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## THE ITALIAN ROOTS OF RACIALISM

RISA SODI

When the Fascist regime in Italy embarked on an official policy of racialism in the mid-1930's, it turned to a stable of propagandists, journalists, and politicians to publicize and, in some cases, lend purported scientific credence to its claims. A spate of books and articles appeared on the national scene expressing in more or less virulent terms the emerging official contention that Jews in general and the Jews in Italy in particular were responsible for Italy's ill fortunes. The annals of history were combed for references to Jewish treachery or, at the very least, undesirability. Recent political considerations were recast in an explicitly anti-Jewish light. And even religion was called into play to bolster Fascist claims on the one hand, while attacking the moral underpinnings of Judaism on the other.

Anti-Semitic remarks drifted in and out of Mussolini's speeches throughout the 1920's and 1930's. They were often counteracted by lavishly philo-Semitic declarations or patently pro-Jewish actions. The mid-1930's, however, brought about a definitive end to such vacillations. As political exigencies dictated the need for clear-cut discriminatory action against the Italian Jews, racialism, a pseudo-scientific doctrine, was imported from the north and emended to fit Fascist ideological prerequisites. Mussolini enlisted the help of a handful of writers to enunciate his emerging racial policy. Giovanni Preziosi, Giulio Cogni, Giacomo Acerbo, Roberto Farinacci Julius Evola and Paolo Orano all responded to the Duce's summons, though they did not interpret their assignments in the same way.

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An examination of their writings reveals certain proclivities and other marked differences of analysis among Fascism's racist writers. After a brief introduction to the concepts of race and racialism and a glance at Jewish history in Italy from the Risorgimento to the March on Rome, the work of these six writers will be analyzed in depth with an eye toward their political context, their degree of official backing and, especially, the origins of their racist interpretations.

### I. Racism, Racialism and Anti-Semitism

Although the terms "racism" and "racialism" are often used interchangeably, it is useful, in the context of a survey of Italian racialist thought, to explore the differences and similarities between the two terms. Racism, in common usage, is the more common of the two. It describes a popular attitude, a gut feeling, that there is a natural, incontrovertible hierarchy of racial and ethnic groups on this earth, that the gaps separating superior and inferior are self-evident and manifest, and that race is the ultimate determinant of social, moral or political behavior. Racism is closely associated with such everyday concepts as bias, prejudice, and discrimination. Racism, as defined above, is associated with "low culture."

Racialism comprises these attitudes and is thus akin to its "poor cousin," racism. Yet it injects racism with a pseudo-scientific underpinning and ideological structure. The crucial difference between the two concepts is that racialism has pretensions to being a systematic body of thought. It presents itself in the positivistic light of nineteenth-century philosophizing as an objective, empirical theory, sustained both through scientific (biological and anthropological) evidence and by historical proof. In the tradition of other contemporary systematic characterizations of the world, such as Hegelianism, Darwinism, and Freudianism, it lays claim to an all-encompassing blue-print for ordering modern (in this case, Fascist) society.

Fascist racialism was a world-view which very succinctly structured the disparate social and moral tensions impinging on the regime. It was applied as a cicatrizing solution to the incipient rifts in Italian internal affairs, caused by imperialist expansion, socialist

dissension, and an economic slump. As a totalitarian system built upon a rigid hierarchy, this act of structuring was intrinsic as essential to Fascism's continued existence. Racialism was an expedient complement of the totalitarian, imperialistic components of Fascist dogma, and as such, added a "spiritual" or "philosophical" groundwork to Fascism's other political and economic doctrines. Far from an aberration, Fascist racialism was a logical outgrowth of intrinsic Fascist aims; its passage in 1938 from theory to practice was not a leap of faith but the natural next step along a well-laid path.

The last term in this triumvirate, anti-Semitism, occupies the middle ground between racism and racialism. It is a manifestation of the former as applied to Jews, and as such is grounded in the popular "low-culture" attitude present in a latent form in pre-Fascist Italy. It was also bolstered and justified by the scientific tenets of Fascist racialism. Through racialist thought, longstanding, popularly-held anti-Semitic beliefs acquired legitimacy and captured a sophisticated national audience. As a systematizing, high-toned ideology, racialism was able to step confidently into the Italian political arena.

When Mussolini's Manifesto of Italian Racism came out in 1938 (soon followed by sweeping juridical measures that same year), Western observers were quick to label it a slavish imitation of Hitler's racial views. The Allies, in fact, had consistently attributed the stimulus for Italian anti-Jewish measures to German pressure of influence (while this view had been voiced before Hitler and Mussolini joined forces in 1936, it gained widespread diffusion after the signature of the Pact of Steel). Recent scholarship, however, has effectively disproven this view. Such writers as Michaelis, Bernardini, and De Felice have shown that Italian racialism has its own peculiar roots, roots that this paper will attempt to trace. In fact, a survey of some of the most influential Italian racialist writings from the 1920's, 1930's, and 1940's will reveal a deliberate effort on the part of virtually all racialist writers to distinguish Italian and German thought. The basis for such a distinction, as asserted by the "ideologues" themselves, will be examined in



greater detail below. However, at present it should be emphasized that the major Italian "race writers" - Preziosi, Acerbo, Farinacci, Evola, and Orano - took pains to stress the "spiritual," "ideological," or "philosophical" imperatives for an Italian racist policy, as contrasted with the "biological" claims of their German counterparts (The outstanding exception here is Giulio Cogni, who subscribed so thoroughly to the German line as to transpose entire passages of Chamberlain's Die Grundlage des XIX Jahrhunderts to his book Il Razzismo). Many of these writers augmented their arguments with historical justifications for racial discrimination. Thus, a brief historical and demographic background of the Jews of Italy from the Risorgimento to the March on Rome is helpful to evaluate the context of such accusations.

#### Historical Background of the Jews of Italy

The walls of the Jewish ghettos were first erected in the early 1600's and were not completely razed until 1870. For nearly three hundred years, they were nearly impermeable barriers between Jewish and Christian society in Italy. With few exceptions, every Italian city with a Jewish population enclosed that population within locked ghetto gates. Emancipation for most Jews came only on the heels of the Risorgimento and thus found a great many Jews keen on embracing its liberal, anticlerical, free-thinking ideals.

Jews immediately entered the mainstream of Italian life, joining the ranks of university professors, civil servants, deputies and senators in disproportionate numbers ( a fact that later racial publicists interpreted as proof of a longstanding, occult Jewish conspiracy to undermine the State). Jews also became prominent in the fields of economics, civil law, jurisprudence, medicine, music, and the natural sciences. Unparalleled among other European Jewish communities, a significant number of Italian Jews chose military careers: there were 86 army officers. in 1864, double that number by 1900.<sup>1</sup> World War I saw active participation by fifteen Jewish generals, fifteen colonels and three admirals, and over 1000 Jews were decorated for heroism. From the Risorgimento through World War I, Jews earned a considerable reputation as

patriots. Even Mussolini was quick to acknowledge their "good citizenship" and "bravery" during World War I.<sup>2</sup>

Demographic changes also occurred in the Jewish community in the ninety years from 1840-1930. While 1/5 of the Italian Jews (or 7,700 out of 37,000) resided in small Northern agricultural communities in 1840, by 1930 this number had shrunk to one in forty. Cities such as Rome, Milan, Florence and Trieste registered sharp increases in Jewish population, while Venice remained stable; and communities sprang up out of nothing in Bologna and Naples (it should be remembered that the Jewish population of Southern Italy remained virtually nil after the forced expulsions of 1492). Literacy rates were 94.2% for Jews in 1861, versus 35.5% for the general populace. In 1927, 27% of Italians did not know how to read or write while 0% of Jews were illiterate.<sup>3</sup>

Jews had also become prominent in government by the beginning of the new century. At one time or another, they occupied the positions of Minister of the Treasury, Agriculture, and War. Salvatore Barzilai was appointed "Ministro delle terre liberate" (from Austria) in 1915, and Luigi Luzzatto and Sidney Sonnino each served as Prime Minister. Ernesto Nathan, a leading exponent of Freemasonry, served as mayor of Rome from 1907-1913, and two Jews, General Ottolenghi and Vittorio Polacco, were nominated tutors to the heir by Vittorio Emanuele III. In the early 1920's, nine Jews sat as Deputies and 26 as Senators in the Italian Parliament. In addition, two leaders of the Socialist Party, Treves and Modigliani, were Jews.

Thus, by the advent of the Fascist regime, Jews had moved from a position of cultural, political, and even physical isolation to one of extensive participation. They lived at the crossroads of Italian life, no longer by the wayside, and exerted a not inconsiderable influence on many aspects of Italian society. They were, in general, urban, literate, newly assimilated, and eager to claim a place in the new society around them. Though recent tradition saw them aligned in the liberal, socialist and free-thinking camps, there was also a strong conservative current running through the Jewish community. Many were among Fascism's earliest supporters; some were even listed among its

"martyrs," and 238 Jews participated in the March on Rome.<sup>4</sup>

Neither was the Jewish community monolithic when it came to religious practices. At least three different rites existed in Italy (Ashkenazi, Sephardic, and Italian) and many Jews had abandoned religious practice altogether for a secular life. Thus it is not surprising that Jewish leaders themselves felt constrained in the first decades of the new century to issue calls for "Jewish unity in the midst of multiplicity."<sup>5</sup> Ironically, this very heterogeneity of political and social loyalties was later exploited and "homogenized" by racialist writers via their contention that all Jews, no matter what their professed beliefs, instinctively and inexorably succumb to an innate, supranational blood allegiance.

Thus, at the same time that the Jews were accused of being the guiding lights behind Socialism, Bolshevism, capitalism, and Freemasonry - movements at either pole of the political spectrum - they were also accused of sharing an indissoluble common bond which, regardless of national loyalties, propelled them to work together behind the scenes for the creation of world Jewish dominion. Proof of this was found by such writers as Preziosi and Julius Evola in The Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion. This clamorous Czarist forgery, which purported to be the secret minutes of an international strategy session devoted to planning a worldwide Jewish plutocracy for the subjugation of all other peoples was revived and diffused by Preziosi in 1927. Though many booksellers initially refused to handle it, a second edition with introductions by both Preziosi and Evola received wide circulation in 1938, the year of the racial laws.

Alleged Jewish plutocratic aims, since supranational, were considered irreconcilable with the goals of the quintessentially nationalistic Fascist state. In addition to an international plutocracy, racialist writers also linked Jews to two other phantomatic global "organizations:" the "Jewish International" and "Jewish high finance." The Jewish International was allegedly an "umbrella group" uniting Jewish Bolsheviks worldwide. Even more than Jewish plutocracy, it was perceived as the main threat to Italian Fascism. Preziosi repeatedly



admonished his readership, through books and articles, about the parallels between Jewish incendiary Bolshevism abroad and Jewish socialism at home. That two of the three founding leaders of the Italian Socialist Party were Jewish (Treves and Modigliani) only lent the semblance of credence to his monitions. Moreover, Preziosi was relentless in listing the flesh-and-blood incarnations of this particular threat, from Marx in Germany to Trotsky and Kerensky in Russia, Enver Pasha in Albania to Bela Kun in Hungary, from Blum in France to Treves and Modigliani in Italy (Preziosi was also fond of "revealing" the "real" names of such leaders, for example Braunstein for Trotsky and Mordechai for Marx). Once again the Protocols were called into question, this time to prove that the Soviet Revolution was the result of Jewish agitation. Judaism was thus linked to Bolshevism, Fascism's foremost foe. Orano reinforced Preziosi's point. In his opinion, "Socialism is, to be unambiguous about it, a substantially Jewish doctrine."<sup>6</sup> To equate Jewry with socialism was to equate Jews with the Fascist anathema.

Jewish high finance was another supranational power wielded by Jews for their own occult purposes, in the racialist view. It, too, conspired against Fascism as seen by the Banca Commerciale controversy during World War I. The Banca Commerciale was founded in 1894, at Crispi's behest, with mainly German and some Austrian, Swiss, and Italian capital. By the outbreak of World War I, when Italy and Germany found themselves on opposite sides of the trenches, Preziosi railed against the number of bank executors who were foreign (German) - "and among them, ... how many Jews!" (e fre questi ... quanti ebrei.<sup>7</sup>) This alleged German-Jewish stranglehold on the Italian economy was threatening in and of itself, but also, in the racialist view, confirmed a Jewish propensity for international intrigue and self-serving racial (not national) allegiance. Moreover, the Jews in this instance were seen as willing instruments of Germany, craftily complying with German interests in order to covertly advance their own plutocratic ambitions. Preziosi remarked at the time that, in an Italy "pervaded with Judaism," the Jew was the "invisible dominator."<sup>8</sup> On another front, he also accused the German-Jewish banker Jacob Schiff of financing Trotsky - though



a bolshevic - on the sole basis of their "blood loyalties."<sup>9</sup> Mussolini had enunciated the same thought nearly two decades earlier, concluding that "Race does not betray race ... Bolshevism is being defended by international plutocracy. That is the real truth."<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Jewish banking interests in England were said to have instigated the British call for international sanctions against Italy after the Italian invasion of Ethiopia.

In short, the Italian racialists argued that whatever the avenue, whether to advance their plutocratic aims, whether in the name of socialism or the Jewish International, or whether for their own economic self-interest, the Jews of the world instinctively banded together to help each other. Not only, but that they also were willing instruments of Italy's enemies, as long as they were assured of reaping a benefit. Jews espoused what Preziosi called "disorganizing ideas," running the gamut from liberalism to radicalism, radicalism to socialism, socialism to communism, and communism to anarchy.<sup>11</sup> As defiantly irreducible outsiders and enemies of the state, the Jews, racialists argued, merited separate treatment. Indeed, they brought such treatment on themselves, Farinacci and Orano declared. Two events of the thirties further exacerbated this view and eventually set the scene for the harsh measures adopted at the end of the decade. The first event was the invasion of Abyssinia, and the second was increasing Zionist pressure for a Jewish homeland.

The regime initially betrayed an ambivalent attitude toward Zionism, occasionally authorizing then denouncing the selfsame Zionist activities. After the establishment of the British mandatory regime in Palestine, the question of a "division of allegiance" arose. Italian Zionists were accused of acting as tools of the British to alter the Mediterranean status quo. The longstanding Anglo-Italian rivalry in the Near East came to the fore, along with allegations of international Jewish links to England-based Freemasonry, liberalism, and colonialism. Zionism was soon categorized as a nationalist movement - and as such, unacceptable to the regime - and Jewish Zionists were consequently branded as disloyal Fascists. Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 and the ensuing League of Nations' sanctions, supported by England in

particular, worsened the situation for Italian Jews, stigmatizing them as "sanctionist" as well as separatist. The New African empire also raised serious racial questions for Italy, as the regime struggled to find an ideological justification for its colonial practice.

In such a context, the Fascist state and Mussolini in particular turned to a cadre of more-or-less officially recognized racial propagandists. Some, such as Preziosi, had been active since the first World War; others, such as Farinacci and Orano, rose to prominence within party ranks on the wings of various anti-Semitic campaigns. Preziosi, Cogni, Acerbo, Farinacci, Evola, and Orano laid the groundwork for an Italian racial policy based on "spiritual" values, as distinguished from the biological underpinnings of German "Aryan" thought. They concentrated on a group of "evils" which Preziosi partially, though succinctly, summed up in the title of his 1941 publication Giudaismo, bolscevismo, plutocrazia, massoneria (to which one could add capitalism, democracy, Zionism, and Jewish "high finance" as well). But they also had other, more pressing concerns as well, i.e., the theoretics of racialism, the importance of Catholic dogma to racialist thought, and the obsession with proving that Fascist racialism preceded (and, therefore, did not imitate) parallel German doctrines. Italy's position vis-a-vis its future ally underwent more than one about-face during the mid- to late-1930's. Just as the tenets of Italian racial policy were being laboriously and often quixotically ironed out, it became a political imperative to demonstrate ideological independence from Germany. Similarly, one of Fascism's sacred cows was that it derived its moral and political strength from centuries of Latin precepts and history, certainly not from its contemporary Northern neighbor. Lastly, public opinion toward Germany in the 1930's was particularly uncharitable - all reasons why the regime attempted to present the impression that it steered its own course, in matters racial and otherwise. A look at these three fundamental themes underlying the body of racialist writing will enable us to identify the substantial differences of approach, emphasis, style, and efficaciousness which characterized the six writers mentioned above, as well as to put their efforts into political context.

The supreme dogma of Italian racialism was a belief in Fascism's precedence over National Socialism in propounding a racial world-view. To a man, the six writers examined here reiterated this first and most holy of their commandments, though none as vehemently as Giovanni Preziosi. In article after article, he hammered home his conviction that Fascism did not imitate Nazi Germany but, if anything, was imitated by it. Ironically, Preziosi was also considered by some at the time to be Germany's "homme de confiance" in Italy. How did he maintain this position? As we will see, he did some careful fence-straddling and by and large avoided theory in favor of politically-oriented bombast.

Preziosi, the "dean of Italian Jew-baiters," jumped on the anti-Semitic bandwagon long before his younger colleagues - and years before the founding of the Fascist party, for that matter.<sup>12</sup> In 1915, he published the polemical pamphlet La banca commerciale e la penetrazione tedesca in Francia e Inghilterra, in which he lambasted those two countries for their lack of diligence and predicted dire consequences for their shortsighted capitulation to "German" (i.e., German-Jewish) economic interests. In later articles which appeared in Il Popolo d'Italia during the 1920's, Preziosi's verbiage became more inflamed and more specific, explicitly accusing Jewish international finance, spearheaded by German-Jewish bankers, of infiltrating and trying to pervert the Italian state. He also established himself as enough of an authority in his field to act as mentor and inspiration to a younger generation of propagandists, Farinacci foremost among them. Furthermore, Preziosi played the critical role in reviving and diffusing that clamorous Tsarist forgery, the Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion.

Although Preziosi was an early member of the Fascist Party (he joined in 1920), his early admonitions against the Jews met with a negligible official response at the time and were largely ignored by the Italian public at large: at that stage of his career, Preziosi was something of an outsider, a "voice crying in the wilderness."<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, he did not desist. as the tide of Italian racial politics shifted, Preziosi gradually found himself at the vortex of a new official policy. Through perseverance and devotion to cause, he eventually garnered and



maintained a foothold within the Fascist hierarchy.

Preziosi insisted over and over that Fascism, not Nazism, was the first to generate a racialist world view. Since Mussolini and the Fascist regime vacillated between the two poles of philo- and anti-Semitism for many years, no small amount of revision was required to sustain this last premise. Nonetheless, Preziosi was creative in his approach. He ascribed Fascism's initial racial consciousness to the Libyan War (1911-1912). The fear of a bastardized European race, he said, led to a Fascist stand of antimiscegenation, whose aim was "to avoid the catastrophic scourge of mestization (meticciato).<sup>14</sup> While this potential racial catastrophe had a general, rather than a Jewish referent, one cannot help but question Preziosi's assertion: after all, Mussolini was still a militant left-wing socialist at the time of the Libyan War, making it antihistorical to posit a Fascist racial consciousness any time before November 1914, at the very least.

This is far from Preziosi's only argument, however. In his 1940 article "Gli ebrei italiani furono avvertiti," Preziosi cites anti-Jewish speeches made by Mussolini before the 1922 March on Rome. He also omits, for obvious reasons, profusely philo-Semitic statements made by the Duce during the same period. It is equally significant that, while arguing that "Fascism followed its own path" [il Fascismo ha battuto la sua via] and extolling the Duce's "precursory philosophy" [pensiero precorritore del duce], Preziosi conveniently sidesteps Mussolini's post-1922 statements.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps he was aware, as Meir Michaelis has demonstrated in his book Mussolini and the Jews, that Mussolini's attitude toward the Italian Jews was changeable, contradictory, and influenced more by political strategy than by ideological conviction (Preziosi had certainly reached such a conclusion by October 1943, when he sent a venomous letter to the German High Command accusing Mussolini of surrounding himself with "Jew-lovers."<sup>16</sup>) Nonetheless, Preziosi was adamant in asserting Fascism's precedence over National Socialism, going so far as to dedicate his 1940 book to "Fascists everywhere - hierarchs and followers - so that they may have at their fingertips the uncontrovertible proof that it is 'simply absurd' and foolish to speak of



'imitation' when examining Fascism's attitude toward the problem of race in general and the Jewish problem in particular."<sup>17</sup>

Giacomo Acerbo, a politician and professor of economics and agricultural policy, member of the Gran Consiglio (and one of the majority who voted against Mussolini on July 25, 1943), as well as an occasional racial theorist, also felt a similar need to assert Fascism's precedence over National Socialism in things racial. His most important work, I fondamenti della dottrina fascista della razza, came out in mid-1940 - the same year as Preziosi's aforementioned anthology, and just as Italy was poised to join its Axis partner in declaring war on the Allies.

The Introduction to I fondamenti della dottrina fascista della razza (written by Alessandro Pavolini) immediately set the tone of the book. In it, Pavolini implicitly differentiates between Italian and German racialism and concludes that Italy is destined for superiority: "By now, Italian racialism possesses its own distinct physiognomy in the scholarly world, a profound force of penetration in the popular consent, and full awareness of the incomparable human and historical values which underlie the Italian race and its destiny of supremacy."

Acerbo begins his presentation by arguing that to pinpoint an Italian ethnic identity naturally implies the defense of the same. Such a defense must be conducted on the political, economic, social, oral, and juridical levels. Acerbo then repeats a claim made earlier by Preziosi, namely that Mussolini has been interested in the concept of "stirpe" (literally, stock or race) since the early "battaglie di piazza" prior to the March on Rome.<sup>18</sup> While both Preziosi and Acerbo found it necessary to defend the consistency of thought of the Fascist regime, Acerbo takes this concept one step further by affirming that this concern with race is not a new exigency of "imperial Italy," but instead is immanent in the values underlying the progress of the Fascist revolution. Thus, while contradicting the letter of Preziosian revisionism (Preziosi, as we saw above, argued that the Libyan conquest had first engendered a fascist racial consciousness), Acerbo abides by the spirit of the "consistency" dogma.

Of the other racialist writers, only Roberto Farinacci and Julius (Giulio) Evola concern

themselves with questions of precedence (Orano takes a predominantly religious tack while Cogni focuses on race theory), and their references to Fascism's precociousness are essentially "en passant." Roberto Farinacci, called the "ras" of Cremona, "Mussolini's gadfly," the founder and editor of Il regime fascista, and a Fascist hierarch, published a tauntingly polemical pamphlet in August 1938, which contains a reference to this precedence debate. Called La chiesa e gli ebrei, it was issued in response to Pope Pius XI's March 1938 encyclical Mit brennender Sorge. Farinacci's treatise, therefore, is an attempt to remind the Church of its own anti-Semitic heritage and to shame it into softening its position.

Farinacci prefaces his scathingly sarcastic anti-Church attack with two obligatory statements: one attempting to distance Italian anti-Semitism from its German relative, and the other referring to Mussolini's landmark anti-Semitic speech of July 4, 1919 (Preziosi also quotes the same speech on at least two occasions).

Julius Evola, head of the School of Fascist Mysticism in Milan grounded most of his works in a spiritual, ethereal discussion of the larger implications of such Fascist by-words as duty, loyalty, patriotism, and race. An associate of Preziosi, his assertions do much to contradict Preziosi's dogma of Fascist precedence. In fact, in Sintesi della dottrina della razza, Evola blithely dates the official incorporation of racialism into Fascism to 1939 - some 28 years later than Preziosi's bench-mark date of 1911. Undeterred, Evola also documents his assertion, citing Numbers 5, 6, 7, 11, 15 and 18 of the official regime publication La difesa della razza. Whether Evola's date is motivated by self-promotion or by the obligations of doctrinal puritanism is open to debate, given that he also claims that his own 1936 book Il mito del sangue was the first Italian-language expose of racial theories, from Fichte to Herde, and, moreover, was completely "objective and impersonal."<sup>19</sup> Evola's dating is additionally damaging to the official Fascist view in that it implies that Italian racialist theory was not developed until after previous German theories had penetrated into Italy. Whatever his motives, Evola dealt an inconvenient blow to a precedence theory already

weakened by Mussolini's own mercurial positionings and Preziosi's overly-enthusiastic datings.

Each of the writers who touched on the issue of precedence asserted Fascism's supremacy over Nazi Germany, some more fiercely than others (Preziosi, for example), some even with deleterious implications (Evola). Nonetheless, they were substantially in agreement that Fascist racialist theories predated any official German facsimiles and that Italy, not Germany, spoke with the original voice in the racialist debate. This univocal approach was not repeated in the matter of the theoretical grounding of racialism. Faced with the unhappy prospect of adhering to the German "biological," "materialistic," or "blood and soil" reasoning - and thus, in practice, subtracting themselves from the Aryan superrace - most, though not all, of the Italian racialist writers sought out a middle ground, a series of caveats, or a new basis altogether for Fascist racialist theoretics. Not all, however, demonstrated such theoretical fealty. Some backed the German view, even to the point of no return and found themselves ostracized from Fascist officialdom because of it.

When Giulio Cogni published Il razzismo in 1936, he was mainly known as a writer and composed resident in Germany. He quickly established himself as a pro-German exponent of the same Nordic heresy that other Italians (Preziosi, for example) were careful to avoid. His two books, Il razzismo (1936) and I valori della stirpe (1937) are devoted almost exclusively to racial theory, with hardly a mention of Bolshevism, Zionism, capitalism, Masonry, or plutocracy, the pet evils of other, more politically oriented writers like Preziosi, Farinacci, or Telesio Interlandi. Characterized as a "rehash, in Italian form of Hitler's Nordic mythology," Il razzismo was the first indication that German racialism might make inroads in Italy.<sup>20</sup> It was initially received favorably by the Italian press and came out in 1937 - the same year that his second tract was published - Cogni had come under heavy fire from the official press and the Duce had withdrawn his support. A brief analysis of Cogni's main arguments will underscore why they were judged incompatible with current Fascist ideology.

Cogni begins Il razzismo by dividing the world into two main groups, Nordics and Latins.



Nordics, he writes, are self-sufficient. They are the descendants of Siegfried and Valkyrie and they embody a romantic and idyllic past. In florid prose, he goes on to extol "the mystical bonds of blood which have arisen from the primordial depths of human instinct."<sup>21</sup> Since "blood" and "instinct" were two of the most common catchwords of German biologically-based racial theory, Cogni is quick to point out at this junction that he conceives of "blood" as a spiritual term. By so doing, he was following the lead of other Italian racialist writers who often used the words "sangue," "stirpe," "nazione," and "popolo" (blood, race, nation, and people) interchangeable in order to indicate a cultural, rather than biological, unity. Moreover, he thus tempers what initially rings as an endorsement of the German blood-and-soil dogma. Cogni, in fact, asserts that he rejects "medical-anthropological" racialism. He instead espouses a philosophical racialism (or Weltanschauung, as he defines it), which, though availing itself of the data that "experimental racial science" has to offer, can also stand on its own (fa da se).<sup>22</sup> His words were echoed in 1939 by another racialist writer, Giuseppe Maggiore, who said: "Biology too, unless practiced by the Jews, is on our side."<sup>23</sup> Cogni considers "nature and spirit two aspects of a deeper reality" and calls himself the direct heir of German idealism.<sup>24</sup> He takes issue with one of the fathers of German racial thought, H.S. Chamberlain, for being too deterministic and overly positivistic. Thus, biological racialism is ultimately unacceptable for him since it neglects the spiritual aspects of race in favor of cold empirical data.

Having stated his concept of blood and race, Cogni then turns his attention to three races in particular: the Nordic, the Latin, and the Semitic. The former two share "the Aryan blood," "a vague, ideal concept," Cogni admits, "which roughly corresponds to the most common concept of the Indo-European."<sup>25</sup> Such a definition is patently devised in order to leave the Italians ample room under the Aryan rood. He later expounds on this definition in equally vague terms, concluding that "Aryan equals genius, profound mystery of the soul, which radiates out from man."<sup>26</sup>

In a chapter entitled "The Semitic Peoples," Cogni asserts the "historic inferiority of the



Semitic civilizations." Unlike Preziosi or Orano, he does not undertake an actual historical survey. Instead, he insists that practical measures are taken against Jews for reasons of self-defense alone. In the north, Nordics and Jews are caught in a warlike stance since Jews constitute a "sort of nation against the constituted nations."<sup>27</sup> They demonstrate a characteristic tendency toward Communism, internationalism, hatred of Aryans, refusal to intermarry, and usurpation of Germans from positions of importance. In Italy, however, that is not the case. Cogni affirms that "they have merged with [the Latin nations] into a single body."<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, Italy's Sephardic Jews, as descendants of "the ancient upper classes of the classic Israelite civilization," are superior to the Northern Ashkenazi Jews and create fewer problems for the Italian state.<sup>29</sup> (This argument was later modified by Preziosi, who claimed that Sephardic Jews fit into Italian society by reasons of physiognomy).

Cogni continues with a critique of Jewish religion and dogma derived largely from Chamberlain (in fact, it is interesting to note that German sources alone are listed in Cogni's bibliography, and that Il razzismo is salted with quotes by Rosenberg and Hitler). The essence of his argument is that only Indo-European (i.e., Nordic and Latin) people have a sense of inferiority; Semites are mere materialists. Materialism, in its connection with both Marxism and capitalism, was an anathema to Fascist ideology; therefore, by association, Jews were "genetically" identified as enemies of the regime.

Cogni concludes Il razzismo with the sort of Hegelian idealism that underlies his whole theory. The Aryan peoples, he states, are the product of the mixing of Aryans and Etruscans and, later, Germanic tribes and Italic tribes. The resulting fusion of Christianity and Germanism, Roman and Odinic civilizations produced a Hegelian "transcendental synthesis." By applying this logic, Cogni is also able to show that Dante and the other leading lights of Italian civilization were Aryan at heart and that Fascism was but a manifestation of the Nordic spirit.

Il razzismo was immediately hailed in the German press and understandably so. After an

initial, warm reception in Italy, Cogni's arguments met with increasing protest. He attempted to dismiss any criticism as the efforts of what he termed "half-castes, the ugly, the subnormal and the small-minded, in body and in soul."<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, his excessive glorification of the Germanic myth at the expense of Italian "romanita" quickly convinced Mussolini to deny Cogni further official patronage. While his rejection of biological racialism for a spiritual emphasis ran parallel to official Italian racialist thought, Cogni was not pardoned his overly enthusiastic Germanophilism.

Giacomo Acerbo, on the other hand, is critical of the Nordic world view. He sets the tone of his anti-German polemic by openly doubting whether the concept of race can be defined at all: many ethnologists, he states, openly repudiate the term race as pseudo-scientific.<sup>31</sup> Nonetheless, four "orders" of the concept "race" can be identified: common, historic, naturalistic, and spiritual. Acerbo quickly eliminates the first order (based on somatic, linguistic, and cultural properties), yet devotes special care to the historic and naturalistic orders. The historic order, in his analysis, defines race in terms of political upheavals, conquests, and immigration. In the German interpretation, it is similar to Cogni's concept of a transcendental synthesis. Acerbo, however, denies the role of the Goths and Lombards as conquering peoples with a historic mission and asserts that their descendants were absorbed into the lowest strata of Italian life.

Acerbo similarly liquidates the naturalistic order. While it seems to rest on the solid ground of such physical evidence as morphology, pigmentation, height, etc., he concludes that it is utterly groundless. He forcefully asserts, "We can relegate to the junkpile of romantic ethnology and literary sociology the pretext that vast human collectivities ... can preserve their primordial complexities and that, once genetically identified, each of these complexities can be assigned by destiny a particular historic duty in the advancement of the species."<sup>32</sup> Clearly, Acerbo was destined to meet a hostile audience beyond the Alps. Mussolini was well aware of this fact before Acerbo went public with his views, and yet he commissioned Acerbo to present his theories to

the Istituto Nazionale di Cultura Fascista of Florence in January 1940; the book I fondamenti della dottrina fascista della razza was a transcription of that January lecture and was published by the Office of Racial Studies and Propaganda of the Ministry of Popular Culture. Why would Mussolini deliberately offend his ally? Perhaps an answer to this seeming contradiction can be found in Mussolini's steadfast though short-lived policy of non-belligerency in 1939-40 and in the fact that, in January 1940, "relations between the two Axis Powers reached their lowest ebb."<sup>33</sup>

Mussolini's strategy was well-served by Acerbo's conclusions about the fourth order. In speaking about the "spiritual" concept of race, Acerbo immediately mentions Fascist doctrine and then refers to Fascism throughout. He feels that the spiritual concept of race coincides with Fascism's integral, totalitarian conception of the world. Fascism, he says, requires a concept which, instead of "sequestering" racism to one camp or another, will be synthetic and put due emphasis on moral, cultural, and linguistic factors - even in the light of anthropological data. Racialism, according to Acerbo, should stress spiritual values, Italy's "ideological and moral heritage, the sum total of tradition and collective effort."<sup>34</sup> Acerbo continues with his polemic in no uncertain tones:

the concept of race in the light of Fascist civilization - the legitimate heir to the most radiant Italian civilizations - can only be construed in the most radiant Italian civilizations - can only be construed in the integral sense I have mentioned. The purely physical or somatic data underlying this concept, which if taken alone would humiliate the nobility of the human race (stirpe) by confining it to the realm of zoology and would turn racial policy into a treatise on zootechnics, must necessarily be integrated with ethnic and cultural data.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, Acerbo delivered a firm blow to many German racialist tenets - several of which had prominent Italian exponents. He denounced biology, he deflated the Nordic myth, and he "restored" expropriated Italian culture to Italy.



His concluding words fit in with the most impassioned Fascist rhetoric: "The unifying force of the spirit is forever at the guide of the Italian Nation."<sup>36</sup> Mussolini declined to step into the pro- or anti-German controversy which raged around the publication of I fondamenti della dottrina fascista della razza, and Acerbo thereafter refrained from publishing racial theory. Nonetheless, Acerbo was later officially rewarded for his efforts when Mussolini appointed him Minister of Agriculture in 1943.

Julius Evola strikes a middle ground in the debate over racialism's theoretical grounding while simultaneously trying to deflect the race discussion in a novel direction. Consonant with his interest in Fascist mysticism and a later fascination with Eastern religions, Evola attempted to elevate racialist theorizing to a higher ontological plane. While doing so, he both acknowledged the contributions of German theorists and chided them for their shortcomings.

Evola's first direct address to the Jewish question came in the form of a 1936 tract, Tre aspetti del problema ebraico: nel mondo spirituale, nel mondo culturale, nel mondo economico-sociale. Spiritual questions were clearly his primary concern - evident even in the order he gave the three "aspects" - yet the first paragraph of the book opens with a deprecatory reference to Goring and the Nuremberg laws. "In Italy," he states, unlike in Germany, "the Jewish question is not a primary concern." Goring's laws, in fact, "demonstrate the extreme result of such tensions" between Germans and Jews.<sup>37</sup> Italian theorists are allowed a calmer, more reflective approach, he continues, since Italy has long been free of the "special circumstances" that "have provoked more direct and unthinking forms of anti-Semitism elsewhere."<sup>38</sup> There can be little doubt that "elsewhere" and "special circumstances," here cautiously mentioned, refer to Germany and that Evola's immediate intent is to distance his "Roman" racialism from its Nordic cousin. In spite of this seemingly hostile approach, Evola nonetheless insists on using German authors ("naturalmente") as the points of reference for his racialist discourse, justifying this choice by insisting that they are "more specialized and more characteristic, given the 'myth' they propound."<sup>39</sup> He even goes so far as to agree with two German writers, Gunther and



Clausz, that there is a "culture of the Levantine soul" (der vorderasiatischen Seele) "more or less" synonymous with the Semitic peoples.<sup>40</sup>

At this point in his career, Evola tiptoes around the concept of "race," avoiding strict definitions and concentrating on circlocutions. He calls for a positive, universal definition of "Aryan," not just a "vague racialist foundation" and to do so he evokes Max Muller and the fundamental unity of civilizations, religions, symbols, and myths of the Indo-German group civilizations.<sup>41</sup> Evola also mentions Wirth's idea of a "primordial, unified pre-Nordic" (or in Evola's term, Hyperborean - "northern") civilization. Backofen's theory of antagonism between "solar" or "uranian" (heavenly) civilizations and "lunar" or "telluric" (terrestrial) civilizations and societies, where the former are based on virile principles and the later on feminine-maternal "gynecocracies" receives painstaking attention in Evola's book - he even includes an appendix of photographic evidence of these two major racial groups. The Aryans are, of course, identified with the uranian civilization, while the Jews, misfits, and the physically impaired are grouped together under telluric societies.

In a certain sense, Evola endeavors to beat the Germans at their own game. He quotes German sources exclusively - including a line or two by Hitler - yet carefully chooses only those authors whose theories refute or cast shadows on the orthodox German biological line. Culture and spiritual values are Evola's catchwords, not blood and soil. Furthermore, he insists that the Jews are not a race, as "some" hold, being merely a "people (popolo) made up of a chaotic ethnic mixture: desertic race, Levantine race, Mediterranean race, oriental race."<sup>42</sup> And when pressed to expound on his idea of race, he returns to the theory of a "typical attitude toward the spiritual world."<sup>43</sup> "We must be radical," he says. We must re-evoke values that can truly be called "Aryan" and are not just based on vague, unilateral concepts suffused with a kind of biological materialism. Evola champions the "values of a solar and olympic spirituality ... of a new love ... for the hierarchy and universality of a race (stirpe) newly enabled to virilly lift itself from mere 'living' to 'more than living' ..."<sup>44</sup>

Five years later, in 1941, upon publication of Sintesi di dottrina della razza, Evola demonstrated that he had indeed "become radical." He launched a searing criticism of the "propagandistic" and "polemical" aspect of racialism, referring in particular to anti-Semitic attacks and warnings against mestization; he attacked those "formulations (which were) as journalistically brilliant as they were lacking in principles" (a probable reference to Preziosi or Farinacci); and complained of a lack of spiritual and doctrinal rigor.<sup>45</sup> As an antidote, Evola fascistically proposed a totalitarian formulation of racial doctrine, one which would be in line with "our" (Italian) spirit and the traditional spirit (a well-aimed barb directed against German racialism and a veiled reference to his concept of Fascism as the quintessential antimodern movement par excellence). If no one else could come up with a complete, coherent formulation of race, Evola was prepared to offer his own, structured as a series of axioms: race as anti-universalism, race as anti-individualism, anti-rationalism, and anti-evolutionism. Evola conceived of race as the spirit unifying "the living nation." It was conceived of race as the spirit unifying "the living nation." It was more than just a series of juridical, territorial, and biological limits: it was civilization, culture, and history. Evola was also quick to add that the Semitic race was lacking in all these areas. Indeed, it had co-opted its civilization from the "Irani," it had derived its culture from the negative and positive facets of surrounding ethnic groups, and it had reneged on its history by embracing the decomposition inherent in Jewish-inspired modernism.

Evola agrees with the idea of a superrace. Contrary to many German theories, however, his superrace embraces the entire progeny of the great Oriental Aryan civilizations, ancient Rome and the Roman-Germanic Middle Ages, thus yielding a Nordic-Aryan race of Italo-Germanic stock. Racialism, he says, is not a separate discipline but "is in strict dependence to a general theory of the human being." In other words, a materialistic world view will yield a materialistic concept of race, a spiritual formula, a spiritual concept, etc. He sets up three "degrees" of racial doctrine, which he enunciated in four languages (Latin, Greek,

Italian, and "Indo-Aryan"), whereby "corpo," "anima," and "spirito" apply to both the nature of the races under discussion and the ways of perceiving them. Evola favors a totalitarian "spiritual" view of racial characteristics, while at the same time defining the Aryan as the only "spiritual" race. To complement this totalitarian, all-embracing view, he ties in racial theory with sexual theory, advocating that there is a basic "race of man" and "race of woman": "whoever is born a man, let him be a man, whoever is born a woman, in all respects, in spirit and in body, without intermixtures and without attenuations."<sup>46</sup>

Evola is a case apart in Italian racial theory. This is not merely because he interjects mystical, ontological, and sexual considerations into his racial discourse, but also because he most successfully carves out a middle ground between the opposite poles of German and Italian theoretical demands. He rejects German-inspired biological materialism outright and insistently, yet he does so with the "assistance" of German racial writers. He favors the spiritual, as did Cogni and Acerbo, yet he does not explicitly link the spiritual realm to orthodox Fascist values. Instead, he infuses the Italian racial discourse with novel, esoteric concepts, such as solar and lunar races and the races of man and woman. His theories elicited perplexity and confusion in the Italian racialist community at the time and remained marginal in terms of popular influence. Nonetheless, Evola's adamantly antimaterialistic stance earned him steady backing in official party ranks.

More conventional, on the other hand, was Preziosi's stand vis-a-vis the biological/spiritual debate. Preziosi generally kept clear of the Italo-German fray over the theoretical aspects of racialism. However, he did betray a biologizing, German-influenced leaning, deducible through scattered references to race. The bulk of Preziosi's anti-Jewish writings center on political or historical matters. Theory is neither his forte nor concern. Thus, much of his theoretical equivocations vis-a-vis German influence on Italian theory remain at a superficial level. In a piece called "Imitazione," Preziosi differentiates between "Mosaism" (the Jewish religion) and "Hebrewism" (the Jewish race).<sup>47</sup>



In line with such a distinction, he argues that even converted Jews remain "crypto-Jews": while they may change their religion, they cannot change their race. Converts from as far back as the 1700's - the same crypto-Jews who now infiltrate the bands and government - respond to the call of the race to help "pure-bred" Jews. "Whoever has had even one Jewish forebear in his family, either in his maternal or paternal line, will be instinctively inclined to defend his race."<sup>48</sup> This instinctual bond, Preziosi reminds his readers, is part of the physical and mental substratum of the Jew.<sup>49</sup>

Italian racialist thought generally rejected the German biological line since it either denied Latins entry to the superior race or expropriated their heritage for Aryan use. Thus, Preziosi was forced to carefully balance his position. When comparing Mussolini to Hercules or other Roman heroes or paraphrasing the Divine Comedy to assert that "outside our leader, there is no hope for salvation," he was also conniving enough to liken the Duce to the "old Aryan sovereigns of the last century."<sup>50</sup> On another front, Preziosi spoke of "liberating the (Italian) Aryans of the Jews," thereby equating Italian Aryans with German Aryans.<sup>51</sup> Thus, while not overwhelmingly biological or pro-German in his racialism - a stand which would have compromised his official backing - Preziosi nonetheless attempted to appease his German allies.

Italian racialist writers were sensitive to criticisms that they merely aped earlier, original German racialist theories. The depths of their concern is displayed by the lengths to which they went to deny such accusations and replace them with forceful assertions of Fascism's purported precedence in the race field. In many cases, Jews were not their explicit primary concern: instead, they often speak more generally about the Semitic and Aryan, Germanic and Latin stocks. Occasionally, as with Evola, they enlarge the discourse to include man and woman as well; other times, as with Preziosi, they limit their "theorizing" to the Italian realm. Whatever their discrepancies and divergences, the six writers profiled above each make an effort, for better or for worse, to stake out their own interpretation of the Fascist precedence dogma. It is unlikely that they convinced any portion of their readership above

the Alps. However, their efforts did go along with a larger regime-inspired practice of tracing all official policies back to a common, unadulterated Fascist matrix and doubtless were assimilated by a significant number of their subalpine Italian readers.

Regardless of the writers' generalizations to the contrary, it should be stressed at this point that the Jews, not the Semites or even the North Africans, were the targets of the Italian racial propaganda campaign - a point amply demonstrated by the last argument covered here, the influence of Catholic anti-Semitism on Italian racialism. Until now, this influence has not been mentioned. However, a discussion of the two remaining racialist writers could not be entertained without a brief examination of the Church's role in racialist thought. Both Roberto Farinacci and Paolo Orano deal explicitly with Catholic sources in their polemics but, as we shall see, each as a different goal in mind and employs a different means.

Roberto Farinacci published a slew of anti-Semitic articles in his provincial paper, Cremona nuova (after 1926, Il Regime Fascista). Along with Preziosi and Interlandi, he was one of the regime's chief propagandists; in fact, Farinacci was "converted" to anti-Semitism by Preziosi. He has been described as "a lifelong intransigent - recalcitrant schoolboy, rabble-rousing journalist, anticlerical firebrand, Fascist Party Secretary after the Matteotti affair, champion of the Rome-Berlin Axis, and leader of the anti-Semitic faction in the Fascist party."<sup>52</sup> In 1926, he was dismissed as Party Secretary and remained out of favor for ten years until his enthusiastic backing of the Ethiopian venture gained his readmission to the Grand Council in 1936. A political opportunist and cynic, Farinacci used his newspaper to maintain his power base.

One of Farinacci's polemical articles, La chiesa e gli ebrei, was issued as a pamphlet in August 1938 in response to Pope Pius XI's March 1938 encyclical Mit brennder Sorge. Pius XI had used the encyclical to denounce all racial theories "derived from the myth of blood and race," though he neither criticized nor mentioned anti-Semitism by name.<sup>53</sup> As a contemporary scholar has pointed out, "he [Pius XI] simply could not sanction the transformation from

ideological anti-Semitism to racial anti-Semitism..."<sup>54</sup>

Farinacci quickly launches into the heart of his argument: namely that Fascism considers the Jewish problem to be strictly political and not religious, but that Catholic Fascists nonetheless owe their anti-Semitic inclinations to twenty centuries of Church doctrine. He condemns the official Church attitude expressed in Mit brennender Sorge as being in "strident opposition" to the history of Catholicism.<sup>55</sup> Various saints, Tertullian, canon law, Vatican councils, and encyclicals are cited to prove the historical weight of Church-inspired anti-Semitism. Farinacci lists other countries which, in addition to Italy, followed and exacerbated Church-initiated anti-Jewish measures, and compares the new racial laws of 1938 with old canon law to prove their parallels. Farinacci tauntingly poses the rhetorical question, has the Church in modern times foresaken or corrected its canon law against the Jews? Of course not, he replies with barely concealed malice: to do so would be to call into question its very doctrine of infallibility.

In addition to specific Catholic anti-Semitism, Farinacci also cites the Church's generic opposition to the illuminist, democratic philosophies of which Jews have become the "fanatic propagandist." Jesuits, Farinacci asserts, long preceded Fascist racialism with their anti-Semitic pronouncements, and he points out that, in 1890, a Jesuit author writing for Civiltà cattolica equated the "rights of man" with the "rights of Jews." Furthermore, he asks, are the Jews not leading the battle against the Church from the ranks of the international Masonic societies?

In order to quell the Vatican fears about Nazi racialism implicit in Mit brennender Sorge, Farinacci asserts that both Fascism and National Socialism aim to thwart Jewish racial megalomania, which is endeavoring for nothing less than worldwide domination. He concludes that although Fascism preceded National Socialism in its anti-Semitic thrust, still both regimes can work together to warn the world. He also points out that the Jesuits adopted stricter geneological criteria for defining a Jew than the Nazis themselves (i.e., going back to the fifth instead of the fourth generation) in order to



induce the Church to be less precipitous in its criticism of Italy's Axis partner.

Farinacci's last parry is perhaps his boldest. Why, he asks, has the Church's policy changed in but a few months? Why has it suddenly shifted from anti- to philo-Semitic? He wonders: could it be true what "the Jews" confessed to Simonini and Simonini told the Jesuit Fathers, that they control 800 priests and soon hope to have a pope in their party?<sup>56</sup> The implication of collusion is clear. He concludes his tirade with a threat and an admonition. First, he reminds the Church that, by the power of the Lateran Pact, political questions belong to the regime alone. Second, he admonishes the Church to continue its anti-Semitic teachings and to nurture "that anti-Semitic consciousness that the Church has provided us with down through the millenia."<sup>57</sup> Otherwise, he implies, continued Church intransigence could push the regime to seek a compromise with the Communists, the Masons, and the democrats - their mutual enemies.

Paolo Orano, another Party insider, also used religion as part of his racialist arguments. Unlike Farinacci, however, he was neither badgering nor malicious. Orano instead reveals a deep religious sensibility which he readily bent to serve the will of Mussolini and the racialist cause.

Orano was a journalist (at both Avanti! and later Il Popolo d'Italia), a biographer of Mussolini, and an expert on Sardinia. In 1925, he published Inchiesta sulla Massoneria. In 1937, when Mussolini was pondering the advisability of promulgating racial laws directed at Jews, he had Orano write Gli ebrei in Italia, an examination of the social, political, and religious arguments against the Jews. Whereas until that point, writers like Preziosi had been addressing their polemics to abstractions identified only as the "Jewish international" or "Jewish high finance," Orano's book signaled that Italian Jewry was to be the explicit target of this new campaign.<sup>58</sup>

Like his colleagues, Orano begins by distancing Italian racialism from German anti-Semitism. He does it, though, in a novel way, one which reflected the religious undertones of his work. All movements before Fascism were failures, he says - from Jacobinism to Mazzinianism - since they led to a

"decatholization" of Italy. The signing of the Lateran Pact forever resolved the dissension between Church and state in Italy, thus making Fascism unique, an anomaly with no precursors (it is interesting to note that Croce also arrived at a similar conclusion, though by a different path with different aims. He was concerned to prove that Fascism was an anomaly in order to demonstrate the non-evolution of Fascism from nineteenth-century liberalism). Not only has Fascism no Italian precursors, but Orano holds that it likewise gained nothing from "German atheism based on philosophical fads" - an oblique reference to Nietzsche, held by some as an influence on National Socialism.<sup>59</sup> Thus, there is a significant difference between Farinacci's and Orano's approaches: both center their arguments around "Italia concordataria," but one treats religion and religious power as a sham and the other infuses them with a morally legitimizing power.

Regionalisms or divisive religious or ethnic phenomena have no place in the new Italy, according to Orano, since they merely detract from civic patriotic sentiment. A totalitarian Italy must rid itself of diversifying currents and moral antagonisms. As the title of Orano's work makes clear, the Jews of Italy represent a concrete, implied threat to the viability of the new state.

Like Preziosi and Cogni, Orano also undertakes a historical survey of Jewish history, but his differs substantially from either one. Orano take us on a tour of Jewish contemptibleness from ancient Rome to the Roman ghetto. He mentions that while many races (stirpi) make up the Italian people, the Jews since ancient Rome have defiantly chosen racial isolation. If they refuse to assimilate, then they deserve segregation. Like Preziosi before him, Orano contends that Jews have brought their fate upon themselves (thereby absolving the regime of any responsibility). However, from our position of historical hindsight, we can also judge such conclusions as "trial" statements intended to test the waters for the impending racial laws.

Religion, for Orano, became the basis and justification for alienating Jews from the Fascist (Catholic) regime. "Religion for the Italians is a complete system which frees us from critical and philosophical preoccupations ...

Italians don't discuss religion or act as inquisitors to their faith the way Jews and Protestants do."<sup>60</sup> While it is interesting to note the jab at Protestant Germany, it is more significant to analyze Orano's implicit conclusion. Catholicism means resolution for him, and resolution is what a totalitarian state requires of its followers. He sees Christianity, Catholicism, the Church, and "romanita" as the exclusive components of History, thereby lending stability to the regime. Judaism, by contrast, is irremediably antihistorical and uncontestably anti-Fascist.

Not content with robbing Judaism of any historical foundation, Orano then "proves" that Jesus and the prophets were not Jews, that Christianity is no derivative of Judaism, and that the Holy Land was insignificant to Christ's passion ("Christ Romanly triumphed in Rome").<sup>61</sup> There is nothing Jewish, he says, in the christianity that became the Church or Catholicism. Orano also takes up an argument dear to Preziosi: that the Jews have never produced anything to rival Dante, Tasso, or the other products of "italianita." Of Dante, he says "all of Dante's thought, the entire construction of the poem is Christian, Catholic, Latin, Imperial and Roman."<sup>62</sup> "It is undeniable that the Jews have never given Italy a genius."<sup>63</sup> These three arguments taken together effectively deny any social, religious, or historical content to Judaism.

In a chapter entitled "Between Two Racisms," Orano absolves the Church of ever inspiring or guiding an anti-Semitic campaign a year before Farinacci's La Chiesa e gli ebrei. Even the ghettos, he says, were the idea of the common people (il popolino).<sup>64</sup> The real sources of racism, according to Orano, are the Germans and the Jews: the Germans, because they try to demonstrate that there was an Aryan stratum underlying Greece and Rome; and the Jews, because they hold that Greek and Roman philosophy, poetry, religion, and morality derive from Judaism. These arguments naturally trigger "a legitimate defense of Italy's national heritage." In the light of successive events, one can only assume that such an open-ended statement was conceived of as a veiled hint about the legal measures under consideration by Mussolini at the time.



In the last portion of Gli ebrei in Italia, Orano cites many of the most common accusations against the Jews: that of plutocratic scheming, Bolshevistic agitation, Masonic leanings, and subversive instincts. However, he casts his entire polemic in liturgical language within a Christian framework. Evidence of this is the hyperbolic, pseudo-religious denunciation of Jewish perfidy: the Jews, he says, are awaiting an "internationalist, Communard, anarchist or just plain Masonic, rabbinical Messiah" instead of pledging their allegiance to Italy's political Messiah, Mussolini.

Three important threads wind through the works of Fascism's main racialist propagandists. To a man, they endeavor to assert Fascism's precedence over Nazi Germany in generating an official racialist stance. More problematic (though equally universal) is their insistence on distancing Italian "spiritual" racialism from its German "biological" counterpart. Lastly, we saw that at least two writers concerned themselves in depth with Catholic dogma, trying to the best of their sometimes malevolent abilities to use it as a justification for Fascist policy or as an indictment of the Jews.

Mussolini's propagandists were a diverse lot, both in background and in orientation. Nonetheless, by focusing on and reiterating a common agenda of anti-Jewish (and occasionally, anti-German) themes, they ably served the Duce's purpose of carving out a racial policy where before there was none and easing its timely inclusion into official Fascist dogma.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Attilio Milano, Storia degli ebrei in Italia (Turin: Einaudi editore, 1963), p. 338.

<sup>2</sup>Meir Michaelis, Mussolini and the Jews (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 29.

<sup>3</sup>Milano, op.cit., p. 383.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 383.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>6</sup>Ugo Caffaz, L'antisemitismo italiano sotto il fascismo (Florence: La Nuova Editrice Italia, 1975), p. 49.

<sup>7</sup>Giovanni Preziosi, Giudaismo, bolscevismo, plutocrazia, massoneria (Milan: Mondadori, 1941), p. 24.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>9</sup>Giovanni Preziosi, Come il giudaismo ha preparato la guerra (Rome: Tuminelli, 1940, 2nd edition), p. 65.

<sup>10</sup>Michaelis, op.cit., p. 13.

<sup>11</sup>Preziosi, op.cit., 1941, p. 43.

<sup>12</sup>Michaelis, op.cit., p. 18.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>14</sup>Preziosi, op.cit., 1940, p. 79.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>16</sup>Michaelis, op.cit., p. 349.

<sup>17</sup>Preziosi, op.cit., 1940, p. 9.

<sup>18</sup>Giacomo Acerbo, I fondamenti della dottrina fascista della razza (Rome, 1940), p. 11.

<sup>19</sup>Julius Evola, Sintesi de dottrina della razza (Milan: Editore Ulrico Hoepli, 1941), p. 6.

<sup>20</sup>Michaelis, op.cit., p. 116.

<sup>21</sup>Giulio Cogni, Il razzismo (Milan: Fratelli Bocca Editori, 1937), p. 11.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>23</sup>Caffaz, op.cit., p. 24.

<sup>24</sup>Cogni, op.cit., p. 18.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 158.

<sup>29</sup>Preziosi, op.cit., 1940, p. 36.

<sup>30</sup>Cogni, op.cit., Preface.

<sup>31</sup>Acerbo, op.cit., p. 15.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>33</sup>Michaelis, op.cit., p. 283.

<sup>34</sup>Acerbo, op.cit., p. 25.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., pp. 25-26.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>37</sup>Julius Evola, Tre aspetti del problema ebraico - nel mondo spirituale, nel mondo culturale, nel mondo economico sociale (Rome: Edizioni mediteranee, 1936), p. 11.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>45</sup>Evola, op.cit., 1941, p. 5.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Preziosi, op.cit., 1940, p. 90.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>52</sup>Michaelis, op.cit., p. 418.

<sup>53</sup>Gene Bernardini, "The Origins and Dvelopment of Racial Anti-Semitism in Fascist Italy," Journal of Modern History, September 1977, p.

434.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 434.

<sup>55</sup>Roberto Farinacci, La chiesa e gli ebrei (Cremona, 1938), p. 8.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>58</sup>Michaelis, op.cit., p. 112.

<sup>59</sup>Paolo Orano, Gli ebrei in Italia (Rome: Casa editrice Pinciana, 1938), p. 11.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 74.