

Extended Essay in History

The Italian Institutional Referendum of 1946

Research Question:

To what extent were Vittorio Emanuele III's short-term blunders responsible for the Republican victory in the *Referendum Istituzionale* of 1946?

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Background

After three years of failures, Allied troops “landed in Sicily”¹ on 9 July 1943. In response, Benito Mussolini, then *presidente del Consiglio dei ministri del Regno d'Italia* (Prime Minister), was pressured into summoning the *Gran Consiglio del Fascismo* (Grand Council of Fascism). On 24 July, the council dismissed him from his duties as *Duce*.² The following day, King Vittorio Emanuele III ordered Mussolini’s arrest, appointing Marshal Pietro Badoglio as Prime Minister.³ Although Badoglio initially continued fighting, on 8 September, he announced: “to avoid her total ruin, Italy is therefore obliged to address a request for armistice to the enemy.”⁴ Following the declaration, Germany invaded Italy. In reaction, Vittorio Emanuele fled Rome and sought refuge in Brindisi.⁵ This escape was recognised as a major blunder by the King. While in southern Italy, Vittorio Emanuele faced pressures to abdicate the throne. His refusal was considered the second major blunder. He instead appointed his son, Prince Umberto, as *luogotenente* (lieutenant) to act as head of state.⁶ During his two-year rule, Umberto accepted the *Referendum Istituzionale* (Institutional Referendum) for 2 June 1946, to determine whether Italy should remain a monarchy or become a republic. The interest of this paper is to determine whether Vittorio Emanuele’s short-term blunders were the most significant cause for the Republican victory in the *Referendum Istituzionale*.

¹ Martin Blinkhorn, *Mussolini and Fascist Italy*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2000), 49.

² John Whittam, *Fascist Italy* (Manchester [u.a.]: Manchester University Press, 2005), 129.

³ Whittam, *Fascist Italy*, 130.

⁴ "Il telegramma del Maresciallo" [The Marshal's telegram], *La Stampa* (Torino, Italia), September 10, 1943, 1.

⁵ Gianni Oliva, *I Savoia: Novecento Anni Di Una Dinastia* (Milano, Italia: Mondadori, 2019), 392.

⁶ Denis Mack Smith, *Italy and Its Monarchy* (n.p.: Yale University Press, 1989), 330, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5vm0dc>.

Introduction

Although many historians attribute the final blunders of Vittorio Emanuele as turning points for Italian support of *Casa Savoia* (House of Savoy), the difference in support for the monarchy and republic suggests that the notion might be an overstatement.⁷ With over twelve million voters supporting a republic, over ten million supporting the monarchy and just above one million abstentions, the difference of two million votes devalues the dramatic turning points that historians regard as the King's blunders.⁸ Therefore, the question "to what extent were Vittorio Emanuele III's short-term blunders responsible for the Republican victory in the *Referendum Istituzionale*" must be addressed in order to understand the origins of the *Repubblica italiana* (Italian Republic).

To explore this, perspectives provided by contemporary and later figures were of particular use to understand the political atmosphere of 1946. Furthermore, primary sources and secondary sources were used to evaluate the significance of Vittorio Emanuele's blunders. Primary sources, in particular periodical publications and political reviews, were utilised to examine the responses to contemporary events. Moreover, the results of various political elections and referendums proved useful to compare perspectives provided by sources and the population's voting trends.

As mentioned, many historians attribute the turning points for *Casa Savoia* to the blunders by Vittorio Emanuele. However, as argued by

⁷ Mack Smith, *Italy and Its Monarchy*, 331; Oliva, *I Savoia*, 393; Howard McGaw Smyth, "Italy: From Fascism to the Republic (1943-1946)," *The Western Political Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (1948): 208, <https://doi.org/10.2307/442274>; M. K. G., "Republic versus Monarchy in Italy," *The World Today* 2, no. 7 (1946): 309, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40392276>.

⁸ Direzione Centrale per i Servizi Elettorali, "Referendum 02/06/1946" [Referendum 02/06/1946], Eligendo, accessed July 25, 2023, <https://elezionistorico.interno.gov.it/index.php?tpel=F&dtel=02/06/1946&es0=S&tpa=I&lv0=0&levsut0=0&ms=S&tpe=A>.

Ricciotti Garibaldi, hostility towards the monarchical institution was not unique to the post-war environment. A long-term hostility towards the monarchy was prevalent in the late nineteenth century, and may have contributed to the monarchical loss.⁹ Conversely, Republicanism had gained support in Italy since the *Risorgimento* (unification of Italy).¹⁰ This long-term Republican sentiment might have contributed to a Republican victory rather than monarchical loss. Furthermore, the results of the 1919 and 1921 elections, and the *Assemblea Costituente* (Constituent Assembly) of 1946 suggest that Socialism and Marxism were prevalent throughout Italy.¹¹ As a result of the ideological tendencies, this Socialist–Marxist support may have contributed to the Republican victory. These three long-term sentiments may thus all have contributed, to varying degrees, to the monarchical loss and Republican victory. Moreover, the monarchy’s association with Mussolini’s Fascist regime proved to become unpopular. This, in combination with the later unpopularity of Fascism, served to further discredit the monarchy. Finally, the presence of wars, both the Second World War (WW2) and Italian Civil War, served to heighten hostility towards *Casa Savoia*. As argued by the contemporary leader of Democrazia Cristiana (Christian Democracy, DC), Alcide De Gaspari, “an immediate vote[, after the wars,] would overwhelmingly demand a republic.”¹²

⁹ Ricciotti Garibaldi, "Monarchy and Republic in Italy," *The North American Review* 171, no. 529 (1900): 816, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25105092>.

¹⁰ Andrina Stiles, *The Unification of Italy: 1815-70* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2004), 20.

¹¹ "I Partiti nella nuova Camera" [The Parties in the new Chamber], *La Stampa* (Torino, Italia), November 20, 1919; Ministero Dell'Economia Nazionale, *Statistica delle elezioni generali politiche per la XXVI legislatura*, by Direzione Generale di Statistica (Roma, Italia: Grafia, 1924), 43; Direzione Centrale per i Servizi Elettorali, *Assemblea costituente 02/06/1946, Eligendo*, accessed August 7, 2023, <https://elezionistorico.interno.gov.it/index.php?tpel=A&dtel=02/06/1946&tpa=I&tpe=A&lev0=0&levsut0=0&es0=S&ms=S&ne1=0>.

¹² Mack Smith, *Italy and Its Monarchy*, 332.

This paper will thus be structured thematically, exploring and evaluating the significance of the aforementioned themes individually. These themes will be evaluated against the blunders of Vittorio Emanuele in order to determine whether his short-term blunders were the most significant cause for the Republican victory.

Vittorio Emanuele III

During the night of 8 September 1943, Vittorio Emanuele fled the Italian capital threatened by the advancing German invasion. He sought refuge in Brindisi, a city in southern Italy that was under Anglo-American occupation. This event, considered a major blunder on the part of the King, was recognised as a pivoting point in Italian support for the monarchy. As commented by the contemporary Socialist periodical *Avanti!*, the flight from Rome was the moment when “the Italian population open[ed] their eyes.”¹³ The publication further claims that the population perceived the King’s escape to southern Italy as a “betray[al].”¹⁴ This hostile perception, argues Gianni Oliva, “mark[ed] the [monarchy’s] subsequent [fate] until the referendum.”¹⁵ Moreover, Vittorio Emanuele’s limited efforts to defend Rome further defaced his image. As noted by Denis Mack Smith, Vittorio Emanuele, the commander-in-chief of the *Regio Esercito Italiano* (Royal Italian Army), “left only verbal orders that were so ambiguous as to be unintelligible.”¹⁶ Oliva thus asserts that even though the escape from Rome drew hostile perceptions, the “way [the King] leaves”¹⁷ was what highlighted his betrayal. Contemporary historian Howard McGaw Smyth argued that

¹³ "Responsabilità" [Responsibility], *Avanti!* (Roma, Italia), September 26, 1943, 5th edition.

¹⁴ "Responsabilità."

¹⁵ Oliva, *I Savoia*, 393.

¹⁶ Mack Smith, *Italy and Its Monarchy*, 316.

¹⁷ Oliva, *I Savoia*, 393.

had Vittorio Emanuele been “able to make a neat switch and save the army and the capital ... [he] might have saved his throne.”¹⁸ This is in agreement with *Avanti!*'s assertion that Vittorio Emanuele's blunder was “the death of the monarchy.”¹⁹ Therefore, the King's escape to southern Italy was significant in the hostile perceptions that emerged. These perceptions, in turn, influenced the electorate in the referendum. Hence, the King's blunder was a pivoting point in the lead up to the referendum.

After Vittorio Emanuele sought refuge in Brindisi, he was under increasing pressure to abdicate the throne. He, however, refused. The King's refusal to abdicate from 1943 to 1946, was recognised as another major blunder. As described by Palmiro Togliatti, this blunder was “the best chance of [Italy] becoming a republic.”²⁰ According to Norman Kogan, “all the parties, whether monarchist or republican, were bitter toward [Vittorio Emanuele],”²¹ due to his past. As a result of this hostility toward the King, notable Monarchists, Benedetto Croce and Count Carlo Sforza, drafted a plan suggesting that “the King should abdicate, Prince Umberto should renounce his rights, and a regency should be set up for the 6-year-old Prince of Naples.”²² The Republican parties hoped that such an “admission of guilt ... would discredit and weaken [the] monarchical institution,”²³ favouring their cause in the referendum. However, the King's refusal to abdicate similarly discredited the monarchy. Sforza argued that the King's “desperate clinging to power” was “encourag[ing] the growth of

¹⁸ Smyth, "Italy: From," 208.

¹⁹ "Responsabilità."

²⁰ Mack Smith, *Italy and Its Monarchy*, 327.

²¹ Norman Kogan, "The Italian Action Party and the Institutional Question," *The Western Political Quarterly* 6, no. 2 (1953): 277, <https://doi.org/10.2307/442162>.

²² M. K. G., "Republic versus," 307.

²³ Kogan, "The Italian," 277.

Communism,"²⁴ and with it, Republican tendencies. Contemporary figures on opposing sides of the institutional referendum are therefore in agreement on the significance of the King's blunder for its result. Three weeks before the referendum, Vittorio Emanuele abdicated the throne in favour of Prince Umberto. As asserted by opposing political publications, the King's "grotesque farce"²⁵ would not change "the [population's] commitment to the referendum."²⁶ This claim is in agreement with Smyth, who argued that the results "were but little influenced by the last minute abdication."²⁷ However, "had [the King] abdicated eighteen months or a year [sooner],"²⁸ as argued by M. K. G. and Mack Smith, then the results "might possibly have gone a different way."²⁹ Thus, the King's refusal to abandon the crown encouraged further opposition, complementing the already present hostility that emerged from his escape from Rome. While historians disagree on which blunder caused the monarchy's ultimate demise, both can be held accountable in shaping the electoral results.

Long-term Sentiments

Conversely, long-term anti-monarchical tendencies that were present, contributed in shaping the electoral results of the referendum. As Mack Smith asserts, many Italians since the nineteenth century were considering "the comparative advantages of a Republican regime."³⁰ While this long-term tendency may be regarded as Republican, it arose in reaction to the conduct

²⁴ Mack Smith, *Italy and Its Monarchy*, 323.

²⁵ "L'abdicazione dell'ex re è una farsa grottesca priva di ogni valore giuridico e costituzionale" [The abdication of the former king is a grotesque farce devoid of any legal and constitutional value], *L'Unità* (Roma, Italia), May 10, 1946, 1.

²⁶ "Vittorio Emanuele III abbandona l'Italia ma l'impegno per il referendum non si muta" [Vittorio Emanuele III abandons Italy but the commitment to the referendum does not change], *Il Popolo* (Roma, Italia), May 10, 1946, 1.

²⁷ Smyth, "Italy: From," 222.

²⁸ M. K. G., "Republic versus," 309.

²⁹ Mack Smith, *Italy and Its Monarchy*, 331.

³⁰ Mack Smith, *Italy and Its Monarchy*, 142.

of *Casa Savoia*, thus characterising it as anti-monarchical. According to Ricciotti Garibaldi: after the assassination of Umberto I in 1900, “the monarchy in Italy [was] a house of cards; the first hostile breath of wind [would] blow it down.”³¹ This monarchical fragility suggests that *Casa Savoia* lacked the support of the Italian population by the twentieth century. Through Garibaldi’s assertion, one may thus recognise the role of long-term opposition to the monarchy in the electoral results. The value of the assassination, however, lies in union with the previous assassination attempts of 1878 and 1897.³² Even though the contemporary *Gazzetta Piemontese* notes that in the first instance Turin and Naples were “deeply saddened,”³³ Mack Smith observes that in the second instance the monarchy encountered “fewer signs of public sympathy.”³⁴ This, coupled with the monarchical instability of 1900, demonstrates how anti-Monarchism had already grown roots in Italian soil by the end of the nineteenth century. Additionally, radical opposition to the monarchy carried through into Vittorio Emanuele III’s reign. In 1912, as described by Oliva, a “young anarchist bricklayer[, Antonio D’Alba,] fire[d] two pistol shots [at the King] without hitting.”³⁵ This continuation of violent attacks further strengthens the significance of the anti-monarchical tendencies in Italy. While, the violent attacks against the Kings may be considered stand-alone acts of extreme anarchism, their significance lies in the reaction of the Italian population, which, as described by Mack Smith, was beginning to

³¹ Garibaldi, "Monarchy and Republic," 816.

³² "L'attentato contro il Re" [The Attack Against the King], *Gazzetta Piemontese* (Torino, Italia), November 18, 1878; "L'attentato contro re Umberto a Roma" [The Attack Against King Umberto in Rome], *La Stampa* (Torino, Italia), April 23, 1897.

³³ "L'attentato contro".

³⁴ Mack Smith, *Italy and Its Monarchy*, 129.

³⁵ Oliva, *I Savoia*, 369.

disfavour the monarchy. Therefore, this long-term opposition set the foundations for a 'vote of vengeance' against the monarchy.

On the other hand, the long-term Republican tendencies played a role in shaping the results of the referendum. While Mack Smith's aforementioned assertion suggests that Italians voted Republican to oppose the monarchy, many, throughout Italy, were ideologically Republican since the *Risorgimento*. Founded on the ideals of Giuseppe Mazzini in 1895, the Partito Repubblicano Italiano (Italian Republican Party, PRI) laid the foundation for organised Republican support in Italy. As observed by Garibaldi, the PRI had "a good hold, both on the lower and middle classes, and ... on the younger portions of the population."³⁶ Furthermore, Mack Smith notes that, at the time of the referendum, "among the older generation, many were turning towards Republicanism."³⁷ It is therefore observable that the older generation at the time of the referendum, would have been the younger generation at the start of the century, demonstrating the long-term influence of Republicanism. When taking into consideration the Italian region of Emilia, the long-term effects of Republican tendencies can be clearly observed. As asserted by Mack Smith, the early "Republicanism ... [was] strongest in Emilia,"³⁸ which, in 1921, accounted for just under thirty percent of the total Republican votes.³⁹ Even though Emilian support for the PRI dropped in the *Assemblea Costituente*, its overall Republican support surpassed seventy percent in the referendum.⁴⁰ Although this accounts for one Italian region, its historic and contemporary

³⁶ Garibaldi, "Monarchy and Republic," 814.

³⁷ Mack Smith, *Italy and Its Monarchy*, 322.

³⁸ Denis Mack Smith, *Modern Italy: A Political History*, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1998), 159.

³⁹ Ministero Dell'Economia Nazionale, *Statistica delle*, 43.

⁴⁰ Direzione Centrale per i Servizi Elettorali, *Assemblea costituente 02/06/1946, Eligendo*; Direzione Centrale per i Servizi Elettorali, "Referendum 02/06/1946," *Eligendo*.

support for Republicanism justifies its significance for the long-term effects. While popular support for the PRI was limited—with it receiving just under two percent of the electoral votes in 1921—its generational effects, observed in Emilia, played a role in the Republican victory.⁴¹ Long-term support for Republicanism can, in this case, not be considered the principal factor for the Republican victory, but rather, can be considered a foundational factor. Therefore, the long-term Republicanism in Italy was significant in creating the foundations for the Republican victory.

Similarly, long-term Socialist tendencies played a role in facilitating the Republican victory. Although, as noted by Garibaldi, the early Socialist movement in Italy was “careless as to what form the government might have,” they soon “became even more anti-monarchical than the Republicans themselves.”⁴² Italian support for Socialism, particularly the Partito Socialista Italiano (Italian Socialist Party, PSI), thus became complimentary with support for Republicanism. This was evident in “the big industrial centres [of] Milan, Turin and Genoa.”⁴³ In the political elections of 1921, the PSI won overwhelming majorities in these cities, forming a relationship when taking into account the Socialist and Republican victories of 1946.⁴⁴ Additionally, Mack Smith notes that the early Socialist movement became prevalent in Romagna and “the agricultural areas [a]round Parma, Reggio, and Ferrara.”⁴⁵ In 1946, these provinces showcased substantial majorities for the Socialist coalition, with Ferrara reaching a seventy-seven percent majority, and complementary Republican majorities, as Romagna voted over

⁴¹ Ministero Dell'Economia Nazionale, *Statistica delle*, 43.

⁴² Garibaldi, "Monarchy and Republic," 812.

⁴³ Mack Smith, *Modern Italy*, 286.

⁴⁴ Ministero Dell'Economia Nazionale, *Statistica delle*, 45; Direzione Centrale per i Servizi Elettorali, Assemblea costituente 02/06/1946, Eligendo; Direzione Centrale per i Servizi Elettorali, "Referendum 02/06/1946," Eligendo.

⁴⁵ Mack Smith, *Modern Italy*, 227.

eighty percent Republican.⁴⁶ The continued support for Socialism, and complimentary support for Republicanism, in these industrial cities and agricultural provinces demonstrates the significance of Socialist tendencies for the Republican victory. Furthermore, as a Marxist party, the Partito Comunista Italiano (Italian Communist Party, PCI) supported the “revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order,”⁴⁷ which, in this case, was *Casa Savoia*. Italian support for Marxism would thus concurrently support Republicanism. However, Donny Gluckstein asserts that the PCI gained substantial support only after WW2.⁴⁸ With Gluckstein’s assertion, the significance of long-term support for the Marxist PCI is thus diminished, and instead, the influence of WW2 is increased. The long-term support for Socialism, increasing from over one million voters in 1921 to over four million in 1946, consequently provided substantial support for the republic.⁴⁹ Therefore, the long-term support for Socialism played a significant role for the Republican victory in the referendum.

The Fascist Regime

Subsequently, Vittorio Emanuele’s responsibility for the twenty-year Fascist regime was significant in directing opposition towards the monarchy. On 28 October 1922, Luigi Facta, the then Prime Minister, decreed a state of siege in Italy. This was in response to the imminent threat of a march on Rome by the Fascist *squadristi* (blackshirts). To enforce this, the King’s royal signature was required. After initial support, Vittorio Emanuele, however,

⁴⁶ Direzione Centrale per i Servizi Elettorali, Assemblea costituente 02/06/1946, Eligendo; Direzione Centrale per i Servizi Elettorali, "Referendum 02/06/1946," Eligendo.

⁴⁷ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 51.

⁴⁸ Donny Gluckstein, "Italy – the Working Class and the Two Wars," in *A People's History of the Second World War: Resistance versus Empire* (n.p.: Pluto Press, 2012), 154, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt183p5p8.16>.

⁴⁹ Ministero Dell'Economia Nazionale, *Statistica delle*, 42; Direzione Centrale per i Servizi Elettorali, Assemblea costituente 02/06/1946, Eligendo.

“refused ... to sign the decree.”⁵⁰ This event, occurring in 1922, was considered a long-term blunder on the part of the King. As a result of Vittorio Emanuele’s refusal, Mussolini, the leader of the Partito Nazionale Fascista (National Fascist Party) was appointed Prime Minister, initiating his twenty-year rule. As described by contemporary editorialist Tullio Giordana, the King’s “guilt began in 1922” with the “choice to confer the government position on Mussolini.”⁵¹ The refusal bringing Mussolini to power, which the King “openly boasted about,”⁵² tarnished his image, placing him, as agreed upon by Oliva and Kogan, “responsib[le] for the victory of Fascism.”⁵³ However, due to there initially being “*en fête*, with crowds cheering the King [for showing] which direction he was [ideologically],”⁵⁴ opposition to the King’s decision was minimal at first. This suggests that the assertion by Oliva and Kogan upholds only when considering the unpopularity that Fascism garnered. Therefore, Vittorio Emanuele’s refusal to sign the decree was of later significance for the opposition directed towards the monarchy, resulting in the ‘vote of vengeance’.

Moreover, as stated by Giordana, Vittorio Emanuele’s guilt was furthered by his “silence on the Matteotti affair.”⁵⁵ When Giacomo Matteotti, leader of the Partito Socialista Unitario (Unitary Socialist Party), denounced electoral fraud in the recent elections and was killed in the centre of Rome on 10 June 1924, Italy “immediately sp[oke] of a political crime perpetrated by the Fascists.”⁵⁶ As described by John Whittam, there was “an explosion of

⁵⁰ "Lo stato d'assedio revocato per l'intervento del Re?" [The state of siege lifted due to the King's intervention?], *La Stampa* (Torino, Italia), October 29, 1922.

⁵¹ Tullio Giordana, "Il tramonto di un re" [The sunset of a king], *La Nuova Stampa* (Torino, Italia), May 16, 1946.

⁵² Gluckstein, "Italy – the Working," 143.

⁵³ Kogan, "The Italian," 280.

⁵⁴ Mack Smith, *Italy and Its Monarchy*, 252.

⁵⁵ Giordana, "Il tramonto,"

⁵⁶ Paolo Colombo, *La Monarchia Fascista: 1922-1940* (Bologna, Italia: Il Mulino, 2010), 34; Oliva, *I Savoia*, 396.

anger,” which, in turn, “threatened to bring [Mussolini’s] career to an end.”⁵⁷ When the deputies withdrew from parliament in the *secessione dell’Aventino* (Aventine Secession), they did so to ensure an “intervention of the King, the only authority that c[ould] remove Mussolini.”⁵⁸ Vittorio Emanuele, however, as furthered by Oliva, does not react and ignores the “proof of Mussolini’s responsibilities [of] the crime.”⁵⁹ The King’s silence on the affair became his second long-term blunder. As argued by Kogan, it began the monarchy’s close association with the long years of Fascism.⁶⁰ Political publications, such as *Avanti!*, used Vittorio Emanuele’s silence for propaganda in 1946, with *Avanti!* further writing: “the monarchy signed ... amnesty for ... [the] killers of the Hon. Matteotti who had promised to document the violence and electoral fraud of Fascism in the 1924 elections.”⁶¹ Additionally, Mack Smith noted that, in the referendum, many would vote against the monarchy, “especially those who recalled the events of October 1922 and June 1924.”⁶² Therefore, Vittorio Emanuele’s silence on the Matteotti affair, as well as his refusal to sign the decree for the state of siege, were of great significance for the opposition directed towards the monarchy, which resulted in the ‘vote of vengeance’.

Furthermore, the King’s association with Fascism, established by the events of October 1922 and June 1924, threatened the monarchy after the course of the Fascist regime. As argued by Croce, Vittorio Emanuele was “‘hopelessly discredited’ by his long support for Mussolini.”⁶³ Giordana and

⁵⁷ Whittam, *Fascist Italy*, 48.

⁵⁸ Oliva, *I Savoia*, 396.

⁵⁹ Oliva, *I Savoia*, 396.

⁶⁰ Kogan, “The Italian,” 277.

⁶¹ “Vittorio Emanuele *la monarchia non firmò la monarchia firmò*” [Vittorio Emanuele *the Monarchy did not Sign the Monarchy Signed*], *Avanti!* (Roma, Italia), June 1, 1946.

⁶² Mack Smith, *Italy and Its Monarchy*, 322.

⁶³ Mack Smith, *Italy and Its Monarchy*, 322.

Oliva further agree that in the twenty years of Fascism, the King's support for the 1935 war in Ethiopia, the 1936 participation in the Spanish Civil War and alliance with Nazi Germany, the 1938 Racial Laws and the 1940 declaration of war on Britain and France, were all significant for the 'vote of vengeance' against the monarchy.⁶⁴ As argued by Martin Blinkhorn and *Il Nuovo Avanti*, the "increasing [Italian] closeness and subservience to Germany" in the Spanish Civil War and their alliance, greatly discredited the Fascist regime as it appeared "Mussolini [had] sold Italy to [Adolf] Hitler."⁶⁵ Moreover, there was, what Alessandro Barbero describes, a "frigid reaction"⁶⁶ towards the anti-semitic legislation which greatly discredited the Fascist regime. As stated Oliva, although "Vittorio Emanuele did not promote any of the political initiatives of the [Fascist regime], [he] sanctioned them all with his authority."⁶⁷ This support for the Fascist policies allowed all "historical responsibilities of Fascism [to] become the historical responsibilities of the monarchy."⁶⁸ Therefore, the King's guilts, as listed by Giordana and Oliva, thus emphasise the hostility that persuaded many Italians to "[vote] for the republic [in the referendum] out of a sense of disgust over the past."⁶⁹

Presence of War

On 3 September 1939, as the German tanks were invading Poland, Mussolini announced Italy's neutrality.⁷⁰ Her neutrality, however, came to an end on 10 June 1940 when Mussolini declared war on Britain and

⁶⁴ Giordana, "Il tramonto"; Oliva, *I Savoia*, 388.

⁶⁵ "Mussolini ha venduto l'Italia a Hitler" [Mussolini Sold Italy to Hitler], *Il Nuovo Avanti* (Paris, France), May 27, 1939.

⁶⁶ Alessandro Barbero, *Storia Del Piemonte: Dalla Preistoria Alla Globalizzazione* (Torino, Italia: Giulio Einaudi, 2022), 470.

⁶⁷ Mack Smith, *Italy and Its Monarchy*, 388.

⁶⁸ Oliva, *I Savoia*, 388.

⁶⁹ Kogan, "The Italian," 291.

⁷⁰ Stephen J. Lee, *The European Dictatorships: 1918-1945*, reprint. ed. (London: Routledge, 1999), 126.

France, announcing: "Italian people! Run to arms, and demonstrate your tenacity, your courage, your value!"⁷¹ As a result of the home front, however, the excitement demonstrated by Mussolini quickly ended as the war was "not popular with Italians."⁷² Firstly, the war-time working conditions were of great significance for the rising opposition. Tom Behan describes that as a result of companies being allowed to "raise their working week to 48 hours," dissent "slowly began to surface," and by 1942 "there was an average of two strikes a month in Italy."⁷³ Moreover, discontent grew from the population "ha[ving] to survive on very low rations."⁷⁴ As noted by Behan, it became "common for people to lose 10 kilos in one year."⁷⁵ As a result of these living conditions, the Fascist regime was under fire. Due to the monarchy's close association with Mussolini, it thus became the scapegoat for the conditions caused by Mussolini's war, evidenced by *Avanti!* publishing: "Here is the monarchy! It is famine."⁷⁶ These living conditions, coupled with Allied bombings, greatly increased the public's discontent. Two nights after Italy entered the war, "Turin ... was bombed by English planes, with 17 killed and 40 wounded."⁷⁷ As this continued through the course of the war, civilians began to "[rebel] because they were being bombed."⁷⁸ Thus, Italian opposition for the regime that brought them into the war rose. *Casa Savoia* was targeted, as it was seen as "the banner of war,"⁷⁹ emphasising its association to, what Whittam described, as an unpopular war.⁸⁰ WW2 thus

⁷¹ Whittam, *Fascist Italy*, 121; "Parla Mussolini" [Mussolini Speaks], *Il Popolo d'Italia* (Milano, Italia), June 11, 1940.

⁷² Whittam, *Fascist Italy*, 126.

⁷³ Tom Behan, *The Italian Resistance* (n.p.: Pluto Press, 2009), 20–21, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt183p1b5>.

⁷⁴ Robert Pearce, *Fascism and Nazism* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1997), 82.

⁷⁵ Behan, *The Italian*, 40.

⁷⁶ "Ecco la monarchia!" [Here is the Monarchy!], *Avanti!* (Roma, Italia), June 1, 1946

⁷⁷ Barbero, *Storia Del Piemonte*, 470.

⁷⁸ Behan, *The Italian*, 21.

⁷⁹ "Ecco la monarchia!"

⁸⁰ Whittam, *Fascist Italy*, 126.

played a significant role in heightening the opposition to the monarchy. Therefore, De Gaspari's aforementioned assertion of an increased anti-monarchical sentiment after WW2 holds significance.⁸¹

After Vittorio Emanuele fled the Italian capital in 1943, he, as emphasised by Arturo Toscanini, "handed over half of the country to civil war and a more vicious form of Fascism."⁸² The short-term social effects of this Italian Civil War greatly discredited the monarchy. Firstly, the brutality of the Nazi-Fascist occupation of northern Italy caused many, as argued by Behan, to turn "towards the partisans."⁸³ During the German occupation, a strict policy of "for every German or Fascist killed, ten Italians would be killed" was introduced.⁸⁴ This policy resulted in harsh *rastrellamenti* (roundups), where, for example, in 1944 "9 civilians were shot on 1 April in Balangero, ... [and] 17 partisans on 17 May at Mottalciata."⁸⁵ These severe repercussions, coupled with Vittorio Emanuele's abandonment of 1943, caused many to oppose *Casa Savoia*. M. K. G. argues that "the North," controlled for the longest period by the Nazi-Fascist forces, felt "especially bitter against [*Casa Savoia*] for their alleged desertion at that time."⁸⁶ Furthermore, with Behan's assertion, partisan activity played a role in furthering support for Republicanism. In the "Grana, Gesso and Stura valleys"⁸⁷ where Republican Partito d'Azione (Action Party, PdA) partisans were active, support for the republic grew. As Behan states, the PdA's "mountain brigades [were] particularly appealing."⁸⁸ Moreover, the

⁸¹ Mack Smith, *Italy and Its Monarchy*, 332.

⁸² Mack Smith, *Italy and Its Monarchy*, 320.

⁸³ Behan, *The Italian*, 176.

⁸⁴ Behan, *The Italian*, 63.

⁸⁵ Barbero, *Storia Del Piemonte*, 477.

⁸⁶ M. K. G., "Republic versus," 308.

⁸⁷ Barbero, *Storia Del Piemonte*, 473.

⁸⁸ Behan, *The Italian*, 48.

Communist PCI partisans active in “the Lanzo valleys and in the Biellese and Val Sesia mountains”⁸⁹ had similar effects. In these regions, the republic achieved substantial majorities in the referendum.⁹⁰ As described by M. K. G., the “strong working-class elements” of these valley floors made the locals more “influenced by the propaganda of the communist”⁹¹ partisans. Therefore, the “great partisan insurrection in the north,” as argued by Kogan, furthered the “‘Republican mood’ of the country.”⁹² Hence, the hostility towards the monarchy and the Republicanism promoted by the partisans, played a significant role in strengthening the Republican opinion in the north.⁹³

Conclusion

As agreed upon by Oliva and Smyth, Vittorio Emanuele’s short-term blunders were significant in the Republican victory of the *Referendum Istituzionale*. Contemporary *Avanti!* publications argued that the King’s final blunders were pivotal points in Italian support for *Casa Savoia*. However, his long-term blunders, as recognised by Giordana, were what set the foundations for his short-term blunders to become pivotal points. Mack Smith and Kogan agree that the opposition towards the monarchy was heavily influenced by its long-term association with Fascism. This is evidenced by Socialist publications, writing: “Here is the monarchy! It is Fascism.”⁹⁴ Moreover, the policies of the Fascist regime, as supported by Giordana, served to discredit the monarchy due to its association. Therefore, as noted by Mack Smith, Vittorio Emanuele’s long-term blunders that were

⁸⁹ Barbero, *Storia Del Piemonte*, 473.

⁹⁰ Direzione Centrale per i Servizi Elettorali, "Referendum 02/06/1946," *Eligendo*.

⁹¹ M. K. G., "Republic versus," 307.

⁹² Kogan, "The Italian," 289.

⁹³ M. K. G., "Republic versus," 308.

⁹⁴ "Ecco la monarchia!"

supportive of the Fascist regime, especially those of October 1922 and June 1924, were of great significance for enabling a 'vote of vengeance' against the monarchy. Even so, the long-term Socialist tendencies played a role in furthering a Republican victory. The complimentary Republican tendencies made the continued Socialist and Marxist support in the industrialised north significant. However, as argued by the leadership of the DC, some leftists "might also vote for the monarchy because of tradition or sentiment."⁹⁵ Therefore, the long-term Socialist support was not wholly unanimous with Republicanism, but, greatly significant nonetheless. While the continued support for the PRI may suggest a significant long-term Republican sentiment, its minimal support in 1946 counters the claim.⁹⁶ However, the generational effect of Republicanism in, for example, Emilia contributed to a local Republican majority. Therefore, long-term support for Republicanism, while not major, still played a role. On the other hand, the long-term anti-monarchical sentiment was minor, limiting its value. Moreover, the presence of war served to contribute a monarchical loss and Republican victory. WW2 in particular, served to heighten opposition to the monarchy as a result of the social conditions and the Fascist association. The Italian Civil War further served to strengthen opposition to the monarchy. However, this was primarily as a result of Vittorio Emanuele's escape from Rome, which appeared, as commented by M. K. G., as a desertion of the north.⁹⁷ Furthermore, the Republican and Communist partisan activities during the Italian Civil War served to strengthen Republican support. However, as previously mentioned, the long-term

⁹⁵ Kogan, "The Italian," 290.

⁹⁶ Direzione Centrale per i Servizi Elettorali, *Assemblea costituente 02/06/1946, Eligendo*.

⁹⁷ M. K. G., "Republic versus," 308.

Socialist support was greatly significant in northern Italy. Therefore, the significance of Republican-favouring partisan activity during the Italian Civil War is lessened. Given the value of the long-term sentiments and presence of war, Vittorio Emanuele III's short-term blunders remain significant in enabling the Republican victory. This, however, remains the case only when considering his long-term blunders that associated the monarchy with Fascism, establishing the foundations for the *Repubblica Italiana*.

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