

# Cesare Barbieri Courier



**MUSSOLINI AND ITALIAN FASCISM**

# Cesare Barbieri Courier

*A Special Issue on Mussolini and Italian Fascism*

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COVER: *Mussolini in November 1943*

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### 1980 Special Issue

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## Prolegomena

It has been ten years since the *CESARE BARBIERI COURIER* suspended publication after ten years of sustained publication. It came to an end not because it had out-lived its interest for subscribers. Fortunately, matters relating to Italian culture still seem to attract a loyal readership. The problem was essentially that a single editor with no clerical staff could hardly cope with the burden of maintaining subscription lists and countless other little complexities of the publishing world. The rising costs of paper, printing and postage also made continuance prohibitive.

But long after its suspension letters of former subscribers continued to arrive expressing regret and hope for a revival of our journal. Such appreciative expressions kept hope alive and nourished the will to find some way of resuming our undertaking. It then occurred to us that *CBC* could possibly reappear periodically in the form of special issues edited by guest editors. Now after a full decade, a combination of opportune factors has permitted the realization of that possibility: the presence at Trinity College of a collection of primary documents of considerable historical importance and the presence on the Trinity College faculty of a colleague especially interested in the scholarly fields they represent: Benito Mussolini and Italian Fascism, subjects of increasing professional interest now that we have gained an appropriate historical perspective of the personalities and events of half a century ago. The present number of *CBC* is the fruit of this happy combination of circumstances.

It is with particular pleasure that I pass the editorial reins for this issue to my colleague, Borden W. Painter, Professor of History and past chairman of the Department of History at Trinity College. In arranging such an excellent collection of essays he has brought together some of the finest scholars of the history of modern Italy and in so doing has set a high example for this first in a projected series of special issues.

Michael R. Campo, Director  
Cesare Barbieri Center of Italian Studies

## Statement of the Donor

The Collection was donated to Trinity College in the aftermath of a terrible war. Deprived of peaceful familial surroundings and affection, those who served suffered the anxiety and anguish of suddenly being thrust into a brutal world of bloodshed.

The gift is a small token in memory of our heroic dead which, I hope, in some measure will benefit academicians in their scholarly pursuits.

I would pay tribute to two friends who influenced the selection of Trinity College as the donee: Dr. Michael Campo, long dedicated to the advancement of the Cesare Barbieri Center of Italian Studies and Attorney Morris Apter, a true humanitarian and sincere friend of Trinity College.

Anonymity is the choice of the donor—an American soldier.

# Introduction

Early on the morning of April 29 1945 an Allied force of approximately 150 men started across Lake Garda in a group of amphibious Dukws, heading for the western shore. The goal was the villa where Benito Mussolini had the headquarters of his Italian Social Republic. The mission was to capture the Duce and a number of government documents thought to be in his office. Two intelligence officers, Captain John Noel, United States Army, and Captain Reginald Scott,<sup>1</sup> British Army, had the responsibility of penetrating the villa and seizing the Fascist dictator and the papers.

Little opposition met the troops. A few mortar shells fell in the area, and machine gun fire chattered intermittently. Soon they secured the flanks, and the firing ceased with no casualties suffered by the intruders. Captains Noel and Scott entered the villa without difficulty and found Mussolini's office.

Unknown to the two officers, Mussolini had died the day before at the hands of Italian partisans.<sup>2</sup> Although they missed their human quarry, they did find the documents in question housed in several cabinets. They also discovered a cache of thousands of German marks dating from before the ruinous inflation of the early 1920s. Captain Noel moved across the room to the Duce's massive desk and removed a number of papers from the drawers. Later, after carefully sifting through the captured material and removing everything thought to have value for intelligence purposes, the English colonel supervising this operation told the Captain he could keep the remainder as "war trophies." Captain Noel sent them home. These documents make up the Trinity College Collection of Italian Government Manuscripts.

After the war Captain Noel returned to the Hartford area to resume civilian life. He put the Italian documents in the attic and more or less forgot about them until the mid-1960s when a university scholar inquired about them. Although this scholar offered to buy them, Mr. Noel decided that he would prefer to donate them to a school of his own choice. He first thought of giving them to his *alma mater*, but found that it had no particular strength in the area of Italian history and culture. Then a friend, Morris Apter, suggested that he consider Trinity College and its Cesare Barbieri Center for Italian Studies as recipients. That proposal caught his interest, and he decided to look into Trinity.

In 1968 Messrs. Noel and Apter visited Professor Michael Campo of Trinity's Italian Department and Director of the Cesare Barbieri Center. When Professor Campo saw the contents of the collection, he decided to discuss the matter with Trinity's President, Albert C. Jacobs, and Librarian, Donald C. Engley. The Trinity officials were willing to explore the donation of the papers, but thought that the Italian Government should enter the picture.

The Italian Embassy appointed Signor Giuseppe Cardillo of the Istituto Italiano di Cultura in New York City to represent the Italian Government. Cardillo claimed that the documents—or at least some of them—rightfully belonged to the Italians. Specifically, he pointed to the sixty-five letters from the Head of State, King Victor Emmanuel III, and the telegram of 2 June 1944 to Hitler from the Head of Government, Mussolini, as government documents. For a time the discussion bogged down on this point. Finally Mr. Noel made it clear that he would not hand over the collection to the Italians but only to Trinity College and the Cesare Barbieri Center; if that was not acceptable he would dispose of the documents. With all positions clear and lines drawn, everyone saw the advantage of coming to an agreement. The documents would go to Trinity with the understanding that the Italian Government had not surrendered its claim to them. Trinity and the Barbieri Center agreed that the disputed portion of the collection might some day return to Italy's State Archives. Professor Renato Grispo, representing the Archives, visited the campus and agreed to this arrangement. Today Dr. Grispo is Director-General of the Archivio Centrale dello Stato and has expressed his keen interest in and support of this special issue about the collection. In the meantime, the documents have been available to scholars and photo copies of the entire collection went to the Istituto Italiano di Cultura.

The collection is a rather mixed one. It contains items from the nineteenth as well as the twentieth century, and it is not clear in all cases where or why Mussolini got them. The complete list of the items is as follows:

- (1) A one page letter from Adolf Hitler to Mussolini, 8 June 1931, with a signed photograph of Hitler. The letter is in German, and there is an Italian translation and a brief memorandum from the Italian intermediary, Major Giuseppe Renzetti.
- (2) A seven page letter from Mussolini to Hitler in Mussolini's own hand, 2 June 1944.
- (3) Four letters written by the Fascist leader Italo Balbo between 1933 and 1938. Three are addressed to Mussolini and one to the Special Tribunal investigating the writer Curzio Malaparte.
- (4) Twenty-one letters to Abele Damiani, dated 1861 to 1904. Damiani was a Sicilian politician associated with Garibaldi and Francesco Crispi. Four letters are from Crispi, one from Garibaldi, one from G. P. Candella, and fifteen from Antonio Mordini.
- (5) Nine bound volumes of photo copies of letters of Gabriele D'Annunzio. Eight volumes contain D'Annunzio's letters to Mussolini; one volume contains letters to other public figures.
- (6) Sixty-five letters of King Victor Emmanuel III to Count Pietro Acquarone, Minister of the Royal Household, written between April 1939 and April 1942.
- (7) An autographed photo of General Mariakira Shimizu, Japanese military representative in Italy, 1 January 1944. A second photo is of General Shimizu's young daughter, 28 January 1944, who was born in Italy.
- (8) Two copies of a typescript biography of Mussolini's wife, Donna Rachele, by Massimo Pantucci. The copies are identical, but with different pagination (135 pages and 131 pages) and include numerous photographs.
- (9) Six photographs of Donna Rachele. Three of these show her at a cornerstone laying ceremony in the 1930s.
- (10) The first draft of the novel *Al di là* by the nationalist writer Alfredo Oriani (1852-1909).

Our purpose in this special issue of the *Cesare Barbieri Courier* is to make the existence of these documents more widely known and to offer historical appraisals of some of them. We have articles and commentaries which either discuss particular documents or comment more generally on some facet of Mussolini and Italian Fascism. The study of European fascism in general and Italian Fascism in particular has drawn the attention of scholars from many countries in recent years. We believe this volume of essays constitutes a contribution to the growing literature on the subject and will encourage other students of modern Italian history to visit Trinity College to examine this collection.

Alan Cassels of McMaster University offers an assessment of the literature and historiography of Italian Fascism. His essay discusses some of the most recent books and articles on the subject and places into sharp relief the various issues debated and positions taken by various scholars.

Prominent in Professor Cassel's survey of the literature are the works of Renzo De Felice of the University of Rome. Professor De Felice had to cancel plans to write a commentary for us on the letter and photograph of Hitler because of illness. He has, however, commented already in two Italian publications on the significance of the Nazi leader's approach to Mussolini in 1931. We have reproduced the letter and photo with the Italian and English translations. In an introductory note I refer to De Felice's published comments.

In 1931 Mussolini had grave reservations about Hitler's movement and doubts about promoting any relationship between himself and the still little known German politician, but Nazi success in the elections of 1930 compelled the Duce to take notice. Only after Hitler came to power in 1933 did Mussolini agree to meet him for the first time, in Venice in 1934. Even then the Duce looked down on the German Fuhrer, but his attitude changed when Germany supported the Italian conquest of Ethiopia in 1935-36 while the League of Nations, spurred on by the British Government, condemned the action. Mussolini then spoke of a "Rome-Berlin Axis," and in May 1939 Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany concluded a formal alliance, the "Pact of Steel."

The relationship of Mussolini and Hitler, so tentatively begun with a letter and a photograph in 1931, approached its dismal, bloody and tragic end by mid-1944. Mussolini and his regime had fallen in July 1943, but after a daring rescue by German glider troops led by Otto Skorzeny, he assumed leadership of a German puppet government, the Italian Social Republic, or "Salò Republic," so named for the town in northern Italy where many government offices were located. It was in his headquarters on Lake Garda that Mussolini penned his seven page letter to Hitler on 2 June 1944. The two documents in the collection vividly portray the reversal of roles which had taken place in the intervening thirteen

years. In 1931 Hitler played a potential junior partner to the already well-established Italian leader while in 1944 the defeated and discouraged Duce appealed pathetically for help from the still powerful German Fuhrer. The documents provide a kind of frame within which to view the historical relationship of Italian Fascism and German Nazism.

Professor F. W. Deakin of Oxford called the relationship between the two dictators the "brutal friendship" in his book of that title which appeared in 1962. In his essay for this issue he sets the 1944 letter in the context of the events of that year and brings to light some new facts about this fascinating document.

Charles Delzell of Vanderbilt University discusses the letters of King Victor Emmanuel III to his Minister of the Royal Household, Count Pietro Aquarone. He places them within the general framework of Mussolini's relationship with the King. Many people blamed Victor Emmanuel for not blocking Mussolini's appointment as Prime Minister in 1922 and for his failure to dismiss him at the time of the crisis over the murder of the Socialist Deputy Giacomo Matteotti in 1924; yet in 1943 it was the King, with Acquarone's help, who cooperated with the Army and opponents of the Duce on the Fascist Grand Council to bring down the dictator and his regime. It proved too late, nevertheless, to save a monarchy tainted with two decades of association with Fascism. Victor Emmanuel did abdicate in favor of his son Umberto in May 1946, but the people of Italy voted against retaining the monarchy in a referendum one month later. Italy became a republic, and Umberto left for exile in Portugal where he still resides.

Of the many Fascist cohorts of Mussolini, none acquired more fame and publicity in the 1920s and 1930s than Italo Balbo. Balbo first met Mussolini in 1915 and after World War I, in which they both served, he emerged as the leader or *ras* of Fascism in his native Ferrara.

Balbo remained loyal to Mussolini until his death in 1940, although he disagreed with certain policies of the Duce, including the alliance with Germany in 1939 and the Italian emulation of German anti-Semitic legislation in 1938. Balbo had gained international fame for his aeronautical feats, including his transatlantic flight to Chicago in 1933, and for his able and energetic leadership as Governor-General of Libya from 1934 to 1940.

Claudio Segrè of the University of Texas shows how the career of Balbo and his relationship with Mussolini reveal something of the nature of Italian Fascism as a political movement and as a regime. In this context he comments on one of the four Balbo letters in the Trinity collection.

Emiliana Noether of the University of Connecticut has contributed an article on the relationship of Mussolini with Gabriele D'Annunzio. The volumes of D'Annunzio's letters to Mussolini in the Trinity collection contain photo copies of the originals. Although these letters are available in other sources, the attractively bound volumes appear to have been for the Duce's private library.

D'Annunzio was not a Fascist nor did he publicly support the regime until near the end of his life, but, like Balbo, his personal and political relationship with Mussolini followed an erratic and uncertain course for nearly two decades. Professor Noether's careful examination of this "strange friendship" not only clarifies the relationship of the two, but also throws light on the character of Fascism and its leader.

We do not have separate articles and commentaries on the remaining pieces in the Trinity collection, but what now follows are descriptions of them which will clearly indicate the general character and some of the specific content of each. We hope that this information will help scholars identify any items which they would like to examine and study at Trinity.

The biography of Rachele Mussolini by Massimo Pantucci<sup>3</sup> traces the life of the Duce's wife from her birth in 1892 to late 1941. There are two typescripts with identical text and photographs, but different pagination. Separate from these manuscripts are six photographs of Donna Rachele. There is no evidence that the biography was published, and one can only guess that it may have been set aside with the outbreak of the war.

The biography does not add anything substantial to our factual knowledge of Mussolini, his wife and his family,<sup>4</sup> but it merits our attention as an example of Fascist journalis-

tic propaganda. It is a slick and readable piece of work, probably intended for women, for it consistently portrays Donna Rachele as a perfect Fascist wife and mother. She always supports her husband and does whatever she can, privately and publicly, to further the goals of Fascist Italy. When, for example, the Duce fell ill she nursed him back to health (p. 106); when floods and landslides ravaged the Romagna, she traveled everywhere in the region to help the common people who, through this *Madonna di carità*, would know that "Fascism and especially the Duce have not abandoned them to their sad fate." (p. 128)

The early chapters emphasize Rachele Guidi's humble origins and the virtuous hard work of her youth. She developed *carattere forte* which made her a worthy consort of the Duce. In keeping with Fascist propaganda of the 1930s, the book exalts rural virtues. The author, for example, took the liberty of portraying Donna Rachele's inner thoughts as she rode on the train to Forli in 1922 when Mussolini assumed power:

The fields flashing by reminded her of her own youth and made her think of the 'peasant folk, humble and strong.' She shared her husband's goal of renewing 'the rural virtues.' Above all her heart filled with joy as she contemplated her role among these people. 'To come from the people in order to return among the people with hands brimming over with gifts, with the possibility of alleviating the unlimited suffering of the disinherited, interpreting their needs, aspirations and anguish; to remain serenely among the humble while Benito Mussolini prepares with his tremendous work and with his genius and with his boldness a great prosperity for the Italian people.' (pp. 88-89)

Donna Rachele lived only for her husband. When he came home in a black humor, she calmed him. (p. 36) Her faith in "Benito's star" never wavered. (p. 38) She knew his iron will, his hopes and his plans. Above all, she believed in the "great destiny of the Italy of the Black Shirts." (p. 85) No matter what problems and decisions faced him, his wife and family always remained close by. (p. 105) No matter how tumultuous his public life, the "Founder of Fascism" could retreat to the serene atmosphere of a home "dominated by the strong will and great heart of Rachele Mussolini." (p. 85)



Mussolini, Donna Rachele and Edda

Once in power, Mussolini continued to rely on his wife for support and understanding as he addressed himself to the many problems besetting the country. These problems did not escape "the attention of Rachele Mussolini: from the struggle against malaria to the solutions to the problems of development and of life in the South, from the reactions against the torpid conspiracies of Masonic lodges to the courageous battle for the defense and the revaluation of the lira." (p. 108)

In the 1930s she lived most of the year at the Rocca delle Caminate, the medieval fortress restored and given to Mussolini by the people of his native province of Forli. It was to the Rocca that the King came to visit on June 8 1938 (p. 116) where he presented her with a bunch of roses. The author rightly called it an "historic meeting between the Duce and the Sovereign," for the King's visit to the private residence of the Head of Government indicated royal approval of the regime. The historic occasion, nevertheless, occupies only three lines, and it is the monarchy's only appearance in the biography.



*Donna Rachele*

In the province Donna Rachele attended a constant round of public activities: inauguration of public works, Party rallies, meetings of rural housewives, gatherings of the regime's leisure and sports organization (*dopolavoro*). Alone she would go everywhere to visit the "houses of the poor, to alleviate their suffering, to hear their voices, to become acquainted with their aspirations and their needs, to be near the people." (p. 115) In 1940 she received medals for her work at a ceremony in the piazza of Forli. (pp. 127-28)

The most explicit reference to Donna Rachele as the shining example of the Fascist feminine style comes toward the conclusion of the book. On the last Sunday in May 1939, 70,000 Fascist women paraded before the Duce in Forli to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the Fascist movement. Donna Rachele attended, not only as his consort, but as the secretary of the Fascist women's organization of Predappio. The author then adds a quotation from his local newspaper concerning the event:

Everyone understood the highest significance of the Duce's Consort's presence among the female Hierarchy of all Italy, everyone felt in this gesture of hers her spirit as Fascist Woman, as mother and as exemplary spouse. She herself teaches us that every hearth is a trench of the battle that knows no limits of devotion and of sacrifice and that goes from the birth to the education of children, from the stern defense of constitutional institutions to the most varied kinds of support, from the most zealous care for the physical health of the race to the most effective collaboration for the achievement of autarchy. (p. 125)



Throughout the text the author faced the task of what to call the oft-mentioned Mussolini other than Mussolini or *Il Duce*. He managed to come up with over a dozen titles, ranging from *l'Uomo Nuovo* to *l'Uomo della Provvidenza*. Early in his career Mussolini was *l'Agitatore* or *il Tribuno* or *il Figlio del Fabbro di Dovia*; when World War I broke out, he became *l'Uomo dell'Intervento*; then he became *il Fondatore del Fascismo*, *il Capo dell'Italia Fascista*, or *Capo delle Camicie Nere*; and throughout the book he was *il Condottiero*. The book, in other words, is consistent with the image Mussolini wished to project of himself: strong, purposeful and many faceted.

Pantucci does emphasize Donna Rachele's role as the mother of Mussolini's five children: Edda (b. 1910), Vittorio (b. 1916), Bruno (b. 1918), Romano (b. 1927), and Anna Maria (b. 1929). Considerable attention is given to her devotion and prowess as a mother. Less attention is given to the children themselves, although certain events receive emphasis: Edda helping her grandmother and writing to Daddy during the War (pp. 55-58); Edda closely following the progress of the War (p. 58); Vittorio and Bruno receiving First Communion in 1924 (p. 103); Edda going off to boarding school in Florence in 1925 (p. 106); Vittorio and Bruno as pilots in Ethiopia and Spain; and the book ends with the death of Bruno in a plane crash at Pisa on August 7 1941 (p. 133).

A personal touch is a postcard which Mussolini had placed in one of the copies of the biography. It is from his two oldest sons, Vittorio and Bruno, dated May 27 1928 and post-marked Predappio. It shows a picture of the Rocca delle Caminate and bears the message, "After having prayed at the tomb of Rosa Maltoni Mussolini," the Duce's mother.



*Donna Rachele in the 1930s.*

The oldest pieces in the collection are the twenty-one letters to the Sicilian politician Abele Damiani (1835-1905), written between 1861 and 1904. Damiani had an active political career as a *garibaldino*, a member of the Left, and an associate of Francesco Crispi. From 1865 to 1897 he served in the House of Deputies and became a Senator in 1898. From 1887 to 1891 Damiani was an Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs in Crispi's first ministry. Considered an authority on Sicilian land proprietorship, he was appointed to the parliamentary commission led by Stefano Jacini which investigated Italian agriculture. Damiani wrote the volume on Sicily as part of the Jacini commission's fifteen volume report.<sup>5</sup>

The majority of the letters, fifteen, came from Antonio Mordini (1819-1902), a close political friend and ally from Tuscany. Garibaldi appointed Mordini Prodictator in Sicily from September to December 1860. He entered the House of Deputies in 1861 as a representative of Palermo and remained a member until 1895; the following year he was named a Senator. Mordini served as Minister of Public Works from 1867 to 1869 and Prefect for Naples in 1872.<sup>6</sup>

Mordini wrote eleven of the letters in the collection between 1861 and 1865; three others have no date, but appear to be from the same period. He wrote the final letter on August 14 1901, lamenting the death of their friend and colleague Crispi.

The letters of the early 1860s contain comments on the political events of the time, the movements of Garibaldi, and the political fortunes of the Left as the opposition party. In 1862, for example, when Garibaldi appeared ready to lead an expedition to capture Rome, Mordini expressed anxiety over what would happen next and professed to know nothing of Garibaldi's intentions. (Letter of July 21 1862) A month later Mordini was arrested for complicity in Garibaldi's ill-fated adventure which had ended with his wounding and capture at Aspromonte. The letters contain frequent references to other *garibaldini* and members of the Left: Crispi, Giovanni Cadolini, Angelo Bargoni, Salvatore Calvino, Domenico Peranni, and Nicola Fabrizi.

Garibaldi's one letter to Damiani, August 8 1864, is a brief note of condolence for the death of Damiani's friend Andrea d'Anna. A similar but shorter note of condolence came from Mordini on June 24 1864.

The four letters from Francesco Crispi are dated July 20 1877, July 1 1878, August 30 1879, and November 5 1881. In the first, Crispi discussed his forthcoming trip to several European countries and denied the "rumor that I have a commission for Germany." Crispi did in fact meet with Bismarck on this trip which his allies of the day played up as a great personal triumph. Modern historians see Crispi's overture to Bismarck for an Italo-German alliance as a clumsy failure.<sup>7</sup>

The letter of July 1 1878 includes Crispi's assessment of the Congress of Berlin and Austria's occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He rebuked Prime Minister Benedetto Cairoli and Foreign Minister Count Luigi Corti and rejected those who made light of the Austrian threat to Italy. The letter of August 30 1879 concerns a political meeting of the Left in Naples, the problems of Cairoli's weak government and the choice of a secretary-general of the party. The letter of November 5 1881 offers some opinions on foreign affairs. Crispi thought, for example, that "we must be friends with Austria-Hungary, but in the East we have opposing interests and it would be a misfortune if these interests were offended by international conventions." He reported on a conversation several months earlier with Foreign Minister Pasquale Mancini in which "we spoke of a law of extradition [with Germany] which we lack and negotiating with foreign governments to obtain for Italians the exercise of civil rights abroad, rights that we accord to foreigners."

The final letter in the collection, dated January 5 1904, came from G. P. Candella and concerns a court case with a pending appeal. Candella included a copy of a letter he had sent to Carlo Gianpetri that day which summed up the current state of this particular case.

We do not know why Mussolini had this correspondence or whether this is all he had or only a part of a larger collection. Mussolini's approval of Crispi and his wish to find roots of Fascism in the Risorgimento and among the *garibaldini* may offer reasons for his interest in Damji. Another indication of such interest appeared in the February 11 1935

issue of *Nuova Antologia*. In an article entitled "Lettere di Francesco Crispi ad Abele Damiani," the journal's editor, Luigi Federzoni, presented two letters, January 7 1894 and October 13 1898, with his introduction to them. There may also be a clue to the Damiani correspondence in a biography of Mordini by Michele Rosi, *Il Risorgimento Italiano e l'Azione d'un Patriota Cospiratore e Soldato* (Rome-Turin 1906). The author made extensive use of Mordini's correspondence, but made no reference to any letters between Mordini and Damiani. Hence we can only speculate that Damiani's collection of letters had only come to light more recently and had aroused the interest of Mussolini and Federzoni, the leading Nationalist-Fascist ideologue of the 1920s and 1930s.

Mussolini's possession of a manuscript by Alfredo Oriani (1852-1909) comes as no surprise, for he led the effort in the 1920s to establish Oriani as a major literary precursor of Fascism. In fact, Mussolini edited the thirty volume *Opera Omnia* of Oriani which appeared between 1923 and 1933. This particular manuscript came to him as part of his editorial work.

Capriera 8 ag 1864.

Caro Damiani

Sento con piacere che  
vi proponete scrivere qualche con-  
tro biografico sul bravo Andrea  
D'Anna de cui lamentiamo tutta  
la fine disgraziata - Citatelo nel  
vostro lavoro come esempio alla gio-  
ventù italiana - E mi si in pra-  
tica quel precetto che non bisogna  
mai stancarsi d'incalzare ai gio-  
vani "onestamente vivere e tutto  
alla Patria sacrificare" - Odiore  
alla memoria di Andrea D'Anna

Vostro  
G. Garibaldi

Garibaldi to Abele Damiani 8 August 1864.

A faded note in pencil from the author to a member of the Ortolani family identifies the manuscript as a first draft of the novel *Al di là*. The original title of the work on this manuscript is *Uomo o Donna*. Oriani signed it "Ottone di Banzolo," a pseudonym he frequently used.<sup>8</sup> His small, cramped style of handwriting makes great demands on the reader and the text has yet to receive scholarly examination. A cursory comparison of the manuscript with the text printed in the *Opera Omnia* (volumes 27 and 28) reveals numerous changes in the latter, although the essential form and substance of the novel are in the draft. Some pages, usually chapter endings, are incomplete in the draft.

A fragment of an envelope and a note recently added to the collection by the donor suggest that the manuscript was given to Mussolini by Signora Elisa Gulmanelli Ortolani of Ravenna in May 1924. The typed note appears to be the carbon copy of a formal expression of thanks to Signora Ortolani for her gift.

The final pieces in the collection are two photographs given to Mussolini by General Moriakira Shimizu,<sup>9</sup> the Japanese military representative in Italy during the Salò period.



General Moriakira Shimizu, Japanese military representative in Italy during the Salò period.

The first is a portrait of Shimizu with a greeting to the Duce in Italian and Japanese, dated "Cortina 1 January 1944 XXI" (the XXI indicating the twenty-first year of the Fascist Era.) The second is of the General's baby daughter, born in Italy and dated January 28 1944.

These two gifts to Mussolini command our attention initially as curios: personal possessions of an important historical figure, but without much historical significance themselves. Nevertheless, it is possible to see them also as indications of Mussolini's interest in the Japanese representatives then in Italy, as the Axis powers in Europe faced the beginning of the end. Giovanni Dolfin, Mussolini's personal secretary from October 1943 to March 1944, reported several meetings the Duce had with the Japanese ambassador to Italy, Shinrokurō Hidaka, the ambassador to the Vatican, Harada, General Shimizu and other Japanese. Mussolini apparently found the Japanese reasonably reliable and interesting commentators and analysts of German fortunes and intentions at the time. These photographs are indications of the cordial Italian-Japanese relations in early 1944.

A final point: in leafing through the documents one comes upon occasional red and blue crayon marks. Most take the form of a check or a line under a few words. Without question Mussolini made the marks, for others noted his constant use of red and blue pencils or crayons to mark newspapers, letters and other documents as he read through them.<sup>10</sup> Just what Mussolini meant by the marks is, of course, more puzzling which brings us back to the basic point to be made about this collection: it is an odd assortment of items in which some are clearly of more historical importance than others, but they all furnish clues to those things which concerned and interested Benito Mussolini, the Duce of Fascist Italy.

The documents in this collection are housed in the Watkinson Library at Trinity College. Inquiries should go to Jeffrey Kaimowitz, Curator, Watkinson Library, Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut 06106.

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#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Pseudonyms.

<sup>2</sup>For the events of the Italian campaign at this time see Ernest F. Fisher, Jr., *The United States in World War II, The Mediterranean Theater of Operations, Cassino to the Alps* (Washington D. C., 1977), 507-511. A Fifth Army publication, *19 Days from the Apennines to the Alps* (Milan, 1945), incorrectly attributes the raid on Mussolini's headquarters to the famous U. S. Army Ranger, Colonel William O. Darby, who was killed the next day, April 30.

<sup>3</sup>Massimo Pantucci was an Italian journalist and the editor of a provincial Fascist weekly, *Popolo di Romagna*. See *Chi Scrive* (Milan, 1966), vol. 2, and Antonio Mambelli, *Il Giornalismo in Romagna* (Forlì, 1966), 151.

<sup>4</sup>See Rachele Mussolini, *La mia vita con Benito* (Milan, 1948), English translation, *My Life with Mussolini* (London, 1959); *idem*, *Mussolini, An Intimate Biography* (New York, 1974); Edda Mussolini Ciano, *My Truth* (New York, 1977).

<sup>5</sup>*Dizionario Enciclopedico Italiano* (Rome, 1955-61); *Dizionario del Risorgimento Nazionale* (Milan, 1930-37); Denis Mack Smith, *A History of Sicily*, vol. III *Sicily after 1713* (London, 1968) 471,

557; Alberto Carccilo, *L'Inchiesta Agraria Jacini* (Turin, 1958), 45-46.

<sup>6</sup>*Diz. Enc. It.; Diz. del Ris.*; Denis Mack Smith, *Cavour and Garibaldi* (Cambridge, 1954), 262-63, 428.

<sup>7</sup>See C. J. Lowe and F. Marzari, *Italian Foreign Policy 1870-1940* (London & Boston, 1975), 17-19; Federico Chabod, *Storia della Politica Estera Italiana dal 1870 al 1898*, 2 vols., paperback ed. (Bari, 1971), 725-26; Renato Mori, *La Politica Estera di Francesco Crispi 1887-1891* (Rome, 1973), 51-54; Massimo Ganci, *Il Caso Crispi* (Palermo, 1976), 136-40. For a more favorable view with letters written by Crispi during the trip, see T. Palamenghi-Crispi, ed., *Francesco Crispi: Politica Estera* (Milan, 1912), 1-69.

<sup>8</sup>For the origin of the pseudonym, see Nevio Matteini, *Alfredo Oriani* (Rimini, 1952), 1 n.

<sup>9</sup>On Shimizu, see F. W. Deakin, *The Brutal Friendship* (London, 1962), 663-64; Giovanni Dolfin, *Con Mussolini nella Tragedia* (Milan, 1949), 211-12, 279-80.

<sup>10</sup>Rachele Mussolini, *Mussolini, An Intimate Biography*, 97, 98, 138, 269; Dolfin, *Con Mussolini nella Tragedia*, 163, 293; Giorgio Bocca, *La Repubblica di Mussolini* (Rome, 1977), 21, 136.

## Italian Fascism Comes of Age:

### The Problem of an Adequate Historiography

Alan Cassels

It has been observed often enough to become something of a cliché that while research and writing about German Nazism has been a thriving cottage industry since 1945, the study of Italian Fascism has lagged behind. Beyond question, this is due in part to humanity's morbid fascination with the greater of two evils. But there are also more precise and Italian reasons. First, the paucity of archival material must be taken into account. Whereas the victorious Allies in World War II systematically looted Germany of her administrative records, used and published a selection of them in connection with the postwar trials of Nazi criminals, and opened up to scholars most of the remainder in the original or on film, none of this happened in the case of Italy. Only a comparably small quantity of Fascist records passed into Allied hands between 1943 and 1945, and these were by and large capriciously assembled in a semi-official manner (as the tale of the "Trinity Documents" elsewhere in this volume attests).<sup>1</sup> The resultant collections have proved far too fragmentary to supply the documentary base for a composite view of Italian Fascism. There remains a wealth of primary material to be tapped in Rome, in

the Archivio Centrale dello Stato and the Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri. But these depositories have been reluctant to give scholars a glimpse of their riches, although it can be recorded with pleasure that access, at least to selected files, has been granted with greater frequency over the past few years.<sup>2</sup>

Just as great an inhibition to the study of Fascism, though, has been the legacy of resistance. The anti-Nazi resistance, by its failure, opened the door to an enquiry into why the Germans preferred Hitler to his opponents. In Italy, on the other hand, the anti-Fascist resistance came out of the war victorious—or at any rate on the winning side—and was hence enabled to put its stamp on much of postwar Italy's intellectual life, including historical scholarship. The view of Fascism held by the resistance was understandably simple; Fascism was an unmitigated evil which had to be continually denounced rather than analyzed. Any attempt to investigate Fascism's attractiveness to Italians seemed a betrayal of the resistance struggle and a denial of the anti-Fascists' claim to be the authentic voice of the Italian people.

This blinkered vision has been matched by that of the Marxist intellectuals who, after the war, came to occupy a good number of teaching posts in Italian universities. Here, too, scholarly investigation has played second fiddle to dogma and polemic.<sup>3</sup> Overall, the postwar climate of opinion in Italy did not exactly encourage dispassionate treatments of Fascism; not surprising, they have been slow to appear.

One other impediment to the development of a historiography of Fascism deserves mention, not least because it concerns the English-speaking world first and foremost. In both North America and Great Britain there has long existed a predilection to see Italian politics in comic-opera terms and, unwittingly, the most widely read survey of modern Italy in the English language fosters this habit of mind.<sup>4</sup> One of the many qualities of Denis Mack Smith's standard opus, first composed a generation ago, is a mordant wit which coruscates most effectively in those chapters on Mussolini. One cannot gainsay the Duce's ridiculous side, yet the heavily anecdotal approach is liable to leave the impression of Italian Fascism as an improvised, formless escapade. Fascism, that is to say, appears a movement to be laughed or sneered at, certainly not a worthy object of serious study. Comprehensibly a trend-setter in the English-speaking world, Mack Smith's book in translation has, oddly, enjoyed wide circulation and plaudits among Italians, too. Cause enough for the historian of interwar Europe to turn his attention to the 'weightier' problem of National Socialism.

Nevertheless, during the last decade or so giant strides have been made in the area of twentieth-century Italian historical scholarship. *Mutatis mutandis*, archival material has become more available, the mystique of the resistance has waned somewhat, and in consequence a 'new' historiography of Italian Fascism may be said to have emerged. This renaissance in Fascist studies should not be comprehended in a quantitative fashion. Books and articles aplenty were published in the field in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>5</sup> It is, rather, that only in the 1970s have the fundamental questions about Italian Fascism come to be defined and recognized, and the lines of debate drawn up. It is in this sense of the crystallization of issues that one speaks of the 'coming of age' of Fascist Italian historiography.

This phenomenon is the topic of the present

essay. It is hoped that an appraisal of the bibliographical state of play will serve as a kind of overview of Fascist Italian history, and thus also as an introduction to the more specialized pieces which follow in this volume.

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At the outset one particularly vexatious non-issue must be disposed of. It was the great Benedetto Croce who popularized the notion that Fascism was no more than a "parenthesis" in Italian history, without substantive links to what passed before and since. Such an opinion was consistent with, and perhaps conditioned by, Croce's earlier depiction of pre-Fascist Italy as fundamentally progressive and enlightened,<sup>6</sup> and it was certainly congenial to the resistance ideology. Once again, the analogue in Nazi German historiography is instructive. After 1945 it was often alleged, not that Hitler was an aberration in German history, but that he was the ineluctable product of a tradition stretching back through Bismarck to Luther, and even to the Teutonic tribes described by Tacitus. The 'Tacitus syndrome,' of course, is as absurdly simplistic as the 'parenthesis thesis.' The latter, though, has been an unconscionable time a-dying, and it is surely no coincidence that most of the recent explorations of the dark side of the pre-Fascist liberal regime have been published outside Italy.<sup>7</sup>

Patently, the question to be asked of modern Italian history is not *whether* but *how* Fascism grew out of pre-1922 conditions—an approach sometimes termed the 'revelation thesis.' The venality of so much of Italian public life, together with the liberal regime's chequered performance in international diplomacy, provided a constant supply of ammunition to those disaffected elements, on both Right and Left politically, whose aim it was to overthrow the entire legal and parliamentary system. The catalyst which precipitated the fall of Italian liberalism and gave rise to the mentality called Fascism was the First World War. On this generalization all scholars are agreed. What we lack, however, is a detailed and comprehensive analysis of how precisely the war reshaped Italian society and political culture.<sup>8</sup> An enormous and daunting project, to be sure, but the absence of any such study comprises arguably the biggest drawback to our understanding of Italian Fascism.

Accounts of Italian Fascism commonly take off in detail with the meeting of the first *fascio di combattimento* in Milan in March 1919. The transformation of this motley and ideologically inchoate group first into the *Partito Nazionale Fascista*, and then into the dominant faction of the coalition government of October 1922, has attracted its due share of scholarly attention. An unusually illuminating and of late fashionable approach to this problem has been to examine the rise of Fascism in a local setting. Paul Corner's monograph on Ferrara is typical and perhaps the best-known of these case studies, partly because of the author's skill and partly because of Ferrara's prominence in the annals of Fascism.<sup>9</sup> In Ferrara over a few months in 1920-21 the *squadristi* under Italo Balbo, to some extent by persuasion but mostly by violence, wrested control of the province from the socialists hitherto in the ascendant. They did so at the behest of the rich landowners; Fascism prospered in Ferrara as it became a lawless reactionary force. It would be unwise to extrapolate from a single geographical example, although other regional and provincial studies disclose a pattern of Fascist growth not too dissimilar from that in Ferrara.<sup>10</sup> Certainly, in north and north-central Italy, it appears clear that Fascism only gained momentum when it entered into the service of the landowners (Italy's industrialists tended to jump on the Fascist bandwagon later). Indeed, it was "the extremely rapid expansion of agrarian fascism which—at the beginning of 1921—effectively rescued the town-based fascism of Mussolini from political extinction."<sup>11</sup>

The concomitant of agrarian Fascism was a reorientation of Fascist political philosophy. Alliance with right-wing groups demanded an end to attacks on capitalism, the monarchy, the church, and so on. It was, in fact, this drift rightwards which brought Fascism to office. The mock March on Rome at the end of October 1922 served to disguise the fact that most of the Italian establishment had come to accept Fascism as a bulwark of the social order and were prepared to co-opt it into power.<sup>12</sup>

Fascism would never escape the embrace of the Italian conservatives, although the circumstances surrounding the establishment of a one-party dictatorship in 1925-26 seemed to presage otherwise. Mussolini only announced the assumption of absolute power under pressure from the consuls, the local Fascist bosses most

of whom hungered for the second wave of revolution which would sweep away totally Italy's *ancien régime*.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, having bowed to the will of his nominal lieutenants, Mussolini proceeded to entrust to one of the most radical of their company, Roberto Farinacci of Cremona, the task of implementing the new dictatorship.<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, when all the shouting had died down, the promise of a dramatic social revolution remained unfulfilled. The P.N.F., which might have been the motor of change, was severely circumscribed. It was made subservient to the image of an infallible Duce.<sup>15</sup> More important, it did not supplant the traditional organs of the Italian state. If a thread may be discerned in Adrian Lyttleton's magisterial account of Fascism's first decade, it is the gradual emasculation of the party until "it came to seem to those in the know like an inessential and harmful disturbance of the legitimate machinery of government."<sup>16</sup> The trend accelerated in the 1930s; with increasing "bureaucratization" of the party went a corresponding "depoliticization" and loss of revolutionary fervour. "The more that membership in the party came to be a badge of respectability, the less it entailed any commitment to change Italian society."<sup>17</sup>

In this atmosphere Italy's old vested interests survived comfortably. The association of big business, the *Confindustria*, rejoiced not only at the abolition of the conventional socialist and catholic trade unions, but also at the impotence of the Fascist workers' syndicates. In the Great Depression the *Confindustria* found the Fascist government generous with credit at easy rates.<sup>18</sup> The richer farmers and *latifondisti* fared scarcely less well in their battle to preserve economic and social privilege.<sup>19</sup> The Catholic church under Fascism was able to regain its foothold in Italian education and family law—although whether the Lateran Accords of 1929 served the Papacy well or ill in the long run remains moot.<sup>20</sup> Finally, the monarchy, while forced into the background ceremonially and politically, kept the allegiance of countless Italians, especially in the public services—a point amply demonstrated in 1943 when King Victor Emmanuel turned against his Fascist partner in dyarchy.<sup>21</sup>

The foregoing hardly suggests a totalitarian regime on the Arendtian model, that is, one driven relentlessly onwards by a dynamic



ideology and a fanatical party.<sup>22</sup> On the contrary, in outward appearance Mussolini's Italy resembled a traditional conservative dictatorship, and Fascism a thin veneer pasted on for ideological respectability or propagandistic novelty. It is a convincing picture and one widely accepted by Marxists and non-Marxists alike.<sup>23</sup>

Yet, it is on this very score of Fascism's right-wing affinities that the great battle of Italian Fascist historiography has recently been joined. This has resulted from the work of one scholar above all others. Renzo De Felice, with the title of his first volume of Mussolini's biography, announced that he intended to take seriously early Fascism's revolutionary rhetoric.<sup>24</sup> For this he was predictably taken to task for discounting the part played by right-wing nationalism in the birth of Fascism, and debate has not faltered since.<sup>25</sup> De Felice himself has not retracted his insistence on a leftist component in Fascism, his conviction strengthened rather by his ongoing research into the life of Mussolini. It should be pointed out here that his work on this subject has long since ceased to be a mere biography of the Duce, which still remains to be written definitively.<sup>26</sup> De Felice's volumes have become a veritable history of Italian Fascism on a massive scale.<sup>27</sup> In truth, so meticulously is every question examined that there is little scope left to proffer broad interpretations of Fascism. For these the reader is best advised to turn to De Felice's pronouncements made *ex cathedra* as it were—notably to the transcript of an interview with the American historian, Michael Ledeen.<sup>28</sup> De Felice spoke without reference to documentary evidence but, because of his command of the minutiae of Fascism exhibited in his scholarly writings, his far-ranging speculations on this occasion commanded attention and, in fact, stirred up something of a public storm in the Italian mass media.<sup>29</sup>

De Felice's thesis rests on a distinction between "fascismo-regime" and "fascismo-movimento." "Fascismo-regime" conforms to the received wisdom; it did, indeed, degenerate after 1925 a sterile, reactionary administration. In contrast, "fascismo-movimento" represented an idealistic dimension, the dream of a revitalized Italy which, if never realized in practice, nonetheless inspired many Italians to don the black shirt either literally or figuratively. It has been suggested that this yearning for new

departures was first manifest in Gabriele D'Annunzio's Fiume regency before it relocated itself in Fascism.<sup>30</sup> But even if one grants the existence of "fascismo-movimento," the problem remains of identifying that stratum of Italian society which sustained this radical creed. De Felice's solution is to propound a variant on the theme of Luigi Salvatorelli who, as early as 1923, declared Fascism to be a creature of the petty bourgeoisie terrified by the alleged bolshevik threat and disenchanted by the liberal regime's ineffectuality.<sup>31</sup> De Felice posits that a segment of the Italian lower middle class energized by the Great War turned to Fascism to fulfill their wartime expectations, both in terms of their own upward social mobility and in terms of a national regeneration. Up to this moment, however, no hard evidence, statistical or otherwise, has been adduced to lend credibility to this dynamic element among the petty bourgeoisie.

On the other hand, there is testimony enough, independent of De Felice, of some sort of reformist stirring in Italian bourgeoisie ranks and of Fascism's cognizance of it. The postwar cult of 'productivism' betokened a concern for national economic efficiency to which Mussolini responded in his propaganda and in his establishment after the March on Rome of the short-lived *gruppi di competenza*.<sup>32</sup> Ultimately, satisfaction of this yearning for a modernizing revolution came to depend on the Fascist corporative state. It has long been established that the corporative edifice built up in Italy in the 1930s was no agency of change at all, but a typically empty product of the 'regime of gestures.'<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, to many Italians and non-Italians at the time corporativism was an important matter; it was treated as a sincere pioneering effort to find a new middle way between capitalism and socialism. For its capacity to fire the imagination of the progressive elements in Italian Fascism, corporativism deserves the renewed scholarly attention which it has lately received after many years of neglect.<sup>34</sup>

As Fascist corporativism was a lure for middle-class technocrats so it was, too, for much of Italy's youthful intelligentsia. Some of them even schemed to make it the basis of a Fascist International.<sup>35</sup> What is of special interest here is the reaction of the best educated of the rising generation when the dream of a fresh, vibrant Italy finally faded away. And by the late 1930s not only was corporativism perceived to be a

sham but any prospect of social reform at home disappeared amid the sound and fury of Fascism's new ideology of a militant, racist Third Rome. In these circumstances many of those enrolled in the *Gioventù Universitaria Fascista* changed in a few years from fervently idealistic Fascists into disappointed cynics—a change of heart quite brilliantly depicted in Luigi Preti's documentary novel of the years 1936-1945, *Giovinazza! Giovinazza!*<sup>36</sup> Some valuable recent studies of Fascist Italian education and youth groups confirm Preti's impressionistic view.<sup>37</sup> Presumably because of their status as the elite of the future, this disaffected youth was permitted a measure of free expression. On occasion their criticisms were voiced at the *Littoriali*, party-sponsored annual competitions in the arts, crafts and scholarship.

It is this phenomenon of 'the generation of the *Littoriali*' which gives most substance to De Felice's argument for a left-wing Fascism. Interestingly, De Felice has confessed the influence on him of his teacher, Dello Cantimori who, as a young historian, shared in the disillusionment of his generation of intellectuals.<sup>38</sup> Their resentment was plainly directed against the stagnant "fascismo-regime" and its conformist *gerarchii*; Achille Starace, the obtuse party secretary from 1932 to 1939 was a particular *bête noire*. Among the party leaders Mussolini himself remained for a long time beyond criticism—the cult of the Duce in Fascist schools lingering on into adulthood—and the adventurous Balbo maintained some standing with the less cerebral of the young. But the respect of university students and their ilk was reserved for Giuseppe Bottai who, significantly, laboured as minister of education 1936-1943 to effect a pedagogical and cultural revolution and as editor of *Critica Fascista* to sustain some vestige of lively discussion.<sup>39</sup> In Bottai and his youthful admirers one discerns the last flickering of "fascismo-movimento." The war years 1940-43 proved the final disenchantment for the young idealists, and for some their 'long journey through Fascism' ended in the resistance.<sup>40</sup>

Italian Fascism, needless to say, was neither an exclusively right-wing movement nor an exclusively left-wing one. Like all other fascisms, it aimed at being all things to all men. The prime difficulty lay, of course, in balancing the disparate elements. Mussolini came closest to turning this trick between 1930 and 1936, which De Felice has provocatively dubbed 'the years

of consensus.'<sup>41</sup> Yet this consensus, De Felice admits, was a fragile one. It was artificial in the sense that it was fabricated to some extent by a gigantic propaganda apparatus.<sup>42</sup> It was negative in the sense that it was based more on what the Fascist government had avoided than on what it had achieved. Most important, it was too fleeting to allow for the *fascistizzazione* of Italy; Mussolini himself calculated that a whole generation would have to pass before sufficient 'new men' could be created and trained to govern *allo stilo fascista*.<sup>43</sup> That the Duce ran out of time was his own fault. By the end of the thirties his activities outside Italy had such repercussions at home that *volens nolens* the nature of the Fascist regime changed dramatically, wrecking in the process whatever consensus had been built up earlier.

The delineation of a new Fascist Italian historiography, then, must extend beyond the topic of the regime's domestic character to its relationship with the outside world. As the 'Fascist revolution' serves as a hinge for one set of debates, so the association with Nazi Germany provides the lynch pin for another.

To begin generically, the question may be posed whether fascism was a uniquely Italian development—'not for export' as Mussolini protested in the 1920's—or whether—as he preferred to believe in the next decade—it was a cosmic force of the twentieth century which encompassed national socialists as well. There are scholars who emphasize the national idiosyncracies of the fascist movements to the point of denying much if any common identity among them.<sup>44</sup> But the majority opinion is against them, and recognizes fascism as a distinctive European trait during the era bounded by the two world wars.<sup>45</sup> Italian Fascism certainly had its imitators, if not its exact counterparts, in the clerico-corporative regimes of the Iberian peninsula and Austria.<sup>46</sup> As for parallels with German Nazism, the national environments which gave rise to Mussolini and Hitler, respectively, were too much alike to ignore. In each case a belated and by strict self-deterministic standards incomplete national unification; a liberal political structure tainted in origin and short on grass-roots support; and last but not least, a red scare albeit mythical but potent. Given these resemblances, it is not surprising Mussolini and Hitler felt a mutual political empathy and a sense of common des-

tiny; the German was ready to acknowledge the Italian as his exemplar on the route to power, while Duce condescended to recognize Führer-aspirant as his protégé.<sup>47</sup> All of which was simply a reflection of the fact that in their initial inspiration Italian Fascism and German Nazism shared the same starting point, namely, a revulsion against the dull, materialistic world of nineteenth-century liberals and socialists.

It was not until after gaining power that the differences appeared. Obviously, National Socialism in action was vastly the more radical, ruthless and totalitarian of the two movements. The vision of an ideal society held by Fascists and Nazis, respectively, was wildly dissimilar. De Felice, who subscribes to the consensus opinion that Fascism and Nazism belong in the same typological category, nevertheless puts his finger unerringly on the gulf between the 'new man' of Fascist Italian futurology and Nazi Aryan man who was a throwback to an ancient and primitive age.<sup>48</sup> In the same vein, I myself have expounded elsewhere on the distinction between the 'forward-looking' corporative ideology of Italian Fascism and the 'backward-looking' *volkisch* racism which informed the entire German National Socialist experience, and I have suggested that this dichotomy might be ascribed to the relative stages of modernization reached by Italy in 1922 and Germany in 1933.<sup>49</sup> But at this point one is in danger of plunging into the murky and limitless debate over the nature of universal fascism itself, which far transcends the bounds of Italian historiography.

The issues appear more tractable in the conventional area of Italian foreign relations. Mussolini's diplomacy used to be routinely dismissed as "a mere summary of sentiments and resentments," to apply the phrase of one Italian who refused to serve Fascism.<sup>50</sup> Recent scholarship, however, is more inclined to perceive certain patterns and to find threads leading from the 1920s to the 1930s. A Fascist government by its very nature was bound to pursue a consistently imperialistic policy; in this it needed to improve on the lacklustre liberal record.<sup>51</sup> But more specifically, it was a matter of whether Mussolini, in his restless desire to make amends for Italy's 'mutilated victory' of 1918-19, would align his country with the revisionist forces in European diplomacy—especially that of pan-Germanism. From the start in 1922 there were indications that the Duce

would contenance this.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, Mussolini showed some preference for the Nazis over other German nationalists, not merely on ideological grounds, but because Hitler made no bones about sacrificing the South Tyrol as the necessary price to pay for Italian friendship.<sup>53</sup> One historian has gone so far as to call the Rome-Berlin Axis "almost inevitable."<sup>54</sup>

Although researchers into early Fascist foreign policy have unearthed many harbingers of things to come, it cannot be denied that the combination of circumstances which actually brought Italy and Germany into the same camp was decidedly fortuitous. The Ethiopian crisis set in motion Fascist Italy's diplomatic revolution. Yet the timing of the crisis was not entirely of Mussolini's own choosing. To be sure, Ethiopia was always on his agenda for conquest, and he initiated plans for an imminent attack as early as 1932. In the final precipitation of war in 1935, however, Mussolini's hand was in a sense forced. In the first place, mounting domestic pressure built up by the Great Depression demanded relief in a foreign adventure. Simultaneously, a favourable configuration of the European balance and the quiescence of erstwhile diplomatic problems enjoined a quick strike before the propitious moment passed.<sup>55</sup> Whereupon, the Ethiopian conflict proceeded to drive a wedge between Fascist Italy and the Western powers because it coincided with a British election campaign which constrained the cabinet in London to go through the motions of backing the League of Nations.<sup>56</sup>

Even so, the Ethiopian crisis of itself might not have led to the Axis. It was the chance opening of the Spanish Civil War a scant few weeks after the end of the fighting in Ethiopia which threw Mussolini into Hitler's arms.<sup>57</sup> The Duce had always exhibited a predilection for viewing things starkly; the world was full of friends and foes with no middle ground between the two extremes. Accordingly, the popular if facile perception of the Spanish Civil War as a polarized conflict between a fascist Right and communist Left appealed to him enormously. In addition to this simplistic right-left appraisal, Mussolini's reasoning tended to run along equally elementary Social Darwinian lines. The Ethiopian and Spanish crises revealed a lack of will on the part of the 'effete' democracies. In announcing in the autumn of 1936 a special Rome-Berlin Axis to exist, Mussolini aligned his nation with a 'virile' dictatorship. Thus, he

opted not just for a Fascist partner but for what he believed to be the winning side.<sup>58</sup>

There was no going back on the Axis. It led inexorably to the *Anschluss* of March 1938 which, less than four years before, Mussolini had done more than anyone else to forestall. In turn, the *Anschluss* made unavoidable an Italo-German military alliance.<sup>59</sup> Mussolini and his foreign minister, Count Ciano, were eager enough for an accord, and it was not Fascist Italy's reluctance which delayed the conclusion of the Pact of Steel until May 1939. The cavalier manner in which it was finally negotiated, together with the pact's blanket proviso for offensive as well as defensive action, betokened a fatalistic acceptance of whatever the future (or Hitler) had in store.<sup>60</sup> Once German troops were stationed at the Brenner Pass, Fascist Italy's freedom of manoeuvre in international affairs dwindled to the vanishing point. With it, too, evaporated the Fascist regime's tenuous hold on a consensus of popular support.<sup>61</sup>

In one important respect, Mussolini seemed to go out of his way to advertise his subservience to Hitler. This concerned the adoption in 1938 of a Fascist racial policy which, naturally, has sparked extensive scholarly comment. One discovery turned up by the flurry of research interest is the high degree of anti-Semitism present in Italian Fascism from the beginning.<sup>62</sup> This refers not to the few rabid racists in the P.N.F. of the Giovanni Preziosi and Telesio Interlandi stamp but rather to the Duce himself. Mussolini believed in the reality of a Jewish international and was prone, therefore, to wonder whether Italian Jews could be good patriots. Such suspicions impelled him to inspire occasional anti-Semitic articles in the official and semi-official Fascist press. There was no consistency in his attitude, however; he was just as likely to denounce Hitler as an 'idiot' for his obsession with the Jewish question, or to endorse Zionism in the hope it might prove an aid to Italy's colonial ambitions. Before 1936 there was no sign of anti-Semitism's possible inclusion in the Fascist party programme, but in retrospect the latent racism bears a sinister aspect.

The conquest of Ethiopia stimulated tremendously the habit of race-thinking among Italian Fascists; witness the stern code laid down for sexual conduct between white and non-white in the new colony.<sup>63</sup> The African enterprise was instrumental in evoking the atmosphere in which Fascist Italy's racial legislation

was promulgated, but it was not the root cause. The latest authoritative work lays Mussolini's full and open endorsement of anti-Semitism at the door of the Rome-Berlin Axis. Meir Michaelis states categorically: "Racial anti-Semitism was neither a logical development of the Fascist creed nor a logical extension of the ban on miscegenation in Africa. It was, however, a logical consequence of Mussolini's Axis policy." And the same author: "Although there was friction between Fascists and Jews from the very outset, mainly because of Fascist suspicions of Jewish 'separatism' and 'internationalism,' there was no attempt on the part of the Fascist regime to create a Jewish problem in Italy until Mussolini decided to throw in his lot with Hitler."<sup>64</sup> It should not be assumed that Berlin positively required its Axis partner to take up anti-Semitism, although there was a wealth of unofficial encouragement and advice. The 'indirect' pressure of Italy's new diplomatic comportment was sufficient to tip the scales. For anyone who tries to argue the invariable *Primat der Innenpolitik* throughout the history of Fascist Italy, the episode of the race laws constitutes a formidable exception.

To save a modicum of face, Mussolini declared Italian Fascist racism to be philosophically different from the Aryanism of Nazi Germany. And indeed, the Fascist Manifesto of Race argued that race should be determined not biologically but politically; race was equated with national rather than blood lines.<sup>65</sup> At the time, though, the subtlety of argument was lost on the Italian populace. Mussolini was more successful in distancing himself from Hitler in the implementation of his racial legislation. Its application was lax, and frequently Mussolini connived at the evasion of the full stringency of the law. It was only with the Nazis' formal takeover of most of the Italian peninsula in September 1943 that a genocidal persecution became the lot of Italy's Jews. Even then, through the interposition of the Vatican and of countless private Italian citizens, four-fifths of them survived the holocaust.

As the unfolding of the Jewish question suggests, during World War II the power to control events in Italy passed out of Fascist hands. Mussolini was barely restrained from entering the war at the start, and henceforth it was not a matter of if but when Italy would fulfill the Pact of Steel. With the declaration of war on June 10 1940, Fascist Italy became a veritable satellite

of Germany. Axis strategy, both military and diplomatic, was handed down from Berlin. Mussolini's feeble bid to reassert Italian independence—his 'parallel war' against Greece in October 1940—misfired so badly as to compound the problem. Over the ensuing winter Italy was flooded with Nazi German technical experts who, always in the interests of a more efficient war effort, interfered with and sometimes countermanded the Italian authorities.<sup>66</sup> Mussolini's craven submission to Hitler and his imitative declarations of war in 1941 on the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. cost him the allegiance of even the Fascist hierarchs. The continual reshuffling of cabinet posts in 1942-43 bespoke his faltering grip on his own party. When Italian military fiascos in North Africa and Sicily proved the last straw, an unlikely coalition was waiting to pounce. The vague conspiracy between a majority of the Grand Council of Fascism and the royal household illustrated Mussolini's isolation—as did his peaceful arrest.<sup>67</sup> The dismissal of July 25 1943, was not so much that of a Fascist Duce as of a Nazi German puppet.

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Historiographically speaking, the story of Fascist Italy between 1940 and 1943 becomes lost and subsumed in the larger scenario of the Axis in wartime; the German trademark is omnipresent. In a similar vein, the determination of the character of the Italian state to replace Fascism at war's end was made largely by non-Italians. In this case the story falls within the scope of Anglo-American diplomacy.<sup>68</sup> As the Allies advanced painfully up the Italian peninsula between 1943 and 1945, they encountered in the main two sorts of Italians with whom they might co-operate. On the one hand were those remnants of the pre-1922 liberal order not irredeemably tainted by association with Fascism, whose understandable goal was to restore as much of the pre-Fascist world as possible. On the other hand, those who desired a radically transformed Italy to emerge from the war's ashes put their faith in the resistance. Of the two groups, the western Allies found it easier to deal with the former. Often, the representatives of old Italy constituted officialdom already in place in the liberated areas; pragmatically it made sense to acknowledge their authority in order to speed the work of rehabilitation. In

contrast, the resistance was far away, behind German lines; it was also prickly and put a high price on its military co-operation with the Allies—a postwar referendum on the monarchy's fate was the resistance's chief gain from this haggling; and in many Anglo-American eyes the resistance was suspect because its leadership included many communists. Gradually but decisively the weight of western Allied influence (without Soviet hindrance, let it be said) was brought to bear against radical social change and in favour of a postwar conservative restoration. The political beneficiary of all this was the resurrected Christian Democratic party. For Italy at large 1945 marked another *rivoluzione mancata*.

The resistance, thus, lost its battle for a new deal of social and economic justice; instead, it had to rest content with winning the hearts and minds of Italy's intellectuals. Hence, the anti-Fascist opposition was one of the first facets of Italian history between 1922 and 1943 to be vouchsafed comprehensive treatment.<sup>69</sup> What has been slighted by comparison is the history of the Italian Social Republic of 1943-45. Although this regime's political travail is well enough known, its social content has received less than serious analysis.<sup>70</sup> Reasons for this neglect are not hard to find. The so-called Salò Republic was blatantly a Hitlerian contrivance and puppet state, centered not on Rome but near the northern frontier with Austria, which failed signally to protect the Italian population from the full horror of a Nazi German occupation. It was presided over by a very sick Duce, and staffed by the dregs of the P.N.F. whose major achievement was the judicial murder of Ciano and other one time colleagues at the infamous Verona trial. The regime's most positive gesture was an attempted return to early Fascism's populist roots through schemes for the nationalization of key industries, extended workers' rights and benefits, and the like. But Italy's proletariat rejected these overtures as opportunistic and, in this regard also, Salò proved ineffectual.

Nevertheless, in spite of this shabby and pathetic record, there may yet be a deeper significance to the Salò epilogue. If one last parallel with the historiography of German National Socialism be allowed, it is frequently argued that the true fanaticism at the core of Nazism was nowhere better revealed than in the lunatic world of the *Führerbunker* in the spring of 1945. Why, then, should the real face of Ital-

ian Fascism not be disclosed when the movement lay *in extremis*? Because Salò was unsuccessful Fascism, it does not follow that it was not genuine Fascism. At the very least, the resumption of an anti-establishment attitude—both in the form of uncompromising if unattractive party personnel as well as the composition

of socialist paper programmes—reflects on the thesis of a pristine radical Fascism obscured for long by the corruption and compromises of office. This issue, after all, forms the quintessence of the new Fascist Italian historiography. A quarter century after the fact, it is properly time for a new generation to write its own history.

#### Footnotes

1. H.M. Smyth, *Secrets of the Fascist Era: How Uncle Sam Obtained Some of the Top-Level Documents of Mussolini's Period* (Carbondale, Ill., 1975).
2. Two useful general surveys in English of Italian depositories containing primary source material are a Council for European Studies pamphlet, *Guide to Italian Libraries and Archives*, ed. R.J. and R.C. Lewanski (New York, 1979); and the chapter on Italy by V. Iardi and M.L. Shay in *The New Guide to the Diplomatic Archives of Western Europe*, ed. D.H. Thomas and L.M. Case (Philadelphia, 1975).
3. Introduction by M.A. Ledeen to R. De Felice, *Fascism: An Informal Introduction to Its Theory and Practice* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1976).
4. D. Mack Smith, *Italy: A Modern History*, 1st ed. (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1959).
5. E. Noether, "Italy Reviews Its Fascist Past," *American Hist. Rev.*, LXI (1956), 877-99; C.F. Delzell, "Benito Mussolini: A Guide to the Bibliographical Literature," *Jour. of Modern Hist.*, XXXV (1963), 339-53; *idem*, "Mussolini's Italy Twenty Years After," *ibid.*, XXXVIII (1966), 53-58.
6. B. Croce, *Storia d'Italia dal 1871 al 1915* (Bari, 1928); Eng. trans. *History of Italy, 1871-1915* (Oxford, 1929).
7. For example, A. De Grand, *The Italian Nationalist Association and the Rise of Fascism in Italy* (Lincoln, Neb., 1978); S. Saladino, "Italy," in *The European Right*, ed. H. Rogger and E. Weber (Berkeley, 1965); A. Salomone, *Italy from the Risorgimento to Fascism: An Inquiry into the Origins of the Totalitarian State* (New York, 1970); R.A. Webster, *Industrial Imperialism in Italy, 1908-1915* (Berkeley, 1975).
8. Under the title *Il Dopoguerra in Italia e l'avvento del fascismo, 1918-1922*, R. Vivarelli assays something of the kind; however, only one volume of this work has so far appeared, *Dalla fine della guerra all'impresa di Fiume* (Naples, 1967), and is concerned with the tug-of-war in Italian opinion between nationalism and Wilsonianism. In the same vein, see also L.J. Nigro, "Propaganda Politics, and the New Diplomacy: Impact of Wilsonian Propaganda on Italian Politics and Public Opinion, 1917-1919" (unpub. doctoral thesis, Dept. of History, Vanderbilt Univ., 1979).  
There are, of course, satisfactory overviews of Italy in World War I, the best perhaps being P. Melograni, *Storia e politica della grande guerra*, 4th ed. (Bari, 1972); P. Pieri, *L'Italia nella prima Guerra Mondiale, 1915-1918*, 4th ed. (Turin, 1971). A.J. Thayer, *Italy and the Great War* (Madison, Wis., 1964), despite its title stops in 1915.
9. P. Corner, *Fascism in Ferrara, 1915-1925* (Oxford, 1975). Cf. A. Roveri, *Le origini del fascismo a Ferrara, 1918-1921* (Milan, 1974).
10. A good parallel to Corner's book is L.L. Squeri, "Politics in Parma, 1900-1925: The Rise of Fascism" (unpub. doctoral thesis, Dept. of History, Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1976). Other local studies include E. Aphi, *Italia, Fascismo e antifascismo nella Venezia Giulia, 1918-1943* (Bari, 1966); R. Cantagalli, *Storia del fascismo fiorentino, 1919-1925* (Florence, 1972); S. Colarizi, *Dopoguerra e fascismo in Puglia, 1919-1926* (Bari, 1971); A.A. Kelikian, "From Liberalism to Corporatism: Brescia, 1915-1926" (unpub. doctoral thesis, Oxford Univ., 1978); S. Sechi, *Dopoguerra e fascismo in Sardegna* (Turin, 1971); M. Vaini, *Le origini del fascismo a Mantova* (Rome, 1961).
11. Corner, *Fascism in Ferrara*, p. x.
12. A. Repaci, *La marcia su Roma*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1963).
13. A. Lyttleton, "Fascism in Italy: The Second Wave," *Jour. of Contemporary Hist.*, Vol. I (1966), No. 1, pp. 75-100.
14. H. Fornari, *Mussolini's Gadfly: Roberto Farinacci* (Nashville, Tenn., 1971).
15. P. Melograni, "The Cult of the Duce in Mussolini's Italy," *Jour. of Contemporary Hist.*, Vol. XI (1976), No. 4, pp. 221-36.
16. A. Lyttleton, *The Seizure of Power: Fascism in Italy, 1919-1929* (London, 1973), p. 306. See also A. Aquarone, *L'organizzazione dello stato totalitario* (Turin, 1965).
17. E. R. Tannenbaum, *The Fascist Experience: Italian Society and Culture, 1922-1945* (New York, 1972), p. 61 ff.
18. R. Sarti, *Fascism and the Industrial Leadership in Italy* (Berkeley, 1971).
19. C.T. Schmidt, *The Plough and the Sword: Labor, Land and Property in Fascist Italy* (New York, 1938).
20. D.A. Binchy, *Church and State in Fascist Italy*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1970); A.C. Jemolo, *Chiesa e stato in Italia negli ultimi cento anni* (Turin, 1948); Eng. abridgement, *Church and State in Italy, 1850-1960* (Oxford, 1960); R.A. Webster, *The Cross and the Fasces* (Stanford, 1960).
21. S. Bertoldi, *Vittorio Emanuele III* (Milan, 1970); R. Katz, *Fall of the House of Savoy* (New York, 1971); P. Puntoni, *Parla Vittorio Emanuele III* (Milan, 1958).
22. H. Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1958). Two ways of trying to make Italian Fascism fit into a totalitarian mold are demonstrated by D. Germino, *The Italian Fascist Party in Power: A Study in Totalitarian Rule* (Minneapolis, 1959), who exaggerates the role played by the P.N.F., and by A.J. Gregor, *The Ideology of Fascism: The Rationale of Totalitarianism* (New York, 1969) and *Italian Fascism and Developmental Dictatorship* (Princeton, 1979), who defines both fascism and totalitarianism in historical and flexible terms.
23. Since the days of the Third International the Marxist World has regarded Fascism as the automatic consequence, even the tool, of monopoly capitalism. Recent Marxist studies, while rejecting the narrow 'economism' of the Stalinist era, nevertheless continue to be hedged in by a priori assumptions (N. Poulantzas, *Fascism and Dictatorship* [London, 1974—]). This construction severely limits their interpretative value and, hence, Marxist writings have in the main been excluded from consideration in this bibliographical essay.  
This is not to say that excellent works have not been written from a 'proletarian' viewpoint: for example, A. Tasca, *Nascita e avvento del fascismo* (Bari, 1965), Eng.

- ed. under pseud. A. Rossi, *The Rise of Italian Fascism* (London, 1938); E. Santarelli, *Storia del movimento e del regime fascista*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1967).
24. R. De Felice, *Mussolini: il rivoluzionario, 1883-1920* (Turin, 1965).
  25. Contrast, for instance, the respective positions of R. Vivarelli, "Benito Mussolini dal socialismo al fascismo," *Rivista Storica Italiana*, LXXIX (1967), 438-58, and of D. Settembrini, "Mussolini and the Legacy of Revolutionary Socialism," *Jour. of Contemporary Hist.*, Vol. XI (1976), No. 4, pp. 239-68.
  26. The most reliable if not the most penetrating biography is I. Kirkpatrick, *Mussolini: Study of a Demagogue* (London, 1964); more fragmentary but with good psychological insights is L. Ferri, *Mussolini* (Chicago, 1961). Popular accounts of varying merit include R. Collier, *Duce! Rise and Fall of Benito Mussolini* (London, 1971); C. Hibbert, *Benito Mussolini* (London, 1962); R. MacGregor-Hastie, *The Day of the Lion* (London, 1963).
  27. R. De Felice, *Mussolini: il fascista, 1921-1929*, 2 vols. (Turin, 1966-68); *idem*, *Mussolini: il Duce, 1929-1936* (Turin, 1974).
  28. R. De Felice, *Intervista sul fascismo* (Bari, 1975). For Eng. trans. see n. 3 above.
  29. M. Ledeen, "Renzo De Felice and the Controversy over Italian Fascism," *Jour. of Contemporary Hist.*, Vol. XI (1976), No. 4, pp. 269-82.
  30. M. Ledeen, *The First Duce: D'Annunzio at Fiume* (Baltimore, 1977).
  31. L. Salvatorelli, *Nazionalfascismo* (Turin, 1923). Cf. G. Dorso, *La rivoluzione meridionale* (Turin, 1925).
  32. A. Aquarone, "Aspirazioni tecnocratiche del primo fascismo," *Nord e Sud* XI (Apr. 1964), 109-28; R. Sarti, "Fascist Modernization in Italy," *American Hist. Rev.*, LXXV (1970), 1029-45. In an international context, C.S. Maier, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe: Stabilization in France, Germany and Italy in the Decade after World War I* (Princeton, 1975).
  33. Disclosure of the hollowness of Fascist corporatism was one of the anti-Fascist contributions of Gaetano Salvemini, *Under the Axe of Fascism* (New York, 1936).
  34. See especially D.D. Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition and Italian Fascism*, (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1979), a comprehensive survey of neosyndicalism in 'left fascism,' the author's synonym for De Felice's 'fascismo-movimento.' Note also the reissue of H. Finer's administrative study, *Mussolini's Italy*, 2nd ed. (London, 1964); E.R. Tannenbaum, "The Goals of Italian Fascism," *American Hist. Rev.*, LXXIV (1969), 1183-1204; P. Ungari, *Alfredo Rocco e l'ideologia giuridica del fascismo* (Brescia, 1963). For corporatism's attraction in enlightened circles outside Italy, see J.P. Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism: The View from America* (Princeton, 1972); A. Hamilton, *The Appeal of Fascism* (London, 1971).
  35. M. Ledeen, *Universal Fascism: The Theory and Practice of the Fascist International, 1928-1936* (New York, 1972).
  36. (Milan, 1963). Eng. trans. *Through the Fascist Fire* (London, 1968).
  37. T.H. Koon, "Believe, Obey, Fight: Political Socialization of Youth in Fascist Italy, 1922-1943" (unpub. doctoral thesis, Dept. of History, Stanford Univ., 1977); M. Ledeen, "Italian Fascism and Youth," *Jour. of Contemporary Hist.*, Vol. IV (1969), No. 3, pp. 137-54; Tannenbaum, *Fascist Experience*, esp. chaps. 6 and 10.
  38. D. Cantimori, *Conversando di storia* (Bari, 1967); *idem*, "Confessione ad Ernesto Rossi," in *Intelletuali italiana del XX secolo*, ed. E. Garin (Rome, 1974).
  39. G. Bottai, *La carta della scuola* (Milan, 1939); *idem*, *Pagine di Critica Fascista*, ed. F.M. Paces (Milan, 1941).
  40. R. Zangrandi, *Il lungo viaggio attraverso il fascismo*, 3d ed. (Milan, 1962).
  41. De Felice, *Mussolini: il Duce. Gli anni del consenso, 1929-1936*.
  42. P.V. Cannistraro, *La fabbrica del consenso: Fascismo e mass media* (Bari, 1975).
  43. De Felice, *Intervista sul fascismo*.
  44. E. Weber, *Varieties of Fascism* (Princeton, 1964); G. Allardyce, "What Fascism Is Not: Thoughts on the Deflation of a Concept," *American Hist. Rev.*, LXXXIV (1979), 367-98.
  45. The consensus of opinion derives in large measure from E. Nolte, *Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche* (Munich, 1963); Eng. trans. *Three Faces of Fascism* (New York, 1966).
  46. *Mediterranean Fascism, 1919-1945*, ed. C. F. Delzell (New York, 1970); C. E. Edmondson, *The Heimwehr and Austrian Politics, 1918-1936* (Athens, Ga., 1978).
  47. K-P. Hoepke, *Die Deutsche Rechte und der italienische Faschismus* (Düsseldorf, 1968).
  48. R. De Felice, *Le interpretazioni del fascismo* (Rome, 1969); Eng. trans. *Interpretations of Fascism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1977).
  49. A. Cassels, *Fascism* (New York, 1975).
  50. C. Sforza, *Pensiero ed azione di una politica estera italiana* (Bari, 1924). Fascist foreign policy is contemptuously dismissed in G. Salvemini, *Mussolini diplomatico*, rev. ed. (Bari, 1952); *idem*, *Prelude to World War II* (London, 1953). From the same time period, see also the articles by H.S. Hughes and F. Gilbert in *The Diplomats*, 2 vols., ed. G.A. Craig and F. Gilbert (Princeton, 1953). For a recent exposition of this somewhat outmoded approach, see D. Mack Smith, *Mussolini's Roman Empire* (London, 1976); Ital. trans. *Le guerre del Duce* (Bari, 1976).
  51. G. Rumi, *Alle origini della politica estera fascista, 1918-1923* (Bari, 1968). A good case study of Italian imperialism carried over from the liberal to the Fascist period is provided by C. Segrè, *The Fourth Shore: The Italian Colonization of Libya* (Chicago, 1974).
  52. E. Di Nolfo, *Mussolini e la politica estera italiana, 1919-1933* (Padua, 1960); A. Cassels, *Mussolini's Early Diplomacy* (Princeton, 1970); G. Carocci, *La politica estera dell'Italia fascista, 1925-1928* (Bari, 1969).
  53. M. Toscano, *Storia diplomatica della questione dell'Alto Adige*, 2d ed. (Bari, 1968).
  54. J. Petersen, *Hitler-Mussolini: Die Entstehung der Achse Berlin-Rom, 1933-1936* (Tübingen, 1973); rev. ed. in Ital. trans. *Hitler e Mussolini: la difficile alleanza* (Bari, 1975).
  55. G.W. Baer, *The Coming of the Italian-Ethiopian War* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), argues for domestic motives behind the descent on Ethiopia; E.M. Robertson, *Mussolini as Empire Builder* (London, 1977), stresses the factor of an apparently favourable international scene.
  56. G.W. Baer, *Test Case: Italy, Ethiopia and the League of Nations* (Stanford, 1976).
  57. J.F. Coverdale, *Italian Intervention in the Spanish Civil War* (Princeton, 1976).
  58. E. Wiskemann, *The Rome-Berlin Axis*, 3d rev. ed. (London, 1969), is the best factual account but rather thin on interpretation. For an astute analysis, see D.C. Watt, "The Rome-Berlin Axis, 1936-40: Myth and Reality," *Review of Politics*, XXII (1960), 519-43.
  59. D.C. Watt, "An Earlier Model for the Pact of Steel: The Draft Treaties Exchanged between Germany and Italy during Hitler's Visit to Rome in May 1938," *International Affairs*, XXXIII (1957), 185-97.
  60. M. Toscano, *Le origini diplomatiche del Patto d'Acciaio*, 2d ed. (Florence, 1956); Eng. trans. *The Origins of the Pact of Steel* (Baltimore, 1967).
  61. A. Aquarone, "Lo spirito pubblico in Italia alla vigilia della seconda guerra mondiale," *Nord e Sud*, XI (Jan., 1964), 117-25.
  62. One might single out the revelation of the influence on

- early Fascism of the race theories of the nineteenth-century Austrian scholar, Ludwig Gumplowicz (Gregor, *Ideology of Fascism*).
63. For an emphasis on the colonial background to Italian Fascist racism, see L. Preti, *I miti dell'impero e della razza nell'Italia degli anni '30* (Rome, 1965); *idem*, *Impero fascista, africani ed ebrei* (Milan, 1968).
  64. M. Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews: German-Italian Relations and the Jewish Question in Italy, 1922-1945* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 42, 410-11. Michaelis's book must be regarded as having supplanted R. De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo*, 3d ed. (Turin, 1972), as the most authoritative work in the field.
  65. G. Bernardini, "The Origins and Development of Racial Anti-Semitism in Fascist Italy," *Jour. of Modern Hist.*, LXIX (1977), 431-53.
  66. F.W. Deakin, *The Brutal Friendship: Hitler, Mussolini and the Fall of Italian Fascism* (London, 1962); F. Siebert, *Italiens Weg in den Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Frankfurt, 1962).
  67. G. Bianchi, *25 luglio: crollo di un regime*, 4th ed. (Milan, 1964); R. Zangrandi, *1943: 25 luglio—8 settembre* (Milan, 1964).
  68. D.W. Ellwood, *L'alleato nemico: la politica dell'occupazione anglo-americana in Italia, 1943-1946* (Milan, 1977). See also C.R.S. Harris, *Allied Military Administration of Italy, 1943-1946* (London, 1957); N. Kogan, *Italy and the Allies* (Cambridge, Mass., 1956).
  69. R. Battaglia, *Storia della resistenza italiana* (Turin, 1953); A. Garosci, *Storia dei fuorisciti* (Bari, 1953); C.F. Delzell, *Mussolini's Enemies: the Italian Anti-Fascist Resistance* (Princeton, 1961); G. Bocca, *Storia dell'Italia partigiana, settembre 1943—maggio 1945* (Bari, 1966).
  70. S. Bertoldi, *Salò: vita e morte della Repubblica sociale italiana* (Milan, 1976); G. Bocca, *La repubblica di Mussolini* (Rome, 1977); F.W. Deakin, *The Six Hundred Days of Mussolini* (Garden City, N.Y., 1966), Part 3 of *The Brutal Friendship*.





# Hitler's Letter and Photograph

## to Mussolini

8 June 1931

The most startling documents in this collection are Hitler's letter and his autographed picture sent to Mussolini on June 8 1931, nineteen months before the Nazi leader became Germany's Chancellor and then Fuhrer. These documents established official contact between German Nazism and Italian Fascism for the first time.

Hitler admired Mussolini as the leader of a movement which he believed resembled his own. Mussolini did not have a similar view of Nazism. The Fascists were interested in the political weight and influence of the German Right, but they harbored suspicions of Hitler and his followers because of their extremism and virulent anti-Semitism. Mussolini had rebuffed Hitler's effort to make contact several years earlier. Only the German elections of September 1930 forced the Duce to take another look at the fledgling Fuhrer and his movement.

On September 14 1930 the Nazis gained 107 seats in the Reichstag; previously they held 12. This election transformed them into a major German political force. Mussolini kept an eye on them through Major Giuseppe Renzetti who had lived in Germany for some years and knew many of the major political figures on the German Right. Renzetti arranged for Göring to see Mussolini in the Spring of 1930 at which time the Duce gave him his photograph to take back to Hitler. The letter and the photograph in the Trinity collection were Hitler's response. The two leaders had taken the first steps toward the Axis and collaboration in World War II.

For comments on the significance of these documents and additional background information see two of Renzo De Felice's books: *Mussolini il duce: Gli anni del consenso 1929-1936* (Turin 1974), 423-434, and *Mussolini e Hitler, i rapporti segreti* (Florence 1975), 218-229.

*Editor*



*I. Excellenz Frau Berta Himmler  
in Auftrag  
by Hitler*

*Adolf Hitler 1931.*

ADOLF HITLER

KANZLEI  
MÜNCHEN 2, BRIENNERSTR. 45  
FERNSPRECHER 56 0 62-87

MÜNCHEN, DEN 8. Juni 1931.

H/W.

Eure Exzellenz

hatten die Güte, mir durch Herrn Hauptmann Göring ein Bild mit eigenhändiger Unterschrift überbringen zu lassen. Ich empfinde dies als eine grosse Ehre. Die von Eurer Exzellenz in der Widmung zum Ausdruck gebrachte Sympathie für die von mir geführte nationalsozialistische Bewegung, hege ich seit Jahren in ausserordentlicher Weise für den von Eurer Exzellenz geschaffenen Faschismus. Die in vielen Punkten zwischen den Grundgedanken und Prinzipien des Faschismus und der von mir geführten nationalsozialistischen Bewegung vorhandenen geistigen Beziehungen lassen mich in der inneren Hoffnung leben, es möchte gelingen, dass sich dereinst nach dem Siege meiner Bewegung in Deutschland - an dem ich in felsenfester Zuversicht glaube - zwischen dem faschistischen Italien und dem nationalsozialistischen Deutschland ein ähnliches Verhältnis zum Segen der beiden grossen Nationen ergeben wird.

Ich verbinde daher meinen Dank mit den verehrungsvollen Glückwünschen für das persönliche Wohlergehen Eurer Exzellenz sowie für das von Eurer Exzellenz so genial geführte faschistische Italien.

Gleichzeitig erlaube ich mir in diesem Schreiben ein Bild von mir selbst beizufügen, mit der Bitte, es freundlich entgegennehmen zu wollen.

Ich verbleibe mit der Versicherung meiner ausgezeichneten Hochachtung und dem Ausdruck der aufrichtigen Bewunderung

Eurer Exzellenz

ergebener



*Hitler's letter to Mussolini 8 June 1931.*

8 June 1931 Your Excellency has been good enough to send me through Captain Göring a picture with a dedication in your own hand. I feel this is a great honor. The sympathy that Your Excellency expresses in the dedication for the movement which I lead, I have cherished for many years in an extraordinary way for the Fascism created by Your Excellency. The spiritual relations existing on so many points between the fundamental ideas and principles of Fascism and those of the National Socialist Movement under my direction allow me to live with the inner hope that after the victory of my movement in Germany—in which I believe with unshakeable faith—there will one day ensue between Fascist Italy and National Socialist Germany relations of the same kind for the good of the two great nations.

I therefore join my thanks with respectful good wishes for the personal well-being of Your Excellency and for the Fascist Italy so brilliantly led by Your Excellency.

At the same time I permit myself to enclose in this letter my own photograph with the hope that it will be likewise cordially received.

With the assurance of my highest esteem and expressions of sincere admiration I remain

Your Excellency devotedly Adolf Hitler

# Letter of Mussolini to Hitler 2 June 1944

F.W. Deakin

This letter has not been published previously and has hitherto escaped the notice of historians. The text, however, can be found in the Italian Collection at St. Antony's College, Oxford University. The hazards of original filing had, hitherto, concealed this copy of the letter. It is in a file of the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Salò (Group 16) and under a reference to the Grossi invention (see below).

An extract from the document is also in this Collection on the subject of the food and transport problem, in a Ministry of Agriculture file (Group 153) and attached to a personal note from Mussolini to the Minister, Professor Edoardo Moroni, dated 3 June 1944, which reads:

"Dear Moroni,  
Herewith the extract of the letter sent by me under yesterday's date 2 June to the Fuehrer on the problem of transport in relation to alimentation.

Mussolini."  
(Group 153)

This note proves that the letter to Hitler was despatched.

The Italian Collection at Oxford consists of copies of documents found by an Anglo-American specialist team in the spring of 1945 in Mussolini's secretariat at the Villa Feltrinelli on Lake Garda, and in various ministries of the neo-Fascist Republic of Salò. The originals were held for some time in the Foreign Office Library in London. They have now been returned to Rome, and are deposited in the Archivio di Stato. Copies are also preserved in the National Archives, Washington.<sup>1</sup>

## Text of the Letter

Fuehrer,

It's been over a month since our last meeting and I wish to present a picture for you of the Italian situation from a political and military point of view. An objective examination of the situation leads me to note a decided progressive re-inforcement of the Fascist Republic State. This is demonstrated by the following facts:

- (1) After my edict of February about 40,000 youths have presented themselves who had not presented themselves at the call of their classes. The application of the death penalty, in about a hundred cases, has had practical effects.
- (2) The complete failure of the strike of the first of May which was supposed to constitute the dress rehearsal for the insurrection against the Germans and the Fascists now called Nazi-Fascists.
- (3) The return to work and to the barracks of the so-called "disbanded soldiers" (sbandati), after my edict of April 18, in the number of more than 50,000.
- (4) The gradual reinforcement of the police forces.

These are the positive features of the situation but shadows are not lacking in the overall picture, that is, the negative aspects and they are as follows:

- (1) The young men who have entered into the barracks do not find what is necessary for their equipment and their armament. This fact is a source of demoralization.
- (2) The German military territorial authorities continue to go over the heads of the civilian authorities of the Republic even in questions which are of an absolutely administrative character and which have nothing to do with the conduct of the war. This phenomenon rather than attenuating has become rather accentuated since our last meeting, which gives credence to the hypothesis that German civilians and some military personnel in Italy about whom I spoke to you in Salzburg instead of collaborating are operating in a contrary sense.
- (3) The "partisans," phenomenon which now will become even more acute inasmuch as the said partisans—many of whom are foreigners—no longer have any choice and are taking up positions in the mountains. It is foreseeable that they will try to sell their skin dearly. (They will not give up without a hard fight.)
- (4) The food situation which is extremely grave in Rome is also becoming grave in central Italy, given the interruption of railroad communications following the incessant and undisturbed attacks of Anglo-American aviation which have paralyzed traffic even on the common roads. It's been six months that I have asked in vain for a modest grant of trucks for the distribution of food in the different provinces. It concerns 500—just 500—trucks (Fiat manufactures 50 a day!) which would guarantee in any case a regular distribution of food stuffs. Now I refuse to believe that in granting to the Ministry of Agriculture this modest number of trucks, the German Armed Forces would become weakened in Italy! The Italian food problem, Fuhrer, is today exclusively a problem of transportation: either it must be resolved in the way I have described because one cannot rely on the railroads today—even less tomorrow—or if it is not resolved, a crisis will be fatally determined which, especially in

the large cities, could have unforeseen developments.

- (5) The state of mind of the population is naturally in relationship to the progress of military operations. I would not be telling you the truth if I did not add that the great mass of the people was hoping that a counter-offensive might be attempted in Italy in order to increase the territory and the authority of the Republic allied with Germany; in order to punish the treacherous monarchy and its accomplices; to defeat the Anglo-American and mercenary forces; to be able to carry to the south the banner of the Republic and to avoid the advance toward the north of the banner of the House of Savoy together with that of Stalin. I have already spoken to you about the Togliatti phenomenon. Losing its territory, even gradually, the Fascist Republic loses its base; the relationship between the population of the north and south is attenuated and labor agreements are also weakened by the possible loss of other provinces with millions of inhabitants. The military potential of the enemy is increased with the conquest of other tens of aviation fields and consequently increases the enemy air threat on southern Germany and on the Danubian basin. I shall not conceal from you, Fuhrer, that it is a source of regret for me and for all Fascists to note that while the enemy communiqués praise the participation of the "badogliani" in the offensive on Rome, hardly any mention is made of the participation of the Republican divisions which, from what has been reported to me, have done their duty together with the truly intrepid and heroic soldiers of the Reich. I don't know if, when this letter will come to your attention, the fate of Rome will be sealed, but it would be vain to delude oneself that the fall of Rome into the hands of the Anglo-Saxons would not have military and moral repercussions of vast implication throughout the world.

And now I pass on to another subject which still bears relationship to the war. It concerns the invention, owed to an Italian engineer, Grossi, who—a functionary of the State—is per-

Zimmer,

doche un mese di distanza del vostro ultimo incontro  
desidero farvi un quadro della liturgia italiana del punto  
della politica e militare.

Un esame critico della liturgia mi porta a  
concludere un netto ~~regression~~ regresso rispetto  
alle idee famigliari - repubblicane. Ciò è dimostrato dai  
seguenti fatti: 1° il mio libro del febbraio, con  
40 mila copie che non è stato pubblicato alla  
chiamata delle loro classi, 1° libro pubblicato. La  
apprezzazione della parte di merito - un centinaio di copie  
ha avuto effetti pratici. 2° il fallimento completo  
della legge del 1° maggio, che doveva attuare la  
prima generale dell'istruzione con i laici e i famigliari,  
oggi chiamati ungi-famigliari 3° il ritorno alla vita  
lavoro e alla cultura dei laici, 4° il ritorno  
al mio libro del 18 aprile, nella copia di oltre  
50 mila 4° il regresso generale delle forze  
di polizia. Questi i fatti della liturgia

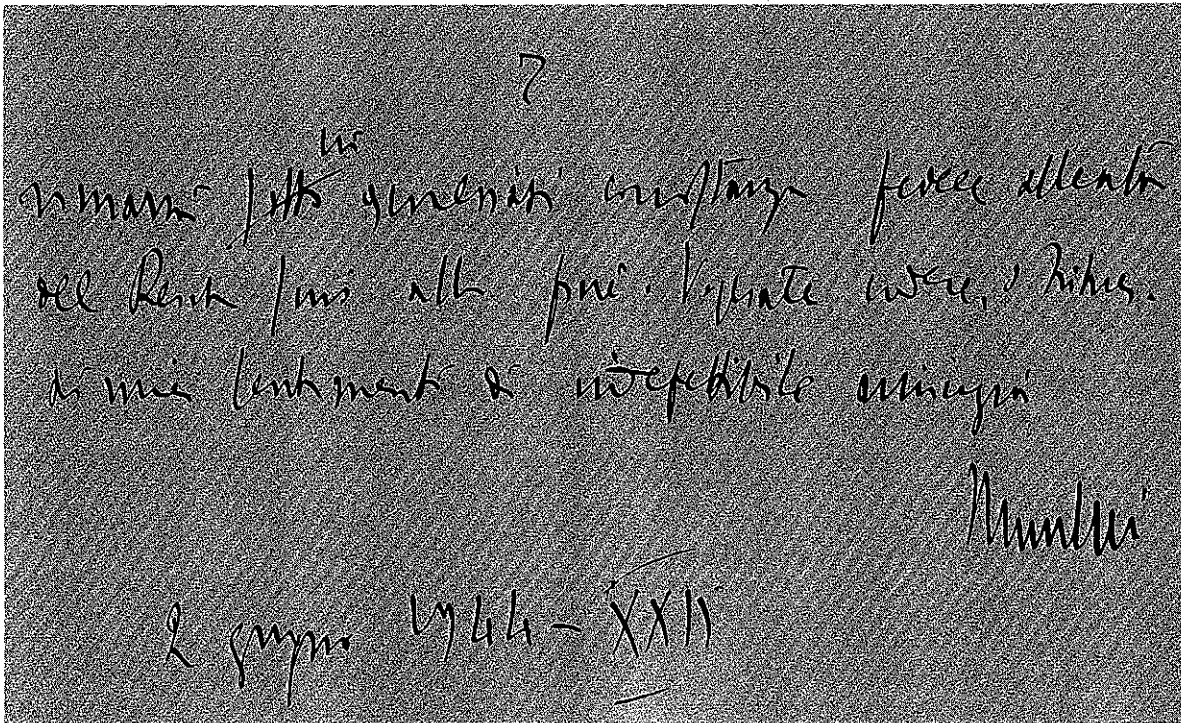
sonally known to me and has been helped by me—despite the contrary opinion of scientists—in his experiments for the conversion of methane from a gas state to a liquid. Such an experiment has succeeded and the transformation of methane from a gas to a liquid can already be carried out on an industrial scale. Now Grossi has resolved the transformation of another gas into a liquid. The result would be such as to permit warlike operations on distances many times superior to present ones. I request, Fuhrer, that you receive my wish that Grossi be permitted to come to Germany to establish contact

with the most competent person in the field whom you would wish to indicate. The scientific reliability of Grossi is beyond question.

I hope, Fuhrer, to be able to see you again when it will be possible for me to visit the other divisions by now completed which under the irreplaceable guidance of your instructors are being prepared in Germany and on which I am counting for the future of Italy and of the social Italian Republic which will remain in all circumstances the firm ally of the Reich to the end. Please believe, Fuhrer, in my sentiments of unflinching friendship.

Mussolini  
2nd June 1944 XXII

*First and last pages of Mussolini's letter.*



This letter of Mussolini to Hitler should be set, briefly, within the frame of the phenomenon of the "Fascist Republican State," and against the immediate background, in Mussolini's words, of "one last meeting"—on 22-24 April at Klessheim Castle near Salzburg.

On 25 July 1943 Fascist Italy had collapsed in twenty-four hours after twenty years' rule. An adverse vote of the Grand Council of the regime had been the signal for a brisk and bloodless military coup, presided over by King Victor Emmanuel.

The total and sudden disintegration of the system precluded any military or political counter measures by Hitler, who was obliged to accept an interim and "neutral" government under Marshal Badoglio, which operated in a vacuum and pause of forty days. On 8 September, a London radio broadcast was picked up in Berlin announcing that Badoglio had signed an armistice with the Western Allies. This act posed a major threat to the whole Axis front in Italy—already dented by the Anglo-American invasion of Sicily in July—and also represented a profound shock to the ideological concept of the Nazi-Fascist alliance.

Since the coup d'état of July, Mussolini had been interned in the ski resort of Gran Sasso in the Abruzzi. His liberation by an SS commando on 12 September 1943 had jerked him back abruptly to face the consequences of the surrender by Badoglio. Italy was now cut into two zones across the Apennines by the battle front between the Axis and the Anglo-American armies.

Hitler's personal intervention had instigated the rescue operation at Gran Sasso, bringing to Germany his comrade without arms and as a refugee without a following. The last and only concession of the Fuehrer was the bleak permission to set up a new administration, without defined authority or powers, and without an army or machinery of government.

On the evening of 18 September 1943, Radio Munich broadcast a special announcement. The Duce of Fascism addressed the Italian people, appealing for their support for a new Fascist Republic in defiant opposition to "il Regno del Sud" of King Victor Emmanuel.

To Hitler, the justification of this frail satellite was the maintenance of a common myth—the ideological union of the Axis and the bond between Nazism and Fascism. It was a propaganda gamble on the continued viability of the Mussolini regime in Italy, and in defiance of the

advice of the German military and political experts, who pressed for a total occupation of Northern Italy on the model of Poland.

The German decision not to allow the new administration to be established in the "open city" of Rome consecrated the *de facto* disunity of Italy. It demonstrated to Italian public opinion the historic responsibility of Italian Fascism for the destruction of the work of the Risorgimento.

In October 1943, Mussolini and his entourage had been settled on the shores of Lake Garda. Skeleton ministries were patched together in the area from those Fascist personalities and civil servants who had gone underground after the events of September. An enclave under strict German supervision, cordoned off by road blocks, was created around the small town of Salò, which was to give its name to the ephemeral and confined remnants of the Italian Fascist regime, which had disintegrated within hours on the previous 25 July.

The territory of the new 'Republic' was nominally bounded by the French frontier on the west, northwards along the line of the Alps, on the east by the border of Venezia Giulia, and to the south by the war front. It included the vital industrial triangle of Torino-Milano-Genova, and the reduced coast lines of the Tyhrennian and Adriatic Seas.

Within this frame, conditioned by the state of the military campaign, a German army group was encamped as the forward southern glacis of the defense of the Reich. Mussolini was confronted with the task of mobilizing throughout the region the human loyalties of the population, without which he could neither reconstruct a neo-Fascist party and administration as the loyal and by now merely symbolic ally of Nazi Germany. Nor could he organize a new armed force upon which such a regime must depend for its existence.

The futile and tragic experiment of Salò was doomed from the start to dissolve into a series of escapes from reality, and in a climate of confused intrigues, ambitions and conspiracies.

The early failure to create an 'official' Republican Army under Marshal Graziani, the conqueror of Libya and Abyssinia, faced by the disloyal competition of a neo-Fascist Militia—the later Brigade Nere (Black Brigades) of the Party—and the indifference of the German military leadership was decisive to the fate of Salò.

The crisis of Italian manpower dominated the immediate scene. After 8 September,



600,000 Italian prisoners of war were in German camps. Massive recruiting of Italian workers by the TODT organization and Sauckel's Ministry of Labour sent many more to Germany. The disaster of Graziani's conscription measures for his military units drove the younger age groups to the partisan bands now forming in the Alpine fastnesses and in the countryside.

The last deception was the artificial incantation of the myth of a Fascist 'socialism' buried in the catchwords of 1919. This now took the form of a paper programme to nationalize the main industries of Northern Italy early in 1944, to be carried out by the neo-Fascist syndicates, and by a Ministry of Labour without function or authority.

The plan received the personal backing of Mussolini, to whom it represented a vague fulfillment of early intentions, and the effective hostility of the German authorities, who had no regard for socialist tendencies and required the undisturbed production of Italian industry. The collapse was total, and yet another legend was destroyed.

The action of the workers in the factories strengthened by the strikes of March throughout the industrial area of Lombardy and Piedmont, was a decisive element. As one of the neo-Fascist syndicate leaders wrote: "The workers consider nationalization as a mirror to catch larks, and they keep well away from us and the mirror."<sup>2</sup>

In April, the meeting of the German and Italian leaders was held at Klessheim to review the situation of the Republic of Salò, and the points at issue between their respective authorities.<sup>3</sup> The German Ambassador at Salò, Rudolf Rahn, the personal representative of Hitler, who in effect controlled all the functions of the satellite Republic, had stated that the Duce would make a detailed report. "Two days would be enough," and Mussolini "attaches value to have his meals alone." At the last Klessheim Conference, exactly a year earlier, Mussolini had been subjected to the devastating monologues of Hitler, which he hoped at least to avoid on this demoralizing occasion.

At the opening session—for the first and last time—the Duce spoke first. He reported on the administration of the Republic since he had taken it over seven months previously. "He had encountered absolute chaos. . . . This state of disorganization had assumed proportions of which he had no conception in the period immediately after his liberation."

The Republic was without an Army. An independent and well-equipped military force was vital—to operate alongside its German ally in defense of the territory under its nominal control, both against the Allied advance towards the Northern Italian plain and on to the Alpine frontiers of the Reich, and against the spreading "partisan" menace to the security of the Republic itself.

"Operations against the rebels were of the utmost importance. Some 60,000 partisans were operating, principally in Piedmont, and were particularly dangerous in the Apennines where only four roads led from North to South."

The main purpose—to Mussolini—of the present meeting was to secure reasonable treatment for the 600,000 Italian officers and men interned in Germany. Only a small proportion had been selected to form one division, now under training as a cadre for a new Republican force. Some recruits—about 60-70,000—had been called up in the Salò Republic, but "there were many slackers." The Republican regime was favoured by only a minority of the population, "the great majority stood between skepticism and pessimism." Large-scale social measures must be taken. "Strikes were entirely under control" (since the outbreaks in March 1944). "But there was a food problem in the North and in Rome." "A thousand lorries would solve the whole matter."

The strengthening of the position of the Republic "was in the interest of Germany." Although Sauckel, the German Minister of Labour, was demanding one million Italian workers, Mussolini would supply them, and call up additional military classes for this purpose. Above all, the Italian people "must be given the impression that the new government had an independent position, and that there were certain fields in which it had complete control."

During these Klessheim conversations, Hitler confirmed that four Italian divisions would be trained in Germany and eventually sent to the Republic. "This was a pre-requisite for the stabilization of the Fascist regime. But the Italian soldiers must be determined to fight for the Duce like a Roman legion."

There was no reference to Mussolini's 'social measures'—the nationalization of Northern Italian industries and a neo-socialism abhorrent to Nazi conceptions.

Hitler concluded that he "had decided once and for all to rely on the Duce. . . . Italy was the first, and even today the only one bound closely

to us in ideology. . . . It was no good standing alone." Before returning to Italy, he reviewed the first Italian Republican division under training (600 officers and 12,000 men). He received an enthusiastic reception and "regained confidence in himself."

Mussolini's letter to Hitler of 2 June was intended as a progress report on the political and military situation since the Klessheim meeting.

The picture is dismal and betrays an Olympian and deliberately uninformed detachment from the dissolving reality of the Republican cause: ill-equipped and demoralized recruits, of whom 40,000 fail to report; a small number of disbanded soldiers return—a euphemism for "deserters"—from the Royal Italian Army; the increasing refusal of the German civilian and military authorities to take seriously the existence of a Salò administration.

The dreary evidence of these signs of disintegration of a puppet regime accumulated daily in the files of Mussolini's Secretariat. Of the two central issues at Klessheim—the arming and equipping of a Republican Army, and the consequent strengthening of action against the partisans—there was no sign of progress.

As Mussolini wrote in this letter, "the partisan phenomenon will become even more acute." Their threat to the German lines of communication in Northern Italy called in question the very justification of a notionally independent satellite regime astride the invasion routes to the Southern frontiers of the Reich.

The failure to create effective Italian Republican anti-partisan units implied the use of ill-spared German SS and military forces in operations of a civil war.

Mussolini refers to the food situation, which he simplifies as a problem of transport. The railways and roads were in fact at the mercy of Allied bombers, and both communications were regularly threatened by partisan bands in the Apennines and throughout the North. At Klessheim he had reduced the issue to a concession by the Germans of one thousand lorries. He now reduces the figure to five hundred.<sup>4</sup>

The Allied offensive northwards had reached the outskirts of Rome, a military rehearsal for the invasion of Northern Italy, and a propaganda triumph for "the banner of the House of Savoy and Stalin." Mussolini wrote in this letter to Hitler, "I have already spoken to you about the Togliatti phenomenon." He was referring to a passage in the opening monologue at Klessheim. In Southern Italy, the num-

ber of political parties had risen to twenty. Here was the most serious enemy. Togliatti, the friend of Stalin, "was now Minister without Portfolio in the Badoglio government." "Togliatti was trying to reconcile the various classes of the population."<sup>5</sup>

In fact, Togliatti, the Secretary-General of the Italian Communist Party, had returned from Moscow to Italy through British channels, arriving in Naples on 27 March 1944. His mission was to give firm direction to the Party groups in the South, and in the North to cooperate with other political parties in a common Resistance front—a mortal threat to the security of the Republic of Salò.

Perhaps the most puzzling remark in this letter of Mussolini to Hitler is his reference to the failure of the strike of 1 May 1944. There are many and recent detailed historical studies of the situation in the factories in the North throughout the existence of Salò, and none of these mention any such episode.

Mussolini received regular reports on internal order from the Republican National Guard, the para-military force of the regime. On 2 May, the laconic note from Milan headquarters reads, "The work force [in the city] reported regularly for work." On the same day from Turin, "All the factory employees following a normal working activity."<sup>6</sup>

The wholesale dismantling of factory plants and their transport to Germany, and the threat of sending strikers to forced labour in Germany had their effect for the moment on the working class of Northern Italy.

Why did Mussolini invent this myth of strikes as a prelude to rebellion? Perhaps it was a tired admission of his isolation and foreboding, and a sign that he could no longer be bothered to study the evidence of conditions throughout the Republic which mounted on his desk.

An even more striking indication of Mussolini's withdrawal into an inner world of unreality was his recommendation to Hitler of the invention by a certain engineer, Grossi, of a formula which was used to transform methane gas into a liquid.<sup>7</sup> Ultimate salvation of the Axis might lie in a Faustian alchemy.

Hitler too played his Nostrodamus role, but with more scientific accuracy. At the last meeting of the two men, at Hitler's headquarters in East Prussia, a few hours after the bomb incident of 20 July 1944, the Fuehrer announced that a new and heavier weapon would succeed

the V-1. "London would be bombarded until the whole city was absolutely destroyed."

But time was running out.

Towards the end of his letter to Hitler of 2 June 1944, Mussolini hinted at the imminent fall of Rome, "which would have military and moral repercussions of vast implication throughout the world." Allied forces entered the Italian capital two days later on 4 June.

The disintegration of the Republic entered into its final stage with the liberation of the city. The agony was drawn out for another ten months. Within the ever shrinking territorial enclave of Salò, the authority of the administration dissolved throughout the countryside in the savagery of civil war between the units of the Republican National Guard and the Black Brigades, and the partisan forces. The cities and small towns were beleaguered and isolated.

Hitler never replied to Mussolini's letter of 2 June 1944.<sup>8</sup>

The four Italian Republican divisions returned from Germany and crumbled away as a fighting force under the plague of mass desertions. The German Command in Northern Italy

fought an obstinate rearguard action against the Anglo-American advance across the last strategic defence line of the Po Valley. Negotiations for the surrender of the German armies to the Western Allies was completed in Switzerland without the knowledge of the Duce, or any provision for the fate of the Republic and its armed forces.<sup>9</sup>

The last scene of Italian Fascism was played out on 25 April 1945 in the Prefecture in Milan in a confused and abortive attempt by Mussolini to surrender to the partisan National Liberation Committee. On the previous day, Hitler sent a telegram from his bunker in Berlin: "The struggle for existence or non-existence has reached its climax." Within hours the Fuehrer had closed the reckoning by his gesture of suicide.

The final historical act of Italian Fascism was the departure of a last convoy of the Duce, with an exiguous band of faithful staff and followers. In a flurry of indecision, this was to vanish in a trail of massacre and shootings. Italian Fascism ended, as it had begun, in squalid episodes of irrational violence.

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#### Footnotes

1. For details of the fate of Mussolini's papers and those of the Republic of Salò see Howard McGaw Smith, *Secrets of the Fascist Era* (Carbondale, Ill., 1975)
2. See F.W. Deakin, *The Six Hundred Days of Mussolini* (Garden City, N.Y., 1966), 165. [This refers to the paperback edition of what was originally Part 3 of *The Brutal Friendship: Hitler, Mussolini and the Fall of Italian Fascism* (London, 1962)]
3. *Ibid.*, chapter 9, "The Klessheim Conference," 166-78.
4. On 12 September, in a letter to Ambassador Rahn, Mussolini wrote, "Fiat produces 50 lorries a day. Let them give at least three of them." *Six Hundred Days of Mussolini*, 213.
5. In the original minutes of the first meeting at Klessheim, April 22, 1944. (Not quoted in *The Six Hundred Days of Mussolini*.)
6. *Riservato a Mussolini* (Daily notes of the Republican National Guard) November 1943-June 1944, Introduction by Natale Verdina (Turin, 1974), 250, 316.
7. I have been unable to trace any mention of Grossi or his invention either in printed works or the massive documentation on the Salò Republic.
8. Hitler had written to Mussolini for the last time, as it transpired, on 23 July 1943. At no point during the period of Salò did the Duce receive any personal communication from him, except for the valedictory telegram from Berlin on 24 April 1945.
9. For a recent account of these negotiations see Bradley F. Smith and Elena Agarossi, *Operation Sunrise: The Secret Surrender* (New York, 1979)—*Editor's note*.