

capitalized on a middle-class backlash as well as low voter turnout to recapture control of city hall.

5. *The Fascist Conquest of Turin.*

While Turin was one of a principal hotbed of revolutionary agitation and labor militancy in Italy during the two “red years” immediately after World War I, the city played a decidedly marginal role in the rise and triumph of Fascism on the national level between 1921 and 1925. In the aftermath of the factory occupations and agricultural strikes of 1920, the new willingness of Italy’s social and economic elites to experiment with violent, extralegal remedies for the ills of the “red tyranny” gave Mussolini’s small extremist movement a renewed lease on life as the vanguard of a patriotic and class reaction against Socialism. From its original bases in Bologna and Ferrara, provincial Fascism, with its armed squads and punitive expeditions, spread rapidly to other zones of northern and central Italy. Within the span of a few months, this “chaotic ensemble of local reactions” propelled Fascism to political prominence on the national level.

Mussolini’s movement met with a considerably less enthusiastic reception in Turin. The first branch or *fascio* in the city was founded in the spring of 1919 by the typographer and ex-anarchist, Mario Gioda and a group of pro-war interventionists, but it attracted less than a hundred members and did little more than distribute anti-socialist propaganda leaflets. The visibility of the local Fascists increased in the spring of 1921 when they sacked and burned the Chamber of Labor and Cesare Maria De Vecchi, a pro-monarchist with solid connections to the military authorities, court and aristocratic circles, assumed an increasingly dominant role in the organization. From the outset, two leaders embodied the deep social and political cleavages within Turinese Fascism between De Vecchi’s conservative, militarist faction and a more populist, anti-establishment faction headed by Gioda. Although De Vecchi quickly moved into the inner circles of the Fascist leadership at the national level, the local organization enjoyed little success. Despite the growing prominence of Mussolini’s movement in Rome and elsewhere in Italy by 1922, the Turinese *fascio* remained only a bit player on the municipal political scene, with no more than 580 members in a city of half a million people on the eve of the March on Rome.

Ironically, it was the very success of the Turin’s industrial leaders in defeating the revolutionary challenge from the left in 1920 that helped