

Mussolini inherited a system of press of liberal tradition, with many newspapers that carried on opinions rather skeptical about fascism and, above all, were not of any characteristics that might remotely resemble that information regime that was so necessary to fascism to root itself strongly in Italy.

The Duce was immediately aware of what was essential to use the press to bring the people inside the regime, and how the press was crucial to convey propaganda and fascist ideas to the masses.

Mussolini wanted the press aligned and faithful to the ideas and needs of the regime, and in particular, wanted to create a clear separation with the nineteenth-century liberal press tradition.

This battle for the fascistization of the press began with the creation of a small press office inside the Head of Government Office, and it was thanks to this that the Duce formulated the complex, more or less consistent, themes of propaganda he needed in the first decade of power

At the time when the regime would manifested in all its authority, the press office had developed a rather effective method of control of the news published in the newspapers: the press office would passed in review all the Italian newspapers, including parish bulletins and periodicals, looking for unwelcome news to the regime or transgressions of the orders given to the press.

In the new penal code, sprang for its nature, profoundly illiberal and for the heaviness of the sentences, the crime of public defamation that was extended to the Italian nation, the religion of State and other cases (Article 290), as well as punishments for the publication of news that were considered exaggerated or misleading as they might had caused public disorder (Article 656).

The fascists hardcore intended, in fact, take advantage of the "responsibility" of the press to gag it and force it to follow the dictates of the regime, Mussolini himself had said during the first meeting of the fascist union of journalists that: "Press freedom is not only a right but a

duty, given that a simple word can bring incalculable harm to the nation.”

The fascist National Union of Journalists had its official start at the beginning of 1927 and the regime forced all journalists to enroll in its ranks.

The Fsnj (National Federation of the Italian Press) was undermined from within by Ermanno Amicucci and other fascist sympathizers who had settled in influential newspapers, causing a vote against the National Council of the Federation to cause a hemorrhage of members.

Once the regime had completed the dismantling of Fsnj, the regime hastened to give the press a fair compensation, on 25 March 1926 was founded the INPGI (National Institute for Welfare for Italian Journalists), whose first president was Arnaldo Mussolini.

This provision was specifically designed to directly purge all those that had already set out against the fascist regime or who were previously classified in the trade unions of the communist mold.

The numerous measures outlined above led to an alignment of the press, to what were the provisions of the Fascist regime, but always with a trace of discontent well in evidence.

In particular, it was poorly digested by *Il Messaggero* as well as by the Roman population, tenaciously attached to that type of publication, the imposition to print just 3-4 pages which deprived the publication, of a lot of revenues due to advertising and announcements.

The internal crisis of the Fascist Party in 1924, resubmitted to Mussolini the problem of the normalization of the regime and that of the management of the major conservative newspapers, as *La Tribuna* and *Il Giornale d'Italia*.

The resignation of the director Bergamini wasn't enough, and the newspaper was given to Vettori, political editor of the newspaper since 1907, later, subjected to additional pressure Bergamini gave the financial control of the newspaper to Emilio Borzino.

Vettori that was the editor of the newspaper took a harsh position, after

the murder of Matteotti, against the fascist extremism, but without despairing in a lawful drift of the regime. In 1925, the newspaper gave in the survivors ambitions of independence and the following March, Vettori was forced to leave, in his place was installed a board of directors chaired by Corradini, assistant deputy fascist Casalini, while the former editorial Gayda ensured a completely fascist newspaper.

The last democratic voices died away on October 31, 1926, when L'Unità and the Avanti! were closed.

The Zamboni accident in Bologna had provided the pretext for the Duce to tighten his grip on the political scene, with the dissolution of political parties and with the suppression of the surviving opposition press.

During the first postwar period the Italian film production, which was one of the most brilliant and original in Europe, began to feel the strong influx of films from the USA by giving strong signs of regression.

The main reason for this crisis was mainly the lack of a national organization of film production, to which was added to the shortage of donors.

At the beginning of the '20s, the production of films in Italy was almost completely stopped, causing the best artistic and technical talents to emigrate.

The causes of this emigration were as stated, the inadequacy of resources, the lack of funding, foreign competition, and most importantly, the chronic disorganization of the film industry.

In this period the idea of censorship is repressive, with a detective role of the censor. The films were inspected once completed and not in course of work, the committee limited itself to verify the requirements of the law and nothing more.

In 1923, a filmmaker named Filippo Cortese created a small company called "National Agency for the instructive cinematography " with the intention of producing educational films of various kinds in favor of industry, tourism and culture.

The PNF (National Fascist Party) refused to grant a monopoly to Cortese for this activity, but another private group, the Union of film education (SIC), obtained permission. At the beginning of 1924 the State authorized numerous productions of the SIC and it allowed the screening in public and in schools.

A few months later, this company was merged with other entities and so was created the Union of film educators, best known as Istituto Luce.

The Italian Government's action in the field was kind of diplomat. Instead of banning the import of new films from the USA or to increase customs duties, it decided to focus on Italian cinema, providing incentives for the projection of domestic films and avoiding, for now, the direct interference of the state in the production cycle.

With this rule the state wanted to boost domestic production, discouraging the import of foreign films, restricting the market. In this way Italian films would have a guaranteed commercial outlet and the operators, an insured income.

The real problem was that the Italian art of the period was not even enough to occupy the space that was assigned by the law, such was the crisis of the Italian film industry. In the second half of the '30s it began to emerge in the regime the idea to use the cinema as a mean of propaganda and political indoctrination. This period is referred to as "fascistization of the Italian cinema."

Mussolini decided to create a structure to control the film industry so he reorganized the Press Office of the Head of Government, which was transformed into the State Secretariat for the press and propaganda, at the head of which was placed Galeazzo Ciano that previously directed the Press Office.

With a subsequent decree, all the powers that were previously in the hands of the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of the Corporations were transferred to this new entity.

The funds for these ministries were transferred to the Finance Ministry

and various committees for the examination and revision of the scripts of the films were literally invaded by fascist leaders of proven faith.

Four departments were created: general business, production, cultural issues and film press, censorship, and film trade.

In essence, the concept of censorship changes, becoming a tool able to intervene in a positive way in the film industry. It was believed that the censor should be allowed to intervene not only on the finished product but, more importantly, on the work in progress.

The judgments on the results of this policy, however, were very mixed. The specialized press, led by the magazine *Cinegiornale*, strongly criticized the lack of fascist films, and in general the substantial laxity of the Italian producers to fund and create movies for the regime.

The positions of the printed paper industry contrasted with what Ciano official claimed on numerous occasions, not least the speech to the Senate in 1936 in which he defined the progress of the film industry as "unexpected."

The Italian state was in the difficult position of having to manage the growing desire for political participation, that was reflected in the exponential growth of the mass parties, this growth was so strong that from 1922 onwards, after the "March on Rome" the country was governed by one of these mass parties, the National Fascist Party.

One of the main problems that faced the fascist state was the popular education, the illiteracy rate was still very high, touching the 31% of the population.

Where the traditional school could not arrive, with its books and notebooks, could arrive the cinema. With the revolutionary power of its images, it would help to educate generations without diminishing the teacher's role.

The first educational films proposed by the SIC did not meet the favor of the institutions to which were proposed, the interlocutors were still highly related to the nineteenth-century culture in which the film was

nothing but the rude and poor brother of the theater.

Due to the economic difficulties the Sic decided to produce a documentary about the Duce and to present it to Mussolini thanks to a series of connections inside the ministry.

Mussolini, in fact, was very impressed by the presentation of a tool that would allow the new regime to consolidate itself while illustrating clearly its victories, and while showing throughout the territory and across the border all the progress made by Italy under fascism.

Mussolini seized immediately the potential of the idea, especially when the documentary about his work was aired in public, arousing great cheer from the crowd.

The idea of creating a newsreel to be shown before every film projection was of the Minister of National Economy Belluzzo, who in 1925 put to work an intuition of deputy Delcroix.

The initial proposal provided the projection of a *Giornale Italiano* of the events and patriotic propaganda that had concerned Italy.

Initially the idea was quashed by the Finance Minister Volpi di Misurata but a subsequent intervention of Mussolini in 1927, brought it back. The *Giornale Italiano* suggested by Belluzzo became the *Giornale cinematografico Luce*.

The newsreel became fully operational in 1928, with about 201 outlets, spread through a complex of 4410 copies, a huge amount for the time. It was not, therefore, a weekly, but almost a newspaper that could be called a forerunner of the modern tv news.