archival documents in the series ‘Collana Dell’Archivio Storico del Senato’, including, among others, Luciano Lama, Carlo Levi, Paolo Emilio Taviani and Giovanni Spadolini.

The volume consists of two complementary parts: the actual book and the annexed CD-Rom. The book contains a selection of Sforza’s speeches, with detailed comments in the footnotes, a foreword by Marcello Pera and an introductory essay by Ennio Di Nolfo, which has the merit of offering a helpful overview of Sforza’s life and political role. The CD-Rom includes all the parliamentary interventions of Carlo Sforza, a selection of documents from the ‘Fondo Sforza’ of the Archivio Storico della Camera dei Deputati, a collection of letters that Sforza wrote to the librarian of the Senate Library, Fortunato Pintor, and the texts of the international treaties signed or negotiated by Sforza. Additionally, the CD-Rom offers the possibility of accessing the full list of the governments (including the names of ministers down to the under-secretaries) from the XXIV Legislatura del Regno (1911) to the I Legislatura della Repubblica (1953).

This publication offers an enormous amount of primary sources material and has the merit of gathering together official sources, archival material and private papers. It must be pointed out, however, that while the documents printed in the books include a series of helpful footnotes, those on the CD-Rom have been simply scanned in from their original version and do not have any comments or notes, and readers may sometimes find it difficult to understand the references. Overall, this is a very welcome publication, which will hopefully be of use to historians working not only on Carlo Sforza, but on the history of Italy in the first half of the twentieth century and on her foreign relations.

References


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This is a dense, rich book. It is sometimes written with the laborious earnestness and fastidiousness of the PhD dissertation on which it is based, and I have not seen so many
numbered lists of points in the body of the text since Renzo De Felice’s multi-volume biography of Mussolini. It is De Felician, also, in its pursuit of and almost exclusive concern with unpublished archive documentation, much of it Foreign Ministry material previously untouched and unused by historians. The book does not really intend to tread on any ground not indicated or covered by the archival sources.

There the comparisons with De Felice should end. The book is important because it manages to bring together Italian Fascist pre-war and wartime occupation policies in Africa, France and the Balkans, and to demonstrate that they were not an unconnected series of improvisations ‘all’italiana’, but rather integral components of the same Fascist racist and imperialist project to create a European and African Mediterranean empire. Based on a clear perception of racial hierarchy, the idea was that an inner imperial ring of metropolitan Italy and suitably ‘Italianised’ and ‘Fascistised’ peoples and territories in parts of occupied Yugoslavia and Greece, would dominate an outer ring of imperial territories where different segregated and non-assimilable ethnic and national groups would co-exist.

The book makes it pretty clear that it was impossible to realise such an imperial project in wartime conditions, largely because Nazi Germany had conquered Fascist Italy’s Balkan empire for its Axis partner and by right of conquest, if nothing else, continued to subordinate Italian Fascist interests to its own in these jointly occupied areas. Yet the book also shows how hard Fascist Italy strained to implement its imperialist vision in face of the realities on the ground of its inferiority to Nazi Germany in the Axis. It shows how the imposed ‘Italianisation’ and ‘Fascistisation’ of some newly-annexed territories in Yugoslavia and Greece continued the policies followed in those areas in the north east that were annexed to Italy after the First World War, at least until late 1942, when waging a nasty and brutal war against the partisans and basic security concerns became the priority. It shows that when repressiveness appeared to become all there was to Italian occupation policy in these areas, the Italian military employed the same repressive practices of deportation, internment and terror first used in the colonial ‘pacifications’ of Libya in the late 1920s and Ethiopia in the late 1930s. Roatta’s notorious, but hardly exceptional, circular 3C was both a manual of counter-insurgency, and in its ‘ethnic cleansing’ tactics, a tool of imperial conquest and colonisation.

This section of the book flatly and explicitly contradicts what appeared in the official military history of the occupation of Dalmatia, published in the early 1990s. Rodogno’s analysis of the treatment of Jews in Italian-occupied territories also contradicts the ‘humanitarian’ thesis developed by Steinberg and others, though, oddly, he rather backtracks on this at a later point. It was not the case that Italian military officers on the ground ‘disobeyed’ or ‘interpreted’ Mussolini’s decisions and so ‘protected’ Jews. It was not the case that the Italian occupation authorities stopped deporting Jews once they knew that deportation meant death. What happened was that Italian officials closed the borders and turned back refugees, including Jews, who tried to enter Italian-held territory, and expelled refugees who had entered illegally, even though their countries or states of origin had racist and antisemitic measures in place. There is a very chilling passage on the Italian military’s inaction in face of the fascist Croat statelet’s massacres of Serbs and Jews in 1941.

Rodogno’s conclusion that Mussolini’s eventual decision to order the occupation of Croatia was not so much to prevent the killings as to prevent anti-Croat disorder spreading to Italian Dalmatia, exactly mirrors the conclusion he reaches about the treatment of Jews in Italian-occupied areas, that it was a question of internal security and
of sovereignty. The internment of Jews was clearly ‘better’ than deportation to the death camps, but internment reflected the Fascist government’s concern to assert its authority in its own area of jurisdiction – a stance that exactly replicated that of Vichy France in its behaviour towards foreign and French Jews.

This highly charged and contentious aspect of Italian occupation policy is treated as dispassionately as is possible. Rodogno’s analysis indicates that Italian military and civilian officials implemented Italian Fascist, if not German Nazi, racial policy in the occupied territories, which was discriminatory and persecuting, but not genocidal. This marks another interesting facet of the book. It demonstrates that to a large degree, the Fascists whom Mussolini appointed to run the occupied territories and the military and civilian officials who administered and policed them, had ‘internalised’ the Fascist imperial project and did their best to implement the Fascist occupation policies that were meant to flesh out the vision. Whether, then, state officials were actually ideologically ‘Fascist’ or not, becomes irrelevant, because like their metropolitan counterparts, they faithfully served the Fascist regime and sought to realise Fascist imperialist goals. They all certainly behaved as if they believed that they were racially and culturally superior to the peoples they attempted to govern, or rather, repress. The Fascist regime’s retention of a largely ‘unfascistised’ career civil service throughout the ventennio, in this light, becomes less a judgement on how ‘Fascist’ the regime actually was, and more a testament to Fascism’s successful co-option of the state’s personnel and apparatus.

The book also makes possible some fascinating comparisons between the modus vivendi of the two fascist regimes and the two fascist dictators, and in this way, contributes to a wider understanding of fascism in general. What the book points to was a convergence in the fascist style of personal rule, with Mussolini, like Hitler, operating in the occupied territories according to the ‘leader principle’, mandating Fascist leaders and officials to act as colonial governors, untrammelled by ministerial or other lines of communication and accountability. Rodogno uses the same terms, ‘arbiter in a polycratic system’, ‘working towards the Duce’, which have been taken to characterise Hitler’s mode of governing. I think Rodogno does a great job in unravelling and clarifying the chains of command in the running of the occupied territories, but what I find fascinating is what others may find boring. The book deserves to be read, despite the clunkiness of its writing, because of the way it cuts through, with the sharp teeth of the archive rat, many of the still prevailing myths about how Italy and Italians behaved in the wartime occupation of parts of Mediterranean Europe.

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In Mussolini and Fascist Italy, Martin Blinkhorn deals with a broad number of issues in a tight structure and with enviable conceptual and linguistic concision. Dismissing the Crocean view that fascism was an aberration in an otherwise post-unification Shangri-La, the author argues first and foremost for the need to see precisely the liberal state as the