study is not a perfect laboratory test, as each new community had a specific PNF agenda to achieve. Some new communities had an agricultural emphasis, while others were located in areas of rich mineral deposits with a focus on mining and mineral retrieval. Other historic adage, such as the PNF’s desire to build what

⁶³⁰ The new town of Predappio (1925 plan) is not covered in this document. Predappio was built over a twelve year period rather than all at once. The *Casa del Fascio* was designed by Ing. Elio Danesi and Ing. Adolfo Volpi in 1937. See Diane Ghirardo, *Building New Communities: New Deal America and Fascist Italy*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 61.

Caesar could not accomplish – such as draining the Pontine Marshlands to make useful land – add a rhetorical component to the analysis, as the PNF’s major agenda was to send a strong message to the Italian people and to the outside world of Mussolini’s accomplishments.

The PNF had several goals in building new communities: to assist the economy by reducing unemployment, to raise the agricultural output of the country that supported the PNF self-sufficiency program, and to stem conflict and possible uprisings in the dense urban areas of Italy by promoting decentralization.⁶³¹ After 1939, when Mussolini issued a decree to limit immigration in cities, the earlier PNF agenda of decentralization was reinforced by growth in the new centers.⁶³² Architectural historian Diane Ghirardo, an expert on the new towns in Italy during the 1930s, pointed out that the new settlements reflected the regime’s desire to relieve social unrest physically, by moving an urban-dwelling lower class to new settlements in outlying areas and, politically, by instituting a symbolism that recalled the “imperial” heritage of ancient Rome.⁶³³ Thus, the political message conveyed by *Il Duce*’s efforts to clear the Pontine Marches merged with the iconography of Roman planning devices such as the “*castrum*” plan.⁶³⁴ The new towns gave the PNF an opportunity to project a new image of a “nation” that utilized both the historical rhetoric of a glorious past and the political cachet of the PNF’s modern technological capacity to allowed Mussolini do what Caesar could not do.⁶³⁵ When designing the town

⁶³¹ Diane Ghirardo, *Building New Communities: New Deal America and Fascist Italy*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 41.

⁶³² Robert H. Kargon and Arthur P. Molella, “Techno-Città: Technology and Urban Design in Fascist Italy,” *Invented Edens*, (Cambridge: MIT, 2008), p. 50.

⁶³³ Diane Ghirardo, *Building New Communities: New Deal America and Fascist Italy*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 64.

⁶³⁴ Ghirardo, pp. 66-68.

⁶³⁵ Ghirardo, pp. 40-41.

centers, the fascist planners also looked to feudal models for their visual rhetoric, specifically the tower and the central “*piazza*,” typical to most medieval “*comune*.”⁶³⁶

A large percentage of PNF funds to build the new towns and *borghi* were spent on the central buildings of each enclave, which represented the PNF, such as the *Comune* and the *Casa del Fascio*. The construction funds also paid for the construction of Catholic Churches, which were generally the largest building in each new community. Housing and modest structures to support farming or mineral extractions were built by the PNF ONC. In some cases, towns were funded directly by specific industries, as in Torviscosa, a town in northern Italy. The first buildings erected in any enclave were the PNF buildings, located in the center square. Ghirardo noted that the civic centers were often completed before the housing was begun, creating the illusion that a new “colony” was thriving.⁶³⁷ The symbolic needs of the PNF were met first with a highly visible urban core and the urgent need of housing and supportive work structures often followed.

Regional Densities of New Towns and *Borghi* and the Significance of the Church Building

The density of the PNF’s placement of new towns and *borghi* throughout Italy was not evenly dispersed. New town and *borgo* construction were greater below Rome [Fig. 1]. Locations for the new enclaves were more numerous close to coastlines, in order to reclaim unusable land. Many new towns and *borghi* were located in the coastal areas of the Pontine Marshland, in Sicily and in Sardinia. Despite Mussolini’s 1929 and 1939 statements that, “Per il Regime, nord e sud non esistono: esiste l’Italia e il popolo italiano,” and, “Non esistono questioni settentrionali o meridionali. Esistono questioni nazionale....,” the job of the PNF ONC

⁶³⁶ Ghirardo, pp. 65-68.

⁶³⁷ Ghirardo, pp. 61-62.

was to clear crowded urban areas, “especially in the south [the *Mezzogiorno*].”^{638 639} Therefore, the regions below Rome received more new “fascist towns” than the rest of Italy.

In addition, the hierarchical position of the Catholic Church building within the new communities is examined in this section of the dissertation. The changing attitude of the PNF toward the Vatican and religious education after 1929 – the year of the controversial Italian Concordat – was visible in the PNF enclaves, since most towns and *borghi* were built after the Italian Concordat. Planners included churches in all new town and most *borghi* master plans. The larger towns, Littoria, Sabaudia, and Pontinia, all built after 1929, had more than one center, which allowed the church to be separated from the political center. The religious sector of the town was often grandiose and required a large portion of the funding, thus the inclusion of a church, often with a bell tower, baptistery and housing for a priest and nuns was not an insignificant financial matter. Since the South received more new communities than other regions of Italy, it seems that the presence of a church in the urban plans had other rewards for the PNF. The presence of a Catholic Church in each new community assisted the PNF’s efforts to win acceptance and membership in their national political organization. Herbert Schneider, professor of religion and philosophy at Columbia University, noted in 1936 that

The influence of the Church is strongest in the South, and until 1905 (or, for that matter, 1919) a large majority of those who had the right, though probably not the inclination, to vote for deputies refrained from voting in the obedience to the “imprisoned” Pope. After the World War, when the Sicilian priest, Don Struzo, organized the Populist Party, he had a strong following in the South. The Christian labor unions were also strong there. In various ways between 1919 and 1922 the South exercised strong and socialistic pressure on the national

⁶³⁸ *Dizionario Mussoliniano*. (Granarolo: Grafiche Manzoni, 1992), p. 118.

[Translation: “For the Regime, the North and South do not exist: Italy and Italian people exist” [and] “The Question of the North and the South does not exist. National questions exist..”]

⁶³⁹ Ghirardo, p. 45; quote from *L’Opera Nazionale per i Combattenti*. (Rome, 1955), p. 69.

government. And even after 1922 it took the fascist several years and the Lateran Treaty to gain genuine control over it.⁶⁴⁰

Raimundo Panikkar, a scholar of comparative religions, put forth the idea that

...the union between the two [politics and religion] not only embroils religion in compromises that reduce it to a sectarian status, but also loads politics with responsibilities that drive it toward totalitarian attitudes. ...the separation of the two weakens religion by relegating it to a more and more insignificant role, and gives rise to the degeneracy in politics by reducing it to a mere application of techniques or by converting it into a religious ideology.⁶⁴¹

It is widely known that Mussolini was not a sincere Catholic, so the inclusion of the church in the new towns and *borghi* was likely part of the political agenda of the PNF.

New Towns and Villages in Colonial Territories in Africa

The second largest group of new towns (or villages) was founded by *Ente per la Colonizzazione* of Libya. The colonial centers in Africa differ from the new towns and *borghi* on the Italian continent, because of increased need of assistance for the Italian colonists and indigenous population. The assistance needs in the African colonies were pressing, which took precedence over overt PNF rhetoric and propagandistic efforts; however, events promoting the PNF still occurred. There were major differences in climate and construction materials in the new African colonies, compared to the Italian continent, causing highly varied architectural solutions, mostly in the East African colonies. The existence of several different religious institutions within each city was unique to the colonial master plans for new villages. Regardless of the many differences, the African colonies added a new viewpoint for the study of the

⁶⁴⁰ Herbert Schneider, *The Fascist Government of Italy*. (New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1936), p. 10.

⁶⁴¹ Raimundo Panikkar, "Religion or Politics: the Western Dilemma," ed. Peter H. Merkl and Nirian Smart, *Religion and Politics in the Modern World*, New York: NYU Press, 1985, p. 44.

development of the *Casa del Fascio* building, which was reviewed in Chapter Two of this document.

Early New Town and *Borghi* Planning Efforts

One of the first *borghi* to be planned by the ONC (*L'Opera Nazionale per i Combattenti* – Veteran's Association) was in the territory of Sessano, in the swamp area of Piscinara. Sessano was in the municipality of Cisterna of Rome and was inaugurated in 1927, but changed its name to *Borgo Padgora* by a resolution on March 13, 1933, in honor of WWI Fighters who lost their lives on a hill top called Podgora. *Borgo Padgora* later became a part of the new municipality of Littoria, a new town completed in 1932. The planning for the village of workers, whose main task was to reclaim the land from the swamp, began in 1927 by the *Bonifica* (reclamation) of Piscinara. The work was assigned to engineers Natale Prampolini, Enrico Nasi and Alberto Conforti. A second group of buildings was added to *Borgo Padgora* in 1928 and the entire new enclave was officially inaugurated in 1929.⁶⁴²

The *Borgo Padgora* buildings were constructed of *tufo* (local stone), cement and brick. The village consisted of seven dormitory houses, which accommodated fifty workers each, a medical building, food pantry, *carabinieri* barracks, and some warehouse buildings, which were planned for future schools. An *oratorio* (oratory) was built in 1927 for spiritual assistance and was not deemed an actual church [Fig. 2]. *Borgo Padgora* did not have a *Casa del Fascio*, but it was noted in town lore that the rectory, built later in 1928 along with a Catholic Church, was

⁶⁴² "Documents and Testimony for the Recent History of Reclamation by Association among the Pioneers of Paludi Pontine" in *ECONOMY PONTINA*, October, 1964.

used for years as the seat of the PNF. A Post Office, a *Dopolavoro*, and cinema were added in 1929.⁶⁴³

By contrast, *Borgo Segezia* in Puglia marked the mature years of the PNF's new town and *borghi* building program. Architect Concezio Petrucci, who had designed the winning entry for the new town Aprilia and Pomezia with M. Tufaroli, P. E. Filiberto, and Riccardo Silenzi, designed a massive central core for the *Borgo* of Segezia in 1939-1940, consisting of an eleven-story tower, a three-story arched *Comune*, a large church and an amply sized *Casa del Fascio*, which would accommodate a large new community [Figs. 3-4]. The adjoining residences to support the agricultural production of the *borgo*, as per the proposed master plan, were not constructed, thus the new center seems disproportionately sized for the modest surroundings [Figs. 5-6]. Farmsteads were spread far beyond the center of *Borgo Segezia*, but despite the distance, farmers and their families did utilize the public and religious buildings in the center of the hamlet. *Borgo Segezia* had a visibly isolated quality, clear demonstrating the power of a "fascist town" in a desolate landscape. The architect, Concezio Petrucci, was immersed in numerous studies and competitions of PNF planning during the same years as his design for *Borgo Segezia*. Petrucci designed other *borghi*, several new towns, and reworked the urban fabric of larger cities during this period in the late 1930s, thus making his design work a valuable testimony for an idealized layout for a PNF enclave, and for an idealized version of a *Casa del Fascio*.

⁶⁴³ Ibid.

Master Planning Studies for New Towns and *Borghi*

In 1933, seven years prior to the construction of *Borgo Segezia*, studies were done by the *L'istituto Vittorio Emanuele III per il Bonificamento della Sicilia* and in 1937, Giuseppe Tassinari presented the findings in Palermo.⁶⁴⁴ The study to create small enclaves in Sicily gave guidance to Italian architects in laying out towns of differing sizes in other areas of the country. Three types of towns, based on the population size and the need of service, were suggested by the Sicilian organization for the new rural centers. There were at least 27 new centers built in Sicily after the 1933 study. The model plan for the smallest rural center consisted of six buildings: a cappella, a school/OND building, an *osteria/bottega*, a transportation/post office/telephone hub, a *dispensario medico* (medical dispensary), and an electric building [Fig.7]. There was no *Casa del Fascio* in the smallest enclave, just an OND, which managed leisure activities for the community. The six buildings surrounded one central *piazza*. The medium size rural center consisted of ten buildings: a church with an entry plaza and bell tower, house for the parish, a sizable school, a transportation hub, a medical dispensary, a *Casa del Fascio*, an office for social services, and an urban *piazza* with a fountain [Fig. 8]. An *osteria/bottega*, an *artigiano* building and electrical utility building occupied their own secondary “commercial” *piazza*. The *Casa del Fascio* had a central position in the major *piazza*, with the entry and balcony facing into it. No tower was included and the flagpole was positioned directly on the *Casa del Fascio*. A larger flagpole was located in the *piazza* in front of the adjacent school. The *Casa del Fascio* included a large *salone*, office for the *Sindicati*, the PNF, the OND, and had a large separate office for the *Podestà* [Fig. 9]. The typical plan for the largest rural center consisted of fifteen buildings and two *piazze* [Fig. 10]. The main *piazza* included the

⁶⁴⁴ Mangione, Flavio, *Le Case del Fascio*. (Pubblicazioni degli Archivi di Stato, Roma, 2003), p. 104.

same elements as the medium size *borgo*. Additional buildings surrounded a second *piazza*, which was the commercial center for the *borgo*. A third minor zone provided assistance to vehicles, horses and included an essential blacksmith shop. Additional peripheral buildings addressed the sanitation needs of the *borgo*. Buildings for leisure activities, such as a canteen, *tabacchi*, and *forno* occupied the urban entrance into the *borgo* with a focus on the main façade of the church. The *Casa del Fascio* in the largest rural center had a small vertical projection (not quite a tower) and a balcony that faced an open *piazza* [Fig. 11]. The *Casa del Fascio* included all of the same room designations as in the medium model – the OND, the *Sindacato*, a *salone*, and a PNF room – with the exception that the rooms were larger in size. The entrance into the *Podestà* office was isolated from the other rooms in the larger *borgo* model.⁶⁴⁵

Borgo Antonino Cascino (Enna) was an example of the small model town with six buildings, constructed in Sicily to take advantage of mineral deposits of potassium in Pasquasia.⁶⁴⁶ *Borgo Cascino* was named after General Cascino, who died in WWI. *Borgo Cascino* was designed by architect Giuseppe Marletta, between 1940 and 1941 [Fig. 12]. The town was built from local red stone from the nearby quarry of Sabbucina [Fig. 13]. *Borgo Cascino* consisted of a church and bell tower, a building that included a PNF room, a *Podestà*, a Post Office, *caserma* for the *carabinieri*, “artiginal” buildings, a *trattoria*, and a medical facility [Figs. 14-15]. At a distance, the church *campanile* of *Borgo Cascino* was most dominant architectural structure in the landscape. The electric utility building, a necessary *borgo* component, also appeared as a tower on the horizon [Fig. 16]. The *Torre Littoria*, which may never have been built, was to have been a free-standing element in front of the PNF building on

⁶⁴⁵ Mangione, Flavio, *Le Case del Fascio*, Pubblicazioni degli Archivi di Stato, Roma, 2003, pp. 104-7.

⁶⁴⁶ Giuseppe Speciale, “Credito agrario, colonizzazione e bonifica in Sicilia,” *Dossier: I Borghi Rurali*, no. 47/ 2014, pp. 25-29.

axis with one of the entry roads, while the other road, the main means of entry into the *piazza*, focused on the church façade [Fig. 17]. The master plan for *Borgo Cascino* was similar to the 1936 layout of the new town of Aprilia in the Pontine Marshes.

New Towns and the *Casa del Fascio* Ranking in the Town Square

Littoria, Sabaudia and Pontinia, the three new towns from the Pontine Marshes near Rome, were towns with dominant central squares and secondary religious squares [Figs. 18-20]. The *Casa del Fascio* building was included in the main squares of Littoria (1932) and Sabaudia (1933-1934), but not in the main square of Pontina (1935) [Figs. 21-23]. A *Comune* building, with a *torre littoria* and balcony, occupied the main square in both Littoria and Sabaudia. The *Casa del Fascio*, in both towns, was given a secondary position within the square. Pontinia's *Casa del Fascio* was missing from the main square entirely.

The three towns of Littoria, Sabaudia and Pontinia had secondary religious squares. Littoria and Pontinia had similar religious square master plans. In the new town designs of Littoria and Pontinia, the church dominated both secondary squares and was adjacent to the ONB (*Opera Nazionale Balilla*), the PNF's central education center for the youngest fascists [Figs. 24-25]. Lingering discord, regarding the education of the young, followed the 1929 Italian Concordat into the 1930s. The Vatican and the Catholic Action group did not want to dissolve their youth teaching programs, as was advocated by the PNF; the PNF did not want the Catholic Church to be engaged in programs that rivaled the PNF's youth programs. Most important to the PNF were their physical fitness classes for the youth, which reinforced the image of the strong and athletic fascist. The presence of the ONB in the church square was not an accidental decision. The Seat of the Association for mothers and widows was located opposite of the ONB,

on the other side of the church square in Littoria.⁶⁴⁷ Ten years after the initial construction of the town of Littoria, a second PNF headquarters was constructed, next to the church square, which rivaled the church in size. The new *Casa del Fascio* was designed in 1938-1942 to be an “M” in plan by Oriolo Frezzotti, the original architect of the town of Littoria [Fig. 26].

Sabaudia was constructed in the Pontine Marshlands between 1933 and 1934. Eugenio Montuori, Gino Cancellotti, Luigi Piccinato, and Alfredo Scalpelli won the commission for the master plan through a national competition. The *Casa del Fascio* was located in the main square, *Piazza della Rivoluzione*, with the *Comune*, cinema-theater and shops [Fig. 27]. The *Casa del Fascio* was not as visually prominent as the other major buildings in Sabaudia and occupied a corner site [Fig. 28]. At a distance, the tower of the *Comune* and the church *campanile*, rather than the *Casa del Fascio* tower, dominated Sabaudia's skyline [Fig. 29]. A view down the main street suggests that the hierarchy of towers was further reinforced by the materials employed. The *Comune* tower and the church *campanile* were clad in travertine, whereas the shorter *Casa del Fascio* tower was constructed in brick [Fig. 30]. The *Comune* tower clearly dominated the town of Sabaudia, because of its height and prominent axial location relative to the entry street. The *Comune's torre littoria* and balcony faced the main square. An extended balcony also faced into a large yard to the left of the tower, which was part of *Piazza della Rivoluzione* and used for mass gatherings [Fig. 31]. Sabaudia's *Chiesa dell'Annunziata* occupied its own square surrounded by a baptistery, a house for a priest and the nuns, and an *asilo* (nursery school) [Fig. 32]. The ONB was several blocks away from both the main square and the church square.

⁶⁴⁷ Photos show the building as the *Casa del Combattenti* (Veteran's Association).

Pontinia, inaugurated in 1935, had a secondary church square similar to Littoria and Sabaudia, but the *Casa del Fascio* was not located in either of Pontinia's town squares [Figs. 33-34]. The Pontinia *Casa del Fascio* was positioned on a major tree-lined street with its own shallow *piazza* and a set-back tower without a balcony [Fig. 35]. The central *Comune* building in Pontinia had an embedded tower and balcony, located symmetrically on one side of the main square [Fig. 36]. The location of a *torre littoria* and balcony in the main square of smaller towns and *borghi* often occurred, but not on the *Casa del Fascio*. The *torre littoria* was the visible part of most singular *Casa del Fascio* in large cities and existing towns, but the *torre littoria* was repositioned to be part of the *Comune* building in most new towns. The *torre littorio* was the symbol of the PNF and embodied the necessary visual cues to remind Italians of their connection to Rome and Mussolini. The *Casa del Fascio* building, with no tower or balcony, was relegated to its functional tasks in most new towns and was not the place for the balcony appearance of a PNF dignitary or Mussolini.

The growing activity of film viewing, generally located in singular *Casa del Fascio* in other cities, was instead located in a separate building in the new towns. *Borghi* generally did not have cinemas. The cinema was given a prominent location in the main squares of the new towns of Pontinia, Sabaudia, and Carbonia.

In contrast to Littoria, Sabaudia, and Pontinia, the *Casa del Fascio*, in the town of Guidonia, was placed in a prominent location in the master plan [Fig. 37]. The *Casa del Fascio* was placed on axis with the main entry street and was the most prominent building within the civic center [Fig. 38]. The master plan was designed by architects G. Calza Bini, G. Nicolosi, and G. Cancellotti, who was one of the Sabaudia designers. The church had a notable position

within the master plan, located on a hill at the end of a tree-lined street. The church was located in the secondary *piazza*, as were the churches in Sabaudia, Pontinia, and Littoria [Fig. 39].

The modernist architectural language of Guidonia set it apart from the other new towns, except for Sabaudia, which was often used as the symbol of modernism during the fascist era. The architectural language of Guidonia and Sabaudia was inconsistent within the rhetoric of the other new towns and *borghi*, which were rendered with a traditionally simple architecture. The *Casa del Fascio* stands out, in particular, in Guidonia, because the building was raised on *pilotis* (columns), and had horizontally aligned windows and a flat roof. Ghirardo noted that the housing in Guidonia followed a more traditional direction, thus combining the two architectural approaches within one town.⁶⁴⁸

The new town of Aprilia was inaugurated in 1936, after the process of a national competition with twenty-five groups of competitors. The entries were considered by the jury, “a somma semplicità (...) rifuggendo dall’ impiego di parti decorative non sobrie.”⁶⁴⁹ The winners were C. Petrucci, M. Tufaroli, P. E. Filiberto, and Riccardo Silenzi [Fig. 40, Fig. 41]. The *torre littoria* dominated the town center of Aprilia, located in the open rectangular *piazza*, seen from both approaching streets. The tower had a grand staircase, which led to the balcony from the exterior of the tower [Fig. 42]. The church was also strongly present, because of its size and towering *campanile*. The church had its own defined exterior plaza, slightly elevated in the main square. The Aprilia *Casa del Fascio*, was located across from the church. Similar to the Pomezia *Casa del Fascio*, also designed by C. Petrucci’s group, the Aprile *Casa del Fascio* was a brick building with geometric

⁶⁴⁸ Ghirardo, *Italy*, p. 117.

⁶⁴⁹ www.edilia200.it/aprilia_5-2-2492.html

[Translation: “ in general simplicity (...) eschewing the busy-ness of decorative pieces that are not sober”]

windows, framed by white travertine. The Aprile *Casa del Fascio* did not have any identifying tower, which faced into the *piazza*, but the *Casa del Fascio* did have a large balcony facing the athletic fields at the rear of the building [Fig. 43]. Designed after the 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* competition, the slightly concaved rear façade of the Aprile *Casa del Fascio* was reminiscent of the Terragni-Vietti's *Palazzo del Littorio* scheme "A" that was intended to amplify Mussolini's voice to all of Rome [Fig. 44].

Aprilia's center square, although not architecturally innovative, was compositionally complex. The PNF buildings: the *Comune* and *Casa del Fascio*, among others – were not individually recognizable as singular buildings, but were meshed together forming a 'fascist town.' The arched arcades connected the tower to the brick building facades at one corner of the *piazza*, while being part of a continuous arcade on the other side of the church. A series of arcades visibly tied the whole central square together.

Adalberto Libera's failed competition proposal for Aprilia, un-meshed the town components [Fig. 45]. The church and the *Casa del Fascio* were equally supporting buildings to the more dominant *Comune*, which was located in a central position. Both the church and *Casa del Fascio* in Libera's scheme, included towers (in the perspective, but not in the urban plan). The church had a campanile and the *Casa del Fascio* had a simple rectangular tower to represent the PNF.

Built between 1938 and 1939, C. Petucci and his group had also designed the new town of Pomezia [Figs. 46-47]. The town of Pomezia, similar to Aprilia, Sabaudia, and Littoria, included a *Casa del Fascio* in the main square, also subordinate to the other buildings in the square. The church, similar to Aprilia, was located in the main square in Pomezia, as there was no secondary square.

The *torre littoria* in Pomezia was situated in front of the *Comune* and was the dominate structure in the main square [Fig. 48]. The tower had a base of arches, which repeated the architectural language of Aprile and its arcades. A tower with a balcony had been planned for the rear of the *Casa del Fascio*, but was not included in the final design. The *Casa del Fascio* bore a strong resemblance to the Aprilia *Casa del Fascio*, with brick cladding and travertine details [Fig. 49]. The church *campanile* was positioned behind an arcade, which allowed the *torre littoria* to have the more dominant appearance in the town square. The Pomezia *Casa del Fascio* did not have a tower, but had a balcony, which indicated that the building was a *Casa del Fascio*, with lion heads and two huge stone *fasci* on both sides of the entry portal.

The status of the *Casa del Fascio* in Pomezia revealed that by 1939, its rank, as a building in a civic center, and its location were no different than the earlier 1933 Sabaudia *Casa del Fascio*; within the hierarchy of civic buildings, the *Comune*, was still the most important building in the new small towns. One could speculate that the *Comune* represented the local town as the primary building and that the *Casa del Fascio* was merely an arm for the central PNF in Rome, thus reducing the need to be represented with a tower of its own, as in other cities. The new towns identified themselves as "fascist towns," therefore the ensemble of buildings, which created a backdrop for the *torre littoria*, was more powerful than the singular *Casa del Fascio* building representing the PNF.

Borghi and the Village Green

In 1928, starting with the new town of Mussolinia in Sardinia, the PNF "created at least twelve New towns in Italy, along with roughly sixty smaller villages or service centers (*borghi*), several areas of newly developed farmland; and a few mining and industrial

centres.”⁶⁵⁰ By November of 1937, seventeen *borghi* were constructed by the *Opera Nazionale Combattenti* in the Agro Pontino, around the principal larger towns of Littoria, Sabaudia, Pontinia and Aprilia.⁶⁵¹ ⁶⁵² Piccinato, one of the architects of Sabaudia, noted that

each group of farms has a ‘Borgo’ (the elemental urban unit) as their head, in which there was to be an office of the Agricultural Concern of the *Opera Nazionale per i Combattenti*, chapel, first aid station, school, post office, and grocery store. The office of the Agricultural Concern was to oversee the direction, administration, and assistance of their respective group of farms.⁶⁵³

Some *borghi* rivaled the size of the towns and the distinction between the two – *borgo* or town – was hard to discern. Architectural historian Henry Millon noted the size variation between the town of Aprilia and the *Borgo Vodice*, which was actually larger. Millon explained that the size was a factor of “Italian economic and political theory of the period.”⁶⁵⁴

Henry Millon wrote about *Borgo Vodice*, a small “village,” built in the early 1930s around the larger town of Sabaudia [Fig. 50].⁶⁵⁵ Each of the towns in the Pontine Marshes was planned for 9,000 surrounding farmers, who depended on the central larger town for most of their services.⁶⁵⁶ In the case of *Borgo Vodice*, the chapel was the dominant building in the open town green of the village [Fig. 51]. The building for the veterans of the ONC and for machinery was on the side of the town green as were the Post Office and grocery store. A school was

⁶⁵⁰ Mia Fuller, “Tradition as a means to the end of tradition: Farmers’ houses in Italy’s fascist-era new towns,” in *The End of Tradition?* Edited by Nezar AlSayyad, (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 171.

⁶⁵¹ Nallo Mazzocchi Alemanni, *La Conquista Rurale dell’Agro Pontino*, no. 10-11, Ottobre-Novembre 1937 XV-XVI, (Rome: Stabilimento Tipografico Ditta Carlo Colombo), p. 5.

⁶⁵² The *borghi* of Borgo Monte Nero, Borgo Ermada, Borgo Vodice, Borgo Pasubio, Borgo S. Michele, Borgo Grappa, Borgo Isonzo, Borgo Faiti, Borgo Padgora, Borgo Sabotino, Borgo Piave, Borgo Montello, Borgo Bainsizza, Borgo Carso, S. Donato are identified on the map titled “L’Appoderamento dell’Agro Pontino” in *La Conquista Rurale dell’ Agro Pontino*, p. 101.

⁶⁵³ Piccinato, 1934, in Henry A. Millon, “Some New Towns in Italy in the 1930s,” in H. A. Millon, and L. Nochlin (eds.), *Art and Architecture in the Service of Politics*, (London: MIT Press, 1978), p. 335.

⁶⁵⁴ Millon, p. 335.

⁶⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 332.

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

positioned at the rear of the town green behind the chapel. The *Dopolavoro*, the closest equivalent to a *Casa del Fascio*, was located on a nearby corner. Millon added that the war monument commemorating the WWI dead, in the central town green, were actual relatives of the townspeople, who had moved from the North. Millon called it “instant history for the families.”⁶⁵⁷ The only tower in the town was the water tower, which had the *fascio* emblem at its top [Fig. 52]

In 1935, engineer M. Quaglino, developed a diagram of a typical rural *borgata* master plan for the institution, *Corsorzio di Bonifica della Capitanata*, in the Puglia region. The master plan included a town green with a church at the pinnacle. A *Casa del Fascio* and a school were combined as one building on the right side of the church, which included a *palestra* and the OND [Fig. 53].⁶⁵⁸ Quaglino’s design of a typical “village” master plan was the model for *Borgo Le Serpe* (Mezzanone) in 1938 [Fig. 54].⁶⁵⁹ ⁶⁶⁰ The *Casa del Fascio* and school were separated in *Borgo Le Serpe*, both located on each side of the central church.⁶⁶¹ A larger *borgo*, named Daunilia, was planned in 1939, with a *Comune* as the head building, similar to Adalberto Libera’s 1936 design for the Aprilia competition. The *Casa del Fascio* and the church in the Daunilia master plan were considered equivalent institutions, as they were located on either side of the *Comune*, each with their own *piazza*. The *Comune* and the church both had towers [Fig. 55].⁶⁶²

⁶⁵⁷ Millon, p. 332.

⁶⁵⁸ Ennio Corvaglia and Mauro Scionti, *Il Piano Introvabile, Architettura e Urbanistica nella Puglia Fascista*, Bari: Edizioni Dedalo, 1985, p. 36.

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁰ Date varies in Arturo Cucciolla, *Vecchie Città/Città Nuove*, Concezio Petrucci 1926-1946 (Bari: Edizioni Dedalo, 2006), p. 266.

⁶⁶¹ Corvaglia, p. 48.

⁶⁶² Corvaglia, p. 53.

Borghi and New Towns: Architect Concezio Petrucci with Gruppo “2PST”

Segezia, a *borgo* in the Foggia region, designed by Architect Concezio Petrucci, was one of the most sensational examples of a *borgo*, because of its eleven-story *torre littoria* and unique church façade decorated with inserted ceramic tiles [Figs. 56-57]. In sharp contrast to the built-up Segezia center, was the lack of density around the *borgo*, as farmland occupied the surrounding land for many miles. The group of architectural buildings in *Borgo Segezia* merit study for their architectural quality. Concezio Petrucci and his associates were responsible for several significant new rural enclaves for the ONC in diverse areas of Italy: Fertilia in 1935-1939 (Sardegna), Aprilia in 1936 (Pontine Marshes), Pomezia in 1937 (Pontine Marshes), and Segezia in 1939-1940 (Puglia). Except for new town of Fertilia, all had asymmetrical layouts, entry roads at non-central points of the main *piazza*, and a direct focus on a tower, which was often separate from any buildings.

Fertilia was located in the province of Sassari in Sardegna and was an agricultural town with a dependent *borgo* of its own [Figs. 58-59].⁶⁶³ Petrucci designed the town of Fertilia with Gruppo “2PST” (C. Petrucci, E.F. Paolini, R. Silenzi, M. Tufaroli), who also designed Aprilia and Pomezia. The master plan of Fertilia was symmetrical, but the elevations of the major buildings reveal the asymmetry of the scheme, since both the *Comune torre littoria* and the church *campanile* were not symmetrically situated in the master plan, and were dominant features. The main *piazza* in Fertilia opened directly to the port and the town green extended to the water [Fig. 60]. The town buildings that bordered the central road in Fertilia had arcaded passageways, which led toward a semi-circular *piazza* for the church. The church was fully clad in brick with a series of arched walkways at its base. The *Casa del Fascio* in Fertilia was in a

⁶⁶³ Mia Fuller, “Tradition as a means to the end of tradition: Farmers’ houses in Italy’s fascist-era new towns,” in *The End of Tradition?* Edited by Nezar AlSayyad, /Rutledge, London, 2004, p. 184.

secondary location in the master plan, located to the left of the entire entry sequence [Figs. 61-62]. The *Casa del Fascio* consisted of a two-story stucco building and a short tower with a balcony, which fronted a secondary plaza.

Aprilia and Pomezia were designed by Petrucci and his group after the design of Fertilia, which had a symmetrical master plan with asymmetrically placed towers. By comparison to Fertilia, Aprilia and Pomezia demonstrated different urban solutions. Both Aprilia and Pomezia were singular center towns with a *Comune*, a church and a *Casa del Fascio*. Two towers existed in both Aprilia and Pomezia, with the church *campanile* visibly secondary in rank to the town *torre littoria*. In Aprilia, the *campanile* was embedded into the building mass next to the church; in Pomezia, the *campanile* was located behind the church façade in a cloister. The *torre littoria* was near to the *Comune* in both Aprilia and Pomezia and was positioned as an isolated tower, within the main square. Both towns had a series of arcades that linked the major buildings together. In both Aprilia and Pomezia, neither of the *Casa del Fascio* had towers.

The urban entry and street configurations in both Aprilia and Pomezia were also different from Fertilia. Whereas the Fertilia plan opened up to a port, Aprilia and Pomezia created enclosed urban squares. In Aprilia, the *torre littoria* was clearly meant to be seen from two major tree-lined entry roads; one coming from Rome and the other from Littoria, the major Pontine Marshland town. Roads were asymmetrically shifted to the edges or non-central points of the main square in Aprilia to focus on the *torre littoria*, similar to the urban planning strategy in Sabaudia.

Concezia Petrucci's masterpiece was his last rural center design for *Borgo Segezia* in 1940. The urban layout was a rectangular plan with arms stretched out in four directions. The roads penetrated the open rectangle at non-central points. An article in *Architettura*, from 1943,

compared the urban layout to a star or a Greek cross, which reached out to the countryside.⁶⁶⁴ Vertically, Borgo Segezia revealed a modernized “classical” language of arches and columns to convey a message to the countryside of the PNF’s connection to a historical past, much like the “column and arch” language of l’EUR in its final design. The varied parts of this small enclave came from Petrucci’s desire to make *Borgo Segezia* picturesque, like his region of the Gargano; at the same time, he said that he wanted a grand center similar to those found in Puglia.⁶⁶⁵ *Borgo Segezia* was a three-dimensional theater of historical architectural references. The various architectural forms of rectangular columns, arches, and curving cornices were tied together by the local stone and materials of the region. The façade of the Church of the *Immacolata di Fatima* and the *Canonica dal Chiostro* (cloister) were treated with a tactile craft-made cladding. The geometric church façade was articulated with small glazed ceramic images, all in colorful squares, set within the stone face [Fig. 63]. The *Chiostro*’s cornice was whimsical with a wave-like top. The *Comune* had a monolithic façade of repetitive arches, a prelude to the *Palazzo della Civiltà* to be completed in 1942 at l’EUR [Fig. 64]. The *Casa del Fascio* and the remaining buildings around the square were merely background, clad with stucco and local stone [Fig. 65]. Round portal windows on the side of the *Casa del Fascio*, similar to the 1939 *Mario Asso* GRF building in Milan, suggested that its design came from the PNF and not directly from Petrucci, however, there are design drawings from Petrucci’s design studio for the *Casa del Fascio* [Fig. 66].

⁶⁶⁴ “Il centro comunale di Segezia, *Architettura*, 1943, no. 2-3, p. 178.

⁶⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 179.

A Traditional *Borgo* and a Modern New Town: Architects Calza Bini and Nicolini

Borgo Incoronata was planned in the same year as *Borgo* Segezia, in 1939, but remained in construction until 1943. Both *borghi* were located in the Foggia region. The master plan of *Borgo* Incoronata was designed by Giorgio Calza Bini and Roberto Nicolini, who had competed to be the architects of the master plans of Aprilia and Pomezia, and had been the architects for the town of Guidonia in 1937 [Figs. 67-68]. *Borgo* Incoronata consisted of a central square with a *Comune* as an isolated building in its center. The three penetrating roads intersected the urban square at the corners and were slightly shifted to be on axis with the church and the tower of the *Casa del Fascio*. The *Comune* was designed with a series of parabolic arches at its base and was clad in stone [Fig.69]. The tower of the *Casa del Fascio* was clad in the same stone as the *Comune*, with the remaining buildings in the square clad in stucco [Fig.70]. The design and year of the church cannot be confirmed and seems architecturally inconsistent with the original composition of the town. Shops, a transportation hub, and apartments surrounded the square. The *Casa del Fascio* was located in a corner adjacent to the school. An *asilo* (nursery school) and a *palestra* were planned for the block to the rear of the *Casa del Fascio*, but had not been built. Calza Bini and Nicolini's unusual placement of the *Comune* in the center of the urban square formed two *piazze*: one surrounded by the civic and religious buildings, and the other *piazza* surrounded by the residential and commercial life of *Borgo* Incoronata.

A comparison of *Borgo* Incoronata and the town of Guidonia show little in common. Guidonia was one of the only towns with a dominant *Casa del Fascio* and had two centers – one civic and the other religious. *Borgo* Incoronata, because of its status as a rural *borgo*, contained all of its buildings in one square with the *Comune* as the dominant building. The architectural aesthetics differed greatly, with Calza Bini and Nicolini clearly following the influence of Le

Corbusier in their *Casa del Fascio* design in Guidonia. The modernism was acknowledged by the PNF, when Mussolini announced from the *arengo* on Guidonia's inauguration Day in 1937, "L'architettura fascista è solida, ridente e moderna, degna del nostro tempo."⁶⁶⁶ The architecture of the Guidonia church, also designed by Calza Bini and Nicolini, mimicked an airplane in plan with outstretched wings and its elevation contained a central rose window, which gave homage to the aeronautical mission of the town. In contrast, *Borgo Incoronata*, also designed by Calza Bini and Nicolini, displayed a rural and regional aesthetic with parabolic arches, stone clad facades, and references to medieval town halls, which occasionally sat in the center of *piazze*.⁶⁶⁷

Industrial New Towns

The industrial town of Mussolinia, in Sardinia, is one of the earliest new towns built in 1928 [Fig. 71]. The *Casa del Fascio* was added in 1934 beyond the Mussolinia civic center [Fig. 72]. The original 1928 center included a prominent church with a *campanile* that faced the town green [Figs. 73-74]. Directly across the town green was the *Comune*, flanked by a school and a hotel [Fig. 75]. The adjacent block included housing and a barracks building. The factory occupied a separate zone, which was the ultimate location for the *Casa del Fascio* that was accessible to the workers.

The industrial town of Carbonia, also in Sardinia, was designed in 1937 by Ignazio Guidi and Cesare Valle. Carbonia contained a major *piazza* at the end of the entry road, *Via Roma* [Figs. 76-77]. The church was on axis with the entry road, but the *torre littoria*, built

⁶⁶⁶ Mussolini, *Dizionario Mussoliniana*, (Milano" Hoepli, 1939), p. 3.

[Translation: "Fascist architecture is solid, pleasing and modern, worthy of our time"]

⁶⁶⁷ See discussion of the precedents for Guidonia in Antonio Pennacchi's *Fascio e Martello* which notes the possible precedent for the placement of the church on the hill as an acropolis and the town center as a foro. The castrum precedent was also discussed. See pages 166-174.

from rough-hewn stone, dominated the *piazza*. Gustavo Pulitzer-Finali designed the *Casa del Fascio* with the massive *torre littoria*. The *torre littoria* was typical of the later versions of towers that were widened to have functional space beyond a staircase and a *sacrario* [Fig. 78]. The *Casa del Fascio* was adjacent to an immense cinema run by the OND [Fig.79]. The church *campanile*, also made of stone, was diminutive by comparison to the *torre littoria* of the *Casa del Fascio*. Images of Mussolini on the generous balcony, with large crowds below, were well publicized. Groups of people also occupied the top of the *torre littoria*, which was adorned with ample loudspeakers.

Torviscosa, located in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region, was an industrial new town planned jointly by the PNF and by SNIA (*Società Navigazione Industriale Applicazione*), which produced the synthetic fiber called viscose. The “*città nuova*” program of the PNF promoted collaboration with industry to create new jobs and economic possibilities for Italians. Franco Marinotti was the president of SNIA and was the founder of Torviscosa.⁶⁶⁸ Marinotti’s background as the vice-mayor of Milan, the president of the Province of Milan, his upbringing and education in the Veneto, and his experience with a Russian-Italian silk textile company was useful in the creation of a new industrial town in the northern Veneto region.⁶⁶⁹ Industrial new towns that served as models for Torviscosa were FIAT, Pirelli and Breda.⁶⁷⁰ Marinotti also had experience with the creation of new *borghi* around the Milan region when he was in a leadership position; therefore, he had some knowledge of town planning and transportation systems. Train transportation in the zone of the proposed town of Torviscosa was a great benefit because the railway system was already established, which aided in the construction of

⁶⁶⁸ Robert H. Kargon and Arthur P. Molella, “Techno-Città: Technology and Urban Design in Fascist Italy,” *Invented Edens*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), pp. 47-8.

⁶⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁶⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

the town. There was also high unemployment in the northern zone of the Veneto, which made for a ready work force.⁶⁷¹

The economic sanctions placed on Italy by the League of Nations in 1935, due to Italy's invasion of Ethiopia, caused SNIA to research and develop textile materials, since Italians could not import them. The textile material developed by SNIA came from the reed fibers of sweet cane, which had to be cultivated. Torviscosa was therefore, an agricultural town born from a land reclamation effort, changing swampland into usable farm land, and then was an industrial factory town that produced the materials from the cultivated cane product.⁶⁷² The private company, SNIA, acquired 6,000 hectares of swamp land and used 1,200 hectares for the agricultural fields. Torviscosa did receive funding from the PNF, as well as rental monies for the use of the *Comune* on the privately owned land.⁶⁷³

The architect of Torviscosa was Giuseppe de Min, a relative of Marinotti, who designed the master plan for a city of 20,000 inhabitants, which was scaled back to a town of 5,000 inhabitants. De Min based his master plan on new "company" town models from America, England and Germany.⁶⁷⁴ Construction began after plans were completed 1937, which was followed by an inauguration 320 days later by Benito Mussolini on September 21, 1938.⁶⁷⁵ Many elements of the town were not in place until the 1940s.⁶⁷⁶

Torviscosa was located south of the train line and the west half of Torviscosa contained housing, civic, religious, athletic, and leisure activities [Figs. 80-82]. The east half of the town

⁶⁷¹ Ibid.

⁶⁷² Ibid., p. 54.

⁶⁷³ Ibid., p. 56-8.

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 56.

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid.

contained the main entry, the *Piazza Autarchia*, and the factory buildings of SNIA. The master plan was structured on the west side of the entry road with formal greens, rows of trees, boulevards and nodes of urban space unlike other new towns further south in Italy. Unique to Torviscosa was the placement of buildings within green areas, which was less urban than the other Italian new towns with *piazze* bordered by the church, *Comune* and *Casa del Fascio*. The entry into the residential precinct contained the cinema/theater and *Dopolavoro*, which was well-located for the workers to rest on their way home from the factory. The *Dopolavoro* was operated by,

Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro, a national organization established in 1925 to promote safe and healthy working conditions and the efficient employment of workers. Not only did it strive to ameliorate their physical conditions; it also looked after their moral and spiritual well-being, in keeping with Fascist precepts.⁶⁷⁷

The OND organized activities from plays to training courses and sporting events for the SNIA employees.⁶⁷⁸ The Torviscosa *Dopolavoro* satisfied some of the operations normally held in a typical *Casa del Fascio*.

The new town of Torviscosa had a lavish sports complex, complete with a swimming pool, tennis and bocce courts, which were located to the north of the master plan. Centrally located and on axis with the town green were two centers, the largest of which was occupied by the *Comune* with a centrally placed clock tower [Fig. 83]. The tower included an *arengario* that faced a huge *piazza* called the *Piazza dell' Impero*. An arcade of arches formed the base of the building, tower and adjacent buildings on the square. The *Comune* building was not symmetrically placed behind the *torre littoria*, but was connected to the *Casa del Fascio* at the

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 56.

⁶⁷⁸ Maurizio Scaini, "Utopia and Fascist foundation cities; the case of Torviscosa," in Antonio L. Palmisano, ed. *Dada Utopia*, n. 10, (Trieste, 2012), p. 316.

rear of the site. The other sides of the square were occupied by housing for the staff of the offices and a large school, which was positioned on a gently curving tree lined boulevard.

A second center was established for the church in Torviscosa, which was positioned on axis with Torviscosa's *Comune* and *torre littoria*. The church had its own *piazza* and street, which was lined with cypress trees. A connection to the housing, both in the north and south of Torviscosa, was emphasized by the tree line street.

The SNIA factory was made of brick, while the rest of the town was clad in stone and stucco; all local materials were used for construction due to the autarchic constraints. Sculptures by Leone Lodi aligned the factory entry near to the sixty meter high information center and tower designed by Cesare Pea [Fig. 84].⁶⁷⁹ Dominating the entire town, not just the factory side, were the two enormous cylindrical chemical towers, linked by a skybridge, which were dressed as two *fasci* [Fig. 85]. The recognizable fascist symbols and the colossal size of the towers were the signature feature of the town, as was the DUX sign on top of the towers.

A Torre Littoria as the Symbolic Marker for the "Fascist Town"

Generally, *Case del Fascio* were placed in a subordinate position in most new towns and *borghi*, compared to the position of the *Comune* or the church in the new enclaves. Most often, the *Comune* was the dominant building because of its location; there were numerous cases of the church dominating an entire urban square. The *torre littoria* and *campanile* played a more duplicitous role. The tower's symbolic connection to any one building was often ambiguous, because the tower was frequently isolated. The *torre littoria* represented the town, rather than

⁶⁷⁹ Robert H. Kargon and Arthur P. Molella, p. 58.

belonging to any one building.⁶⁸⁰ In the small enclaves, when all three buildings – *Comune*, church, and *Casa del Fascio* – shared an urban square, one tower was enough to show the PNF's presence. This tower was the marker at a great distance of a PNF community, claimed by all institutions in the town, including the church. The immense tower in *Borgo Segezia* was labeled as a *campanile* and sat on the church plaza, clad in stone, which matched the church façade. Regardless of the tower's material connection to the church, the impression of the tower, from a distance, was that the tower was marking the town, not any individual building. Upon entry from the west road, which was considered the primary entry road, the tower could have been regarded as belonging to the *Comune* and was drawn as such by C. Petrucci.

The *Casa del Fascio* in each town and *borgo*, with the exception of Guidonia and Carbonia, was architecturally understated.⁶⁸¹ The *Casa del Fascio* was often rendered with a stucco face and rectangular or square windows framed by travertine stone. If the *Casa del Fascio* had a tower, it was clad in stone and much shorter than other towers within the enclave. The *Casa del Fascio* generally faced into the main *piazza* in a secondary position and was often located near the town's school.

The architectural solutions for *Casa del Fascio* in new towns and *borghi* differed greatly. As different as each town and *borgo* were, so were the *Casa del Fascio*. Material selections were often due to need to matching materials in the rest of the enclave. However, even within a materially cohesive master plan, the *Casa del Fascio* was generally treated as a

⁶⁸⁰ Antonio Pennacchi did traffic studies at intersections at numerous *borghi* in *Fascio e Martello*, (Editori Laterza, 2010), that show the relationship of the church, school, *dopolavoro*, tower, and *carabinieri* to one another. Many examples are intersections and are not planned central *piazze*, however several are planned centers as in *Borgo Hermada*, *Borgo Montenero*, and *Borgo Vodice*. Pennacchi also devotes a section of the book to the road structure of numerous *borghi* and studied the relationship of entry roads to the views of significant churches, *torri littorie*, and *campanili*.

⁶⁸¹ The massive tower of the *Casa del Fascio* in Carbonia is an example of the later building type which incorporated usable space in the tower. Unlike Guidonia which had a separate Church zone, Carbonia shared the grand *piazza* with the church, which had a tall and very present *campanile*.

unique entity, not matching the other buildings. I have isolated singular photographs of the *Casa del Fascio* from numerous new towns and *borghi* for a visual comparison without the backdrop of their environment [Fig. 86]. The only *Casa del Fascio* that had any architectural similarity were the two *Casa del Fascio* from Pomezia and Aprilia, which were designed by C. Petruccio and his *Gruppo* “2PST.”

The most important revelation from the study of *Casa del Fascio* in the new towns and *borghi* was the significance of the role of the *torre littoria*, rather than any startling conclusions about the *Casa del Fascio* building. Even though the *Casa del Fascio* occasionally had a tower in the small enclaves; it was generally not the tallest tower in the ensemble of buildings. The *torre littoria*, sited near to the *Comune*, was the dominant tower in the new towns. The *torre littoria* often stood on its own without any building, and represented the PNF’s “fascist town,” funded by the national Party. The need to equip the towns and *borghi* with supportive programs and buildings was essential, but the PNF’s message was of primary importance. When the concepts for new centers were being planned, the question of finding a solution to the “fascist city” was often discussed. In 1928, Ridolfo Mazzucconi wrote in *La Città Fascista*, “sorgerà in Italia un verso movimento architettonico per dare una faccia propria alla città fascista.”⁶⁸² The *torre littoria* was the ultimate solution for adding a Fascist marker to Italy’s landscape, which already had *campanili* and medieval towers marking their past moments of superiority. The growth of new towns and *borghi* contributed to the efforts of the PNF to spread the message of its national presence with the *torre littoria* in the rural areas of Italy. The singular *torre littoria* representing the town was much more effective than the inclusion of a *Casa del Fascio* building

⁶⁸² Ridolfo Mazzucconi, *La Città Fascista*, Edizioni “Maremma” Grosseto, 1928, VI, p. 99.

[Translation: “an architectural movement will grow in Italy to give a proper face to the fascist city”]

in the town with its own tower. The *torre littoria* was the symbol and urban marker for the new
“fascist town.”

Conclusion: The Message of National Identity and the *Casa del Fascio*

The goal of my research was to redefine the *Casa del Fascio*, a building that represented the *Partito Nazionale Fascista*, which was located in most towns and cities on the Italian continent, as well as in the Italian colonial possessions in Africa, from 1922 to 1943. Prevailing historical interpretations have characterized the physical *Casa del Fascio* building as a brick building with a tower and a balcony that hovered over an Italian *piazza*. The name of “*Littorio*,” referring to a stripped-down classicism of the 1930s, was used to describe the architecture of the *Casa del Fascio* building in general histories from the 1970s onward. Authors, such as the architect Peter Eisenman, focused primarily on one building, Giuseppe Terragni’s 1936 *Casa del Fascio* in Como, as an object of architectural design rather than one heavily endowed with a rich political history. Eisenman’s studies of Terragni’s building caused a canonization of the *Casa del Fascio* building in Como as the supreme example of a PNF headquarters building, despite Eisenman’s intentions. The two types of *Casa del Fascio*, one of the “*Littorio*” designation and the other, deemed modern, were designed for the same client, the PNF, and both types of fascist headquarters buildings had to embody the same political message of “nationalism” from the PNF’s central headquarters in Rome. Both types of *Casa del Fascio* interpretations in architecture responded to the PNF’s need for fascist headquarters, which were meant to demonstrate that the national Fascist Party was present in each town and city. The PNF needed buildings in which their constituents could assemble and become members in the larger national organization. There were thousands of the “*Littorio*” type of *Casa del Fascio*; there were even more existing buildings that were modified to be *Casa del Fascio*; there were only a few *Casa del Fascio* that rose to the level of Terragni’s *Casa del Fascio*, with the elegance of architectural

form and surface – yet each *Casa del Fascio* performed its duty to represent the PNF, despite their architect's architectural design.

The *Casa del Fascio* changed over the twenty-plus years of PNF rule, from 1922 to 1943. The change in the architecture of the *Casa del Fascio* followed the cadence of PNF development and its maturation, but the building's modifications, designed by the architects, did not dogmatically follow the exact path of the PNF's development. Major occurrences in the Italian political arena, such as the "Declaration of the Empire," announced after Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935, did not greatly affect the architecture of the local *Casa del Fascio*. By 1936, the *Casa del Fascio* building was well established as a common site in most towns. The PNF Technical Service Department's task was to acquire or build as many *Casa del Fascio* as possible, to gain local fascists members; to give them places to assemble to hear the words from the central PNF. Finding the location for a *Casa del Fascio* was the primary focus of the PNF, as was getting land or buildings donated to the cause. "*Impero*" symbolism, that seemed a likely outcome of the conquests in Africa, was expressed by the renaming of many *piazze* in 1936 to "*Piazze dell'Impero*," but the *Casa del Fascio* building did not become more Roman or Mediterranean or Imperial; nor did the *Casa del Fascio* become less modern. If anything caused the *Casa del Fascio* buildings to retreat into less modern cladding, it was the lack of iron because of foreign and self-imposed sanctions in Italy. Building steel and glass buildings, as were proposed by architecture students in the 1932 design competition for *Casa del Fascio*, was just not possible without the materials. Most designs were based on masonry construction with travertine detailing, which was available and praised by the PNF. Attempts were made by architects to design with local traditional materials to create contemporary buildings. Architects designing the "*Littorio*" buildings believed that they were designing new contemporary buildings. The

“autarchic” choice of materials may have held many architects back, but modern architecture was built without steel and glass, including the *Casa del Fascio* in Como, whose structure was deemed “autarchic.”⁶⁸³

The strategy for my research was to examine the *Casa del Fascio* from numerous and dissimilar vantage points, to garner information from the purposefully isolated studies, and to resist studying the *Casa del Fascio* buildings only as a formal exercise. First, the essential architectural components and the room program of the *Casa del Fascio* were broken down and analyzed separately. Second, the *Casa del Fascio* was studied historically alongside the parallel developments of the PNF, the Vatican, and advances in new broadcasting systems, from 1919 to 1943. Third, the *Casa del Fascio* was examined from the viewpoint of architects, engineers, and surveyors, who were the designers of the PNF headquarters. Hundreds of architects participated in major architectural competitions, sponsored by the PNF, to design *Casa del Fascio* and *Palazzi del Littorio*.⁶⁸⁴ Visual data and juror’s comments about *Casa del Fascio* were published in professional architectural magazines featuring the competitions, primarily *Architettura*. The published material, as well as film reels, and newsprint (an area to research further) guided architects to form their own opinions about the design of *Casa del Fascio*. Fourth, isolating an Italian city to examine the physical and symbolic position of the PNF headquarters building within a city environment, revealed the range of types of *Casa del Fascio* – from the grand *Palazzo del Littorio* to the GRF buildings. The city study revealed the PNF’s preferred locations for *Casa del Fascio*, which was their primary concern, more than the design of the *Casa del Fascio* itself. In addition, analyzing three cities, each separately, in three diverse regions of Italy – North, Central, and South – determined how different regions in Italy were treated by the PNF

⁶⁸³ Alberto Sartoris, *Introduzione alla Architettura Moderna* (Milano: Editore Ulrico Hoepli, 1943 –XXI), p. 39.

⁶⁸⁴ Engineers also participated.

and if the *Casa del Fascio* exhibited any regional variations. Fifth, analyzing the *Casa del Fascio* as part of a new town or new *borgo* permitted the study of the PNF headquarters building in an isolated situation, away from dense urban and existing building fabric. The *Casa del Fascio* building, however, was never truly isolated, as the *Casa del Fascio* became part of a new political and “urban” construct, in a new PNF town or *borgo* ensemble. Each different “lens” of examination revealed an aspect of the *Casa del Fascio* building that brought it closer to its historical place in the Italian political, cultural, and religious context of Italy in the *Ventennio*. The isolated examinations each enriched the historical interpretation of the architecture of *Casa del Fascio* and revealed the hundreds of other interpretations of PNF headquarters by architects other than Terragni.

In response to Terragni’s 1936 inquiry – “What is a *Casa del Fascio*?” – the options were numerous between 1922 and 1943.⁶⁸⁵ A *Casa del Fascio* could be a building with signage that read “*Casa del Fascio*,” which was very common.⁶⁸⁶ A *Casa del Fascio* could be a symbol of itself, in the form of Mussolini’s head or the *fascio*.⁶⁸⁷ A *Casa del Fascio* could be a *palazzo* or an L-shaped building of additive parts with a tower, balcony and a *piazza*. A *Casa del Fascio* could be an existing or modified building. The variety of possible manifestations reveal an acceptance by the PNF of most architectural solutions. The visual character of the *Casa del Fascio* was not as critical to the PNF as were its location and the function of the building to reach the Italian people.

⁶⁸⁵ Giuseppe Terragni, “La costruzione della Casa del Fascio di Como,” *Quadrante* 35-36 (1936), translation by Diane Ghirardo in Peter Eisenman, *Giuseppe Terragni Transformations Decompositions Critiques* (New York : The Monacelli Press, 2003), p. 265.

⁶⁸⁶ The *Casa del Fascio* that is recognizable by signage or by literally being a *fascio* or the head of Mussolini, is similar in spirit to Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown’s concept of the “decorated shed” and the “duck,” see Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1972), pp. 90-91.

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

In 1936, Terragni wrote that a *Casa del Fascio* “must become house, school, temple.”⁶⁸⁸ The *Casa del Fascio* was a house, school and temple during the remaining years of the PNF government. Terragni wrote that “there are no employees in a casa del fascio...comrades ...volunteer their services and work without pay. This is why such a building, more than any other government structure, can be honored with the title casa.”⁶⁸⁹ In 1941, Luigi Mancini, head of the PNF Technical Service Department in Rome, suggested that future *Casa del Fascio* be combined with school buildings consisting of six to seven classrooms. There was an aesthetic and economic advantage, Mancini wrote, as both institutions would appear grander and could share the classrooms, the *palestra* and radio equipment.⁶⁹⁰ The OND organized classes in the *Casa del Fascio*, which were attended by thousands of Italians in their local *Casa del Fascio* or GRF building. It was common for men, women and children to attend a class or to listen to the radio in their local *Casa del Fascio*. The *Casa del Fascio* was also a temple from the beginning of the PNF’s formation in 1919. Memorials honoring the “Fallen” of the Fascist Revolution and of WWI were in every *Casa del Fascio*, which added a tenor of sacredness to the buildings. Terragni called “the sanctuary in memory of fallen Fascists, the spiritual and celebratory center of the whole building.”⁶⁹¹ Rinaldo Gramondo, a *Casa del Fascio* Secretary who wrote a manual for other leaders in 1938 titled *Il Segretario del Fascio di Combattimento*, wrote, “...Sede del Fascio di Combattimento, quella rappresenta e deve rappresentare il Tempio del Fascismo del

⁶⁸⁸ Giuseppe Terragni, “La costruzione della Casa del Fascio di Como,” *Quadrante* 35-36 (1936), translation by Diane Ghirardo in Peter Eisenman, *Giuseppe Terragni Transformations Decompositions Critiques* (New York : The Monacelli Press, 2003), p. 265.

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 266, p. 269.

⁶⁹⁰ ACS, PNF Serie II, B. 1498, June 12, 1941.

⁶⁹¹ Giuseppe Terragni, “La costruzione della Casa del Fascio di Como,” *Quadrante* 35-36 (1936), translation by Diane Ghirardo in Peter Eisenman, *Giuseppe Terragni Transformations Decompositions Critiques* (New York : The Monacelli Press, 2003), p. 269.

Paese...”⁶⁹² More apparent to the “temple” analogy, were the many “religious” parallels of the *Casa del Fascio* to the Catholic Church, as was seen by the rivalry of the *Casa del Fascio torre littoria* with the church *campanile*, and assembly spaces with a focus on Il Duce’s image [Fig. 1]. Gramondo wrote that there should not be many pictures in the *Sede del Fascio*, only a “Giganteggi quello del DUCE” and he reminded other fascist leaders to try to collaborate with the Church, whenever possible, despite being “un campo tutto diverso dal nostro.”⁶⁹³

The PNF Statutes from 1921 to 1938 provided a guide for judging which design changes for *Casa del Fascio* came directly from PNF directives. The architectural form and massing of new *Casa del Fascio* originated from the assembly of spaces required by the PNF, generally a large assembly space and several offices. The urban location of *Casa del Fascio*, in each town, was guided by the Technical Service Department of the PNF in Rome and not by Statute guidelines. Many *Casa del Fascio* designs were the embodiment of the PNF structure, outlined in the Statutes, and the ceremonial use of the building that developed during the *Ventennio*.

Terragni wrote that

...the departments, are distributed in the building...to, reflect the party statute, which determines...the complex political activity, the hierarchy of values and ranks of the members of the *Fasci di Combattimento*.⁶⁹⁴

Terragni continued explaining that “the party statute, as already stated, is the best text and the most secure guide for planning room distribution for a *casa del fascio*.”⁶⁹⁵

⁶⁹² Rinaldo Gramondo, *Il Segretario del Fascio di Combattimento*, Milan: Edizioni O.L.M., ca. 1938, p. 42.

[Translation: “...Seat of the Fascio di Combattimento, which represents and must represent the Temple of Fascism in the Country...”]

⁶⁹³ Ibid., p. 43 , p.47.

[Translation: “Gigantic image of il DUCE” and “an entirely different camp from ours”]

⁶⁹⁴ Giuseppe Terragni, “La costruzione della Casa del Fascio di Como,” *Quadrante* 35-36 (1936), translation by Diane Ghirardo in Peter Eisenman, *Giuseppe Terragni Transformations Decompositions Critiques* (New York : The Monacelli Press, 2003), p. 266.

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 269.

The *Casa del Fascio* mirrored the hierarchy of spaces in built-form, but also embodied the essence of the PNF with its sole leader, il DUCE. Luigi Vietti, Terragni's occasional partner, wrote in 1932, that architecture was the mirror and soul of their national Italian culture, which he called "politics of sincerity."⁶⁹⁶ Terragni's reminder in 1936, to the readers of *Quadrante*, of Mussolini's concept that "Fascism is a house of glass into which all may look," supports Vietti's remarks. Their *Casa del Fascio* buildings – Terragni's in Como, Lissone, and projects for Rome; Vietti's building in Intra, Rapallo, and projects for Rome and Oleggio; were experiments of giving architectural form to the soul of the PNF.⁶⁹⁷

Conflicts between the PNF and the Vatican did affect the *Casa del Fascio* development, which was visible in site selection, discussions of youth programs by both institutions, and the urban placement of the *Casa del Fascio* and the *torre littoria*. Parallels between the PNF and the Vatican were abundant. The addition of new churches in new urban planning situations, which consisted mostly of PNF buildings, as in the new towns and new *borghi* plans, forced decisions about building hierarchy to be made by PNF administrators, architects, and urban planners.

Political decisions, such as the expansion of the Italian Empire into African territories, caused autarchic demands on construction, as noted earlier in this section. Self-imposed sanctions of foreign construction materials and the lack of metals were strongly felt in the 1940s because of increasing foreign conflicts and the military's use of metal. Design work continued on buildings with the use of local marbles, travertine, and with masonry construction.

⁶⁹⁶ Luigi Vietti, "Vuole parlarci della Architettura Razionale?" in *L'Economia Nazionale*, 1932, p. 39.

"Politica di sincerità! Soprattutto nell'architettura, specchio dell'animo e della cultura nazionale." [Translation: "Politics of sincerity! Especially in architecture, mirror of the soul and of national culture"]

⁶⁹⁷ Giuseppe Terragni, "La costruzione della Casa del Fascio di Como," *Quadrante* 35-36 (1936), translation by Diane Ghirardo in Peter Eisenman, *Giuseppe Terragni Transformations Decompositions Critiques* (New York : The Monacelli Press, 2003), p. 266.

Broadcasting and film advances greatly affected the design of the *Casa del Fascio*, physically and audibly. The *Casa del Fascio* required a large assembly space throughout its existence, which changed in character from a *cortile*, to a large meeting room/gymnasium, to a theater/cinema space from 1922 to 1943. The change in the character of the “assembly space” was in response to the new availability of the radio, loudspeaker components, and film. The emergence of the clock/bell *torre littoria* was the physical podium for the loudspeakers, which sent Mussolini’s message farther than the radio room within the *Casa del Fascio* interior.

The historic need to “assemble,” in the wake of the 1919 mass assembly in *Piazza San Sepolcro*, developed in the twenty-one years of PNF domination, to require not only an assembly area inside the *Casa del Fascio* building, but a grand *piazza* in which to assemble on the exterior of the building. The development of the interior of the *Casa del Fascio* with a grand meeting space, which grew into a sloped-floor cinema by the late 1930s, created the need for an exterior space that was useful for mass rallies, militaristic ceremonies, and mass exercise. The ceremonial sequence of PNF dignitaries from the internal podium or stage to the exterior balcony to address the masses was a design development in the larger new *Casa del Fascio* [Fig. 2]. The smaller new *Casa del Fascio* included the same architectural components and the ceremonial path, from the inside to the outside, which was a characteristic of most *Casa del Fascio*. The circulation path from the large assembly space to the exterior *piazza* caused facades to be designed with multiple doors. The circulation path of the PNF leader from his office to the balcony on the tower, and the path of the other PNF officers to proceed to a long exterior balcony, demonstrated that the architectural items attached to a *Casa del Fascio* building, the tower/balcony combination, were part of the ceremonial path of the PNF in built-form.

When the PNF ceremonies were not occurring, on a quiet day, Mussolini's presence was still visibly and audibly present in each town. Those towns and cities with *Casa del Fascio* with towers and balconies, which were most often vacant, knew that the singular podium was meant for Mussolini. The bottom of the tower was also quiet, as it was secured by decree for the memory of the deceased. In Lissone, the words "*credere, obbedire, combattere*" (believe, obey, fight), carved on the front of the balcony of Terragni and Carminati's *Casa del Fascio*, were enough to allow the podium to speak, even without the PNF leader [Fig. 3].

The *torre littoria* that emerged as a regular component in the early to mid-1930s of new *Casa del Fascio*, but not all, grew in size as it developed through the later 1930s. The *torre littoria* grew taller and wider, including office space and windows. The PNF's symbolic need of larger and taller *torri littorie* was greater than the PNF's need for offices or assistance rooms, as was seen in the visibly dominant Segezia *torre/campanile*. Many *torri littorie* in the late 1930s had more building mass, and cost more to build, than the smaller *Casa del Fascio* edifices at their sides. The *Palazzo della Civiltà* at l'EUR was not a *Casa del Fascio*, but embodied the same primary function as a *torre littoria*, as a symbol of the PNF. The assembly hall at l'EUR, the *Palazzo dei Ricevimenti e dei Congressi*, was on axis with the "monument" called the *Palazzo della Civiltà*. The *Palazzo dei Ricevimenti e dei Congressi* contained the functional spaces for mass assembly, the grand *piazza*, the cortile hall, the sloped assembly hall and roof top cinema [Fig. 4]. The *Palazzo della Civiltà* was the "*torre littoria*" of l'EUR and the *Palazzo dei Ricevimenti e dei Congressi* functioned as the *Casa del Fascio* edifice with a balcony.

The architectural competitions were not peripheral to the development of the *Casa del Fascio* building, but fed the designers of PNF headquarters with visible inspiration and juror comments of designs by other architects, engineers, and surveyors. Hundreds of architectural

studios proposed *Case del Fascio* building designs for numerous PNF sponsored competitions that were never built. The *Palazzo del Littorio* competitions for Rome in 1934 and 1937 were highly publicized and reached hundreds of architects through architectural journals. The designs, which forever remain as projects on paper, were powerful material, because of their publication in magazines that reached the view of many more architects and designers than constructed *Case del Fascio*.

The competition for the *Torre Littoria* in Milan, which was to face into *Piazza del Duomo*, was a turning point for the significance of *Case del Fascio*. The *Duomo piazza* lacked the presence of the PNF. The *torre littoria* would fulfill the symbolic need of the PNF. The location of the proposed Milan *Torre Littoria*, across from the *Duomo*, required a dominant structure to compete with the *Duomo* and its grand *piazza*. The proposed *Torre Littoria* did not need a *Casa del Fascio*. The tower needed a balcony and a *piazza*. Designing a structure tall enough to support the voices that spoke to the people assembled in the *piazza* solved the PNF's need to reach the people. The *Torre Littoria*, its balcony, the loud speakers, and the *piazza* were all that were needed to get the PNF's message out to Milan's fascist "congregation" [Figs. 5- 6].

Other PNF sponsored competitions provided significant material for architects' interpretations of "regional" *Case del Fascio*, designed in the late 1930s and early 1940s. There was a request by the PNF in a competition brief for rural and border *Case del Fascio* designs, to create solutions for different climatic regions of Italy. Architects submitted *Case del Fascio* designs for snow-filled mountain areas that included rough-hewn stone towers and slanted roofs and designs for warmer areas that included open structures, ponds with sailboats, and garden areas. These "regional" *Case del Fascio* designs would be dispersed to the appropriate zones for construction. The pre-designed *Casa del Fascio* program for rural areas was never fully

implemented, because of the PNF's need to focus on the foreign conflicts, so these designs remained mostly on paper. Ironically, the impending war and foreign conflicts were the reason behind the PNF's need for more fascist headquarter buildings in far-flung areas of the country.

Comparing the desire by the PNF for regional characteristics to be shown in their rural PNF headquarters to the result of examining *Casa del Fascio* for regional characteristics in the three cities of Milan, Arezzo and Bari was revealing. The *Casa del Fascio* in all three cities did not exhibit any strong regional characteristics. The *Casa del Fascio* designed in the three cities could easily be interchangeable among each city. More revealing by the study of the three cities was that the *Casa del Fascio* did not reveal any strong national characteristics either. Although there were many towers, balconies, and *arengari* on *Casa del Fascio* in all three cities, their incorporation was not consistent. Most *Casa del Fascio* did not have *torre littoria*, particularly those occupying existing buildings, which were most numerous.

Despite the wide-ranging variations of *Casa del Fascio* with or without towers, the *torre littoria*, began to be perceived as representing the PNF by the late 1930s. *Casa del Fascio* Secretary Rinaldo Gramondo wrote that “La “Torre Littoria” deve costituire l’elemento architettonico caratteristico di ciascuna “Casa del Fascio,” e deve essere minita di campane...”⁶⁹⁸ Church *campanile* were also varied in design, and in Italy, despite the variation, *campanile* clearly belonged to the Catholic Church. *Torre Littoria*, also highly varied in design, were perceived of as a sign of the nation – a sign of the PNF. Thus, the *torre littoria* structure, not the *Casa del Fascio* edifice, was the common national element, despite their variation of designs.

⁶⁹⁸ Rinaldo Gramondo, *Il Segretario del Fascio di Combattimento*, Milan: Edizioni O.L.M., ca. 1938, p. 44.

[Translation: “The “Torre Littoria” must be the characteristic architectural element of each “Casa del Fascio,” and must at least have bells...”]

Most central squares in new towns had a *torre littoria*, but the main square did not also have a *Casa del Fascio*. The tower and the *Casa del Fascio* were separated in most new towns. If the *Casa del Fascio* was located in the main square and had a tower, it was squat by comparison to the *torre littoria* or *campanile*. In some cases, the *Casa del Fascio* tower was located on the rear of the building, as was planned in Pomezia. Architecturally, it was hard to resolve two or three towers in a small town or *borgo*. Symbol and function were separated by relinquishing the *Casa del Fascio* building to a side street or minor *piazza*, while the town received an isolated *torre littoria* in the main square.

The *Palazzo* “M” by O. Frezzotti was added to the new town of Littoria in 1942 [Fig. 7]. The *Palazzo del Littorio* was not designed as a *palazzo* plan form, nor as an L-shaped plan, but in the shape of an “M.” The *piazza* was embraced by the “M,” which faced a *torre littoria* (not built) in the design from 1938 to 1942. “Mussolini” was wrapped around the PNF’s fascist society in the *piazza*, who faced the balcony on the tower. All that was needed for the *Palazzo del Littorio* building was the *torre littoria* with its balcony, the *piazza* and the people. Luigi Vietti’s drawing describing the Vietti/Terragni team’s design for the 1934 *Palazzo del Littorio* competition was an even starker realization.⁶⁹⁹ All that was needed for a PNF Fascist headquarters were the words that emanated from the balcony and the *piazza* with people to receive them [Fig. 8]. Thus, Terragni’s *Casa del Fascio* did not need the controversial tower, but needed the ability to allow the words of the PNF to reach the Italian people. The lack of a singular balcony was more serious to the failure of the Como *Casa del Fascio* to be considered as the supreme *Casa del Fascio* example. The numerous long balconies on the Como *Casa del Fascio* were architecturally uniform and held many fascists – the balconies were not designed for one singular person. The singular element to represent the PNF, the one vacant balcony that

⁶⁹⁹ Project “A.”

represented Mussolini, was missing [Fig. 9].⁷⁰⁰ Terragni and Carminati corrected the problem in the 1937-1939 design of the Lissone *Casa del Fascio* by separating the glass building from the stone *torre littoria*. The tower's singular balcony clearly represented Mussolini who spoke to the Italian people in his absence with the carved words "*credere, obbedire, combattere*."

Author Umberto Eco lived through the years of fascism in Italy and recalled in 1995 how his "whole childhood had been marked by the great historic speeches of Mussolini."⁷⁰¹ Eco compared Mussolini's speech to the speech of the local partisan, Mimo, revered by his small town in 1945 after the Partisan's success. Eco wrote that Mimo,

showed up on the balcony of the city hall,... tried to calm the crowd... Silence. Mimo spoke in a hoarse voice, barely audible. He said: "Citizens, friends. After so many painful sacrifices...here we are. Glory to those who have fallen for freedom." And that was it...I had also learned that freedom of speech means freedom from rhetoric."⁷⁰²

The ability for the PNF to speak from a "national" podium and to convey a message to the local Italians was the essence of a "*Casa del Fascio*." The embodiment of that act caused the construction and design of over 11,000 buildings [Fig. 10]. The PNF told the architects what functional spaces the government needed in each local *Casa del Fascio*, as Terragni reported after receiving a typed list of required rooms from the head of the PNF Como Federation. Architects did ultimately tell the PNF what a *Casa del Fascio* was, with their enormous array of designs.

⁷⁰⁰ For the numerous attempts by Giuseppe Terragni and Marcello Nizzoli to add a "tower" and *arengario* to the *Casa del Fascio* in Como see, Diane Ghirardo, "Politics of a Masterpiece: The Vicenda of the Decoration of the Façade of the Casa del Fascio, Como, 1936-39," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 62, No. 3 (September 1980), pp. 466-478.

⁷⁰¹ Umberto Eco, "Ur- Fascism", NY Review of Books, June 22, 1995.

⁷⁰² Ibid.

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