

ers on the periphery and the wealthy and middle-classes in the center and foothills. The increasing presence of folks from distant regions, however, did erode the old cultural unity and social solidarity of the pre-fascist working-class communities.

On the whole, the Fascist regime did not provide into any real improvements in the living standards for the great majority of Turin's citizens, although some social groups suffered more than others during the 1930s. Chronic problems of overcrowding, high rents, and inadequate basic services persisted throughout the inter-war years. Predictably, these conditions hit worker families the hardest. Nearly three quarters of these families lived in residences of one to two rooms; less than one percent had a bathroom and only four percent had modern heating. The Great Depression compounded the hardships of the industrial labor force by enlarging the ranks of the unemployed, by slashing hours of work, and by reducing wages and real incomes, which did not rise again until 1939-40 and then only briefly. While the large number of business failures and falling incomes also hit the lower-middle classes as well, these social groups and the upper ranks of skilled industrial workers benefited from Fascist policies and employer initiatives that assured them preferential treatment, economic aid, and improvements in social status. The regime's housing initiatives in the city, for instance, were designed, located, and priced to favor shopkeepers, artisans, and white-collar employees, whose numbers swelled with the expansion of governmental and corporate bureaucracies during the inter-war years. Only in the late-1930s did local authorities begin to construct inexpensive public housing in the working-class areas on the periphery.

Mussolini's government did introduce new social and cultural programs to promote national consciousness, rally mass support for Fascism, and undermine older class and provincial loyalties by regrouping people on the basis of sex, age, activity, and social group. State-sponsored organizations like the Opera Nazionale Balilla, for young people, the National Institute for Maternity and Infancy, and the National After-Work Foundation (Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro) provided services and activities to tens of thousands of local residents. At the same time, Fascism attempted to leave its physical imprint on the city. In addition to the expansion and renovation of Via Roma, a principal avenue in the heart of the city, the regime oversaw the construction of five new bridges, two hospitals, a new stadium, the Turin-Milan highway, and a number of other buildings that provided headquarters for various Fascist organizations. Such initiatives, in tandem with the easing of the economic crisis and the success of public works projects in reducing unemployment, helped to improve the image of the regime in Turin and favored