STEFANO SANTORO, **The Latin "Frontier of Civilization": Italian Cultural Policies and Fascist Propaganda towards Central and Eastern Europe in the Interwar Period**

Abstract: Italian Fascism consciously used a series of myths built by the Italian cultural and political world in the second half of the nineteenth century and continued up to WWI, which presented Italy, the cradle of Latin civilization, as a natural point of reference for the "young nations" of Central and Eastern Europe eager to free themselves from the oppression of central European empires. Until WWI, these myths had a democratic connotation and had, in effect, developed within circles inspired by Mazzinian ideals. From the early 1920s, however, the fascist regime started to use the myth of "Latinity" for the purposes of power politics, in order to give a historical and cultural basis to its expansionist ambitions towards Central and Eastern Europe. In fascist propaganda, the "frontier of civilization" in Eastern Europe coincided with the area where the influence of Italian culture had asserted itself over the centuries. On this mythical "frontier line" stayed peoples related somehow to Rome, both for religious reasons (the majority of the population belonging to Catholicism), and for linguistic and cultural reasons. Beyond this imaginary line were the "enemies of civilization," which were represented either by political entities (Russian Bolshevism) or religious entities (eastern "Byzantinism") that Latin and fascist civilization had a historical mission to face.

This article aims to study the strategies of the cultural policies and propaganda implemented by the fascist regime, with the collaboration of Italian and foreign pro-Italian scholars, through a network of cultural institutions operating in Italy and abroad, aiming to foster the myth of the "frontier of civilization."

Keywords: Italy, Central and Eastern Europe, Fascism, propaganda, culture.

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