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Racial Theories in Fascist Italy

Aaron Gillette

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Aaron Gillette



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Racial Theories in Fascist Italy

Racial Theories in Fascist Italy examines the role played by race and racism in the development of Italian identity during the fascist period. The book analyzes the struggle between Mussolini, the fascist hierarchy, scientists, and others in formulating a racial persona that would gain wide acceptance in Italy.

Aaron Gillette seeks to explain Mussolini's decision to add racism and racial theory to fascist ideology. He finds that the *Duce* settled on racism in a final effort to galvanize Italian nationalism and unity behind a fascist movement in decline. He also considers the insurmountable difficulties faced by this nationalism because of complex Italian regional differences. Were the Italians an "Aryan" people as were the Germans to the North? Or were they a Mediterranean people, whose proud classical heritage made them natural enemies of the northern "Goths"?

This is the first book to examine in detail the debates over racial theory in fascist Italy between the academic and scientific communities, and among the fascist leadership itself. Gillette analyzes the shifting official policies on race that resulted from the influence of Nazi Germany, prominent fascists and scientists, and Mussolini himself on racist theory. Rather than unifying the Italian people, the addition of a racial identity to fascism had the opposite effect.

Racial Theories in Fascist Italy will be of interest to historians, to political scientists concerned with the development of fascism, and to scholars of race and racism.

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Aaron Gillette
Germantown, Maryland
May 28, 2001

Introduction

L'histoire ne servirait à rien, si l'on n'y met les tristesses du présent. [History has its uses, if only to place there the sorrows of our times.]

Jules Michelet

With race theories you can prove or disprove anything you want.

Max Weber

So we are fragmenting and retribalizing ourselves. We are doing so at a much more rapid rate, certainly, than we are moving toward any more humane kind of humanhood in the arrangement of our social and political affairs. Where this all has to go, where it can go, are still questions without answers in this time of great change.

Harold Robert Isaacs

The oldest of all questions [are] where do I come from, and who am I?

Léon Poliakov

Das Du ist älter als das Ich. [The “You” is older than the “I.”]

Friedrich Nietzsche

Science, too, is founded upon belief; there is no such thing as a science free of suppositions.

Friedrich Nietzsche

We have made Italy; now we must make the Italians.

Massimo D’Azeglio

Several [participants] claimed they descend from the Celts, saying they have nothing in common with the peoples of the Mediterranean.

Report on Northern League rally, Veneto region, May 1997, by Sylvia Poggioli

In many respects, a profound chasm separates today’s intellectual world from that which existed before the end of World War II. In the immediate post-war world, a whole reality, as it existed for many educated Europeans, was swept away. This intellectual revolution was based on the realization that many of the key shibboleths of early twentieth-century Europe – unbridled nationalism, racism and anti-Semitism, and science free from ethical oversight – had led to the near destruction of European civilization, and the slaughter of the majority of European Jews.

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Thereafter, historians have sought to elucidate the role these shibboleths have played in European history, the better to prevent their resurrection. Indeed, as interest in the Holocaust grows, it becomes even more imperative that we seek to understand the interaction of science, racism, nationalism, and the relationship of intellectuals to political power in pre-World War II Europe.

This work will explore this culture of science and power in fascist Italy. In particular, I will explain how the notion of the Italians as a racial group evolved from its genesis in pre-fascist intellectual circles to the final collapse of the fascist regime in 1945. Some essential issues related to this topic include: Was the issue of Italian racial identity a topic of long-term debate in Italian society and culture, or merely a product of the fascist epoch? Why was a consensus on the racial composition and history of the Italian people so difficult to reach? What motivated intellectuals to embrace race as an explanation for history and human behavior? What caused particular individuals to support one racial theory over another? Were the racial animosities between different peoples in the early twentieth-century a product of ancient antagonisms, or a more recent phenomenon? To what extent did scientists contribute to this “racialization” of historical understanding? What was the relationship of “racial scientists” to the state: were they pawns of totalitarian regimes, or did they help to shape these regimes? To what extent did they help turn racial theory into bureaucratic practice in some twentieth-century states? To what extent did they use race theories and racism to promote their own personal objectives and careers? How did the growing divergence between the humanities and the sciences affect the development of racial theories? To what extent was Mussolini able to control the debate over racial identity in the Fascist Party, and in Italy as a whole?¹

The complex history of Europe and adjacent regions was one of the most important factors influencing the development of European racism. Educated Europeans knew in the early twentieth century that dozens of major migrations had profoundly altered the course of European history over the millennia. The people of every European country had been affected by some of these migrations. How, precisely, they had been affected was still unclear. Therefore, numerous other considerations led individuals to identify themselves with one or another of the major racial groups then believed to have existed.

In Italy, the choice often depended on factors as diverse as regional or national affiliation, professional or political allegiances, or attitudes towards other European states. Generally, Italians concerned with this issue identified one of three groups as representing the “true” Italians: the *Mediterranean race*: a shorter, darker people responsible for ancient classical civilization; the *Nordic Aryan race*: a taller, fairer people associated with Northern Europe, who came into prominence in European history with the “barbarian” invasions co-incident with the collapse of the Roman Empire; or an indigenous *Italian race*: a people native to Italy from remotest prehistory who survived relatively free from admixture with peoples outside the peninsula.

Diverse intellectual traditions would also contribute to the diversity of racial ideologies. Since the eighteenth century, many historians, linguists, folklorists, and philosophers had been increasingly attracted to racial explanations for the development of different human cultures. They attempted to clarify the murkiness of the distant past, or simply the complexities of human behavior, with facile explanations that sought to reduce the intricacies of history down to the interaction of racial stereotypes. Often, these explanations relied on mysticism, spiritualism, and intuition as the foundations behind racial “truths.”

For these “spiritual” racists, an irresolvable problem remained: racism by definition assumes the existence of a link between biological differences and behavior. Otherwise, there is only ethnocentrism, with the ever-present possibility that those of different races could assimilate into the “superior” culture, as was the case throughout Chinese history. Attempts by spiritual racists to link their concepts to racial biology were usually clumsy and transparently illogical.

Biological racism also grew out of the eighteenth century, through Enlightenment science’s fascination with studying newly discovered organisms (or human groups) and classifying them in an ordered hierarchy. The science of anthropology resulted from these endeavors. Classical nineteenth-century anthropology, though it sought to use the long-accepted methods of science in its investigations, nevertheless often found its raw data inadequate and its research tools hopelessly crude. Therefore, imagination and speculation often took the place of more sound conclusions. Non-rational considerations, such as national identity or career opportunism, also contributed to the formulation of biased conclusions.

All of those willing to utilize race as a key determinant of Italian history and culture faced the same basic questions: Are Italians one ethnic group, with the same linguistic, historical, and cultural roots, or are they a forced aggregate of two (or more) ethnic groups uneasily sharing a peninsula and living in a precarious and artificial union that belies chasmic cultural differences? Why was there a large degree of physical and cultural variation among Italians from different regions? To what extent did Italy’s climate affect the Italian people? Was such an effect hereditary? Was there a racial basis for “Latin” civilization? Did such a civilization even exist? If the Aryan peoples arrived in Italy at some point in history, what became of the indigenous Italians? Was there racial intermixing of the indigenous Italians and the Aryans? What survived of the indigenous culture? To what extent was Italian civilization due to immigrant Nordic Aryan peoples after the fall of the Roman Empire? To what extent could Rome’s rise and fall, the brilliance of the Renaissance, the degeneration of early modern Italy, or the hoped-for revival of modern Italy be traced back to racial influences? What was the “natural” relationship between Germany and Italy, their peoples and civilizations?

These issues were already widely debated in Italy during the liberal period, but became even more critical in the fascist period. Fascism sought to dominate

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Italian culture and thought, if not control it outright. Determining a fascist position on such basic questions as the racial nature of the Italians, although on the political back burner throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, became one of the regime's central projects as it sought to fascicize all aspects of Italian society by the late 1930s. Fascism hoped to settle this issue once and for all by propagating an official racial ideology.

Mussolini had a further incentive by 1938 to propagate a fascist racism: he hoped that a racial identity would finally unify the Italian people and transform them into the new *uomo fascista*, the "fascist man."² To understand this use of race by fascist ideology, we must consider the work of contemporary sociologists on the politics of identity. Indeed, many scholars, beginning with Max Weber a century ago,³ have concluded that the concept of race exists only in the context of communal identity. Communal identity, whether based on nationalism or racism (or both), tends to subordinate the individual to a unity of which he is merely an atom, a link in a great chain of being that stretches into the distant past and forward to an (often idealistic) future. Communal identity is often based on an originating myth, a founding movement, or the belief in a predetermined destiny. It is molded and directed over time by those who inspire or orient action – scholars, prophets, and charismatic leaders.

Furthermore, as Émile Durkheim and others have argued, the existence of social deviants is necessary to define and clarify the boundaries of normality and good for any society. A particular group in a society might be *a priori* defined as deviant, and invested with all of those characteristics considered deviant. They would thereby serve as a sort of "anti-model" which would unify the remainder of society.⁴ The community would define itself by reacting *against* what it was *not*. In addition, the society could be energized through efforts to expel these deviant and impure elements from the collectivity and thus purify it, ushering in a golden age.⁵

This sort of *differentialist* racism is all the more powerful when it is not based on social or historical arguments, but on appeals to such non-rational mystical principles as nature, biology, the cosmos, and Providence. Associating a people's self-identity with such primordial archetypes aids in both naturalizing and demonizing the "Other." The Other is redefined as a sort of virulent germ, and God has tasked the "chosen people" with eradicating this deadly plague. Hence we generally find in such societies the obsessive fear of miscegenation, appeals to racial solidarity, and a certain "medicalization" of the Other, rendering the Other an inhuman biological quantity.⁶ How can one feel sympathy with a virus?

This study will argue that Mussolini believed that race had the potential to transform a society along the lines first enunciated by Weber and Durkheim, and so introduced an official racial ideology into fascism in 1938 in an attempt to unify the Italian peoples and eventually mold them into uniform copies of the fascist archetype. Furthermore, he transformed Africans and (especially) Jews into symbols of the deadly "Other," the anti-fascist nemesis whose existence helped to define the new fascist man.

But this peculiar attempt to use racism to redefine the Italians had a number of fatal flaws. For one, racial explanations of history and culture often posed more questions than they answered: what exactly was a race? What was the relationship of “Caucasians” to “Aryans,” of “Aryans” to “Nordics,” and of “Nordics” to “Italians”? Should each of these groups be considered a race, or were some of these groups races and others “subraces”? How could those Italians with the physical attributes usually reserved for Nordics or Mediterraneans be so similar when they looked so different? How could all miscegenation be deleterious, if Italians were a racial mix? How could Italians be all spiritually united in fascism, if they all looked and behaved so differently? How could Italians today be considered a great people if there was still so much room for improvement? How could the Catholic worldview be reconciled with the racist worldview when Catholics believed that all were equal before God and anyone could be redeemed? How could fascist ethics be explained on the basis of race?

In addition, although Mussolini interested himself in the racial question from the early days of his political career, he failed to ever consistently embrace the Mediterranean or the Nordic archetype in his attempt to define the Italians. Over the course of his life, he shifted between one model and the other, allowing political expediency, personal whim, or pressures from influential elements of Italian society and the Fascist Party to incline him to embrace first one model, then the other. Official fascist ideology was largely dependent on Mussolini’s inclinations; therefore the policies, programs, and bureaucracies focusing on Italian racial identity experienced enormous strains, and had to constantly change in order to accommodate the wishes of the *Duce*. These strains were further exacerbated by the struggles of different factions of the Fascist Party to influence racial policies, sometimes in direct opposition to Mussolini’s directives.

In the end these competing and often contradictory forces largely canceled one another out, leaving Italian racial identity as ill defined at the end of the fascist period as it was in the beginning. The only consistent elements of racial policy in the late fascist period were anti-Semitism and anti-Africanism, both of which had an impact on the Italian people, and led to the most dreadful consequences. The introduction of anti-Semitism into fascist ideology proved to be a serious miscalculation. The regime’s anti-Semitism alienated many influential fascists and large segments of Italian society. This failure to achieve a consensus within fascism and within Italian society on some of the most basic issues of the day serves as an example of the internal divisions that plagued fascism and Italian society. As with many other issues, Mussolini sacrificed ideological coherency in pursuit of the momentary tactical advantage. This stemmed, in part, from Mussolini’s own mercurial temperament. As important, however, were the pressures on the *Duce* to accommodate other power brokers, both those within fascism and those with an autonomous existence (e.g. the Church and the scientific community). This indecisiveness weakened fascism, revealing the regime’s failure to effect any substantial changes in Italy’s society and culture, or resolve any of modern Italy’s fundamental conflicts.⁷

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The history of racial theories outside of anti-Semitism has received relatively little attention from scholars. This gap in our knowledge is perhaps due to the overwhelming repudiation of racially based social scientific theories after World War II, and perhaps also due to an understandable concentration on anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. This lack of interest in the history of racial theories is unfortunate, since the preoccupation with race was a near obsession for many influential Europeans and Americans, and racial theories had enormous impact on western civilization in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁸

Naturally, the first works concerning the history of European racism, written after World War II, concentrated on the Holocaust.⁹ Holocaust studies came into their own in the 1970s, and have gathered increasing momentum since then.¹⁰ Interest in the Holocaust encouraged scholars to examine its roots in anti-Semitism and in European ideas on race in general.¹¹ Written in the shadow of the Holocaust, many of these works tend to see anti-Semitism as the *sine qua non* around which (or in opposition to) other racial concepts evolved, such as the Aryan race.¹²

Examining the research done on European racism in general, a number of critical questions become apparent. One of the most fundamental questions is: when did “racism,” in any meaningful sense, first make its appearance in Europe? Why did the concept of race become so commonly accepted as the basis for understanding the differences between different peoples? Léon Poliakov traces European racism back to myths of origin of various peoples, and the antagonisms that their differences engendered. Others find the trans-oceanic voyages of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and European encounters with non-Europeans, as the critical moment when the concept of race took shape. Most scholars emphasize that modern racism was the product, at least in part, of an attempt by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century academics to apply rational and scientific methods to the classification of human populations.¹³

Once racism emerged, additional factors influenced these classifications toward a hierarchical ordering of races. Critical events often cited as influencing European ideas about race include the European encounter with less technologically advanced societies in the sixteenth through twentieth centuries, the Enlightenment’s infatuation with classical Greek physiognomy, the development of anthropology, the cultural isolation of the Jews, the relationship of Judaism with Christianity, and the potential for (and desirability of) conversion of the Jews to Christianity.¹⁴ A number of scholars, such as Hannah Arendt, Juan Comas, and Ivan Hannaford, see the Franco-Prussian War as a pivotal event in the evolution of race-thinking. They note that in the immediate aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War, Bismarck, Nietzsche, Gumplowicz, and Renan all saw this and other conflicts as a product of racial struggle.¹⁵

To date, most work concerning the historical relationship between race and science in Europe has focused on early twentieth-century Germany, once again with the Holocaust in mind.¹⁶ Science before the fall of Nazi Germany had a nearly unshakable reputation as a neutral, objective process for determining universal facts. This allowed scientists to legitimize their own prejudices, beliefs, and ideologies before an unsuspecting public.¹⁷ Many books in the late 1930s and 1940s,

such as Joseph Needham's *The Nazi Attack on International Science*, argued that the Nazis sought to destroy German science.¹⁸ Ruth Benedict and Gene Weltfish claimed in *Race: Science and Politics* (1958) that "legitimate" science had never accepted or promoted racism – rather, racism was the product of a distortion of science in the hands of politicians. German scientists themselves (as well as their Italian colleagues) heartily agreed with this assessment after the war. In their opinion, so long as one had concentrated on science rather than politics during the fascist period, one was free from blame.¹⁹ Works such as Max Weinreich's *Hitler's Professors: The Part of Scholarship in Germany's Crimes against the Jewish People* (1946), which did not hesitate to link scientists with Nazi policies, were a rarity at the time.

This degree of complacency changed in the 1960s for several reasons. Michel Foucault's influence led many scholars to argue that popular interest in progress, evolution, and heredity was used by the biomedical community to advance their particular professions, expand their career opportunities, gain control of public health administration and ultimately assert their power over society.²⁰ Furthermore, a new generation of scholars, often displaying a more critical attitude toward science than had their predecessors, challenged the prevailing belief in the objectivity of science.

By the 1980s an entirely different view of the effect science had on social beliefs and norms prevailed. Robert Proctor's book *Racial Hygiene* provides an excellent summary of the current orthodoxy with regard to racial science in pre-1945 Europe. Proctor argues that science is essentially a social construct. Scientific "facts" have no objective reality, but are entirely dependent on the society and conditions that create them.²¹

The lack of complicity in Nazi crimes that German scientists had once touted in the post-war period was now revealed as a deliberate obfuscation of the powerful role scientists held in the Nazi regime. As Proctor explained:

the case can be made that science (especially biomedical science) under the Nazis cannot simply be seen in terms of a fundamentally "passive" or "apolitical" scientific community responding to purely external political forces; on the contrary, there is strong evidence that scientists actively designed and administered central aspects of National Socialist racial policy.²²

Those few scholars now examining science in fascist Italy would agree with this general assessment. Carl Ipsen, in *Dictating Demography*, provides for the reader an interesting guide into the intricate relationship of scientists and the fascist regime on the issue of Italian demographic policies. Ipsen explains that Italian scientists, far from being aloof and disinterested observers of reality, were intimately involved in crafting demographic policies in conformity with Mussolini's plans for Italy. Many Italian scientists were also eager to influence the direction of fascist policies, for personal or ideological motives.²³ As Sandra Puccini has shown, Italian anthropology followed this same pattern.²⁴ As I will demonstrate, Italian racial theorists were no different from their counterparts in

demography and anthropology – indeed, most of the racial theorists belonged to these professions.

Emilio Gentile, in a recent work, has examined Italian racism's relationship with nationalism. He concludes that the idealistic or "spiritualist" conception of the Italian state, as opposed to the deterministic and racial definition of the National Socialist state, operated to force Italian racism in the direction of a spiritualist, universalistic doctrine devoid of biological determinism.²⁵ Unfortunately, Gentile's propensity to review only the role of political theorists in the discussion of race fatally misses the critical role that others, especially those from the scientific community, played in the formulation of official fascist racial theory, and the influential deviations from official pronouncements at any particular time. Rather than a seamless consensus on the nature of Italian racism and racial theories, unbridgeable chasms separated many of those involved in the formulation of racial theory, and prevented a solid front concerning Italian racism and racial theory from ever forming.

Finally, we must ask: to what extent did the Catholic Church influence the development of modern European racism? This question has particular relevance for Italy, an avowedly Catholic country, regardless of the political elites' anti-clericalism. George Mosse, in *Toward the Final Solution*, entitled one chapter "Infected Christianity." He concludes that "the record of most Protestant churches and of the Catholic Church [in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries] was not one clearly opposed to the idea of racism."²⁶ Renzo De Felice would agree in the Italian case. In *Storia degli ebrei sotto il fascismo* he explains that the Church in general and the Jesuits in particular not infrequently expressed a variety of non-racial anti-Semitic sentiments in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. "With the twentieth-century Catholic, or rather clerical, anti-Semitism became progressively linked to that of the Nationalists, and eventually, to the Sindicalist-Revolutionaries, and then the fascists."²⁷

While the Catholic Church may have encouraged a certain type of essentially non-racial anti-Semitism, it also provided a barrier in Italy against the extreme eugenic measures seen in Nazi Germany. Pronatalist social hygiene was acceptable to the Church; Nazi-style eugenics was not. Mussolini was aware that the public's opinion on these matters was strongly influenced by the Church's attitudes (and likely agreed himself). Therefore, he kept his eugenic policies in line with Church pronouncements. Mussolini would not be so compliant on other racial issues, especially after 1937, as we shall see later.

This work will elaborate the conclusions outlined above in eight chapters. Chapter 1 will concentrate on the literary and historically based debates of the nineteenth century. In Chapter 2 we will turn our attention to the increasing involvement of scientists in this debate, in the first decades of the twentieth century. Chapter 3 will review Mussolini's and other Italians' ideas about the nature of and future of the Italian race as fascism developed, but before they took a strong stand on the debate regarding the racial nature of the Italian people.

Chapter 4 will discuss the implementation of state-sponsored Nordic racial theory in Italy, culminating with the Manifesto of Racial Scientists in July 1938, and the creation of a racial propaganda office in the Ministry of Popular Culture. Chapter 5 will explain the Mediterraneanist backlash against Nordic racism, as it unfolded from 1939 to 1940. The struggle between these two ideologies from 1940 to 1942 will occupy our attention in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 will explain Julius Evola's rise to ascendancy in the field of Italian racial theory from 1941 to 1943. Chapter 8 will describe the ideological stalemate in racial theory in the final years of the regime, and in the Italian Social Republic. The Epilogue will conclude the work by briefly examining the lives of the most prominent racial theorists after the war, and the remnants of the debate on Italian racial theory as they have played out to the present time.

1 Racial ideology in Europe and Italy before the twentieth century

In many respects, the history of Italian racial identity begins with the cultural conflict engendered by the Germanic conquest of much of the western Roman Empire of late antiquity. To some extent, the Latin peoples, and particularly the Italians, retained a certain historical and cultural antagonism toward the Germanic peoples.

Certainly, as an Italian and German consciousness emerged over the course of the Middle Ages and the early modern period, writers reached back to this mythical period of heroic struggle to borrow images that might enable them to support their nascent concepts of national identity. To accomplish this, it often proved convenient to highlight the perceived defects of the historical adversary, the better to emphasize the virtues of the writer's own ancestors.

The noted historian of anti-Semitism, Léon Poliakov, believes that the Germans have suffered from delusions of persecution mania, centering on a foreign non-German threat, and leading them to "close their ranks." This delusion included plans to attack and destroy antagonists who might be at the same time both imagined and real. For example, Poliakov believes that the Germans felt that while

Rome still stood, the *Welsche* [Latin peoples] were ever ready to proclaim their cultural superiority and their antique origins, that they even won victories on the battlefield. Hence the explosions, characteristic in their ferocity, of German patriotic fury; hence the belief, which began at that time but which became traditional, in "national humiliations" inflicted on Germany.¹

This "paranoia," Poliakov concludes, was fostered by "authoritarian education" and "national traditions," and especially by the model images of the "ideal of the German man" of overweening pride, triumphant, barbaric, and conquering, placed before the German people by humanists such as Luther.²

Though we might discount any presumptions of a national paranoia, it is indisputable that we can trace a certain historical German antipathy toward the Myth of Rome as a German identity developed. Even as early as 962, Bishop Liutprand of Cremona wrote:

We Lombards, Saxons, Franks, Lotharingians, Bavarians, Swabians, and Burgundians have such utter contempt for the Romans that when we try to express our indignation we can find no term with which to insult our enemies more damaging than that of Romans. This single word means for us all that is ignoble, cowardly, sordid, obscene.³

Modern German–Roman antagonisms were strongly influenced by the Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther, on his trip to Rome in 1510, was disgusted by the sloth and corruption that he encountered there. Later, Luther complained that, after the Germans had conquered the Romans, the crafty Romans had built up the Catholic Church and re-enslaved the Germans, fooling and duping them.⁴ Religious differences would henceforth contribute to the cultural division between the Germanic and Romance worlds.

In the early sixteenth century, no doubt influenced by the Reformation and the subsequent religious wars that devastated Germany, the German knight and Protestant reformer Ulrich von Hutten founded the national cult of Hermann-Arminius. He claimed that the Germans were a virile people, whereas the Romans were feminine, “a woman-race, a crowd of weaklings, without heart, without courage, without virtue. None of them has fought in battle, nor are any of them skilled in war. These are the people who rule us! This mockery breaks my heart.”⁵

Between 1746 and 1776, Pastor Schuetze, an editor of Luther’s correspondence, published a series of writings to defend the civilization of the ancient Germans. We can gain some idea of his arguments through the title of his pamphlets: “Caesar, Roman Emperor, became emperor through the help of the Germans whom he wrongfully accused of atheism and treachery”; “*Romans*, a name hated by the Germans”; “*Barbarians*, a name erroneously given to the ancient Germans.”⁶ In 1780, the Prussian statesman Friedrich-Ewald von Hertzberg read a paper to the Berlin Academy of Sciences on the “Causes of the Superiority of the Germans over the Romans.”⁷

German Romanticism, which arose in the late eighteenth century, gave a more comprehensive intellectual foundation to this Germanic re-evaluation of the classical heritage. Romanticism rejected neo-classicism, the assumption that the most important aspects of European culture were to be traced to the Roman heritage, and rebelled against the rationalistic orientation of the Enlightenment. Therefore it was associated in some writers with a tendency to look for inspiration to Nordic rather than to Latin culture and to recall the barbarian liberties praised by Tacitus.⁸ When discussing their history, German scholars not surprisingly pointed to the martial ardor, youth and vigor of their ancestors, the conquerors of Rome.⁹

Johann Gottfried von Herder was one of Romanticism’s principal advocates in the late eighteenth century. Herder rejected the common Enlightenment assumption that all people (or at least all Europeans) were essentially the same, and differed only in so far as historical circumstances varied. Rather, Herder was passionately convinced that different peoples had dissimilar innate psychological

qualities, and these qualities determined their culture and their social and political institutions. Therefore, everything from language to religion, traditions, folk songs, rituals, and historical development were unique manifestations of the “spirit” (*Geist*) of a particular *Volk*. Individuals were bound to their people through their spirit.

While Herder still maintained that all European peoples were equal, they each had unique gifts. For example, the Germans were excellent warriors and steadfast defenders of culture, a characteristic engendered in them through long resistance to Roman conquest.

Johann Fichte sharpened the Germanic claims to primacy. He believed that all Europeans except the Slavs were descendants of the ancient Germans. The Germans were an original race (*Urvolk*), whereas the “‘neo-Latin peoples’ were deficient, de-Germanized and sterilized through the loss of the ‘original language’ (*Ursprache*).”¹⁰ Italians contemptuously used the term *Germanismo* to describe this claim by some German nationalists that their culture was the unique and most important in the world.¹¹

German commentators regarded a people’s spirit as a product of their racial blood. Fichte’s contemporary, Georg Hegel, wrote that

The pure inwardness of the German nation was the proper soil for the emancipation of the Spirit; the Romantic nations [i.e. the Latin nations], on the contrary, have maintained in the very depth of their soul – in their spiritual consciousness – the principle of *Disharmony*; they are the product of the fusion of Roman and German blood, and still retain the heterogeneity thence resulting.¹²

Only by maintaining the purity of Germanic blood could Germany retain its homogeneous cultural identity.

Hegel was, however, interpreting the mythical Roman–Germanic blood fusion in a sense opposite to that prevalent in the nineteenth century. Most German writers alleged that the infusion of Germanic blood in the Romance peoples *revived* them from their decadent lethargy.¹³ Joseph Goerres’s (1776–1848) work *Deutschland und die Nationen* was quite typical in this respect. He wrote that the admixture of Germanic blood revived a moribund Latinity:

Constantly renewed waves of Germanic blood spread through the arteries of the Italian people and as a result of this transfusion all that was exhausted, worn out, corrupt and lifeless was swept away and replaced by young and vital lymph; the old decrepit body was thus re-animated for centuries, regenerated and filled with life.¹⁴

Nonetheless, other scholars followed Herder’s lead in searching for the *Volksgeist* of different peoples. The search for ancient roots soon turned up a nearly unknown ancient language, Sanskrit, spoken in Northern India. Scholars were amazed to find that Sanskrit showed unmistakable though distant affiliation with the ancient classical languages.

Friedrich von Schlegel, in 1808, announced that German, Greek, and Latin were derived from Sanskrit. Schlegel concluded that most Europeans and northern Indians must have a common ancestor, which he called the Aryans. Linguistic and historical evidence suggested that the Aryans most likely originated from India or Central Asia, and had migrated as a body to Europe around 1000 BC. These Aryans were thought to embody all the moral and intellectual virtues that had eventually made the Europeans masters of the globe.

Thus began the history of a mythical concept that would cause so much controversy and pathos over the next 150 years. Still, the Aryans remained a great mystery. Were the Aryans one racial group, or simply a linguistic family of varying races? If they were one particular racial group, were they “pure” or “contaminated” by lesser breeds? From precisely where did they originate? What current European people (it being assumed that the Indians were greatly corrupted) had deviated the least from the original Aryan stock? What was the culture of the Aryans, and what of this culture had survived into modern times?

Since all significant contributions to western civilization were supposed by some to have been Aryan creations, the classical Greeks and Romans were included among the Aryan peoples. But many German scholars, such as Theodor Mommsen, believed that the modern Italians were a degenerate Aryan people, who had greatly decayed from the days of the Roman Republic.¹⁵ Indeed, the modern Germans were spiritually closer to the “noble Romans” than were the Italians, Mommsen claimed.¹⁶

Perhaps because German scholars predominated in the study of Aryans, the notion quickly gained ground that those of “Nordic” ancestry were the truest heirs of the Aryan forefathers. Of course, the concept Nordic, when defined as a racial group, was almost as vague as the concept Aryan. It meant different things to different people: Heinrich Himmler believed that the only “true” Aryans were the Germans and the Dutch; Chamberlain included in those possessing the “Teutonic race-soul” the Celts and the Slavs.¹⁷ On what criteria would a people’s Nordic affiliation be judged? Hair and eye color? Cephalic index? History? Archeological evidence? All of the criteria would be employed in the European-wide competition to claim Nordic Aryan ancestry.

The French writer Arthur de Gobineau attempted to solve the riddle of who, precisely, was Aryan. Influenced by his own indirect links to the French aristocracy, Gobineau advanced the claim that the French aristocracy was the only group in France that had preserved the essential elements of Aryan identity. Italy, Gobineau claimed, had been bastardized since late antiquity by foreign blood. Miscegenation in Italy, he wrote, produced mediocrities, “men with the herd mind,” “nations dulled by a fatal somnolence,” “people like buffaloes chewing the cud in the stagnant wallows of the Pontine marshes.”¹⁸

One can easily imagine that many Italian intellectuals found such analysis offensive. We may gain some idea of the reaction of Italians to Gobineau’s work from his pamphlet, “Il Trentino veduto da un socialista,” published in 1911. Mussolini specifically objected to Gobineau’s claim that (as Mussolini put it)

the Aryan is the race that carries in its womb the superior forms of civilization. Two races are today on the soil of Europe: the superior Indo-Aryan race, living in the North, and the Latin or “chaotic” race, mixed with the Semite, swarming in the South. This last is a continuous threat, a permanent danger for the former. Germanism must therefore purify Europe, reducing to slavery and gradually eliminating the inferior race, the chaotic or Mediterranean race incapable of an elevated tenor of life. Naturally all that is noble, grand, and heroic is the work of the Aryan race; all that is vile is certainly a product of the “chaotic” race.

Furthermore, Gobineau equated the psychology of the Mediterraneans to that of the indisputably (to Gobineau and probably also to Mussolini) inferior black races.

Much like his predecessors, Gobineau attempted to understand the role of the Aryans in history through linguistics and what we would today call the “social sciences” (e.g. history and political science). However, a profound revolution in racial thought would occur after the publication of Charles Darwin’s *Origin of Species*. Darwinianism gave a tremendous boost to the role of biology and anthropology in understanding European racial history.

Scientists had been classifying humans according to their physical and psychological characteristics at least since the time of Carl Linnaeus’s *Systema Naturae* of 1735. A century later, Anders Retzius originated the “cephalic index” as a mathematically precise means of determining skull shape, a measurement assumed to have great importance in determining race. Retzius used the term “brachycephalic” to classify a skull that was broader than the mean, and “dolicocephalic” for skulls narrower than the mean. Later, Paul Broca (the founder of the Société d’Anthropologie de Paris) and others devised different means to classify skin color, hair type, and so on.

The Comte Georges Vacher de Lapouge, a lawyer who had also studied biology, would synthesize Darwinianism with the new measuring techniques of anthropology to create a new branch of racial ideology, biological racism.¹⁹ Lapouge claimed that the Aryans were the most adaptable of all races, and thus best fitted for survival. As Mussolini later explained, Lapouge believed “the individual belonging to the Aryan race ... [was] tall, with blonde hair, clear eyes, light complexion, and an elongated form of head.” Their adversaries, the Alpine race, were an inferior brachycephalic people:

The auctonous alpiners lived, according to Lapouge, in the mountains and the forests in an almost ape-like state during the Stone Age. The Aryans were served by these beasts of burden. Then in the course of centuries the mix between the two races confused their different characters, so much that today the inferior race, the alpine brachycephalics or chaotic race, seriously menaces the purity of the blonde race.²⁰

The struggle between these races, Lapouge thought, would end only through the application of the most drastic measures. Mussolini summarized the argument:

Lapouge, like Gobineau, declares that the Aryan race today represented in greater part by Germanism is the “elect”, but not circumscribed solely by the limits of the current German Empire. (According to the pangermanists, also twelve million French belong to the elect race.) The brachycephalic race, dispersed in the territory of the ancient Roman Empire, is inferior. The first is the creator, the second the destroyer of civilization. This latter must disappear or be reduced to the most humiliating and necessary servitude, so as to not obstruct the Aryan race on its ascending path. The ruling classes must apply artificial selection in order to eliminate the chaotic race and gather within itself all that includes the Germanic.

Though Lapouge’s writings retained a close attachment to Gobineau, Lapouge had clearly moved the development of racial ideology in a new direction. He elucidated for many anthropologists and other scientists a whole new realm of endeavor: the application of the “scientific” study of race to problems of history, culture, social and political organization, and other concerns of European society at the time.

Though scientists would increasingly carve out a niche in the realm of racial ideology and its application, the older tradition of basing racial ideology on cultural, historical, and linguistic evidence did not vanish. Quite the contrary: this trend continued to have an autonomous development, and a powerful impact on European racism. This tradition, exemplified by Gobineau and further refined by Houston Stewart Chamberlain and others, appealed to many racists whose educational background stemmed from the humanities rather than the physical sciences.

In both Germany and Italy, “spiritualist” racial theories (as they will be called here) often tended to attract fringe-group extremists as compared to the generally more respectable and “mainstream” biological racism. As Paul Weindling has described them, these spiritual racists were typically

pedantic, petty-minded and querulous, and were often isolated figures; they were neither scientists directing research institutes nor professional men. They turned their isolation into advantage by claiming that their status as *Privatgelehrte* allowed them to stand above party politics and academic disciplines.²¹

Houston Stewart Chamberlain, the epitome of a spiritual racist, is also often regarded as the most influential Nordic racist in Europe. Chamberlain claimed that physical traits meant nothing if “there lacked in the individual the ‘Germanic’ quality of the soul.” The concept of the racial soul, for Chamberlain, was “self-evident,” and much more consistent with the philosophical and idealistic tradition of German *Wissenschaft* than was biological racism.²² Nevertheless, Chamberlain retained the belief that there existed an observable biological difference between the Aryans and non-Aryans.

More than his predecessors, Chamberlain pointed specifically at modern Italy as a symbol of the degenerated state of Mediterranean Europe. He proffered

evidence for this view in his “masterpiece,” *Die Grundlagen des XIX Jahrhunderts (History of the Nineteenth Century)*:

It is enough to simply go through the museum of Berlin, in the gallery of busts of the Renaissance, to convince oneself that the type of the great Italians of that time has totally disappeared....

He who travels [said Chamberlain] from London to Rome, goes from the clouds to the sun, but at the same time from a refined civilization and a high culture towards barbarism, filth, brutality, ignorance, lies, and misery. It is not a spectacle of decadence that we contemplate in the south: it is a simple arrest of development; that population has remained in the Roman imperial civilization, while the world has marched forward. Today, it is true, they have begun to awkwardly imitate the north, but instead of assimilating the superior culture, they finish by losing the picturesque vestiges of their past originality. The “Mediterranean” is thus as low in the scale of culture as Seville and Athens are today cities “less European” than are New York and Melbourne. Between the Germans and the “chaotics” there is an abyss over which it is not possible to build a bridge.

In “Il Trentino,” Mussolini emphasized that Chamberlain did not even allow Italians the honor of fathering the Renaissance masters. Rather, Chamberlain attributed such Italian achievements as the Renaissance to Germanic families living in Italy: “The Italian or Latin Renaissance in general is the work of German elements. Raffael was blonde, Michelangelo did not want to learn the classical languages (the languages of chaos), Giotto was German.”²³ Thus, we should not be surprised to learn that Chamberlain claimed that: “Naturally all the epochs that signal a ‘turning point’ of history are due to the Germanic element,” and “today great Europe is Germanic. Here there is equilibrium. In Mediterranean Europe there is disequilibrium and dissolution. The united future Europe will have the Germanic stamp.”²⁴

Following Chamberlain, Ludwig Woltmann in 1905 argued in *Die Deutschen und die Italienische Renaissance* that all other racial groups in Italy outside of the Nordics were inferior, and had contributed nothing to Italian civilization. Woltmann asserted that virtually all the notable achievements of Italy were produced by German descendants.²⁵

Racial explanations for history also were popular in nineteenth-century Italy. Not surprisingly, however, most Italian scholars embraced a historical reality far removed from those created by their German counterparts. Nineteenth-century Italians lived in a culture whose *Volksgeist* was traced back to ancient Rome. When the Italian cultural elite considered their ancestral past, they focused on the revered statesmen and cultural heroes of the classical period rather than Theodoric and his warriors.²⁶ Visions of a resurrection of the power of ancient Rome haunted the dreams of rulers from Frederick II to Mussolini.²⁷

The desire to revive ancient Roman greatness inspired the Italian nationalists of the Risorgimento. Giuseppe Mazzini, one of the principal founders of Italian nationalism, wrote that “Rome was the dream of my youthful years, the creative force of my spiritual ideals, the religion of my soul.”²⁸ It was the “temple of humanity” which he wished to see resurrected as a Third Rome, to be the center of a universal religion.²⁹ It was common among Italians at that time to believe that Roman spiritual values had been preserved by the Catholic Church and had blossomed again in the Renaissance. From there, it was but a short step to the rebirth of the Italian national consciousness that led to the Risorgimento and the modern Italian state. Through this route, modern Italians were the direct spiritual heirs of their ancient Roman forefathers.³⁰

Italian nationalists were proud of the age and sophistication of their civilization, as compared to the relative newcomers of the North.³¹ The growing chorus of Nordic racists of the nineteenth century provoked scorn from many Italians. Carlo Cattaneo, about 1840, referred ironically to “the excellence and nobility of the North” and to “the magical peregrinations of the Aryans.”³² Carlo Pisacane, in *Saggio storici-politici militari sull'Italia*, published in 1858, expressed his conviction that the Italian people and their culture were descended from Rome. This biological-cultural heritage had survived the barbarian invasions intact. The Ostrogoths and the Huns did not leave “any trace of themselves other than of ruins,” while the Lombards were completely italicized.

The triumph of the communes was the triumph of the Italian element over the foreign: and thus in the vast Roman world only the Italians triumphed over the barbarians and conserved the ancient racial type.³³

Italian writers used the term “Romanità” to describe their assertion that ancient Rome made invaluable contributions to modern Italian and western civilization. Vincenzo Gioberti was probably the most notable Romanità-inspired Italian nationalist. His work *Del Primato Morale e Civile degli Italiani* brilliantly summarized the Romanità argument for his compatriots and later earned Gioberti a place among the pantheon of fascist heroes. Gioberti believed that Italy, and not “any other province of Europe,” created the principles of modern civilization.³⁴ In terms of European culture, Italy occupied the primacy of place among European nations for several reasons. It possessed the oldest civilization of Europe, and was the center of three civilizing peoples: the Etruscans, the Greeks, and the Romans. In the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church preserved this culture for Italy, while the rest of Europe sank into barbarism, due to the incursions of the Germanic invaders:

It is a fact that Europe was everywhere crude and barbaric, while the Italian peninsula was already experiencing a reflowering and re-enlightenment of the sciences, letters, the fine arts, industry, traffic, navigation, cities, and citizenship.³⁵

Thereafter, Italy experienced the renewal of classical civilization through the Renaissance, giving the world such geniuses as Dante, Michelangelo, and Galileo.³⁶

It is very significant that Gioberti did not rest with his assertion of Italian cultural superiority, but included racial superiority as well. Like many other intellectuals of his era, Gioberti had some nebulous notion that culture was linked to biological race. In Gioberti's scheme, the white race was intellectually superior to all others, and among the whites the Pelasgics took the lead. Italians were the finest descendants of the ancient Pelasgic people, and thus were the flower of the white race.³⁷ Gioberti was unimpressed by German claims to racial and cultural supremacy. He maintained that the Italians and Greeks were more beautiful than the Germans. They had created an advanced civilization before the "boreal peoples" of the North. Gioberti was willing to grant that the Italians had declined in civilization since ancient times, and had been conquered by the Germans at the end of antiquity. However, these unfortunate situations were "simply an effect of social conditions which change continually, and don't spring from their nature." Indeed, Gioberti was optimistic about Italy's future:

a people that has been weakened and became prey of barbaric invaders, after the barbarism of many centuries, can reacquire new spirits, like an uninvigorated field that, left in repose for several years, returns in sap and redoubles the harvest.³⁸

This emphasis on the cyclic nature of history, and the assertion that the weakness of contemporary Italy was due to potentially correctable social or psychological disfunctions, would become a common Italian explanation for their nation's weakness relative to the Great Powers of the North.

2 Racial identity in Italy, 1900–1915

The racial question is an antipathetic problem; since even the most authoritative writers lose their temper when it comes to [questions concerning] the excellence of their race.

Angelo Mosso, *Escursioni nel Mediterraneo e gli scavi di Creta*

By 1900, two developments were profoundly affecting the racial debate in Italy: the rise of biological racism, and the laggard pace of Italy's economic development. Until the turn of the twentieth century, the debate over racial superiority in Europe was generally dominated by scholars and historians, using techniques culled from the humanities and the social sciences. Nevertheless, newer biological understandings of race were increasingly gaining renown, especially in the more technically advanced Northwestern European nations. Anthropology, archeology, and eugenics had developed into recognized scientific disciplines, and their practitioners utilized scientific methods to devise an increasingly precise idea of German and of Italian ethnography. Science was now mobilized to lend "objective" weight to the deeply held convictions about race prevalent throughout Europe.

In general, western society has had a tendency to take a congratulatory approach to science: to dwell on its successes, and ignore its failures. Science, in the popular mind, may be used for good or ill, but its power seemingly derives from its unfailing ability to correctly interpret nature. The history of racial biology is a spectacular example of the fallacy of this assumption.

There are a number of reasons for this. For one, personal prejudices and other beliefs often have a profound effect on the practice of science. These beliefs can critically affect the sort of hypotheses scientists formulate, the collection and analysis of data, and the conclusions thereby established, often without the scientist even being aware of these personal influences. Very often, such individuals will maintain their objectivity with fierce conviction.¹ As we will see, racial biology was a particularly clear example of personal prejudice influencing scientific endeavors.

Another factor that undoubtedly aided the acceptance of racial explanations for human behavior lay in the nature of biology itself in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century western society. Science was strongly influenced during this

time by the doctrine of positivism, which believed that all human activities could be explained in purely objective, formulaic, and determinist terms. The advent of Darwinian evolutionary theory in the mid-nineteenth century and its subsequent application to human societies in the form of Social Darwinism suggested that biological explanations lay at the root of human behavior.²

Nevertheless, human biology and psychology were not highly developed fields during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The causes of human behavior, and the reasons for the differences in human societies or between members of the same society, were only beginning to be formally considered in any organized and coherent fashion at that time. Given that anthropology, sociology, and psychology were only in their initial stages of development, facile explanations that nevertheless had a biological underpinning appealed to many. In these circumstances, it is perhaps not surprising that race was fastened on by such individuals as a key element in understanding human behavior. Their main evidence for these assumptions ultimately rested on an apparent correlation between a people's "race," their cultural traits and their presumed level of sophistication. Of course, we now know that these assumptions were based on the unquestioning acceptance of Eurocentric value systems, meaningless categories such as race, and the detrimental effects of European imperialism. Yet such criticism of racially based theories of human behavior were only beginning to be heard at the turn of the last century, as espoused by Franz Boas in the United States and others.

Finally, biologists and other academics found that giving their personal convictions a pseudo-scientific gloss was immensely empowering. Posing as "objective academic experts," for example, many German professors in the late nineteenth century found that presenting their views in the guise of evolutionary theory and racial ideology gave them an "expertise" on such issues as the Catholic Church, German armament, colonial policy, feminism, the Polish problem, and national demographic trends.³

The variations among nations in the power and prestige of science played a critical role in the development of their racial ideologies. To some extent, the degree to which science influenced the racial debate depended on a particular country's stage of economic development and cultural and social modernization. Although Germany and Italy both became nation-states about 1870, Germany rapidly outstripped Italy in economic and scientific development. Science came to occupy pride of place in the German pantheon of scholarship.⁴ In Germany, academics and other scientists were given the status of objective, knowledgeable experts in many areas outside their immediate disciplines. Issues such as the Catholic Church, education, socialism, military policies, foreign affairs, colonialism, and feminism were influenced through widely read books and articles written by noted scientists.

The situation in Italy was very different. For one thing, mass education in Italy was far less extensive than in Germany, especially in the sciences. Illiteracy in Southern Italy remained above 50 percent at the turn of the century. By then in Germany, literacy was nearly universal.⁵

Second, higher education in Italy continued its traditional focus on the classics and the humanities, rather than on technical and scientific subjects. Italy's

“cultural snobbery” towards its northern neighbors was originally justified through Renaissance humanism. But it increasingly seemed archaic as Northern Europe devoted greater resources to scientific research while Italy only slowly resumed the interest in science it had abandoned after Galileo. In the early twentieth century, Italy’s anti-scientific legacy was far from dead. Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile, two leading Italian philosophers, still rejected scientific inquiry in favor of humanism, neo-idealism, and Hegelianism. They endeavored to reassert spiritual values against Marxist materialism and “arid positivism.”⁶

Essentially, these differences meant that biological racism would be more influential in early twentieth-century Germany than in Italy. Although biological racism would make itself felt in Italy, racial arguments there tended to be dominated by spiritual racism. In Germany, the biologically oriented “racial hygienists” would come to the fore, exercising enormous influence during the Nazi period.

This does not indicate that German biological racism contained any greater degree of objective “truth” than did Italian spiritual racism. In reality, the conclusions of many scientists concerned with race were no more objective, or for that matter accurate, than were those of other racial ideologues. There are a number of reasons for this. Many scientists sought answers through the new science of anthropology. Anthropology (at least until very recently with the use of DNA testing) has always been a very ambiguous science, attempting to deduce enormous amounts of information from very scattered and fragmentary evidence. It certainly allowed scholars of the nineteenth and early twentieth century free rein for their imagination and creativity. In addition, as we shall see, many scholars chose to allow ideological, personal, or political considerations to dictate their interpretation of the significance of a skull fragment or an ancient burial site.

Still, biological racism was not entirely separate from the broader academic debates of the early twentieth century, and in fact was an integral part of these debates. One of the key controversies concerned the mechanism of evolution and its relation to race.

In the early twentieth century, there seemed to be three possible means available to Italian racists to explain racial change. Many believed that environmental pressures provoked racial evolution. This hypothesis, sometimes known as “paravariation,” is more commonly known as Lamarckianism, after the early nineteenth-century French zoologist Jean Baptiste Lamarck. Lamarck sought to explain the evolution of species by positing an ability for organisms to inherit the acquired characteristics of their ancestors. Over time, Lamarckianism came to be associated with those who believed that the environment played a predominant role in the formation of human character. Angelo Mosso, for one, wrote in 1897 that: “Habits, when they persist for many generations, tend to become hereditary.”⁷

Lamarckian inheritance was severely challenged after 1900, when Gregor Mendel’s work on genetics was rediscovered. Mendelian genetics asserts that the hereditary material, or genes, retained their characteristics unmixed (the principle of “independent assortment”), though their effects might be masked, as when a recessive gene is paired with its dominant counterpart. Mendelian genetics proved

to be enormously popular with the German racial hygienists and later the Nazi Party, since it seemed to substantiate the permanence of racial characteristics.

Although Mendelian genetics made considerable headway in Italy during the fascist period, Lamarckian theories of inheritance proved stubbornly popular.⁸ Lamarckian adaptation and psychic factors such as the national “will” allowed for the sort of racial evolution that fascist thinkers deemed necessary to make the Italian people once again the stern, militaristic race represented in Roman legend. Indeed, the idea that environmental (and even psychological) changes could affect the evolution of a race would become a core premise of Mussolini’s own racism, and his nearly obsessive determination to elevate the Italian race.

One of the most striking differences between Italian fascist and German Nazi racism (and there were many) was the conviction of the former that the environment had an enormous impact on race. Most Nazi racists adamantly denied the influence of environment on racial development.⁹ To Italian fascists, both climate and geography influenced behavior, and somehow seemed to effect a permanent change in a race’s genetic makeup. For example, it was claimed that Italians were inevitably extroverted and warm due to their climate, while Germans were cold, hard, and introverted, reflecting the harshness of northern lands. As Mario Canella wrote, the Nordics were “children of the frigid and gray Nordic winters” while the Italians were “children of the dazzling sun and the blue Mediterranean sea.”¹⁰

Finally, one could account for racial alteration through the miscegenation of two pre-existing races. This idea, sometimes called “mistovariation,” was first advanced by Ludwig Gumpowicz and others in the late nineteenth century.¹¹ The belief that races are created from the fusion of the peoples making up a nation was also present in the work of Oswald Spengler, the German schoolteacher turned sociologist who excited worldwide interest with his magnum opus, *The Decline of the West*.¹² In general, due to the prevalent prestige of the idea of racial purity, and the obsession with racial hierarchies, mistovariation did not often play a leading role in Italian racial theories.

Besides evolutionary theory, many prominent intellectuals at the turn of the century were influenced in their ideas about race by Italy’s status as a European power.¹³ Like Germany, Italy was a late arrival in the European family. Therefore, many members of the Italian political elite were driven by nationalist motives to make a nearly desperate claim to great-power status. Unfortunately, Italy lagged behind the western Great Powers – Britain, Germany, and France – on virtually every economic and military indicator. Germany was unquestionably wealthier and in many respects more “modern” than was Italy.

The defeat of Italian attempts to conquer Ethiopia at the Battle of Adowa in 1896 seemed to seal Italy’s fate as a second-class power. Some Northern Europeans attributed this failure of Italy’s ambitions to racial degeneracy. So pervasive were racial explanations for national cultural traits in late nineteenth-century Europe that many Italian intellectuals themselves thought it imperative to understand Italy’s racial composition in order to understand the reasons for its apparent inability to

rival its northern neighbors. As Alan Cassels has written, “nearly all of Italy’s troubles have stemmed from the inferiority complex of its people.”¹⁴

Two solutions to this crisis presented themselves to Italian intellectuals seeking a racial foundation for Italian culture. One could identify with the dominant ethnic identity of Northern Europe, i.e. assume Italians were “Aryans.” The heroic and intellectual virtues of the Aryans, as had been elaborated on by (mainly) German and French scholars for much of the nineteenth century, would then explain Italy’s past greatness or future potential. In this interpretation, Southerners were usually assumed to suffer from racial “pollution” of some type and therefore not to be capable of the same level of civilization as Northerners.

We should not be surprised that an identification with the “superior” Aryans of the North would tempt some Italians by the turn of the century. In 1904 the Frenchman Jean Finot claimed that “Today, out of 1,000 educated Europeans, 999 are convinced of the authenticity of their Aryan origins. . . . This has become almost an axiom.”¹⁵ As early as 1878, Gaetano Trezza, a literary historian, introduced into the Italian context the basic elements of Nordic Aryan racial supremacy: the superiority of the Nordics, the inferiority of the Mediterraneans, and the opposition of Aryan to Semitic civilization.¹⁶

Thenceforth, a small number of Italian scholars would adhere to Nordic Aryanism.¹⁷ Alfredo Niceforo, a prominent Italian sociologist at the turn of the century, believed that the Aryan race predominated in Northern Italy, while Mediterraneans prevailed in the South.¹⁸ Like all Aryanists, Niceforo believed that the historical brilliance and the current economic success of Northern Italy relative to the South was due to innate psychological characteristics of the dominant race. In the modern period, in a world of industry, liberty, and democracy, only the Aryans could flourish. The Aryan virtues of self-direction and discipline adapted them well to the new age.¹⁹ While civilization in the North was “more fresh and more modern,” that of the South

presents one with a moral and social structure that reminds one of primitive times, and perhaps even almost barbarous times, a social structure belonging to inferior civilization by now surpassed through the fatal cycle of modern social evolution.

As Niceforo explained

The psychology of the man of the north – in Italy – is thus better adapted than is the character of the south to modern social progress and to the creation of modern civilization . . . modern civilization leaves the caresses of the sun and of fire, attracted, with growing strength, to the kisses of the cold and the snow.²⁰

Niceforo’s work had a direct influence on later Nordicist authors. Hans Günther, one of the most popular Nazi racial writers, made use of Niceforo’s writings on crime and Mediterranean psychology.²¹ But the Nazis would not find favor with Niceforo’s lavish praise of modernism. Rather, they embraced a reactionary

modernism which was directed toward the use of modern technology to support a conservative social ideology and military aggression.²²

The Aryan thesis was by no means universally popular with Italian intellectuals. Steeped in the classical humanistic tradition, most scholars relished the ancient glories that to many seemed to militate against any presumption of Northern European Aryan superiority. Furthermore, by the turn of the century, some Italian observers saw hope in Italy's increasingly rapid industrialization. From 1896 to 1913, the value of Italy's manufacturing industrial production doubled. There was also a shift from textile- and food-processing sectors toward more advanced engineering, metal, and chemical production.²³ The problem with Italy's industrial development was that it was concentrated in the northern provinces, particularly the Northwest. The southern half of Italy failed to develop along the same lines, thus accentuating the economic differences between North and South. The southern countryside was depopulated by emigration and exploited by an irrational system of landholding, and so had been left out of the process of modernization.²⁴

As a consequence of this pattern of uneven economic development, many Italian anthropologists tended to exhibit pride in Italy's entrance into the ranks of the European industrialized countries, while growing ever more concerned that there might be deep-rooted defects in southern society that were holding back the country as a whole. This paradox generally was explained by cyclical theories of historical development. Readers were reminded of the wonders of ancient civilization throughout Italy, including the South. Yet, as the world progressed through different types of civilization, the psychological characteristics that had brought success to the Southerners in the ancient epoch had not proved as useful in the modern.

Those scholars with a more nationalistic bent, while not ignoring the "Southern Question," nevertheless focused their attention on trumpeting the glories of Italy relative to the Nordic countries. Years of being subjected to pro-Nordic propaganda from Northern European writers, combined with a deep reverence for classical and Renaissance Italy, convinced them that racial theories could be wielded as a potent weapon in Italy's favor. These circumstances explain the excitement generated over the "discovery" of the Mediterranean race in the late nineteenth century.

The first anthropological evidence for a Mediterranean race was presented by Jean-Louis Armand de Quatrefages and E.T. Hamy in 1878. They described them as a brown-haired, dolicocephalic, short race of people. Over the course of the next several decades, many anthropologists came to believe that the entire Mediterranean basin had been populated by the Mediterranean race – hence its name. Turn-of-the-twentieth-century studies of the ancient Aegean, Egyptian, and other Near Eastern peoples seemed increasingly to call into doubt any possible "Nordic" ancestry for these peoples, but rather re-baptized them as Mediterraneans.²⁵

The world-renowned anthropologist Giuseppe Sergi became the leading advocate of a Mediterranean racial identity for Italy. Sergi was born in Messina on

March 20, 1841. He was a true polymath, first studying law, then turning to linguistics and philosophy, moving on to physics and anatomy, psychology, and finally to racial anthropology. In 1880 he was appointed as the first chair of anthropology at the University of Bologna, and transferred to a similar position at the University of Rome in 1884. In 1893 he founded the Roman Society of Anthropology.

Much of Sergi's scholarly career would be dedicated to racial studies, and particularly to expounding his theories on the racial history of Italy. His research into race in Italy was undoubtedly at least partly motivated by a profound distaste for the Nordic racism emanating from Germany and finding a following even in Italy. Enrico de Michelis, an Italian anthropologist and Sergi's contemporary, correctly assessed the motivations behind Sergi's elaborate and remarkable reconstruction of European paleontology and history. It stemmed from

the necessity of combating the ... exaggerations of the Germanic school, headed by [Hermann] Poesche, [Karl] Penka, [Ludwig] Wilser, [Otto] Ammon, [Vacher] de Lapouge, etc. according to which everything is the work of Aryans, whom they identify with the dolico-blondes; and the Aryanized races – brachycephalics and dolico-browns – were only an inert matter for them, of which their contribution to the Indo-European civilization represented a negligible quantity.²⁶

Sergi first made a name for himself in the world of anthropology by rejecting the current craniometric methods of human racial classification as oversimplified. Rather, he considered the over-all cranial morphology to be a more useful indicator of race. Sergi came upon his technique of classifying races by cranial morphology in an extraordinary manner. He lined up 400 Melanesian crania on some tables. Then, roving among them and observing each carefully with the unaided eye but without taking measurements of any kind, he began grouping similar skulls together, first into more general categories, then into subcategories. In this manner Sergi devised his own cranial classification system, and his racial classification scheme.

Sergi claimed that evolution almost always proceeds by new species radiating out from an original ancestor, called polygenesis. He believed that human races were an example of this process. Thus, each race was a separate species of the Hominid family.

Through a study of the paleontology of his races, Sergi concluded that the primitive population of Europe, after the Neanderthals, arose somewhere in the Horn of Africa and constituted the entire population of the European continent in Neolithic times. From this large Eurafrikan group came three races: a black African, remaining in Africa; an intermediate race, the Mediterranean, living around the Mediterranean basin; and a Nordic, which migrated to the North. The dolicocephalic blonds of Germany and Scandinavia were supposedly descended from this latter race.²⁷ Sergi considered the Semites as a lateral branch of the Eurafrikan species, and called them Afroasians, or "Feodermica," to distinguish them from true Mediterraneans, to whom they were closely related.²⁸

For Sergi, the Mediterranean peoples were the “greatest race in the world,”²⁹ “the finest brunet race which has appeared in Europe ... derived neither from the black nor white peoples, but constitut[ing] an autonomous stock in the human family.”³⁰ In their “face and facial gesture there is an expression of grace, vivacity, and aesthetic beauty.”³¹ They were distinguished by their individuality, their desire to rise above the masses and become leaders in the arts, literature, or politics. They were also inventors and initiators. Thus many geniuses rose from the Mediterraneans. They successively created the Minoan, the Hellenic, and the Latin civilizations.

In Italy, the Mediterranean race (also called the Pelasgians or Latins) probably spoke a Hamitic language, related to that of the prehistoric Egyptians, Iberians, and Libyans.³² They developed a brilliant civilization in prehistoric Italy, which included the use of metals late in this period, learned from the consanguineous civilizations to the East.³³ Much later, they created the Latin civilization, and spread it throughout Europe by means of the Roman Empire. Thus, contemporary European civilization ultimately had to trace its ancestry back to the Mediterranean race.³⁴

In his book *La decadenza delle nazioni Latine*, published in 1900, Sergi used psychological, sociological, and anthropological evidence to explain the lack of wealth or progress in the Latin countries relative to those of Northern Europe by the turn of the twentieth century. He claimed that the Aryans of the North, due to their long habitation in frigid climates, had developed an instinctual tendency toward close-knit social organization, which allowed them to survive in their hostile environment. This predisposed them to adapt well to a civil society, and encouraged hard work and a peaceful disposition. They became more orderly, organized, industrious, civic-minded, and obedient than the Southern Italians. For this reason, explained Sergi, contemporary Northern Italy (which had a certain amount of Aryan blood) was more peaceful and prosperous than Southern Italy. Sergi asserted that the drawback to the Mediterranean personality type was a tendency toward political chaos. The Mediterraneans were difficult to govern, and tended to lapse into anarchic or demagogic societies. The Romans were only successful due to their superior legal system and despotic form of rule during the Empire.³⁵ As we will see, Sergi’s somewhat restrained devotion to the Mediterranean race, and to Italian nationalism, would strengthen as a result of World War I.

The Nordics, according to Sergi, were the third branch of the Eurafrikan species. They were not Aryans, but rather were Aryanized Eurafrikan.³⁶ Thus, Nordic Germans were more closely related to black Africans than they were to Aryans. Sergi derides the “very many Germans” who believed that the Germanic peoples were Aryan, an assumption which he described as “contrary to the facts” and “irrational.” He also rejected the idea that the Aryans were Germanic or Nordic in appearance.³⁷ Sergi specifically criticized Hermann Pösche and Karl Penka for their “fantastic” assertion that the Nordics were an Aryan people.³⁸ The fact that Nordics and Mediterraneans were racially related in Sergi’s system based on cranial morphology would decades later receive enormous attention

from some Italian Nordacists. They longed for such a scientific justification for the Nordic–Mediterranean racial relationship.

The Nordics, in Sergi's opinion, had not made substantial contributions to pre-modern European civilization. There was no appreciable Nordic blood in the classical peoples; classical-period statuary did not "in the slightest degree" resemble the features of the "northern race," but "recall[ed] the beautiful and harmonious heads of the brown Mediterranean race."³⁹ Rather, "in the epoch of Tacitus the Germans ... remained barbarians as in prehistoric times."⁴⁰ The Romans were unable to Romanize the Germans, as they showed themselves refractory to Rome's civilizing influence. Furthermore, Sergi pointedly noted, "they retain today an invincible aversion to the Latin spirit, like an instinct contrary to humanization." Indeed, though the Germans may have produced technological marvels in modern times, the German soul had not progressed beyond its primitive level for two thousand years.⁴¹ Nor were Germans the saviors of a decadent post-Roman Italy, as many Germanic scholars had claimed; quite the contrary. Sergi rebukingly wrote that

Those who believe that the medieval *barbarians* were vital elements injected into the old decayed Italic race of the empire, follow only a superficial and fantasmic criterion: these *barbarians* were instead disorganizing elements of social and political society and carried with them the germ of grave harm, delinquency, vagabondage, and ferocity, [problems] that for some time pestered that beautiful country [Italy].⁴²

For Sergi, the Aryans fared no better than the Germans when it came to assessing racial contributions to pre-modern European civilization. The Eurasiatic or Aryan species had migrated from the Hindukush region of Asia to Europe at the end of the Neolithic Age. These Aryans weren't really a race at all, but a collection of peoples speaking the Indo-European language.⁴³ The arrival of the Aryans proved to be one of the most disastrous events in the history of Europe: "The Aryans were savages when they invaded Europe: they destroyed in part the superior civilization of the Neolithic populations, and could not have created the Greco-Latin civilization,"⁴⁴ nor could they have imported "a new and superior civilization, as has been stated by those who were in ignorance of the real facts."⁴⁵ The Aryans' Indo-European speech was their sole contribution to European civilization.

The Aryans interbred with the Mediterranean race in Northern Italy, but their numbers declined south of the Po Valley, and were insignificant south of Rome.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, their language spread through the southern half of the peninsula through commerce, Sergi dubiously asserted.⁴⁷ Sergi's claim that the Aryans had little impact on Italian culture did not jibe well with the (seemingly obvious) fact that their language had eventually replaced the indigenous Mediterranean speech.

The Mediterranean race in Italy was able to remain largely physiologically and culturally intact to the twentieth century because they were a "healthy" race, and adapted to the environment. They resisted the invaders, or absorbed them if they were not too numerous.⁴⁸ Sergi compared the process to "the planetary

perturbations caused by the influence of passing celestial bodies, which nevertheless don't impede the completion of their movements in orbit."⁴⁹ Because of this ability, "Italy has resurrected itself many times."⁵⁰ Of the later immigrant groups, such as Arabs, Berbers, Goths, Huns, and Germans, "little or nothing remains."⁵¹ Such a vague and dubious explanation later gained great currency among Italian racists of all stripes, once the fascist regime let it be known that Italians could not admit that their blood had been tainted by foreign admixture since at least the time of the Lombard invasions.

Sergi's thesis also emphasized the spiritual unity of the Italian people. Based on his understanding of human psychology, Sergi was comfortable with the notion that a people of diverse racial ancestry could unify spiritually, through being immersed in the same cultural environment over time. As he explained:

Who could distinguish Illyrians, Venetians, Cisalpine Gauls from other groups of Italic peoples? Rome fused all in one unique Italic mold; and it is not important that today's analytic anthropology tries to find physical differences in various Italic groups; there is a complete spiritual fusion, which happened during the centuries-long historical process. All speak a language that recalls Rome; all have social and political institutions of Roman origin; all have a single Italic soul.⁵²

The concept of spiritual unity of a race, whatever the physical features of its members, is the cornerstone of spiritual racism. Most often, spiritual racists came from philosophical or allied disciplines, rather than the sciences. Most anthropological racists took a more biologically determinist position on racial identity. No doubt Sergi's wide-ranging humanistic background aided him in spanning the gulf between these two fundamental approaches.

Much like his contemporaries in Germany, Sergi felt that the aura of scientific objectivity with which he covered his views allowed him to speak with authority on the problems of his age. As he wrote in the preface to the work *La Decadenza delle Nazioni Latine*, entitled "Why I have written this book":

I have written the melancholy pages of this book out of duty, because it is the duty of every man of thought and action [to write] on behalf of the social community; I write because of the acute impulse of the [contemporary] events that reveal at every instant the political and social evils of the Latin nations; I write when I feel these evils personally as my own, and experience sad impressions that have not and will not cease, imitating someone who, affected by physical ailments, struggles and cries out for relief.

I am not a journalist, nor a politician, nor an employee of any society or association of any type; I live alone, dedicated to study and to science, an independent observer of events, writing freely with only the objective of benevolence, as I see it and judge it. I am suspending for a moment the serene studies of science that has led to the separation of myself from the

world, and entrust to this book impressions and judgments free of any influence; I am also expressing my desires and future hope of a resurrection of peoples who were once great, but now fallen, if only they will learn to open themselves to new ways of doing things and abandon tendencies and behaviors that are anachronistic manifestations, fatal survivals that immobilize and arrest the course of progress and the transformation of social life.

I, however, do not have the illusion of believing that my words can have an echo in the midst of men; they are too contrary to the feelings that dominate, they are too new for the ideas that govern social and political life today; and thus they will seem utopian. Nor will I be surprised if the demonstrations of decadence that I have clearly related will only be heard with preponderant signs of denial and protest; very few, or no one, will want to be convinced.

But perhaps even more strange is the fact that among my adversaries one finds not only the conservatives of every type, but also many who profess the most advanced ideas. [They oppose me] because I am not among them; I am not a Mazzinian, nor a socialist; I don't belong to any party.

I am an enemy of all the old ways that encumber the movement of nations, and thus advance war against those old institutions that today ail the Latin nations; and I would like to act like the shrewd and intelligent farmer who cuts the dry branches off of the old plants to reinvigorate them, or like the surgeon who amputates a bone affected by necrosis in order to avoid death.

All of this will seem like a utopia. It may be a utopia, but I am convinced that it shows the road which humanity must inevitably travel for the better: one could say that I have written for the future!⁵³

Sergi's ideas concerning modernism provide us with an interesting example of the fact that racial thinkers at the turn of the century were not always reactionaries, by any means. As a liberal dedicated to his country's modernization, Sergi had little respect for classicism in art or education. He believed that

Modern artists must ... understand that modern art must not be a reproduction of ancient art with old ideas and sentiments; but must manifest itself in new forms, because the life of the people changes continually and leaves the past for the future.⁵⁴

Furthermore, the Italian obsession with the past had to end, Sergi wrote, if Italy was ever going to prosper. He compared Italy to a fish that sees only behind itself, and is pushed forward only by accident or by an outside force.⁵⁵ The past, Sergi said, was dead and could not be reborn; only someone "intellectually myopic" or "absolutely ignorant" would not understand this "general and common phenomenon in nature, in human life and society, and thus in the life and thought of the people."⁵⁶ Nations thrived and developed only if they were open to new ideas and were flexible; when they became immobile and rigid (as did ancient Rome) they

perished.⁵⁷ Sergi hoped that the global civilization he saw emerging would follow this recommendation:

Universal culture must also be new, not a continuation of the Renaissance; it must have as its base that which constitutes the glory and the greatness of modern thought – science – not the forms of ancient classic civilization, Greek and Latin.⁵⁸

Thus, Sergi suggested that the Italian government, instead of spending 40 or 60 million liras on an old-fashioned monument to King Victor Emmanuel, could have used the money to build a “great scientific establishment” or some other permanent institution dedicated to welfare activities.

Sergi had an almost religious faith in science, built on his positivistic faith that science could become a panacea for the world’s ills, and could create a secular paradise. It would free mankind from superstition, and a scientific education would unshackle the Latin nations from the mental stranglehold of the Catholic Church. Science could even lead to the moral perfection of humanity and allow it to acquire serenity through a solid foundation of knowledge about the world. Perhaps thinking of Italy, Sergi believed that science could enable even small nations without great militaries to accumulate knowledge and through it dominate the world and prove their superiority.⁵⁹

This near-deification of science enabled Sergi to liberate himself from the constraints of scientific objectivity. Science was now a tool used to confirm his own hopes and prejudices. In reality, Sergi’s work was largely intuitive. He occasionally admitted as much. In *Gli Ariti in Europea e in Asia*, Sergi explained his approach to archeology:

To interpret the vicissitudes and the transformations of the ancient peoples it is necessary to live in their far-off time and space.

And as in a dream, almost separated from present reality, my thought has journeyed to very distant regions and in very remote epochs calculated in millennia. It seems to me that an unnamed goddess guided me by the now ruined paths of the oldest cities of the world, Babylon and Ninevah...

Now my glances turn to the Nile valley, where reappears the goddess, mysterious Isis who rises from the black Hamitic land, and inspires me with an idea like a vision, in which I seem to see coming from the African lands the first peoples with the first germs of human culture and disseminating them from the Asiatic east and from the Mediterranean: creating the most ancient civilizations.

Like a vision, I say: and science is an intellectual vision similar to the artistic, although not always deluded by appearances as is art...

For some time I have had the vision described, of peoples and their manifestations; and if this is not a deception or an illusion, it seems to me

that the historical interpretation of humanity must be different from that so far presented.⁶⁰

In one of his last books, *Da Alba Longa a Roma*, Sergi compared intuition to:

radiography, which illuminates the depths of the organs through the membranes which cover them, penetrating the various strata that have formed in the centuries and millennia of history, to explore the most ancient and primitive elements that one finds at the base of the deposited strata, and that [these intervening layers] have thus depressed and obscured the first sediments from no longer emerging or disappearing forever from the vision of he who looks at the surface. But intuition which penetrates the depths, reveals to the mind's eye a world that seemed submersed or had disappeared forever; that which intuition has reconstituted is not deformed or even mutilated, but is a true and precious archaic heredity. This is also true for human history.⁶¹

De Michelis, for one, was aware of the pitfalls awaiting Sergi when abandoning scientific objectivity for ethnic pride:

As often happens in the history of knowledge, so we find in this question of the relationship between Aryans and pre-Aryans, to wit, that there is derived from the same premises entirely contrary consequences: from one side, a new glorification of the race that could have created and diffused the Indo-European language, almost to compensate it for the restrictions inflicted upon it by paleontology; from the other an excessive reaction, due to the need to put in the foreground the historical importance of the [Mediterranean] races

whose glory had been otherwise diminished through the discovery that their language was the product of an invading people, the Aryans.⁶²

Sergi himself strenuously denied such accusations. As he explained his position:

We have written many times on this argument with the goal of establishing the veracity of the facts without racial prejudice, without the goal of diminishing the value of one human type in order to exalt another one, but, as true science demands, in order to eliminate errors – difficult work when the error is universally accepted as a demonstrated fact – and to establish the real nature of things and events in the history of the European people.⁶³

Critiquing Sergi's contention that the Aryans were so primitive that they could contribute nothing of value to Mediterranean civilization, De Michelis concludes that "it would be difficult to announce hypotheses more contrary than these against the teachings of history and paleontological data."⁶⁴

As the twentieth century progressed, Sergi's admonitions for the faults of modern Italy increasingly gave way to praise for Italy's Mediterranean ancestors.

He published a series of books in this period which lauded the Mediterraneans and deprecated the Aryans: *Gli Ariti in Europa e in Asia* (1903), *L'Italia* (1919), *Le prime e le più antiche civiltà: I creatori*, published in 1926, and *Da Alba Longa a Roma* (1930). His last book, *I britanni*, published in the last year of his life, sought to trace the origin of the British Empire to the Mediterranean part of the British population.

By the time of his death on October 17, 1936, Sergi had produced more than 400 publications ranging through many of the human sciences, and had made enormous contributions to the development of Italian anthropology.⁶⁵ Sergi's explanation of Italian anthropological history, developed over the course of 35 years, would form the bedrock of the Mediterranean school of racial theory. The Mediterranean thesis gained wide acceptance in Italy in the early twentieth century. Many of the leading Italian scholars worked on elaborations of the theory, though with their own variations. Mediterranean racism would continue to dominate anthropology under fascism, and would maintain a shadowy existence even after World War II.

Many other Italian anthropologists and archeologists were influenced by Sergi's work in whole or part. They often drew conclusions from anthropological research to buttress their extremist nationalism. Generally, they selectively utilized anthropological and archeological evidence to emphasize the claim that ancient Mediterranean Italians had laid the seeds for modern western civilization to develop. Then, leaving scientific evidence behind, they soared into the realm of fantasy with increasingly bold and distorted interpretations of post-classical history. For many, the Germans had nearly destroyed civilization, ushering in the "Dark Ages" that were only overcome by the Italian Renaissance. Foreign intervention in the sixteenth century once again suppressed Italy, but a "third dawn" of Italian Mediterranean civilization was at hand.

Angelo Mosso, an anthropologist working in the early twentieth century, essentially followed Sergi in his racial histories. Mosso believed that the ancient Minoans had created the first great European civilization. This emerging western civilization was further developed by the ancient Italians, who were closely related to the Minoans. The later barbarian invaders of Italy made no contribution to this civilization. Nor did they alter the "temperament" of the Italians; indeed, the Germanic tribes were themselves simply blond Mediterraneans.⁶⁶

Though Enrico de Michelis may have chided Sergi on his lack of cool-headed objectivity, he still agreed with much that Sergi had to say. Civilization was a product of the Mediterranean races. Northern Europe in de Michelis's day may have been more "progressive" than the South, but this was not due to any inherent genetic superiority. Rather, this was a consequence of the "exhaustion" of Southern elites. In the end, de Michelis concluded that "the Nordic doctrine has no other base than metaphysical anthropo-ethnic conceptions, destitute of any positive foundation."⁶⁷

We should conclude this examination of early twentieth-century thought on race in Italy with a brief review of Benito Mussolini's writings at the time. In his early

years as a socialist, Mussolini was committed to understanding the world from a Marxist perspective. Most problems in the world were a result of class struggle; racial antipathies were fostered by capitalists with the objective of dividing the working class. Yet he also clearly shared racist and Eurocentric sentiments that were not uncommon at the time. Our earliest hint in this direction comes from his essay, “God does not exist,” published in 1904:

we can affirm that intelligence has full force in a cerebral weight between a maximum of 1830 grams and a minimum of 1200; that the labyrinth of convolutions is more complicated in the cultured races than in the ignorant races; [and] that the two most important factors in intellectual development are the quantity of gray material and culture.⁶⁸

Mussolini believed that cultural achievement was predicated on the intellectual capacities of a particular race. In the passage above, he may also be suggesting that environmental and spiritual forces, such as culture, can induce biological changes, such as the convolutions of the cerebral cortex that confer intelligence. The use of the term “race” here implies that these physical developments can be inherited. This is our first sign of Mussolini’s acceptance of Lamarckian inheritance, which would in fact loom large in his later concept of race.

Mussolini also showed hints of a more nationalistic sentiment from time to time in this period, as A. James Gregor and others have demonstrated. In conjunction with his nascent nationalism, Mussolini deplored the arrogant presumptions of Nordic racism, much as did Giuseppe Sergi and his followers. Perhaps Mussolini’s first negative encounter with the realities of “scientific” Nordicism occurred in 1903, while a vagabond in Berne. Years later Emil Ludwig questioned Mussolini about this episode:

“I have been told that at the age of twenty you were arrested by the police in Zurich and subjected to anthropometrical examination.”

“In Berne.”

“Is it true that you were so angry that you exclaimed in fury: ‘The day of vengeance will come!’”

“‘Yes, it is true,’ he replied. ‘This contumelious treatment struck sledge-hammer blows which were more useful to me than my adversaries supposed!’”⁶⁹

Mussolini took his revenge several years later, when he published an attack against the major Nordic racial theorists, “Il pangermanismo teorico” in *Il Trentino veduto da un socialista*. Mussolini was particularly incensed by two assumptions these writers had in common: that the Aryan race was best represented by the Germanic people; and that the Italians were an inferior people. Mussolini related an encapsulated Nordic racist view of Italian history, replete with degenerating miscegenation and Germanic cultural superiority:

The black psychology belongs to the Mediterranean peoples surviving the imperial degeneration and living inside the old frontiers of the empire. They are the peoples who during the long Roman peace fused and confused themselves by mixing with Syriac and Abyssinian blood, the Numidians and the Balearians, on the soil of France and Spain. This mixing, restrained and held back by the last representatives of the ancient aristocratic families until the epoch of the Caesars, became irresistible with Caracalla, who granted the right of citizenship to all the subjects that Rome dominated in the southern European basin. Not the change of the political forms, from republican to monarchical, signaled the beginning of the decadence of Rome, but the corruption of the dominating races [*stirpi*] with too frequent and prolonged contact with inferior peoples ... Then, thick darkness, until the Reformation, which was the work of Germanism, who have not since stopped in their march toward superior forms of life though will not so continue, if they do not remember to keep immune from the Alpine brachycephalic contagion.⁷⁰

Mussolini concludes his essay by summarizing the dreams of the Nordic racists, such as J.L. Reimer, for the future:

The Germanic civilization would have rigid caste divisions like oriental society. In the highest level there would be the group of pure Germans, that would politically and spiritually direct society; in the middle the semi-Germans would be tolerated; below, at the pedestal, the non-Germans, prodded toward sterility and death. The Alpine brachycephalics would be assigned to the most heavy and unhealthy work, true beasts of burden, without rights and without a future. Such is the picture of Germanic society foreseen by the Bellamy of pangermanism, Doctor Reimer.⁷¹

With the above evidence in mind, we can safely conclude that Mussolini in his early years was anti-Nordic. Also in this work, Mussolini continually referred to the prevalent belief of many Nordic anthropologists that the Southern Europeans belonged to the Alpine brachycephalic race. Since he did not seem to object, he may have agreed with this categorization. Yet we cannot expect stability in this matter; as on most other issues, Mussolini would continually alter his view as conditions warranted.

3 Racial theory and fascism, 1915–1935

... and it should be time for whomever up until now has knelt before the privileged and elect man [the German] to change their mind, and recognize the truth.

Giuseppe Sergi, *Italia, Le origini: antropologia, cultura e civiltà*

This is the springtime of our race.

Benito Mussolini, "Al popolo di Venezia," June 3, 1923

In May 1915, Italy entered World War I. The decision to fight on the side of the Entente, which had already been fighting Germany and its allies for nine months, was made in the expectation that Italy would be rewarded with generous territorial concessions north and east of the Adriatic. Throughout the war Italy concentrated its struggle against neighboring Austria-Hungary, Germany's chief ally. Since both countries were Germanic,¹ anti-German and anti-Nordic sentiments reached a fever pitch in Italy during and immediately after the war.

For example, Lorenzo Ratto called for a Celtic–Latin racism to defend France and Italy from the Germanic racism that had existed since ancient times. Giuseppe Sergi also allowed political antagonisms to color his judgment of German scholarship. He fiercely attacked the notion of Germanic superiority, which he called "*Germanismo*." It held that the Germans were responsible for all great western civilizations:

The German philologists and archeologists have termed *indogermanic* the Indo-Europeans or Aryans, and have founded a science and a prehistory according to their interests and their sentiments, to wit: the Germans were the authors of all civilization, the invaders of Europe, the dominators of the non-Germanic peoples, and the creators of classical Greek and Latin civilization. I have previously exposed in a series of works the falsity of these German doctrines. ... This pseudoscience has disgracefully dominated Europe, and among us in Italy has laid deep roots in philology and in history, has polluted true and real history, so much so that it is now difficult to exterminate it because of the deep roots that it has laid.²

In the same work, Sergi asserts even more sternly that “[e]veryone” in Italy seemed to accept the assumptions of Nordic racism:³

Also in Italy there were archeologists, philologists and historians who accepted the Germans’ opinions and followed them to their ultimate development, when the unlucky [Ludwig] Woltmann [he drowned in the Gulf of Genoa] saw German faces in our great Renaissance, beginning with Dante, followed by Michelangelo, Leonardo, and Raffaello. An Italian sustained this imposture in all of them, just as Lapouge [a Frenchman] sustained the Aryan as the dominant type. Thus, when the astonishing discoveries in the eastern Mediterranean revealed the true and legitimate origins of the Mediterranean culture and civilization to the scientific world, which was astounded by the great discovery, the German archeologists did not surrender, hanging on by a spider’s thread through falsifying a few particular results of excavations here and there in some of the many islands of the Aegean sea.⁴

Several years after the war Sergi lamented that “many exuberant volumes of boastful pretensions” had been written to support *Germanismo*. Mommsen came in for criticism because he “gratuitously affirmed” that the earliest Italians

of which so much has been written by ancient and modern historians, were of Indogermanic origins, that is to say Aryan or Indo-European. Perhaps one can find some mitigation for Mommsen, who was ignorant of Italic prehistory. But this mitigation does not hold for his living followers, who, either ignoring what has been discovered for more than half a century in continental Italy and in the islands, [discoveries] which document the foundations of Italian history, or do not take into account these discoveries, as if the facts of history do not interest them; or they might even have that psychological character that I have defined as *mental inertia*, which consists in continuing on the same path as their predecessors without noticing the erroneous direction; or finally perhaps all of these are the causes of their lack of progress.⁵

No doubt Sergi had in mind such Nordic racist works as Hans Günther’s *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volks* (1923) and Madison Grant’s *The Passing of the Great Race* (1921) both of which he described as “books which absolutely lack the critical sense and are effects of a nationalistic monomania.”⁶ In such authors, Sergi explained,

if there is not the intention to deform history, there is certainly false vision; but, without doubt, there is in them preconceived and predominant ideas of Indo-germanism that they wish to uncover or find in every great human fact and in every superior people, such as the Mediterraneans. By now the Italians should be familiar with this game.⁷

Mussolini’s anti-Germanism increased, if anything, during World War I. On February 16, 1915, he wrote in his newspaper *Il Popolo d’Italia*:

For the last hundred years, the Germans have been poisoned by a constant apology of the fair-haired race, the only one capable of creating and propagating *Kultur* in a decaying Europe.... The giant has created a monstrous machine, militarism, to assure itself dominion over all peoples. It is necessary for this machine to be smashed.... Then, and only then, will the Germans, pillaging and murderous, reacquire the right of citizenship in humanity.⁸

Unfortunately for Italy, the war did not go as planned. Though Italy lost 600,000 men in the fighting, it was unable to score a major victory against Austria until the final days of the war. At the conclusion of the war, the allies were sufficiently unimpressed with Italy's military successes that they denied Italy much of the territory it had expected. Eventually Italy received South Tyrol, the Trentino, Trieste, and Istria; Fiume remained in contention for several years before eventually passing to Italy; and the vast majority of Dalmatia went to the newly created Yugoslavia. Mussolini joined others in decrying this "vittoria mutilata." Over the next few years, political, economic, and social conditions in Italy rapidly deteriorated. Dissatisfaction with the state of Italy was widespread.

By 1919, Mussolini had created a new political movement that was meant to rescue Italy from post-war chaos and despair: the *Fasci di Combattimento*. The fascists began as an amalgam of ex-soldiers (such as Mussolini), Futurists, Nationalists, Syndicalists, and students.

Mussolini's ideas about race were influenced by his new comrades. He agreed with the Italian Futurists, such as Tomasso Fillipo Marinetti, that the hitherto quiescent Italian race needed to be modernized and militarized. Their propaganda emphasized progress in these areas whenever possible. For example, Marinetti claimed that the Italians were blessed with a "will to conquest and adventure" and were exhorted to manifest a racial pride in their virtues. Other times Marinetti praised the "Latin race," of which Italy was a member.⁹ Mussolini borrowed from these concepts in his public proclamations. He lauded the "Latin" race in a speech in Bologna in 1918, and approvingly noted the Latins' tendency to aestheticize "personal audacity" and display a "fascination with risk, the taste for adventure...."¹⁰

Privately, however, Mussolini would also have agreed with his associate, Giovanni Papini, who several years before had written with disgust about the low state to which Italy and the Italians had sunk:¹¹

Cavour had understood the situation well: nothing great can be made with shit. Italy of 1860 had been shit [*sic*] dragged kicking and screaming towards unification by a daring minority, and shit it remained throughout fifty years of unification, urged on by the occasional outbursts of zeal from small minorities either in favor of an imperial mission in Africa or of a liberating transformation in its domestic politics.

We are a country of botched attempts: everything is tried and nothing comes off. A nation which constantly fails through the lack of a mobilizing force.¹²

As we shall see, Mussolini would eventually use the concepts of racial transformation and racism in an attempt to forcibly “evolve” the Italians from Papini’s version to Marinetti’s ideal.

Perhaps Mussolini was already in the early 1920s considering the need to emphasize the mythic grandeur of the Italian people in order to effect this transformation. Even before World War I, Mussolini had been fascinated with the ideas of the French political theorist, Georges Sorel. Sorel wrote in his seminal work, *Reflections on Violence*, that we enjoy the liberty to act freely “above all when we make an effort to create within us a new man with the purpose of transcending the historical frameworks that confine us.” This transformation could be effected through the use of myth.

Sorel regarded myths as inexhaustible sources of regeneration. They enabled one to transcend a detested present and overcome material obstacles. Myths, to Sorel, need not be true, or come to pass. Their efficacy lay in their power to mobilize and energize the masses.¹³ Historical myths, for example, might be ideal reconstructions of the past used by the current elite to mobilize the masses, prepare them for heroic sacrifice, and help mold them into a united, dedicated force for action. The most powerful myths are dogmatic, simplistic, and imperative.

Mussolini agreed with Sorel’s use of myths. “A myth is a faith, it is a passion,” Mussolini affirmed in October 1922. “It is not necessary that it be real. It is a reality in the fact that it is a goal, that it is hope, that it is faith, that it is courage.”¹⁴

Mussolini’s ideas on the Italian identity at this time were also strongly influenced by the Italian nationalists. The idea of race as a living organism, transcending the generations, was a substantial element of the racial concept as elaborated by Marinetti and by the Italian nationalists.¹⁵ The dean of Italian nationalism, Enrico Corradini, believed that nationalism was “rooted in nature.”¹⁶ The people of the nation, in Corradini’s view, are spiritually connected with their ancestors. In “La vita che non muta,” Corradini describes

The divine law of the continuity of life through the centuries and millennia, by which the duration of man is much longer than the existence of the individual, and is almost our earthly immortality; this divine law by which the life of the people appears interwoven through the generations ... and we feel like the contemporaries of our fathers and breathe the same breath from the same air. ...¹⁷

In his book *L’unità e la potenza delle nazioni*, he ventured that “the race carries the spiritual seeds that form the spirit of the nation”:

The nation is a physical, ethnic, historical, spiritual, and political entity. Above all it has a body. It has a people [*razza*] and a territory. It is not a pure, natural race, but a historic, mixed race. The two so-called Latin nations, Italy and France, have races of very different historical mixtures. The historic Italian race still presents the spectacle of numerous different regional races. In the young nations we observe the merging of the most diverse races that have emigrated from everywhere.¹⁸

Successful nations coupled the internal cohesion and common interests of their people with resistance to external forces. Such superior peoples expressed the power of their civilization through imperial conquest.¹⁹ In 1920 the Italian nationalists claimed that

The fundamental thesis of nationalism ... is that the various societies existing on earth are true organisms endowed with a life that far transcends that of individuals and which is sustained for centuries and millennia.

Thus the Italian nation does not only contain the 36 million Italians alive now, but all the hundreds of thousands of millions of Italians who will live in the future centuries, and who are conceived as components of a single whole. In this conception each generation and every individual within a generation is but a transient and infinitesimal part of the nation, and is the cell of the national organism. Just as cells are born, live, and die, while the organism remains the same, so individuals are born, live, and die, while the nation continues to live out its millennial existence....²⁰

Mussolini agreed with these sentiments, which are reflected in his early fascist writings. In the 1921 preamble of the fascist program, he wrote:

The nation is not simply the sum of living individuals, nor the instrument of [political] parties for their own ends, but an organism comprised of the [*sic*] infinite series of generations of which the individuals are only transient elements; it is the supreme synthesis of all the material and immaterial values of the race [*stirpe*].²¹

Mussolini continued to express the same sentiments after the “March on Rome,” in October 1922, which inaugurated the fascist regime. In 1923, he wrote that the Italians were an “old but always young” race.²² And, several months later, he described Italians as “this old and marvelous italic race....”²³ In June of that year, he once again invoked the youth of the Italian race, referring to the fascist period as “the springtime of our race....”²⁴ Also in 1923, Mussolini referred to a crowd of listeners in Cagliari as “the very beautiful buds of the Italian race [*razza*], immortal in time and in space.”²⁵

It is necessary, however, to note that Mussolini was often vague and even contradictory in his early attempts to define the “Italian race.” In an April 1921 speech given in Bologna, Mussolini referred to “our Aryan and Mediterranean race.”²⁶ This, of course, seems to combine in one phrase two contradictory racial conceptions, as then understood. Mussolini most likely meant to describe the Italians as the Mediterranean branch of the Aryan race, bearers of an Indo-European language and culture that pursued its own development in the Mediterranean world.

One of Mussolini's most ambitious goals, once he was in power, was to insure that his movement would permanently "improve" the Italian character along fascist lines. This, he believed, could be accomplished in two ways: the introduction of a relatively mild eugenics program and the social and cultural fascistization of Italian society. These programs, he hoped, would eventually create a new generation of Italians that would be beautiful, athletic, strong, and embody fascist ideals.

Roger Griffin maintains that one of the most important defining characteristics of fascism is its use of the myth of national resurgence and regeneration, or palinogenesis. We might also extend Griffin's thesis to embrace Mussolini's concept of racial regeneration. Mussolini believed that the Italian people had lost through centuries of foreign domination the severe Roman virtues of courage, fortitude, discipline, and martial ardor that were deemed to be essential preconditions for a truly fascist renaissance. The first long-term goal of fascism was to revive these virtues in the Italians. Logically, they should not have been considered hereditary elements of the Italian psychology, regardless of what later apologists might have claimed, or they could never have been "lost" in the first place. Even so, Mussolini believed that these characteristics could somehow be permanently bred into the Italians.

Mussolini made his intention to initiate eugenics policies apparent even before he entered the government. At a Fascist Congress in Rome held in November 1921, he announced: "fascism must concern itself with the racial problem; fascists must concern themselves with the health of the race by which history is made."²⁷

Little was done initially to realize these goals, since Mussolini spent his first years in office largely preoccupied with setting up a dictatorship. After this task was largely completed, in 1925, he devoted more attention to accomplishing fascism's long-term objectives, including the remaking of the Italian people.

It is likely that Mussolini's forthcoming eugenics policies were influenced by the theories of Corrado Gini, Italy's foremost demographer in the late 1920s and a principal advocate of neo-organicism. Gini was a "precocious nationalist" and believed that nations had a collective personality. Like other Italian nationalists, Gini believed that individual existence had meaning only as part of the larger "organism," which was the nation. Eternal national interests were more important than the interests of the present population. Thus, the biological sciences, social sciences, and nationalism were merged into a syncretic theory often called neo-organicism. This neo-organicism was promoted by Gini in a 1927 lecture to inaugurate a new sociology program at the University of Rome.²⁸

Gini, like his more famous sociologist colleague in Germany, Oswald Spengler, believed that all populations pass through a cycle of birth, growth, and decay as impelled by internal forces. However, continued evolution produces infertility. In the earliest, less evolved stage of any people, all socio-economic classes are still reproductively vigorous. As the national organism ages, however, the fertility of the upper classes begins to decline. Even the greater reproductive vigor of the lower classes will eventually be depleted as its stronger members emigrate, die in war, or advance into the upper classes. Finally, in the decadent

stage of its life, all classes in the national organism show a reproductive exhaustion, cultural output diminishes, imperial conquest ceases, and the nation dies a natural death. In this scenario, an aging nation might be overrun by one younger and consequently more vigorous.

Gini's theory had a number of important practical implications. Its emphasis on the desirability of a high birth rate led him to support government intervention to encourage people to marry early and have large families. Gini believed that especially fertile people were resistant to disease and lived longer. Demographic degeneration, on the other hand, led to alcoholism, tuberculosis, stillbirth, and early death. These prescriptions for a program of government-sponsored eugenics inspired Mussolini when he began advocating many of these measures in 1927.²⁹

Mussolini also viewed a high natality rate as essential for the survival and prosperity of Italy. Those nations with expanding populations were young and vital.³⁰ They would have a legitimate need for territorial expansion, through the acquisition of colonial territory, for example. Nations with declining populations, such as France, were dying. They should allow immigration, if not outright territorial annexation, from the more vital countries.

Mussolini again hinted at the need for eugenic policies in late 1926, on the cusp of his new eugenics and demographic policies. In a speech to the people of Reggio Emilia he declared:

We need to create ourselves; we of this epoch and this generation, because it is up to us, I tell you, to make the face of this country physically and spiritually unrecognizable in ten years. In ten years, comrades, Italy will be unrecognizable! We will create a new Italian, an Italian that does not resemble that of yesterday ... we will create them according to our own imaginations and likeness. ...³¹

The new eugenics policies were more clearly elaborated in Mussolini's Ascension Day speech of 1927. As he informed his audience, "We need to be seriously vigilant in regard to the destiny of the race; we need to take care of the race."

A number of measures were introduced to realize this goal. For one, the Opera Nazionale per la Maternità ed Infanzia (ONMI), created two years before to administer infant and maternal welfare programs, was now expanded to include a wide range of services, such as providing free medicines, baby foods, child care literature, and building hundreds of mother and child care centers.³²

Further pronatal innovations included an increase in criminal sentences for those involved in an abortion; the taxing of bachelors over a certain age, which was supposed to provide funds to subsidize poor families with a large number of children; regular exercise regimens in the schools and among youth groups, and adult athletic programs; fascist centers of education dedicated to creating the "new fascist man"; and various medical programs intended to improve the overall health of the Italian population. Later, in 1933, Mussolini created a propaganda spectacle to encourage women to have more children: the most prolific mother from each of Italy's provinces was celebrated in a public ceremonial with

the *Duce*. The award continued in modified form in subsequent years.³³ The result of this flurry of new policies, Mussolini hoped, would be “more beautiful” Italians who were “three centimeters taller.”³⁴

For about ten years, until the late 1930s, Mussolini continued to hope that his new eugenic policies would work. In 1929, he claimed that the fascist state “transforms this [Italian] people continually, even in their physical aspect.”³⁵ The next year he spoke once again of his struggles: “one now tries to continue, day after day, this work of remaking the Italian character.”³⁶ During his conversations with Emil Ludwig, in 1932, Mussolini denied the existence of races, in the sense of the Nazi use of the term. But revealingly, he continued musing with Ludwig about race:

Only a revolution and a decisive leader can improve a race, even if this last is more a sentiment than a reality. But I repeat that a race can change itself and improve itself. I say that it is possible to change not only the somatic lines, the height, but really also the character. Influence or moral pressure can act deterministically also in the biological sense.³⁷

He claimed to be succeeding in this goal two years later, while addressing some Italian athletes: “He who has seen you march here has had the profound and almost plastic impression of a new race that fascism is shaping and forging by every [athletic] competition.”³⁸

But Mussolini’s alliance with the Catholic Church after 1929 would make it impossible for him to consider the type of severe eugenics programs the Nazis would employ, such as forced sterilization of those with hereditary diseases or birth defects. Nor did Mussolini fear the multiplication of the lower classes in Italy, as did the Nazis. Quite the opposite: Mussolini saw the relative fecundity of the lower classes as the key to Italy’s demographic salvation, as had Enrico Corradini and Corrado Gini. Mussolini frequently lectured the Italians on this point, as the following excerpt demonstrates:

That the decline in natality does not have any relationship with the economic situation is demonstrated by the universal fact that wealth and sterility proceed together, while the most fecund classes of the population are the most modest, that is they are still the most morally healthy and have not ruined the divine sense of life, under the cerebral calculations of egoism.³⁹

Mussolini’s study of demographics had made him more aware of the differing birth rates of white and non-white races. While he may not have been concerned that the lower classes in Italy were more prolific, he was anxious that the European birth rate was low relative to that of Africans and Asians, and feared the consequences of this differential. These thoughts on global demography reveal several important new developments in Mussolini’s racial thought. First, it is obvious that his paeans to nations such as Italy with relatively high birth rates did not apply to the non-white world. Rather, he believed that the high birth rates

of non-white peoples posed a threat to Europe, as they could overwhelm the white nations with their numbers. This, in turn, threatened European civilization, presumably because non-whites would migrate into the demographically weak Europe, importing their own exotic cultures.

Second, Mussolini's ill-defined fear of the non-white races reveals his intensifying racism toward people of color, and an obsession with racial miscegenation between Italians and these peoples. This fear of people of color was first explicit in Mussolini's preface to Richard Korherr's *Regresso delle nascite: morte dei popoli*, published in Italian in 1928:⁴⁰

[Because of the low birth rates in urban areas] the city dies, and the nation – without the vital lymph fluid of the young of new generations – no longer can resist, composed now of vile, old people. A younger people will press against the abandoned frontiers. That happened. That can still happen. That will happen, and not only among cities and nations, but on an order of magnitude infinitely greater: the entire white race, the western race, can become submersed by other races of color that multiply with a rhythm unknown to ours.

Blacks and yellows are thus at the door?

Yes, they are at the door, and not only because of their fecundity but also because of their race consciousness and their future in the world. Meanwhile, for example, the whites of the United States have a miserable natality rate – it would be even more miserable, if not for the injection of more prolific races, such as the Irish, the Jews, and the Italians. The blacks of the United States are ultra-fecund and already amount to an imposing total of 14 million, that is one-sixth of the population of the Stellar Republic. There is a large quarter of New York, Harlem, which is populated exclusively by blacks. A serious revolt by blacks broke out last July in this quarter; it was a difficult job for the police to suppress it, after a bloody night of conflict, when they found themselves before a compact mass of blacks.⁴¹

Several years later, at the height of the Depression, Mussolini was even more pessimistic about the fate of Europe: “The singular, enormous problem is the destiny of the white race. Europe is truly towards the end of its destiny as the leader of civilization.” The *Duce* explained that this sad outcome had occurred because “the white race is sickly,” “morally and physically in ruin,” and in opposition to the “progress in numbers and in expansion of the yellow and black races, the civilization of the white man is destined to perish.” Only through an aggressive program of promoting natality and eugenics was there any hope of reversing this trend.⁴²

Italy was not exempt from this demographic disease, to Mussolini's chagrin. Heedless of his entreaties, Italy's birth rate continued to decline. Thus Mussolini continued to hammer away at the topic, warning Italians in January 1937 that Italy was facing demographic catastrophe if the birth rate did not turn around.⁴³ Given his lack of success, Mussolini became convinced of the need to increase

the pressure for cultural change. This led to the campaign for the reform of manners, and the promulgation of an official fascist racial ideology.⁴⁴

Until 1933, Mussolini's eugenic efforts concentrated on "improving" the Italian race, without much concern with defining what exactly the Italian race was, or its relationship to other European races. As we have seen, Mussolini's early remarks on Italian racial identity tended to be vague and vacillating, with the exception of his staunch insistence that the modern Italians were the direct descendants of the ancient Romans. External developments would induce a new urgency to answer these questions, however.

Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in January 1933. The rise to power of Hitler's National Socialist Party would unleash a tidal wave of pro-Nordic and anti-Italian rhetoric that would wash over Italy uninterrupted for the next 12 years. These verbal attacks would precipitate a vigorous reaction from Mussolini, and would aggravate the already serious tensions between the opposing racial theorists in Italy.

Nazi anti-Italian sentiments had a long history. Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Ludwig Woltmann, and the other Nordic Aryan racists discussed above were revered by the Nazi Party as their ideological predecessors. The Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg, building on the ideas of Chamberlain and others, had wondered in his 1927 work *The Future of German Foreign Policy (Der Zukunftsweg einer deutschen Aussenpolitik)* if the Italians had enough "Aryan" blood in their veins to make the fascist experiment succeed.⁴⁵ Rosenberg claimed in his address inaugurating the 1934 academic year at the University of Munich that Europe had received its culture "five times consecutively from the 'Nordic epicentrum.'"⁴⁶ Rosenberg wrote that the Germans had defended the Aryan race from the legions of Varius, which were not composed of Aryans. Other Nazi writers claimed that Roman law was not a genuine expression of Aryan thought and civilization.⁴⁷ Nordic racism, as discussed above, viewed the downfall of the Roman Empire as a consequence of polluted blood. Thus, the Italians were not a pure race, but a motley hybrid of various races, including the black African. Hitler certainly agreed with these sentiments, and informed Mussolini when the two met in June 1934 that all Mediterranean peoples were tainted by Negro blood.⁴⁸

Mussolini had no illusions regarding these detrimental opinions toward the Italian people. It appears that, from 1933 to 1934 at least, this sort of anti-Italian, Nordic racism came to his mind whenever the *Duce* was asked about "racism" in general. One of the most obvious instances of this is found in his famous conversations with the German Jewish journalist Emil Ludwig in 1932. When asked about his ideas on race, Mussolini exclaimed,

Race! It is a feeling, not a reality; ninety-five percent, at least, is a feeling. Nothing will ever make me believe that biologically pure races can be shown to exist today. Amusingly enough, not one of those who have proclaimed the "nobility" of the Teutonic race was himself a Teuton. Gobineau was a Frenchman, Houston Chamberlain, an Englishman; Woltmann, a Jew; Lapouge, another Frenchman.⁴⁹

Similarly, the Nazi idea of race was rejected by fascism in Mussolini's *Treatise on Fascist Doctrine* and in the *Enciclopedia Italiana* issued by Treccani in 1935.⁵⁰ We should keep in mind that the rejection of Nazi racism should not imply that Mussolini had entirely abandoned his racial ideas. Quite the contrary. In the summer of 1935, Mussolini wrote in *Il Popolo d'Italia* that "[w]e fascists acknowledge the existence of races, their differences and their hierarchy."⁵¹

Whatever inhibitions Mussolini may have had in directly criticizing the Germans vanished on the afternoon of July 25, 1934, when a group of SS men shot and killed the Austrian Chancellor E. Dollfuss in preparation for an attempted *Anschluss*. Mussolini, who regarded himself as the protector of Austria, exploded. He vented his rage at Germany in every way possible for months.

Mussolini was particularly sensitive to German accusations that the Italians were a mongrelized race. He retaliated by mockingly referring to the Germans' own lack of racial purity on a number of occasions. When discussing the Nazi decree that the German people must henceforth carry with them a passport with Aryan or Jewish racial affiliation marked on it, in the summer of 1934, Mussolini wondered how they would designate membership in the "Germanic" race:

But which race? Does there exist a German race? Has it ever existed? Will it ever exist? Reality, myth, or hoax of the theorists? (Another parenthesis: the theoretician of racism is a 100 percent Frenchman: Gobineau.)

Ah well, we respond, a Germanic race does not exist. Various movements. Curiosity. Stupor. We repeat. Does not exist. We don't say so. Scientists say so. Hitler says so.⁵²

He also invoked the scientific veracity of anthropology to support his critique of Nazi racial theory:

a few days or so ago, the famous anthropologist Sir Grafton Elliot Smith, speaking to a congress of European scientists, did not scruple to declare that the Nazi doctrines of a "pure race," or Aryan if you will, "falls in flagrant conflict with the recognized teachings of anthropological science."

Science, therefore, does not guarantee the "purity" of anyone's blood.⁵³

In 1933–4, during the worst period of Italo-German relations in the fascist era, Mussolini emphasized Italy's Mediterranean nature, its affinity for other Latin countries, and fascist antipathy for Nazi racial theory. In a speech to the Florentine *Camicie Nere* on October 23, 1933, he referred to the Italians as

Our Latin and Mediterranean race, that I want to exalt before us, because it is the race that has given to the world, among thousands of others, Caesar, Dante, Michelangelo, Napoleon. It is an ancient and strong race of creators and builders, individual and universal at the same time. . . .⁵⁴

Mussolini now claimed that the deficiencies of Nazism were a consequence of a spiritually impoverished people. Mussolini called National Socialism “a revolution of the old German tribes of the primeval forest against the Latin civilization of Rome.”⁵⁵ He criticized the supposition of the German people that they were “the only survivors of Atlantis, and consequently German civilization is the benefactor of humanity. . . .”⁵⁶ Indeed, as the *Duce* saw it, “Thirty centuries of history permits us to regard with sovereign pity those doctrines from beyond the Alps, sustained by the descendants of peoples who were ignorant of writing . . . when Rome had Caesar, Virgil, and Augustus.”⁵⁷

The Italians considered the arrogant German anti-Italian rhetoric to be a consequence of a deep-seated inferiority complex, brought about by their “parvenu status, lack of culture, and dislike by other peoples.”⁵⁸ Although Italian retorts grew more muted over time, Mussolini continued for three years to denounce Nordicism. On January 31, 1936, Mussolini told the German journalist Roland Strunk that one of the remaining problems in Italo-German relations was “Hitler’s Nordic gospel.”⁵⁹ As late as April 1937, Mussolini told the current Austrian Chancellor, Schuschnigg, that the Italians “do not accept the Nazi racial theories.”⁶⁰ But then again Mussolini never did; even in its most Nordic phase, Italian racism was unique. This would explain his remark a month earlier, to Giorgio Pini, that “As you know, I am a racist.”⁶¹

A number of Mediterraneanist scholars found these particularly anti-German years, from at least 1933 to 1936, to be an excellent time to launch a new offensive against the Nordicists. A declining Giuseppe Sergi returned to the theme of the German falsifiers and their Italian dupes in *Da Alba Longa a Roma*, published in 1934. Ironically, he criticized his Nordic adversaries for making overly abundant use of their vivid imaginations in their reconstruction of the European past, much as did Sergi himself:

The German historians and the Italians who follow them in their critique of the history of Rome and of ancient Italy, repudiate almost scornfully that which the ancient Greeks and Romans wrote about Latium, Rome and the people of Italy who had continuous relations with Latium. Rather, they apply conclusions drawn from the study of Sanskrit and Zend in the last century to ethnography and linguistics, almost as a matter of course. Thus with the Indo-European languages they created the people also called Indo-Europeans, and from these they constituted a hegemonic branch, the Germanics, from which derives the aggregate name Indogermanic. The Indogermanics were therefore the originators of European culture [*il vessillifero in Europa*], especially where ancient civilization was born and developed, i.e., in Greece and in Italy. In this way they invented fables that are much more marvelous than those attributed to the ancient writers. In spite of the fact that major corrections have abolished the gross errors of the first Indogermanists, disgracing the Italian historians, a few certainly, and the glottologists that studied the ancient Italic languages, they have not liberated themselves from μυθολογεῖν, in Latin *fabulavi*, and continued playing

together with some Germans the same music, believing as infallible dogma the ethnographic aberrations on which they formed their science, which is archaic and long since surpassed. From this fable, the foundation of a multitude of errors, is derived the belief in the migrations into Italy of Indo-European Italic peoples, of a germanized type, that brought their Italic language, a branch of the common Indo-European language, and the seeds of Latin civilization; Rome was thus founded by Indogermanic Italians ... and the fable continues!⁶²

Sergi's anti-Nordic Mediterraneanism found an influential fascist supporter during these years in Nicola Pende. Pende was born on April 12, 1880, at Noicattaro in Bari province. He studied medicine and surgery, and rose rapidly through the ranks of clinical and university administration. He first came to national attention by successfully treating King Victor Emmanuel III's daughter for anorexia.⁶³ Pende played a principal role in the science of constitutionalism or orthogenesis, a unique version of eugenics. In orthogenesis, techniques from anthropology, pathology, sociology, and other sciences are used to monitor individual or collective development. Development could be guided by changes in nutrition, environment, and hormonal balance, leading ultimately to racial improvement. In 1928 he organized the Biotypological–Orthogenetical Institute at the medical clinic of the University of Genoa which was dedicated to orthogenetic research. His own research in the new field of endocrinology would propel him to international fame. Pende became a fascist in 1924, and was made a Senator of Italy in 1932.⁶⁴

Stemming from his work in eugenics, Pende was also interested in racial studies. In 1931, he approached Mussolini with a proposal to systematically study the biotypology and psychology of the different ethnic groups in Italy. The Biotypological Institute sponsored studies by Pende and others on the physiology and psychology of various racial groups of Liguria. The goal of these studies was to

furnish a new base, stronger perhaps than that furnished by history, traditions, and economic and political reasons, on which to found *the Latin spiritual and especially Mediterranean unity*, that has been, in all periods of history, the eternal source of the true civilization and peace in the world.

They concluded, rather fancifully, that 65 percent of the Ligurian population was racially identifiable. Of these people, 35 percent belonged to the Alpine race, 27 percent were Mediterranean, 20 percent were East Baltic, 15 percent were Nordic, and 2–3 percent were purely Dinaric. South of the Rome–Ancona transverse, Italy was predominantly Mediterranean. Pende believed that, overall, relatively few Italians were of Nordic descent.

Pende eventually decided that differences in endocrine biology among the various races could explain their psychology. He imagined an elaborate, and rather ludicrous, racial psychology that seemed to find its inspiration more in politics than in endocrine systems. Due to effects of the sun and the sea on their thyroid glands, he claimed, the Mediterraneans were hot, passionate, intuitive, with an

easily exhausted will, yet rich in imagination and creative energies in every spiritual discipline. On the other hand, the Nordic peoples had strong thyroid and thymo-lymphatic glands, giving them a vivacious, adventurous, irritable, ascetic, solitary, mystic character, tending toward an abstractionism that separated feeling from intellect. They had a greater synergism with nature than did other races. They often had an insufficiency of hypophysial and adrenal gland secretions, giving them a persistent puerile personality, a romantic – instinctive psychology filled with fantastic dreams. They tended to have the temperaments of artists, geniuses and heroes, but with little sense of reality, changeable in humor and sentiments, going from extreme optimism to extreme pessimism and nihilism. We should pay particular attention to Pende's insistence on the connections between the environment and racial biology. Such environmental racism would become a standard feature of Italian racism by the late 1930s.

Pende claimed that the three “brown-haired” races, the Mediterraneans, Alpines, and Dinarics, have a natural affinity among themselves and a natural antipathy to the blond races (Nordics and Baltics). The greater fecundity of the former explains why they had been able to assimilate or throw back from the Mediterranean basin various blond invaders.

The three brown-haired races also had a biologically based affinity with Roman culture. Among them

the grand idea of Rome has found its fertile biotypological humus; while never in history has such an idea succeeded in being cultivated by the Nordic and Slavic soul, the soul of the two blonde races, so different, for biological reasons, from the descendants of Rome.⁶⁵

Pende described the interrelationship of the Mediterraneans, the Nordics, and Roman civilization in a speech given at a conference in Nice, France, on January 5, 1934, at the height of Mussolini's anti-German hysteria:

The true destiny of the circum-Mediterranean peoples is to reconstitute the *Latin Mediterranean spiritual unity*, from one side of the Mediterranean sea to the other, a Mediterranean unity that can cause the renewed brilliance of the first great and multi-sided civilization that from the eastern Mediterranean through Greece and Rome and our Renaissance has paved the way for humanity at all times with its great and truly human, that is ethnic, principles. And with such a Mediterranean civilization, founded on the reconstituted Mediterranean spirituality, Rome and its Duce want to counteract, for the sake of world peace, the type of civilization based on machines and economic individualism, civilization of Nordic origin, that brought the world the disaster of the Great War and the great modern material and spiritual crises. Such a type of civilization, for biological reasons of race, as well as for historical reasons, can no longer be tolerated by those nations in whose blood lives and will always live the germ of the physical and psychic greatness of immortal Rome.⁶⁶

Pende kept up this line as much as he dared even as Italo-German relations improved. In an article dealing with “the Mediterranean mentality in the new medicine of Imperial Italy” published in 1936, Pende maintained that modern medical thought in Italy was

essentially Mediterranean thought, which descends from the immortal Italic school on the banks of the Ionian sea, in other words it is harmonious and equilibrated. Its power is founded on numbers and order, whereas the political as well as the religious thought and medical philosophy of the Nordic races, not impregnated with Latin and Mediterranean civilization, are characterized by disharmony, disorder, and by the dissociation of body and spirit.⁶⁷

Pende was one of Italy’s staunchest Mediterraneanists. As we shall see in Chapter 5, except for one brief moment when he signed the Manifesto of the Racial Scientists, he would stay true to his convictions in the face of a withering Nordic counterattack.

4 The implementation of Nordic racism in Italy, 1936–1938

You know and everyone knows that also on the question of race we will follow the correct path. To say that fascism has imitated someone or something is simply absurd.

Benito Mussolini, July 30, 1938

Duce! When I was alone, and gained the attention of all of Europe, I had in Italy the hostility of all of your secret enemies. Now that the principles developed by me have become official dogma, I am copied, exploited, gingerly plucked aside by the latest prophets, put in a corner and absolutely forgotten. You know to what I allude. I refuse to believe that this is fascist justice.¹

Letter, Giulio Cogni to Benito Mussolini, August 7, 1938

DUCE, I ask you to hear the plea of a young man of 27 years, who by your orders compiled the Manifesto which officially began the racial politics of fascism, who was Head of the Racial Office in the most bitter period of fighting and arguments and who taught racial politics at the highest school of the P.N.F.!

Letter, Guido Landra to Benito Mussolini, September 27, 1940

We must fight and fight until the end.

Lidio Cipriani to Guido Landra, July 15, 1938

Given Mussolini's public antipathy towards racism in the early 1930s, why did he decide to inject it full force into Italian society in July 1938? This question has preoccupied historians of fascist racism since the middle of the twentieth century. Thus, it is worth while to pause for a moment to consider the variety of explanations offered by prominent historians. Originally, many scholars believed that Italian fascist racism was a largely artificial creation of the Italo-German alliance. Antonio Spinosa, one of the first to examine the problem comprehensively, charged that

This politics [of the Italo-German alliance] crowned by the declaration of war against Great Britain and France, is the cause of the Italian racist campaign wanted by the leaders of the Gross-Deutsches Reich. The more one examines the documents of the epoch one finds only gauges of how fascist racism was born automatically from the foreign politics of the regime,

and also, even if there were not more precise elements [of similarity], there would be enough of a coincidence in certain dates to convince the most skeptical.²

The great historian Renzo De Felice, while essentially agreeing with this assessment in his earlier work, added several secondary factors:

In this “conversion” [to anti-Semitism] the weight of the Nazis and of Germany was determinant, but not direct ... with this we do not wish to say that from the Nazi side there had not been pressures because Italy allied itself even in the subject of race with Germany, though it was indirect; one side waved the “Jewish threat” at every step and let the *facts* demonstrate to Mussolini the impossibility that between the allies there could be a very strident diversity of attitude ...; from the other side there were those notoriously anti-Semitic fascists, such as Preziosi, to serve as instruments of pressure on Mussolini, or those who out of conviction or personal interest in the Italo-German alliance made [anti-Semitism] their political *trump*.³

A. James Gregor made much the same point. Mussolini was unable, in 1933, to convince Hitler that racism was unproductive, yet eventually decided that an alliance with Germany was highly desirable. Thus, Mussolini “decided to accommodate the National Socialists by introducing anti-Semitic legislation in Italy as evidence of his good faith. He conceived it an offering calculated to solidify the Italo-German alliance.” In this way, “Mussolini’s anti-Jewish attitude was dictated not by theoretical but almost solely by tactical, i.e., political, considerations.” This shift toward racism effectuated by political considerations unleashed “a biologism latent in the writings of some nationalists.”⁴ Almost a decade later, in Meir Michaelis’s book *Mussolini and the Jews*, we continue to hear the same theme:

His [Mussolini’s] sudden declaration of war on the Jews was not a logical consequence of his population policy or his ban on miscegenation, but a somewhat precipitate attempt to bring his domestic policy into line with Italy’s changed alignment in Europe; the doctrinal basis of his anti-Jewish crusade was German racial theory, despite his indignant denials.⁵

Thus “the fascist regime passed from anti-racialism to racial anti-Semitism on the German model ... [through] the impact of German–Italian relations on the evolution of the racial question in Italy.”⁶

I would contest this interpretation of Mussolini’s rationale for adopting racism. Like the Germans, Mussolini considered non-European peoples inferior to whites. But because the spiritual element was so important to Mussolini’s racism, he outrightly rejected National Socialist racism, which was based on the importance of physical uniformity. Unlike National Socialism, Italian fascism was imbued with philosophical idealism, and so gave prominence to the historical, voluntaristic, and spiritual elements of its worldview. The Germanic concept of race as a fixed,

static, and unalterable biological entity (except for the impact of miscegenation or eugenics) was always alien to Mussolini.⁷

This point has led to considerable confusion among some scholars. Mussolini's disparaging remarks about German racism during his anti-German phase of 1933–4 have often been highlighted in comparison to his adoption of racist ideology in 1938 as evidence that he had no real ideas about intra-European racism except to use it as a tool of diplomacy.⁸ This assertion is untrue. As I have shown, Mussolini had very definite ideas about race, which conflicted sharply with those advocated by National Socialism.

Several scholars have suggested motivations other than German appeasement for Mussolini's 1938 embrace of racism. Luigi Preti claimed in 1968 that Italian fascist racism was born from fears of miscegenation with non-Europeans (including Africans and Jews), as the fascists themselves had always insisted.⁹ This explanation has found increasing acceptance, as elaborated on by such scholars as Luigi Goglia. In 1977, Gene Bernardini made it a point to downplay German influence on the Italian decision to adopt racism:

His [Mussolini's] decision to formulate a policy which would weld together racism and anti-Semitism was purely voluntary and flowed naturally from the confluence of Italy's imperial policies, the ideological tenets of fascism, and Italian national interests as enunciated by the Duce. It was not, as some observers believed, imposed upon Mussolini by official German pressure.¹⁰

In the end, Bernardini credits Mussolini's desire to remain the ideological leader of world fascism as the reason for his decision to join the racist campaign that had already been joined by upstart fascist movements in Germany, Hungary, and elsewhere.¹¹ Dante Germino agreed with Preti that Mussolini introduced racism in order to avoid miscegenation with the colonial peoples, but added a new twist: racism was a tool used to deepen the "state terrorism" forced on the Italian people. Thus, Germino concludes, "it is more nearly true to call fascist racism a result of the inner workings of the fascist system – and of the development of fascist ideology – than an imitation of totally foreign developments."¹²

My own interpretation is quite different. Up to the mid-1930s, Mussolini's concepts of race were essentially eugenic in nature. Yet, after the conquest of Ethiopia, as world tensions increased with the growing prospect of another world war looming over Europe, he became frustrated with the lack of progress his eugenic campaign had made thus far. It seemed to him that the Italian people had refused to submit, body and soul, to their fascist transformation. In particular, Mussolini hated the bourgeoisie for commitment only to urban comforts and materialist acquisitions, rather than the stern and Roman virtues of sacrifice for the state and martial ardor.¹³ As Giuseppe Bottai observed, "Mussolini had an all but good opinion about the people he governed, in spite of the public elegies and attestations of esteem. He in reality felt himself in a state of permanent war against the alleged 'Italian character.'" "His antagonist"– observed Bottai – "is the people, of which he would wish to revise history, to remake them in his own

way. . . .”¹⁴ Furthermore, “The Duce accused the Italians of resisting ‘to think and to see greatness.’”¹⁵

In an effort to accelerate the pace and degree of change he desired, Mussolini developed a number of programs that became increasingly radical as time went on. This included the so-called “Reform of Customs,” which he announced on October 25, 1938 in a speech to the National Council of the Fascist Party. He proclaimed that fascism would attack the Italian bourgeoisie, adopt the goose step (legitimized as the “passo romano”), encourage the use of the more “Italian” *voi* instead of *Lei* as the second person plural, and give their party a racial ideology.¹⁶

Most importantly, racism would be used as a tool to accomplish this transformation. Mussolini thought it would strengthen the consciousness of the Italian identity, remind them of the imperial might of their ancestors, and foster the ardent desire to conquer new territories.¹⁷ Racism would become the key driving force behind the creation of the new fascist man, the *uomo fascista*.

Renzo De Felice came to much the same conclusion. As he demonstrates, by 1938 Mussolini frequently expressed to his colleagues his great disappointment at the lack of transformation in the Italians thus far and a greater determination to force that transformation. Italians were to be converted into a race of warriors and conquerors.¹⁸ Italians, he claimed, were too “weak and anarchic.” They were a “gesticulating, chattering, superficial, carnivalesque country.”¹⁹ The fascist revolution would create “a new type of Italian.”²⁰ Mussolini deplored those who didn’t “*feel* their race.” From a “race of slaves” he wanted to create a “race of masters [no doubt referring to Nietzsche’s writings on this subject in *Beyond Good and Evil*].” He explained to Ciano that “the revolution must now etch itself into the customs of the Italians. They need to learn to be less ‘nice,’ to become hard, implacable, hated. That is, masters.”²¹

Thus, by 1938 Mussolini’s ideas on the need for Italian racial transformation had become considerably more radical than they had been ten years before. By the late 1930s, Mussolini believed that races could be fundamentally altered, both physically and psychologically, through the application of eugenics programs, combined with intense environmental pressure for behavioral change. Mussolini’s concept of racial evolution flowed quite naturally from his belief in Lamarckian inheritance, where environmental factors and even ideas or Sorelian-type myths could so impact a population as to change its hereditary constitution.

World War II seemed to Mussolini another opportunity to intensify the re-creation of the Italians.²² Ciano told Bottai soon after Italy’s entry into the war that Mussolini “lives in this war in a state of metaphysical exaltation, as if his goal was that of hardening, by exertions and sacrifice, the Italians.”²³ At the beginning of 1943, Bottai reported that Mussolini continued to harp (“it is his fixed obsession”) on the “defects of the race, that have not been corrected after 20 years.”²⁴

Julius Evola, who had an intimate knowledge of Mussolini’s racial views during the war, agreed that Mussolini was interested in racial myths as a tool to transform the Italian people:

Mussolini hoped that his “revolution” would not simply be political, but could create a new type of Italian. In order to survive and affirm itself the movement needed, besides a state, a human substance corresponding to it. He recognized that the racial myth and the myth of the blood offered possibilities to realize these goals.²⁵

Evola was himself inspired by the concept of the Sorelian myth, and united it to Mussolini’s eugenics goals in a manner that attracted the attention of the *Duce* in the early 1940s. Mussolini underlined the passage in his copy of Evola’s *Sintesi di dottrina della razza* which claimed that

An idea, given that it acts with sufficient intensity and continuity in a given historical climate and in a given collectivity, finishes by giving place to a “race of the soul” and, with the persistence of action, causes to appear in the generations that immediately follow a new common physical type, which can be considered, from a certain point of view, as a new race.²⁶

Mussolini, for his part, enthusiastically endorsed Evola’s ideas about race, based on his reading of Evola’s *Sintesi*. Mussolini underlined several other passages in the book which seemed to validate the possibility that the Italians could be racially transformed: “[what is needed is a] dynamic theory, rather than static, of race and of heredity ... [that allows for the] elevation of relatively inferior races through various cycles of heredity.”²⁷

Quite clearly, Mussolini sought to elevate Romanità as a myth with the power to transform the Italian race. As Julius Evola recognized

The theory of the Aryo-Roman race and its corresponding myth could integrate the Roman idea proposed, in general, by fascism, as well as give a foundation to Mussolini’s plan to use his state as a means to elevate the average Italian and to enucleate in him a new man.²⁸

As I have demonstrated, the Romanità myth had a very long pedigree, existing long before the birth of fascism. Mussolini believed that the myth had pride of place in fascism. This is demonstrated by such articles of faith as the entry on “fascism” in the 1932 edition of the *Enciclopedia Italiana*: “the fascist exaltation of ancient Rome and the spiritual values represented by it ... became one of the central motives of fascism.”²⁹

Once Mussolini was in power, he increasingly funded institutes and studies dedicated to Romanità, the most important of which was the Istituto Nazionale di Cultura Fascista (or INCF).³⁰ The Institute was created in December 1925 by the prominent Italian fascist philosopher Giovanni Gentile. Its purpose was to channel the energy of the intelligentsia into activities directed by the Fascist Party. Over time, it grew to become an enormous propaganda organization with 104 provincial sections and 700 subsections. Much of its work in this period concentrated on a reinterpretation of the Italian past according to fascism, with the

concept of Romanità playing a central role. In 1937 Gentile was replaced by Pietro De Francisci, Rector of the University of Rome and member of the national directory of the PNF, who was well known as a disciple of Romanità.

Scholars at the INCF focused on two basic goals: justifying fascist policies based on Roman precursors; and proving that Italian civilization was directly descended from ancient Rome. The first goal was fulfilled through exegesis on Rome's imperial mission, its martial spirit, and its traditional values. The second goal was realized through a blizzard of historical revisionary works that stressed the "spiritual unity" of the Italian people throughout the ages. Arrigo Solmi, the noted legal historian, Undersecretary of National Education, and Minister of Justice in 1932, wrote several works of this genera. In his *Discorsi sulla storia d'Italia*, for example, Solmi claimed that the barbarian invasions left Italy "whole or almost whole" and did not succeed in "extinguishing the energies of the race"; rather, Italy had always evinced an "uninterrupted continuity."³¹

As the 1930s wore on, proponents of Romanità were conscripted into the campaign to re-create the Italian people. Giuseppe Bottai, the Minister of Education, wrote in *Quaderni di studi romani* that "We don't want as much to *inform ourselves* about [ancient] Rome, as to be *formed* by Rome: form ourselves by a contemporary application of its unifying, coordinating, disciplinary energy."³²

Beginning in 1938, the INCF made its vast resources available for the racial campaign, organizing conferences and courses on racism and devoting its editorial facilities to propagating racism.³³ Prominent publishing endeavors included the authoritative cultural journal *Civiltà Fascista* and the "Notebooks" on racial studies. At least until 1940, when the Nordacist Camillo Pellizi became its Director, the INCF emphasized those racial theories based on Romanità, nativism, and Mediterraneanism.³⁴

Surprisingly, Mussolini decided to synthesize the Nordic Aryan myth with Romanità in his new racial model. This development was quite extraordinary, and seemed shocking to many fascists. The addition of the Aryan myth to fascism was considered by some to have been a poor graft of an intrinsically foreign doctrine onto an otherwise organically whole and sound body of ideology. It also highlighted Mussolini's volatile and increasingly isolated decision-making process.

Nevertheless, Mussolini saw in German Aryanism a motivating myth that seemed to answer Italy's need for a militaristic model. Romanità and Mediterranean racial theories had apparently not been sufficiently inspirational. The Italians required a fiercer, more militaristic, model, and presumably also one that existed in the present, rather than in the ancient past. As the new Reichswehr took shape under Hitler, it seemed that such a militaristic model was at hand. Fulvio Suvich recalled in his memoirs that Mussolini did not feel sympathetic toward the "Prussian spirit," which was repugnant to his Latin and Catholic cultural background, yet could not help but admire the national and military enthusiasm of the Germans.³⁵ Mussolini had respect and admiration for the sense of discipline and organizational capacity of the German people.³⁶ His new admiration for the Germans was inspired on a trip he took to Germany on September 25–9, 1937. The visit included a series of dazzling displays of German discipline,

hardiness, and military prowess.³⁷ As he strongly admired these qualities and wished them for his own people, he began his fateful promotion of Italian Nordic racism, and pointed to the Nordics as racial models in the Manifesto of the Racial Scientists in July 1938.³⁸

Mussolini had always resented the inferiority complex many Italians felt based on German and Anglo-Saxon racial propaganda. By Nordicizing the Italians, he now took an “if you can’t beat them, join them” attitude. German propaganda against the non-Nordic peoples certainly wouldn’t sting if Mussolini decided that the Italians were themselves Nordic. The Italians could now bask in the prestige of the Nordic race, as proclaimed by many of the German, French, and Anglo-Saxon racist circles. Mussolini’s blind conviction to assert this racial identity would reach a fever pitch in the summer of 1938, when the racial campaign was launched in earnest. The Aryan element was at that time awkwardly added to the fascist myth in an attempt to translate German martial values into the Italian psyche.

This Nordic transformation was probably aided by his low esteem for Southern Italians, the most indisputably “Mediterranean” element of Italy. Of course, Mussolini was himself a Northerner, from Romagna. Early in his premiership of Italy, Mussolini told Sem Benelli that he had “low esteem for Neapolitans in particular and southerners in general, exclaiming that, from Tuscany on down, the Italians, deep down, were not willing to do anything to be Italians.”³⁹

Thus, after 1936, when Italy was chained ever more tightly to its aggressive German neighbor, and Mussolini felt waves of admiration for the German military juggernaut, we find that the Italian people are transfigured into paragons of the Aryan race. One of the most striking examples of the new racial orthodoxy transpired during a meeting in June 1938 between Mussolini, Guido Landra, Dino Alfieri, and probably Giuseppe Bottai, the Minister of Education. At the meeting, Mussolini identified himself as a Nordic, and declared that Aryanism would replace Mediterraneanism in fascist propaganda.⁴⁰

Of course, we must ask: how was racism *per se*, rather than simply eugenics, expected to further the process of the racial transformation of the Italians? As Michel Wievorka has observed, movements that advance a strong, totalizing national identity often attempt to realize their goals by utilizing the tools of difference and rupture, separating the sacred “in-group” from the reviled “out-group.” Émile Durkheim described racism as a scapegoat strategy, which begins in a crisis or a dysfunctional society and targets a human group defined by a representation that has nothing to do with its objective characteristics.⁴¹ Etienne Balibar describes the ultimate outcome of this process:

by seeking to circumscribe the common sense of a people, racism thus inevitably becomes involved in the obsessive quest for a “core” of authenticity that cannot be found, shrinks the category of nationality and de-stabilizes the historical nation.⁴²

It is obvious that fascism sought to use the concept of the “Italian race” to unify the country, and separate the “true” Italians from their internal enemies. The target of this racist assault, the “out-group” fascists sought to identify and excoriate, was of course the Italian Jews. Though Mussolini refused to establish the sort of intra-European racial hierarchies so beloved of the Nazi racists, he was, most unfortunately, willing to see the innocent suffer as part of his scheme to “harden” the Italians. Quite likely, Mussolini believed that it would be useful to single out an Italian minority as “racially different” and inferior, the better to galvanize the Italians in the model of the new fascist man. As Mussolini told Emil Ludwig in 1932, “Every society ... needs a certain proportion of citizens who have to be detested.”⁴³

Probably the idea to single out the Jews for racist attack was an extension of Mussolini’s long-existing anti-Africanism, as I discussed above. Mussolini’s antipathy toward Africans grew out of his more diffuse fear of the fecundity of non-white races discussed earlier. As the invasion of Ethiopia neared, Mussolini became obsessed with an anxiety over instances of miscegenation between Italians and Africans, producing mixed-race children. Such instances, though still rare, already occurred in the Italian colonies of Eritrea and Somalia. Mussolini’s state of mind was revealed to Baron Pompeo Aloisi, who when he called on the *Duce* on April 2, 1934, found him “very upset” by his discovery of a book, *Amore Nero (Black Love)*, that dealt with a love affair between an Italian and a black woman. Mussolini had the book immediately withdrawn from circulation.⁴⁴

On August 5, 1936, only several months after the conquest of Ethiopia, a decree was issued outlining the system of racial separation that would now characterize Italian East Africa. Beginning with the fundamental provision that “the lives of whites and blacks should be completely separate in Italian East Africa,” it went on to specify the details of this program: “gradual separation of the habitations of nationals and indigents”; “avoidance of all familiarity between the two races”; segregation of public space; and the end of “madamismo” (concubines) and “sciarmuttismo” (biracial children). The police were instructed to enforce these provisions with “extreme rigor,” and anyone who was so bold as to live with or act married to a native would be deported. Until the anticipated arrival of Italian women in Africa created the conditions appropriate for proper family life, brothels staffed by Italian prostitutes were set up for the Italian soldiers. Not surprisingly, natives were absolutely forbidden to patronize them.⁴⁵

Due to his dislike of the non-white races, one of the reasons Mussolini decided to elevate racism to an official ideology was to prevent miscegenation between Italians and non-white peoples, especially in Italian East Africa. As the *Duce* informed the world, “For the Pope souls have no color, but for us faces have color.”⁴⁶ Indeed, Mussolini himself often claimed that the reason he decided to enshrine racism as a fascist principle was to further the goals of his racist colonial empire:

The racial problem did not suddenly burst out as those who are habituated to brusque awakenings – because they are used to long armchair naps – would

believe. It is in relation to the conquest of empire; since history teaches us that the empires are conquered with armies, but are held by prestige. And for prestige it is necessary to have a clear, severe racial consciousness, that establishes not only the differences, but also the clear superiority [of the imperial race].⁴⁷

Mussolini quite clearly explained to the Italian people that his anti-African policies were meant to solidify Italian racial consciousness and solidarity, two prerequisites he undoubtedly considered essential for the birth of the new fascist Italian race:

Naturally, when a people becomes conscious of its own racial identity, it does so in relation to all the races, not of one alone. We became racially conscious only in the face of the Hamites, that is to say, the Africans. The lack of racial dignity had very grave consequences in Amara. It was one of the causes of the revolt of the Amaranans. The Amaranans had no interest in rebelling against Italian rule, no interest in doing so. The proof of this is that during the Ethiopian conquest five thousand Amaranans, well armed, welcomed comrade Starace, when he descended from the plane, with manifestations of obedience and enthusiasm. But when they saw that the Italians were more ragged than themselves, that they lived in tuculs, that they raped their women, etc. they said: “This is not a race that brings civilization.” And since the Amara are the most aristocratic race in Ethiopia, they rebelled.

These things probably the Catholics don’t know, but we know. This is why the racial laws of the empire will be rigorously observed and that all who sin against them will be expelled, punished, imprisoned. Because for the empire to be preserved the natives must be clearly and forcefully aware of our superiority.⁴⁸

While we can quite easily trace Mussolini’s paranoia in respect of Africans, his decision to use the Italian Jews as the internal nemesis is rather less easy to explain. Mussolini had only occasionally shown hints of an anti-Semitic attitude before 1936, at the earliest. He cautiously tested the waters for popular and international reaction toward an anti-Semitic campaign that was only unleashed with full fury in the summer and fall of 1938. But why would Mussolini want to disrupt his nation, risk generating domestic and international animosity, and alienate the opinion of the small but important Jewish population of Italy? Scholars have proposed many possible answers to explain this *volte-face*. Mussolini and the fascists always claimed that the laws against the Jews were but a logical extension of the African racial laws.⁴⁹ Mussolini was aware that some Jews or Jewish organizations abroad were opposed to the Ethiopian conquest.⁵⁰ Certainly Mussolini did not undertake the anti-Semitic campaign at the behest of the Germans. Ciano, for instance, recalled that the Germans had never encouraged the Italians to initiate an anti-Semitic campaign.⁵¹

Perhaps a more subtle cause might involve the rising tide of invective hurled at those with a “bourgeois mentality” that the fascists feared were too comfortable and moderate to follow the *Duce* into the brave new world of the fascist supermen.⁵² Jews were frequently stereotyped as representing the epitome of bourgeois decadence, afraid of physical labor, military service, and hardship. Thus, their exclusion from Italian society could serve as a warning to others who “shared” such values. Mussolini told Ciano that “the fight against these powerful forces [the Jews] . . . serves to give the Italians a backbone.”⁵³

Thus it is likely that the anti-Semitic campaign, at least in its early years, was really meant as only one component of an overall larger program. We must remember that Guido Landra, the architect of the Racial Manifesto which outlined the new racial program, was struck by the relatively small space given in Mussolini’s racial thought to the “Jewish Question”; during their conversation the *Duce* devoted “only a couple of phrases to it,” while otherwise spending hours discussing Mediterraneanism, Aryanism, and sundry other topics.⁵⁴ Mussolini maintained, in his speech to the citizens of Trieste on September 15, 1938, that “the Jewish problem is thus only one aspect of this phenomenon [racism].”⁵⁵ Thus we may conclude that Italian anti-Semitism was initially meant to focus Mussolini’s efforts to change the Italian’s innate mentality, though the persecution of the Jews would soon grow to enormous proportions, and take on a life of its own.

It is interesting to note that Mussolini intuitively perceived that convincing the Italian people to wholeheartedly embrace anti-Semitic racism and the Nordic myth was a risky enterprise fraught with potentially grave consequences. Thus, he appears to have decided as early as 1936 not to introduce racism as an official fascist dogma *per se*, but to allow some young unknown scholar to take center stage, advance a racial theory with the *Duce*’s tacit approval and thereafter instigate a national debate on the matter. If the nation seemed willing to accept the theory at this juncture, it could then be formally sanctioned by the regime. Such may have been the plan Mussolini had in mind when he first learned about the work of a young Italian philosophy teacher then working in Germany, Dr Giulio Cogni.

Cogni was born in Sienna on January 10, 1908. His family was of “good social and economic condition.” He graduated in law, and then turned to philosophical studies. He studied with Giovanni Gentile, who held him in high regard. He then taught philosophy at the *liceo* of Perugia, left to teach Italian at a university in France, then moved on to direct an Italo-German cultural institute in Hamburg.

His first book, *Saggio sull'Amore, come nuovo principio di immortalità*, was published in 1933. Through a confusing exposition, it sought to define true love as the union of two individuals by a sort of mystical phagocytosis reminiscent of the act of eating the Eucharist. The Church did not appreciate the analogy, and promptly placed the book on the Index of Prohibited Books.

Undaunted, Cogni continued to write, and took an interest in racism after moving to Germany through a scholarly exchange program. While there, Cogni found

himself entranced by Nazi Germany's racism, and he thereupon set out to create his own Italianized version. Cogni's efforts gained the attention of Telesio Interlandi. When Mussolini apparently first decided to launch a racial campaign in Italy, in 1936, Interlandi arranged for Mussolini to meet Cogni and hear him out.⁵⁶ The two met sometime shortly before September 11, 1936. At the meeting, Mussolini encouraged Cogni to continue his studies on race, an encouragement that galvanized him.⁵⁷

On September 11, 1936 Cogni sent Mussolini the first copy of his book *Il Razzismo*. In his note to the *Duce*, Cogni promised that "all of my work and all of my life are in your hands. . . ." Cogni hoped that he would be at the center of the forthcoming racial campaign in Italy, and proposed an eclectic variety of ambitious projects to diffuse racial propaganda throughout the peninsula. He wanted to write articles for the great daily newspapers and illustrated magazines, set up a library dedicated to race, and hold a series of conferences dedicated to racism. He foresaw courses on racial philosophy at various Italian universities, modeled after the German *Völkerkunde*. To strengthen ties between Italy and Germany, he proposed conferences in Germany on the Italian race.

Furthermore, he suggested that Dino Alfieri (the Minister of Press and Propaganda) should have him write the screenplay and select the music for a great documentary film on the Italian race, "not purely photographic but developed dramatically through the themes of myth and history." He envisioned that the film would be "a grandiose and moving work of art, of which no precedent exists in Europe."⁵⁸

Mussolini, however, had not been very impressed by Cogni. A note written on September 11, 1936, in Mussolini's handwriting, opines that Cogni "does not have any special merit."⁵⁹ Ironically, many of Cogni's ideas would actually find their way into official dogma several years later.

Cogni published *Il Razzismo* at the beginning of 1937, closely followed by *I valori della stirpe Italiana*. These works sought to simplistically combine neo-Hegelian idealism derived from Giovanni Gentile with Nazi racial determinism. Cogni borrowed many of his ideas from Alfred Rosenberg's *Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts* plus elements from Hans Günther, a prominent German racial theoretician with whom Cogni had a close relationship.⁶⁰

Cogni has often been characterized as a die-hard biological determinist, but this is not accurate. In fact, he showed many signs of the spiritual racism that would later captivate Mussolini. For Cogni, body and spirit were inseparable. Each was a manifestation of the other, and each reflected the other. "The truth of racism" was the fundamental recognition of spiritual values "in our corporeal reality."⁶¹

The primary unifying principle of any group was its racial identity. Cogni believed that race was the primordial substance of humankind.⁶² One could no more escape one's racial identity than one could one's own body. And, given the unity of the corporeal and spiritual facets of reality, each racial group had a particular psychology inherent in its being.

Naturally, given this model, each race had a readily identifiable mentality. Nordics were reserved, serious, solemn, introverted, and honorable. They were

nature-loving and anti-urban, a sort of natural-born environmentalists.⁶³ The German Romantic movement had been the greatest expression of the Romantic genius in history. Through it, the German soul had ascended to the Absolute.⁶⁴

Mediterraneans had certain differences. They were cold-blooded, but passionate. They were given to a more spontaneous sensuality. Unlike the calm or placid Nordics, they were vivacious and extroverted. Due most likely to the infiltration of Asiatics in Roman times and the later Arab invasions, the Mediterraneans of Southern Italy had become polluted with orientalizing tendencies. They were given to intellectualism, oriental transcendence, mysticism, and superstition. Their spirit often had a melancholy and sensual side. Southern Italy displayed the regional particularism of mixed races.⁶⁵

Cogni's chief difficulty lay in the fact that, having now detailed the profound differences between Nordics and Mediterraneans, he was forced through political exigencies to reconcile the two groups: after all, his goal was to prove the fundamental racial unity of Germany and Italy. Through a transparently facile coincidence, that both Nordics and Southern Italians were highly dolicocephalic, Cogni asserted that they were closely related racial groups, and hence were also spiritually similar. As Cogni wrote, "between us and the Nordics there is a great deal of fundamental affinity, and all of the history of the spirit demonstrates this." Cogni conveniently ignored the fact that many other races were also strongly dolicocephalic, such as Australian Aborigines and many African tribes.⁶⁶

Cogni ascribed the usual set of superior intellectual and moral virtues to the dolicocephalics. They were generally responsible for what is best in European civilization.⁶⁷ Cogni resorted to environmental causes to explain the psychological differences between Nordics and Mediterraneans noted above. Because of the Italian climate, the Italian people had become extroverted and publicly oriented. The Germans, living in a much colder climate, evolved into a more reflective, introverted race. Once a people had adapted to their environment, any sudden environmental change, such as relocation to a new climatic or geographic region, would cause psychological degeneration. "Every man outside of his own environment, living and mixing with a soul and a country not his own, essentially worsens. Every man that establishes himself in strange lands, generally loses a part of his spontaneity and his own life."⁶⁸

Like most Nordicists, Cogni believed that he could understand Italian history through the interplay of racial groups. Though Italy had a large Mediterranean population, particularly in the southern half of the country, it also had a very sizable Nordic component in the North. In fact, according to Cogni, "Nordic doesn't mean Germanic. Germany is one among the most Nordic nations of Europe. Another is without doubt Italy."⁶⁹ To reconcile this apparent heterogeneity, he asserted that out of the combination of the closely related Mediterranean Aryans and Nordic Aryans in Italy arose a superior synthesis of the modern Aryan Italian.

The [racial] intermixing [in Italy] has produced a synthesis: and out of this synthesis has come a new civilization, that is a new harmonious way of life: a great nation, consisting of a great people, one that is truly pure, because it

consciously created itself as a pure entity, just as from contrary elements is born the great purity of chemical synthesis.⁷⁰

Following his German sources, Cogni asserted that the ancient Greeks and Romans were essentially Nordic Aryans. Thus they were proud, intelligent, warlike peoples who built extensive empires. Their decline had two causes: aristocratic interbreeding with the less racially pure lower classes, and the influx of non-Aryan peoples from their empires. For the Romans, degeneration began early on, because of contact with the Asiatic Etruscans. Slaves and concubines “of all races” poured into Roman Italy, and mated with the natives. The decadent Romans even sought out sexual intercourse with exotic peoples, due to their “cosmopolitan psychology.” The children of these unions were inevitably psychologically and physically weak. They pursued “decadent and refined pleasures” rather than their military duties. Christianity only furthered this process, as class and racial barriers melted away. The ancient values of warlike ardor and hard work vanished, and Italy sank into a fatal catatonia.⁷¹

Fortunately for Italy, the barbarian Germanic peoples swept down from the North, and settled in the peninsula, re-Nordicizing the population. Though uncivilized, the barbarians had an elevated spiritual and moral character that harmonized with the native Roman peoples. They shared similar conceptions of the world, of will, and of life. Their philosophical thought, poetry on nature and the cosmos, and ideas about valor and God, for example, showed a close affinity. Both peoples had an immanent conception of life.

The Germans also brought some unique elements to medieval civilization. A new conception of honor, absolute respect for women, a thirst for adventure, the mystery of travel, chivalry, courtly love, and troubadoring were strictly Nordic in their inspiration.⁷² Once the Germanic nobles began to intermarry the native peoples, around AD 1200, a tremendous “creative force” was released from the new synthesis, which led to the glorious achievements of the Renaissance.⁷³

Yet the Italians still remained somewhat poisoned by the earlier miscegenation with inferior peoples. They had not recovered their martial spirit, and so fell under foreign rule once again for over three hundred years. “We have our defects and we are aware of them. They are due for the most part to a minor quantity of less elevated blood mixed in with our own.”⁷⁴ Western civilization itself was under siege. Using Spengler and the anti-Semites as his sources, Cogni bemoaned the spread of philosophical materialism, Marxism, consumerism, mechanism, empiricism, democracy, and arid analytical intellectualism beginning in the nineteenth century. The cult of the hero was lost, along with the values of hierarchy, ideal courage, and belief in miracles. Mankind was turning to the worship of machines and numbers. However, under fascism Italy was now experiencing a new rebirth, mystically cleansing itself from impure elements, and resuming its role as a leading Aryan nation.⁷⁵

Cogni retained the traditional gender role for men and women. Men were the intellect of the race; women were the life-givers. But women embodied the nation

in a way men never could. In fact, it was through a man's carnal connection with woman that he was able to achieve a mystical union with his race.⁷⁶ Marriage would be the primary means to pursue a eugenics policy in Italy, according to Cogni's prescription. Mates would be selected, above all, based on their racial characteristics, physical health, and mental superiority.⁷⁷

Given the tremendous influence German racial theory had on Cogni, it is interesting to note the relatively mild treatment accorded to the Jews. For example, he allowed that they were one of the three peoples who had created a civilization, along with the Aryans and the Mongoloids. He even says that those Jews native to Palestine were a strong and beautiful people. It was their brothers who inhabited foreign lands that have given Jews such a terrible name. Because they separated themselves from their native environment, interbred with other unrelated races, and grew bitter after centuries of persecution, these Jews became a "ruined race," ugly, weak, and servile; in short, aesthetically displeasing. They displayed a cold, arid intellectualism suited to business and egoistic preoccupations. They rejected the people and culture they found themselves in the midst of, and in fact poisoned it with their values and their financial control.⁷⁸

Oddly enough, Cogni weakened his views on the biological determinism of race when it came to the Jews. He claimed that "if a Jew loved Christ . . . he would be *ipso facto* outside of Judaism; he would be transfigured, in his veins would begin to flow Aryan blood."⁷⁹ This conception of the Jew was essentially that of the Catholic Church, and must have horrified Cogni's German admirers. He also opined that the Italians should not worry themselves about the few weak Jews in Italy, who "through education almost have an Italian soul," but should concern themselves with the Semitization of the Italian national spirit.⁸⁰

Mussolini, increasingly warming to Nordicism, at first supported Cogni by allowing favorable press reviews of his book. For a short while, Cogni seems to have achieved a certain level of importance, even acting as an intermediary between the Germans and the Italians with regard to building intergovernmental relations. For instance, Cogni was instrumental, through a letter to Ciano on February 6, 1937, in reviving a plan to exchange an intermediate-level delegation of scholars to study each other's political ideologies.

Cogni's books certainly did attract a great deal of interest in Italy, but not in the manner he had hoped. The reaction in Italy was almost uniformly negative. On June 10, the Church put *Il Razzismo* also on the Index of Forbidden Books, due no doubt to its prior disapproval of Cogni, and its dislike of German racism in general and spiritual determinism in particular.⁸¹ An interview Cogni gave to a German journal provoked further negative reaction in Italy. Essentially, Cogni was seen as attempting to Nordicize the Italian people through a slavish imitation of Nazi racism. The journals *Il Frontespizio* and *La Piazza* came out with articles severely criticizing *Il Razzismo*. Ezio Garibaldi called Cogni's theory a "stupidity."⁸² Mussolini withdrew his support after the degree of opposition to Cogni's ideas became apparent.⁸³ He claimed to have lost respect for Cogni once he became aware of his book on love:

I am a racist and I have met Cogni, but I had to regard him as disqualified due to his earlier book on love, in which he expounds the theory that lovers must feed on [*pascersi*] one another, that is eat each other. This is ridiculous!⁸⁴

We should note that throughout this withering attack, Cogni's closest supporter remained Telesio Interlandi, who would become a leader in the Nordic racial campaign in Italy.⁸⁵

In June 1937 Cogni wrote Mussolini requesting an audience to defend himself against his many detractors. He still felt confident enough to suggest that the *Duce* create and direct a center of racial propaganda, with absolute power over the media. This center would dedicate itself to creating a racial consciousness in the Italian people.⁸⁶

The *Duce* was unmoved. Though he had allowed some favorable press coverage of *Il Razzismo*, he had soured on Cogni altogether, given his manifest unpopularity.⁸⁷ In fact, he would soon find a new young intellectual upon whom he would thrust the task of writing the Manifesto of the Racial Scientists: Guido Landra. Cogni was incensed at the lack of attention he was receiving, as Italy embraced racism. He was convinced, quite correctly, that Mussolini was deliberately excluding him from participation in the construction of Italian racial policies.

When Mussolini finally decided to force an elaborate racial worldview on the Italian people, in 1938, he propagated a somewhat toned-down version of Nordic scientific racial theory, and added his own anti-African and anti-Semitic components. It seems odd that Mussolini would clearly commit himself to a scientific racism, when many of his own inclinations tended toward spiritual racism. Perhaps the answer to this puzzle can be found in the experience gained from the Cogni episode, and in the influence of the young anthropologist chosen to lead the racial campaign in Italy, Dr Guido Landra.

After Mussolini's encounter with Cogni, the *Duce* allowed a slow development of anti-Semitism in the press, marked by the publication of Paolo Orano's book, *Gli ebrei in Italia* in 1937, and granted permission for various anti-Semitic articles to be published in Interlandi's and Preziosi's journals. It wasn't until early 1938 that Mussolini felt inclined to resume a full-scale racial campaign, however. Obviously, he could have used Interlandi or Preziosi to spearhead the racial campaign, as both had already shown a keen interest in the racial debate. This may have been their drawback, ironically. Since both men had well-established positions on racial matters, they would not be able to follow the *Duce*'s innumerable twists and turns through the racial maze without losing face. Thus, Mussolini sought a younger, unknown assistant. Perhaps given the fiasco of Cogni's philosophical racism, a more "scientific" racism was deemed more likely to succeed in garnering public support. Obviously, the new head of the racial campaign would have to have some scientific credentials to lend legitimacy to the forthcoming "scientific" racial project. Also, such an individual could be easily disposed of with a minimum of fuss if such an expedient proved necessary.

Interlandi may have been aware of the *Duce*'s requirements. In any event, he knew of a perfect match. Seven years before, he had published a series of travel

articles and other incidental pieces in *Il Tevere* by Guido Landra, a bright young 18-year-old with a certain flair for writing. Landra's feuilletonist career would be brief, however. The two lost contact by the end of 1931.⁸⁸ The next year Landra began his studies in natural sciences at the University of Rome. In 1933 he began an internship at the University's Institute of Anthropology, where he received training by the Institute's director, Sergio Sergi, the son of the famous anthropologist. After graduation, he continued his research at the Institute, studied anthropology in Hungary, and enrolled in the school of medicine at the University of Rome. From 1934 until the summer of 1938 Landra published 18 papers on anthropology, the history of anthropology, and physiology. Quite a few dealt with the morphology of particular anatomical structures in various races. He also wrote a paper on the mixed-race children of Chinese and Europeans.⁸⁹ Though Landra joined the Partito Nazionale Fascista (PNF) in 1935, he seems to have participated in little Fascist Party work before 1938.⁹⁰

We can determine Landra's ideas on race in this period from his comments in a series of articles he wrote commemorating the death of Giuseppe Sergi on October 17, 1936. Landra staked out a position on the Mediterranean side of the theoretical divide. Like Sergi, he claimed that the Nordics were not part of the Aryan race, "because this term, created by F. Müller, has simply a linguistic value, not an anthropological one." The Mediterranean race, originating from Africa, settled in Italy in the Neolithic era. The Romans belonged to this race, and the modern Italians were their direct descendants.

Landra also advocated the pursuit of science in a manner wholly independent from personal or political influence. As he wrote in some notes on the International Congress of Anthropology, held in Bucharest in September 1937, he was "[h]abituated to considering anthropology, the science to which I have always and solely dedicated all of my activities, as something superior to petty personal ambitions and to the necessary changes and contingencies of politics...."⁹¹ Yet in these very same notes, Landra described the congress in terms entirely devoid of "scientific objectivity":

[He complained about the] Little men, who use borrowed science to the point of making it the handmaid of bad faith and lies, have said things that fade like drunkenness and similarly leave only a sense of profound disgust.

No one believed nor believes in false propaganda, even if it cost various millions, no one believed nor believes in the affirmations of sincerity of he who always has a secret thought in his heart. . . . In vain the lances of the Don Quixotes of many countries have tried to cut the inescapable reality against which was spit the rabid venom of the so-called anthropological congress of Bucharest.⁹²

Interlandi apparently was aware of Landra's own research, some of which had found its way into a popular science magazine published in Rome, *Il Sapere*. In any event, the two had a "casual, interesting" conversation on the "racial

problems” of Italy in January 1938. Interlandi was forthcoming about Mussolini’s own views on these problems, and gave Landra the impression that the *Duce* was well informed on German and Italian racial literature, and his own ideas on race had thereby reached “a notable grade of evolution.” Mussolini had decided to develop his own “original solution” to Italy’s racial problems, Interlandi said, based on a desire “to confront the problems in their most essential aspect, skeletal, thereby eliminating any purely theoretical superstructure.” At the end of the conversation, Interlandi confided in Landra that Mussolini was looking for scientists such as himself to work on the racial campaign, and invited Landra to aid in recruiting some other “technical consultants” who could also be of assistance.⁹³

Apparently Landra’s ideas on race didn’t faze Mussolini, who had secretly received a copy of Landra’s notes on race through Mussolini’s secretary, Osvaldo Sebastiani. On February 2, 1938 Landra was called in to see the Minister of Popular Culture, Dino Alfieri, and was shocked to learn that the *Duce* himself was very interested in Landra’s racial work and requested that Landra consider taking the responsibility of organizing a scientific committee to study racial questions. Landra immediately accepted the charge, and Alfieri authorized him to secretly approach suitable scientists with the offer of participation. Alfieri warned him that “this dealt with a very delicate question, given the extraordinary aversion of the University to any form of racism and thus the necessity of maintaining the greatest secrecy.” Landra, with his usual intensity, sent the list of prospective members to Alfieri on February 4. The two met again on February 11, and Alfieri informed Landra that Mussolini had approved the list and instructed Landra to convene the committee immediately. Landra later remarked that Alfieri attributed “extraordinary importance” to the committee, which he suggested should rather be designated an institute or office for racial problems.⁹⁴

In any event, the meeting of the committee was postponed due to Mussolini’s preoccupation that spring with international events. Hitler disrupted his plans by finally forcing the *Anschluss* of Austria in mid-March and, flushed with victory, began making demands on Czechoslovakia.

Landra’s work on the racial issue continued unabated, however. By April, he had prepared a document that shows him rushing to catch up to the *Duce*’s position on race.⁹⁵ Landra at this point still retained the essentially Mediterranean identification of the Italians, and opined that “Italy should be the natural seat of a Mediterranean racism” and that “the mentality of all Italians is essentially Mediterranean.” Such a position was meant to bolster fascist propaganda, which stressed the unity of thought of all Italians as expressed through fascism.

But he now erected a barrier between the Mediterranean Italians on one side and the Jews and Africans on the other. The Mediterranean race had to be understood in a more narrow sense than it had been previously. It could not include “all the peoples of Europe, Asia and Africa that populate the regions washed by the great sea.” The Sephardic Jews, Landra made clear, belonged to a different race than the Mediterraneans, contrary to the belief of many Italians. Rather, Mediterranean Italians were “much closer to the blonde population of other countries than to the brown-haired populations of Africa and Asia,” as, Landra claims,

was “clearly shown by blood type.” Confusingly, however, Landra asserts at the same time that the Italians are a “new race ... born from the long fusion of the three principal races that have populated the peninsula for thousands of years.” The new definition recognizes the contribution of the Alpine, Adriatic, and Nordic races in addition to the Mediterraneans.

Landra frequently expressed a need for the nation to take racism seriously. He ominously suggested that the representatives of Italian anthropology be officially asked to fill out a form that would force them to clearly signify, “singularly for each person ... their attitude in regard to the current racial campaign, with special regard to the question of hybrids of the Italians with the African races, or on the question of the Jews.” He rather lamely adds that these anthropologists would be free from “a shadow of pressure” in respect to their answers. Presumably following this inquiry, some carefully selected anthropologists, “absolutely immune from any Jewish influence,” and exhibiting “the adequate attitude,” would be convened to form a consultative body that would advise the political hierarchy on “propaganda and the defense of the race.”⁹⁶

Racism would receive a prominent role in the curriculum of middle schools and the natural sciences curriculum at universities. Only specialists would be permitted to teach it, for fear that it would deteriorate into a simple parroting of German racism (perhaps an allusion to Giulio Cogni’s previous efforts). Though Italian racism might develop in “parallel with German racism,” it “had to have its own characteristics.” Italian racism had to emphasize its own “national character,” and exalt its own racial virtues. The new Italian racism would not drift off into metaphysical speculation, as Cogni had done. Landra placed heavy stress on the need for Italian racism to “follow the norms of science,” though it is quite obvious that the political apparatus was to have firm control over its direction, the scientific community being relegated to little more than the task of window dressing.⁹⁷

With this document, Landra marked out a position that was far removed from his views on race over a year before. Contrary to traditional Mediterranean theory, he had severed any racial connection between Italians, Jews, and Africans. He had embraced a sharply anti-Semitic position, and suggested that a moderate degree of German racist influence in Italy could be considered beneficial.

Soon thereafter, on April 20, 1938, Landra distanced himself even from the slight role he had envisioned for academic participation in the racial campaign. He wrote that there was “an entire lack of control” at the universities on the racial issues. Since “the racial problem is always and above all a political one” and “scientists are not political men,” Landra concludes ironically, “It would be a grave danger if scientists gained a monopoly over the scientific aspects of racism.”⁹⁸

He explained further that

a monopoly of Italian scientists would be dangerous – especially new converts – because monopoly means school, and school means University, and the Italian Universities are enemies of racism, they are the proponents of Jewish intellectualism, in a word menacing dissidents.⁹⁹

Indeed, Landra later wrote that before 1938 almost all Italian intellectuals were decidedly anti-racist (from his perspective) and that Italian anthropologists, in particular, applauded miscegenation, denigrated German racial politics, and condemned sterilization and eugenics.¹⁰⁰

Landra's now virulent anti-Semitism may have been facilitated through his close connection with the anti-Semitic faction of the Catholic Church in Italy. Several years later, in 1940, Landra would co-author a book on racial anthropology and psychology with Father Agostino Gemelli. Gemelli's chief notoriety would come from the active role he played in encouraging Farinacci, Landra, and others in their anti-Semitism during this period.¹⁰¹ In their book, Landra made a stunning about-face concerning the role politics should play in science, in light of his first pronouncements on the subject three years earlier:

The attempt to liberate the anthropological sciences from all political influences has been and will always be destined to failure. The study of man in reality can never be like the study of crystals, of animals or of plants, that can be constructed on exclusively naturalistic criteria. The evolution of anthropological studies is fatally tied to the evolution of political concepts. The science of man, separated from politics, is destined to become arid and to become a vain game of figures and of facts that cannot speak to anyone.¹⁰²

We can assume that this entirely opportunistic and politicized concept of science was encouraged by Mussolini and already formed the basis of Landra's work in the spring of 1938.

Landra at that time was also rapidly solidifying a close professional relationship with Dr Eugen Fischer, Director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Anthropology at the University of Berlin. Fischer was in Italy in the spring of 1938 giving lectures on German racism. Landra probably attended these conferences; at any rate, he described Fischer as "the greatest anthropologist in the world" in a note of April 1938 and again in a report of December 1938. They seem to have known each other quite well by mid-July, and maintained frequent contact over the next several years, to the extent that Landra was eventually inspired to describe himself as Fischer's disciple.¹⁰³

At this same time, it was Fischer's opinion that "the majority of Italian anthropologists" were Jews. Fischer had a particular grudge against Sergio Sergi, a "full Jew," who had blocked the anthropological examination of the skulls of the University of Rome. Nevertheless, Fischer was pleased to report that, in his opinion, anti-Semitism was growing in Italian universities, giving him hope that greater German–Italian cooperation in the development of racial theory might soon be possible.¹⁰⁴

It is interesting to wonder to what extent Fischer influenced Landra while he was drafting the Manifesto, thus establishing a direct link between German and

Italian fascist racism. We do know that toward the end of the war, while he was in a bad mood (for obvious reasons), Mussolini told Bruno Spampanato that

the Racial Manifesto could have been avoided. It dealt with an abstruse scientific document of a few teachers and journalists, a conscientious German essay translated into bad Italian. It is far from what I have said, written and signed on the matter.¹⁰⁵

Landra would from this point on advocate anti-Semitic policies and strongly support eugenics programs along much the same lines as Fischer.¹⁰⁶

Dr Walter Gross, Head of the Office of Racial Politics of the Nazi Party (Rassenpolitisches Amt der NSDAP) was among the coterie of German racists visiting Italy in the spring of 1938. He arrived in early June to meet with Prefect Antonio Le Pera, soon to be given responsibility over the implementation of the forthcoming racial laws in Italy. Le Pera told Gross that the *Duce* was interested in obtaining information on German racial policies, particularly in regard to eugenics. To fulfill this charge, Le Pera was planning to visit Germany in the fall to study their racial doctrines (the visit never materialized). Significantly, however, Le Pera stressed to Gross that “official Italo-German cooperation in racial matters was not considered desirable.”¹⁰⁷

By June 24, Mussolini was ready to address himself once again to the racial campaign. He met with Landra, in the presence of Alfieri and probably Giuseppe Bottai, the Minister of Education. Mussolini expounded on the racial issue for “a long time,” obviously meaning to bring Landra more in line with the *Duce*’s own thought. Landra noted in particular that the *Duce* “was aware of all that had been written” on race, was concerned that the racial problem be treated in an original manner, and apparently saw the Jewish problem as only one relatively small part, devoting “a couple of phrases” to it.

The *Duce* wanted to make it abundantly clear that he required Landra to adopt a Nordacist position. According to Bottai,

In the discussion with Landra, Mussolini declared himself a “Nordic,” not related to the French, but rather to the English and the Germans. “My daughter is married to a Tuscan,” he exclaimed, “my son to a Lombard!,” in order to affirm the constant instinct of his family towards the most pure people, from the racial point of view, in Italy. Furthermore, Mussolini told Landra that “The concepts of ‘Latinità’ and ‘Mediterranità’ will be thrown out in place of ‘Arianità.’ The ‘Romanità,’ with reservations, will be kept.”¹⁰⁸

Before dismissing Landra, Mussolini ordered him to study the racial problem in depth under the aegis of the Ministry of Popular Culture, and select collaborators to aid in establishing within five or six months the fundamental points that would form the basis of the Italian racial campaign.¹⁰⁹ Later that same day Alfieri instructed Landra to write down the essential points of the *Duce*’s racial thought as the basis for the Manifesto. “From that moment,” Landra writes, “all of my

work developed under the counsel and control of His Excellency Alfieri who devoted himself with extraordinary passion to it.” Landra himself was awed by the responsibilities given him. He would inform Mussolini several years later that “what you told me [on June 24, 1938] indelibly impressed itself in my mind and has constituted the basis of all my other actions.”¹¹⁰ Landra immediately gave up his academic work in order to devote all his attention to the racial campaign.

He submitted the new draft of the Manifesto to the *Duce* on June 28. Thereafter it would receive “only a few minor attenuations and clarifications” before its publication several weeks later.¹¹¹ The most significant alteration occurred in point eight of the Manifesto. The earlier version included a long denunciation of the theory of the Mediterranean race, and of Southern Mediterranean Italians:

The theory of the Mediterranean race is pernicious ... to give a Nordic direction to racism in Italy does not mean to deny the existence of Mediterraneans in Italy or to negate in them good qualities, but only to prevent the bad qualities of the psychological complex of the Mediterraneans from being exalted. These bad qualities that sometimes constitute the inferiority of some Italians (excessive individualism, exaggerated sentimentalism, lack of calm and of tenacity, etc.) belong to the psychological complex of the Mediterraneans. On the other hand, the theory of the Mediterranean race includes in this race also the Semitic populations, carriers of a subversive civilization for Europe, and thus establishes ideological sympathies with Asia and Africa that are absolutely inadmissible.¹¹²

The final version of the Manifesto shortened the first two sentences to: “It is necessary to make a clear distinction between the Mediterraneans of Europe (western) on one side, and the Orientals and Africans on the other.” The final sentence of this point changed little, except for references to “subversive civilization.”

Mussolini kept to his insistence that there be a committee to take responsibility for the racial campaign. Four other scientists were collected to join Landra in a series of meetings meant to put the final touches to the document. Three were unknown: Lino Businco, assistant professor of general pathology at the University of Rome; Leone Franzì, assistant professor in pediatric clinology at the University of Milan; and Marcello Ricci, assistant professor of zoology at the University of Rome. Lidio Cipriani was the only scientist of any prominence on the committee as it was then composed. He was an anthropologist focusing his research efforts on the African study of African races. He served as an assistant professor of anthropology at the University of Florence, and was Director of the National Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology of Florence. These four do not seem to have contributed much to the final document. After a few days they met with Alfieri, who told them that this would lead to a full-time job, and fixed their salary at 2000 liras per month.¹¹³

The final version, published in the *Giornale d'Italia* on July 14, 1938, took a wrenching turn toward Nordicism, compared to the draft of the previous spring. It was in fact an essentially biological Nordacist document. Spiritual racism was

fiercely denied in the final draft. Rather, the Manifesto articulated a staunchly biological–deterministic position. It claimed that “the existence of human races is not indeed an abstraction of our spirit, but corresponds to a real phenomenon, material, perceptible with our senses.” National differences are explained by their particular racial composition. Different races occupying the same territory interacted in one of three ways. One might have had “absolute dominion” over another, or they all “fused harmoniously together,” or one or more of them remained unassimilated.

The particular deterministic orientation of the document, emphasizing the physical over the spiritual, seems to clash with the orthodox idealism of fascism, as elaborated by Giovanni Gentile and others. That Mussolini would have accepted such a biological determinism, even for the time being, is difficult to explain. Indeed, Mussolini frequently expressed regret for the decision to pursue this line. It is possible that Mussolini felt his dramatic unveiling of Italian racism should carry with it the universal respectability of hard scientific “fact”; he would soon show a feverish preoccupation with the prominence and prestige of the Manifesto’s authors. Or perhaps Mussolini was so temporarily enamored of the Germans that he allowed Landra to infuse the document with the principles espoused by the German racial hygienicists.

In any event, the turn toward biological determinism was out of character and did not last long. Toward the end of his life, in 1943, Mussolini was quite explicit on the perceived process of Italian racial fusion:

I have always considered the Italian people to be a miraculous *product of diverse ethnic fusions* on the basis of a geographic, economic, and especially spiritual unity. . . . Men of different blood were the bearers of one splendid civilization. (Italics added)¹¹⁴

As is quite clear in the preceding quotation, Mussolini emphasized the importance of *spiritual unity* in the creation of a new race. The realities of the spirit were a core concept of fascism, as befitted its neo-Hegelian, Gentilean philosophical foundation.¹¹⁵ Soon after the publication of the Manifesto of the Racial Scientists, which placed most of its emphasis on physical racism, Mussolini sought to reinforce the supremacy of the spirit. For this reason he praised Giuseppe Bottai’s article “Politica fascista della razza,” which he published in his journal *Critica Fascista*.¹¹⁶ Bottai claimed that “the foundations, in fact, of Italian racism are and must be eminently spiritual, even apart from purely biological ‘data.’”¹¹⁷ In 1941 Mussolini enthusiastically endorsed Julius Evola’s *Sintesi della dottrina della razza*, which presented Evola’s ideas about race. In his own copy of the book, Mussolini underlined in red one of the passages that claimed:

it is necessary to maintain alive the spiritual tension, the superior focus, the internal formative soul, that originally elevated that material to a final determinant form, translating a race of the spirit into a corresponding race of the soul and of the body.¹¹⁸

When discussing his understanding of race with Bruno Spampanato, Mussolini reminded him, “It is the spirit that put our civilization at the world’s crossroads.”¹¹⁹

Further following the German infatuation, the emphasis on the Aryan nature of the Italians was certainly one of the more controversial claims of the document, and aroused violent opposition from some of the Italian intelligentsia. Point number four of the Manifesto stated flatly that “the population of Italy today is of Aryan origin and its civilization is Aryan.” As for their predecessors who inhabited the peninsula before the Aryan invasion, “little remains of the civilization of the pre-Aryan people.” Adding insult to injury, the Manifesto demanded that Italian ideas on race follow an “Aryan–Nordic” orientation. The reason given for this shocking revelation was that the Italians needed

a physical and above all psychological model of the human race that for its purely European characteristics is completely removed from any non-European race; that is to say elevate the Italian to an ideal of superior consciousness of himself and of his great responsibilities.

Given this position, the document manifestly rejected the most salient aspects of the Mediterranean theory, except for its attitude toward intra-European hierarchies.

Theories that claim that some European peoples are of African origin and that within the Mediterranean race there are Semitic and Hamitic elements are ... dangerous, establishing absolutely inadmissible relations and ideological sympathies.

A denial of an intra-European racial hierarchy was all that remained of Landra’s original Sergian proclivities. It implied that the Europeans were close enough to each other racially to interbreed without serious disruptions:

Union is admissible only among European races, in which case one can not talk of a true and real hybridization, given that these races belong to a common body and are differentiated only by a few characteristics, that are otherwise the same in most instances.

Miscegenation would be absolutely forbidden with the “extra-European” races, however. Any interbreeding between Italians and non-Europeans would bring to Italy “a civilization different from the ancient Aryan civilization.” Mussolini seemed to have been especially concerned to hammer home his fear of Semitic or African “contamination,” and protect the Italians’ claim to purely European ancestry. Thus the Manifesto claimed that “the Jews do not belong to the Italian race.” The other Semitic peoples that had settled in Italy, such as the Arab occupation of Sicily, supposedly left without a trace. Those settlers belonging to European races were supposedly rapidly assimilated, on the other hand.

The Manifesto contained a new and enormously problematical definition of racial purity, probably its only “contribution” to racial theory. This was a lukewarm

attempt to assert some notable distinction for the Italian race, lest it be relegated to the humble position of being only one among many European peoples. The Manifesto argued that Italy was unique in having a stable racial composition for over one thousand years, unlike most other European nations. Because of this, the Italians were to be considered a “pure race,” and its “ancient purity of blood” was “the grandest title of nobility of the Italian Nation.” This must have seemed most unscientific to many observers. The Manifesto claimed that the Italians were a unique race on one hand, yet expounded on its stable racial complex on the other.

Mussolini had always been quite vague with regard to the true “originality” of the Italians as a race. In his conversations with Ludwig, Mussolini seemed to hint at a belief in a unique Italian type. He claimed that

each nation has its own *peculiar countenance*, its own language, its own customs, *its own types*. For each nation, a certain percentage of these characteristics (*x* per cent., let us say) remains completely original, and this induces resistance to any sort of fusion. (Emphasis added)¹²⁰

But he also backpedaled on this assertion some years later. As he explained to Yvon De Begnac, no doubt reflecting on the arguments that a unique Italic race had existed since time immemorial:

Does there exist an italic race?

I do not believe so, despite the demonstrations of so many scientists. All races have passed through the agitations of the Italian melting pot, acclimating themselves to our conception of life. No one camped out for long on our piazzas. A little Jewish blood, in the end, never hurt anyone. Imreedy is insightful, perhaps, also on this.

My own personal view in respect to the racial question has recently been effectively represented by Missiroli: “Extreme moderation”: nothing more and nothing less. Any fanaticism disgusts me, but we must take a position in front of the architrave of the opposition. I don’t bemoan it. Our conception is, moreover, originally alien to any political or religious movement.

And this is an insuperable fact. There are no superior races or inferior races. We need not indulge too much – especially on this subject – in materialistic suggestions. Races are – sometimes – like nations: one allies with one: it fights the others. Naturally, in such a case, we are not dealing with a true and proper war, arms in hand: it is a much worse type of warfare: so dangerous that – to avoid the consequences – it seems useful to have recourse to the means of true warfare.¹²¹

Toward the end of his life, in December 1943, Mussolini told Bruno Spampanato that “I have always considered the Italian people an admirable product of diverse ethnic fusions on the basis of geographical, economic, and spiritual unity.”¹²²

The most likely explanation for the claim of racial unity stems from Mussolini's desire to create a myth of racial unity in order to foster true national unity, something Italy had always lacked. The unified national spirit and ideals would overcome any physical obstacles. We must remember that, for Mussolini, spiritual and psychological homogeneity always outweighed physical similarity when it came to racial "purity." In his "idee fondamentali" from *La dottrina del fascismo*, written in 1932, Mussolini defined the Italian people as "a stock historically perpetuating itself, a multitude unified by an idea, that is the will to exist and to power: conscious of itself, of its personality."¹²³

Thus, though Northern and Southern Italians might *look* different (and no one argued otherwise), this was not what was important. They belonged to the same race because their core beliefs and values were the same: namely, nationalist and fascist; and because they had formed a (relatively) undisturbed breeding population for at least fifteen hundred years.¹²⁴

As Mussolini proclaimed in his October 25, 1938 speech to the National Council of the Fascist Party:

This racist principle introduced for the first time in the history of the Italian people is of incalculable importance, because, also here, we had an inferiority complex before us. We were convinced that we were not a people, but a racial mix, of which they say in the United States: "There are two races in Italy: that of the Po valley and that of Southern Italy." They make these distinctions in certificates, etc.¹²⁵

In this way, racism was used to support a core goal of fascist ideology: the battle for national unity and cultural homogeneity in a country otherwise torn by regional differences. As Mussolini continuously (and quite erroneously) claimed, the Italian people are among the "most homogeneous" of Europe.¹²⁶

Mussolini continued to hammer home this point for the next several months. On October 25, 1938, he declared: "for at least 1500 years, our people have been unified among themselves, the reason for which our race is pure, especially in the countryside."¹²⁷

There were a number of notable changes from the spring draft of the Manifesto to the final version. The final draft made no mention of the role the academic establishment would play in propagating racism or advising the government on racial matters. The final version conferred a certain uniqueness on the Italian race, yet there was a pronounced shift toward a stronger Nordic orientation. Fear of miscegenation with Jews and Africans was much more pronounced in the later document; and the divorce of the Jews from the rest of Italian society was more prominent. These points most probably reflect Mussolini's particular racial concerns.

Reactions to the Manifesto were swift and largely unfavorable.¹²⁸ Previously, the Catholic Church had said little regarding the racial apartheid laws applied to Ethiopia, given that many Catholics opposed miscegenation of Italians and Ethiopians. Though Church doctrine did not oppose marriage between Catholics of different races, the Ethiopians were not Catholic.¹²⁹

The Church's view with regard to the Italian Jews was more complex. The Church had espoused some form of anti-Judaism throughout its entire history. Jews were regarded as the murderers of Christ, and were considered perverse for their refusal to accept Jesus as the Messiah. Yet this anti-Judaism always had to concede that Jews who converted to Catholicism were full members of the Church, untainted by their racial origins. Even so, as biological racial theories developed in the nineteenth century, condemning the Jew to unmitigatable racial malevolence, some clergy were sorely tempted to embrace this more intense racial anti-Semitism.

Father Agostino Gemelli was one of the fiercest Catholic anti-Semites. Gemelli began his career as an award-winning medical doctor and an experimental psychologist, then entered the Church as a Franciscan several years later after a conversion experience. In 1922 he founded the Catholic University of Milan, and served as its rector thereafter. Gemelli and his associates justified their anti-Semitism on the grounds of Catholic tradition, and applauded both the Third Reich's and fascist Italy's new anti-Semitic policies. On January 10, 1939 Gemelli spoke at the University of Bologna about the "decide people" tragically unable to belong to Italy "because of their blood and because of their religion."¹³⁰ In the following years, Gemelli would develop a close association with Landra, each reinforcing the other's conviction that it was possible to remain both Catholic and a fascist anti-Semite.

Generally speaking, biological racism was more roundly condemned by the Church than was "moderate" anti-Semitism. For Catholicism, biological racism implied a determinism that denied the possibility of redemption for all humankind, a core Catholic doctrine. The Jesuit A. Messineo noted in July 1938, after the publication of the Manifesto, that

German racism, which is purely materialistic, cannot be applied to the whole human being, without lowering a reasonable creature to the level of animals. Man is not only animalistic, but also has a spirit; he has not only somatic characteristics, but also spiritual characteristics, which far outweigh his corporeal characteristics, and cannot be reduced to them.¹³¹

Naturally, this opinion applied as well to Italian biological racism.

As a corollary, the Church also rejected the notion that race could constitute the essence of a nation. By the early twentieth century, Catholicism was not antagonistic to the existence of nation-states or to moderate nationalism. But it defined the nation as a result of historical and spiritual forces, rather than biology. Nevertheless, perhaps because of their classical training or the strength of the Church in Southern Italy, many Italian Catholics were biased in favor of the Mediterranean race when it came to discussions of the racial origins of Italians. As the racial debate took center stage in Italy in late 1938, Catholic publications made considerable efforts to ridicule the idea that Nordic Aryans were responsible for Italy's historical achievements. Rather, they considered Italian culture to be a product of the Mediterranean people.

An April 1938 article in the Vatican journal *Osservatore Romano* quoted the German "expert" on racial psychology, Ludwig Clauss, and Professor Wilhelm

Mühlmann, Director of the Ethnological Museum of Hamburg, to demonstrate to its readers the fallacies of German racial theory. The Mediterraneans, as a race, according to the Germans, were much more notable for their indulgence in sensuality and the passions than in their creative or spiritual abilities. Furthermore, according to Mühlmann, “the differences between European Mediterraneans and blacks are ethnologically non-essential.” Negroid influences could be traced back to prehistoric Italy, Mühlmann alleged. Psychologically, Italians and blacks were similar, having in common “suggestionability, musicality, loquacity, and the tendency to get drunk on words and their own excitability.” The author condemned the Germans’ theories as “anti-scientific and partisan in structure” and “unsustainable before history and reality.” The article concluded that the Mediterranean people, in fact, were the source of the world’s civilization.¹³² Several months later, an article in *Civiltà Cattolica* also denounced the Nazi racist writer Dr Rudolf Laemmel, in part for his rejection of the historical veracity of Romanità.¹³³ Synthesizing these various pronouncements of the Catholic Church on matters of race, we can understand why the Church would eventually use its influence to attempt (with some success) to turn fascist racism in the direction of the mild, Mediterranean spiritualist theory elaborated by Vincenzo Mazzei and other Mediterraneanists discussed later in this work.

The Church’s position on Italian racism was summarized on July 28, 1938, when Pope Pius XI publicly accused Mussolini of imitating the Germans and denying Italy’s Roman heritage. Several weeks later, on August 21, 1938, the Pope spoke once more against racism and exaggerated nationalism.¹³⁴ These remarks infuriated the *Duce*.¹³⁵ Three months later, in his discourse to the PNF of October 25, Mussolini countered the Pope’s accusations. He reminded his audience that he had been talking about race since 1921, long before the Germans could have exerted any influence on him. Mussolini claimed that “for the Pope souls have no color” but for the fascists “faces have color.” Furthermore, Mussolini declared that the ancient Romans had in fact been racists to the end.¹³⁶

One observer claimed that many people sided with the Pope, feeling “resentful shame” that their government was adopting such policies and copying “German neo-barbarism.”¹³⁷ Guido Leto, head of the secret police (OVRA), later wrote that “Italians ... have never sensed a racial problem let alone had a precise notion of a racial question.... The racial problem was, therefore, for the totality of the Italian people truly non-existent.”¹³⁸ Italo Balbo wrote a friend in Boston a year later, reporting that there was still “widespread opposition” to racism.¹³⁹ The King himself was astonished that Mussolini seemed bent on importing “these racial fashions from Berlin into Italy.”¹⁴⁰

Naturally, the German attitude to this development was rather different. The *Völkischer Beobachter*, a paper close to Hitler, described the Manifesto as “a revolutionary act of universal significance.” In embracing the Aryan–Nordic direction of racism, the *Duce* had dealt the death-blow to the anti-German concept of “Latinity.”¹⁴¹

Characteristically, Mussolini stepped up the propaganda campaign to overwhelm his opponents. To assuage foreign opinion, he issued the *Informazione*

Diplomatica No. 18 which emphasized the fascist contention that they had been racist since their inception in 1919, and it had been the conquest of Ethiopia rather than the German alliance that had made the need for a racial policy imperative.¹⁴² For domestic consumption, the press was whipped up into a frenzied support for Aryan racial theory in its “uniquely” Italian form.

Curiously, the Manifesto was originally published without any details on the involvement of the government in its authorship, nor were the names of the authors provided. Mussolini may have wanted to gauge public reaction to the document before endorsing it. He also was apprehensive about the lack of prestige and scientific authority of the committee that had worked on it. Therefore six days after its publication he ordered five more established scientists to join the committee: Senator Nicola Pende, Director of the Institute of Special Medical Pathology at the University of Rome; Sabato Visco, Director of the Institute of General Physiology of the University of Rome and Director of the National Institute of Biology of the National Research Council; Franco Savorgnan, President of the Central Institute of Statistics; Arturo Donaggio, Director of the Neuropsychiatric Clinic of the University of Bologna and President of the Italian Society of Psychiatry; and Edoardo Zavattari, Director of the Institute of Zoology of the University of Rome.¹⁴³

One can imagine the reaction of Pende, an acknowledged Mediterraneanist, upon seeing the document for the first time. Pende immediately objected to the Manifesto, and was joined by Visco. As Alfieri explained to Mussolini,

These scientists raised objections to the use of the term “Italian race.” For Visco and Pende there does not exist a pure “Italian race.” A second point strongly criticized by the two scientists regards the use of the term “Aryan.” A third complaint is that of the “Nordic” direction. For Pende the brown-haired type is more representative of the Italians than are the blondes.¹⁴⁴

According to Marcello Ricci, debate during this meeting reached such a fevered intensity that Pende and Visco stood up, yelling, “We can’t endure the great stupidities written by youngsters that we ourselves made the mistake of graduating one or two years ago!”¹⁴⁵

After an impromptu private meeting with Alfieri, who informed Pende and Visco that Mussolini had written the document, the two reluctantly agreed to sign the Manifesto.¹⁴⁶ Perhaps they hoped they could steer Mussolini and the racial campaign toward Mediterraneanism. As Pende later told the ever-inquisitive Bottai, he had become involved in “this racial business” in order to “put the ideas in order; especially to combine the idea of ‘race’ with the idea of ‘Rome.’”¹⁴⁷ Naturally, this was an expression of Pende’s allegiance to Romanità, one of the most important aspects of the Mediterranean thesis.

Further efforts to calm down Pende and Visco proved to be fruitless, because of the “open hostility of the professors and especially of Senator Pende and Hon. Visco to fall into step with the new ideas.” Pende and Visco declared that they wanted a note published that would make their views more precise and

differentiate their position from that of the Manifesto.¹⁴⁸ Their request was rebuffed, apparently on direct orders from the *Duce* himself. On August 3, Pende was informed by Mussolini's secretary, Osvald Sebastiani, that "on higher orders I must tell you that now is not an opportune time to publish such a declaration."¹⁴⁹

While Pende was trying to dissociate himself from the Manifesto, Giulio Cogni was incensed at not having been invited to help draft it.¹⁵⁰ As another slap in the face, an article he wrote for the new racist journal *La Difesa della Razza* was mysteriously rejected.¹⁵¹ On July 31, 1938, Interlandi published a letter from Cogni in *Il Quadrivio* that complained that his book *I valori della stirpe Italiana* had been hitherto ignored, though it anticipated all of the major points of the Manifesto. The next day, Cogni made substantially the same point in a letter to Alfieri. Furthermore, he expressed his hope that *I valori* would henceforth receive a wider distribution than it had so far been granted, and that he would be given a role in the racial campaign. He also confided to Alfieri that he hoped to win the competition for a university chair of philosophy in Italy, but feared that opposition to him would militate against this possibility.

Cogni seems to have become increasingly anxious concerning the lack of attention he was getting in the midst of all the excitement. Still unable to get over the heady days when he expected to act as Mussolini's racial *Reichsführer*, Cogni wrote Mussolini an amazingly intemperate letter on August 7, bitterly lamenting his treatment to date:

Duce! When I was alone, and gained the attention of all of Europe, I had in Italy the hostility of all of your secret enemies. Now that the principles developed by me have become official dogma, I am copied, exploited, gingerly plucked aside by the latest prophets, put in a corner and absolutely forgotten. You know to what I allude. I refuse to believe that this is fascist justice.¹⁵²

In a touch of added spite, Cogni enclosed a copy of his letter to *Il Quadrivio*.

Out of pity for Cogni, or more likely simply to keep him from making a scene, Mussolini had Alfieri talk with Cogni and assure him that "the Capo had words of praise" for him and promised that his "seclusion would be only temporary." As Cogni later told Landra, he came away satisfied, and chirped on about his next book project, the editorship of a collection of racist volumes written by both scholars and scientists. "You and Cipriani will deal with the scientific aspects," Cogni informed him.¹⁵³

Part of Cogni's disappointment undoubtedly stemmed from not being invited to join the editorial staff of *La Difesa della Razza*. Ever the journalist, Mussolini intended *La Difesa* to become one of the chief means of propagandizing the new racial policies to the nation. The press announced the advent of *La Difesa* on July 22.¹⁵⁴ Upon hearing that such a journal was about to begin publication, Telesio Interlandi anticipated that it would simply be the mouthpiece of the Ministry of Popular Culture. He commented to his staff, "I would like to know who will be the cretin that they will call in to direct it." The story goes that hardly had he

made this comment when he received a call informing him that he in fact was the “cretin” selected by the *Duce* to become *La Difesa*’s editor.¹⁵⁵ Mussolini apparently felt that Interlandi’s journalistic expertise, combined with his long-history of anti-Semitism, made him the obvious choice to edit the journal. Since the journal could not be published without review from the Ministry of Popular Culture, which subsidized it, the government would be able to keep a measure of control over Interlandi and his staff. Interlandi disagreed with some of the underlying principles of the journal right from the start. For example, he felt that the title, stressing the *defense* of the race, was too passive. He would have preferred a title more indicative of attack.¹⁵⁶

La Difesa was financed not only by the Ministry of Popular Culture, but by a variety of banks, industrial concerns, and insurance companies. The first issue of the magazine carried articles by the eight “pro-Nordic” members of the Manifesto committee, five of whom were on its editorial board: Guido Landra, Lidio Cipriani, Leone Franzi, Lino Businco, and Marcello Ricci.¹⁵⁷ The other collaborators on the journal were initially rounded up from Interlandi’s and Preziosi’s existing pro-racist publications: *La Vita Italiana*, *Il Tevere*, and *Il Quadrivio*.¹⁵⁸

From the fourth issue of *La Difesa* on, the committee was joined by a new editorial secretary, Giorgio Almirante, Interlandi’s protégé.¹⁵⁹ This issue would see the climax of the journal’s readership, with 150,000 copies distributed.¹⁶⁰ Circulation of the magazine would drop dramatically thereafter, eventually stabilizing its circulation at 19,000 to 20,000 bi-monthly issues, of which 9000 were distributed free.

Believing that one of the primary functions of *La Difesa* should be to inculcate racism in the nation’s youth, the Ministry of Education distributed copies to all rectors, superintendents and other officials, and to all schools. Bottai ordered the teachers to “read it, consult it, comment on it in order to absorb its spirit ... propagate it and advocate it.”¹⁶¹ He also outlined an educational program of racial studies that would now be followed:

In the first grade, with means befitting infants’ minds, one must create a climate adopted to the formation of an initial, embryonic racial consciousness, while in middle school the more elevated development of the minds of the adolescents, already in contact with the humanistic traditions through the study of classical languages, history and literature, will permit the fixation of the main points of racial doctrine, its goals and its limits. The propagation of the doctrine will continue, finally, in superior school, where the young scholars, with the assistance of the humanistic and scientific knowledge already acquired, will be able to go into it deeply and prepare themselves to be, in their turn, propagators and animators.¹⁶²

Those contributing articles to *La Difesa* or who were engaged in editorial work were paid handsomely. Writers received between 100 and 500 liras per article. A total of 161,534.20 liras was paid out to Interlandi, Almirante, and the frequent contributor Massimo Lej from August 1938 to November 1940. Guido Landra was paid 700 liras per month for his editorial work.¹⁶³

La Difesa della Razza maintained a complex and changing relationship with the Ministry of Popular Culture. From its inception until Landra fell from grace in February 1939, the magazine was tightly linked to the Racial Office. Articles in *La Difesa* on Italian racial identity were most often written by employees of the Racial Office, or associates of Telesio Interlandi. These two groups were closely related ideologically, and focused their allegiance around the principles enumerated in the Manifesto. Thus, *La Difesa* displays a clear biological Nordacist orientation during this period.

Though the scientific staff at the Racial Office and the journalists under Interlandi shared similar ideological biases, their approach to racial propaganda was often very different, creating obvious tension between the pseudo-scientific objectivity of some articles and the strident journalistic tone of others. The involvement of so many scientists, biologists, and medical professionals in the publication of *La Difesa* gave a “scientific,” biological tone to many of its discussions of the Italian race.

The use of this scientific vocabulary was intended to depersonalize race. Individual human beings became “organisms,” children of mixed ancestry were “hybrids.”¹⁶⁴ This sterilization of race had a number of consequences. For one, it eroded individualism. It was not unusual to see the most subjective and particular psychological traits treated as manifestations of racial biology. Personal peculiarities were at best treated as secondary.

Through language, the “degenerate” races were transformed into dehumanized objects, removed from the field of emotive response. Often, such races were equated with diseases against which the “normal” social body had to be inoculated.¹⁶⁵

The scientific tone and academic titles of many of the magazine’s writers were also meant to lend an air of detached authority to the publication.¹⁶⁶ The numerous journalists who wrote for *La Difesa* employed a strident and highly emotive tone in some articles, clashing sharply with those of a more “scientific” nature.¹⁶⁷

As a consequence of this biological Nordacist editorial line, many articles in *La Difesa* were built upon a foundation of racial determinism. As Landra explained in one of his articles from this period, “race is the only secure patrimony on which man can count: everything else is fleeting and evanescent.”¹⁶⁸ Both physical and psychological characteristics were to a large extent racially determined.¹⁶⁹

The Manifesto’s claim that the Italians constituted a “pure race” proved to be one of the most serious stumbling blocks for *La Difesa*. Such an assertion was obviously quite absurd, and attempts to rationalize the claim were invariably awkward. As the author of the Manifesto, Guido Landra’s explanation of the concept is especially important. After studying the work of German racists, Landra claimed that external factors, such as the miscegenation of the original closely related ancestral races, the formative pressure of a common nation and environment, and more recent eugenic measures led to the creation of an Italian race. As he explained, “the term ‘Italian race’ serves ... to indicate ... not so much the original varieties [living in Italy] as the results today.”¹⁷⁰ The observed variations in the current Italian population could simply be explained as manifestations of

the internal mutations common in any race. This obviated the tendency to explain such variations as a result of the incursions of non-Italian peoples, an interpretation absolutely forbidden by the *Duce*.¹⁷¹ Nor could any particular non-Jewish population in Italy be singled out for special treatment, as had been the Nordic element in Germany.¹⁷²

Certainly not all *La Difesa*'s writers adopted Landra's torturous explanation of Italian racial evolution. Commonly, writers of this period offered a reconstruction of Italian anthropological history by twisting Sergi's thesis toward a much stronger Aryan identification. Articles on the history of the Italian race generally claimed that a remote Mediterranean race originally inhabited the peninsula. Nevertheless, these Mediterraneans "had characteristics similar to the Aryans."¹⁷³ This Aryan nature of the Mediterranean people was usually left unexplained, or rationalized by the vague supposition that the Mediterraneans were actually an early Aryan people. In the Eneolithic Age the Nordic Aryans arrived in Italy, strengthening the Aryan character of the Italians, and imposing their language and culture on the inhabitants. The Romans are always identified as Aryan and sometimes as Nordic during this first phase of *La Difesa*'s existence.¹⁷⁴

Many writers took a fairly typical Nordacist view of the Empire's decline and fall. These explanations asserted that "Levantine" (meaning Semitic) immigrants had come to Roman Italy, and intermixed with the native Italians, causing racial decay and the collapse of the Empire.¹⁷⁵

Naturally, all writers had to give some sort of explanation for the Italians' successful extrication from this sorry state of affairs. Here again, racial theorists were presented with a dilemma. If one asserted that the late Roman Empire collapsed due to racial impurity, how could one account for the subsequent resurrection of Italy since the late Middle Ages? Some writers, recognizing the paradox, averred that the Italians were endowed with mystical regenerative powers, uniquely allowing them to repurify themselves after their own racial bastardization. German racists alleged that the descendants of Nordic Germans were responsible for modern Italy's modern resurrection. No Italian would be permitted to advocate such a craven thesis, however. Fascism required that the Italians themselves be mainly responsible for their rebirth. Nevertheless, the more inclined to Nordicism a writer was, the greater the influence he would accord German invaders in reviving the degenerate Italians. Giuseppe Pensabene believed that a number of events occurred during the early Middle Ages that succeeded in repurifying the Italians: urban inhabitants migrated to the "purifying" country, the Levantines returned to the Orient, and the German conquerors injected fresh Aryan blood into the Italian population. Thereafter, Italy's long centuries of isolation allowed these newest influences to return the disrupted racial balance to the previous, idyllic level of the classical age.¹⁷⁶ Other writers postponed the ultimate day of German–Roman fusion until later in the Middle Ages, in order to provide a racial rationale for the rise of the powerful Italian communes or the Renaissance.¹⁷⁷

Italian Nordacists sometimes contended that the miscegenation of two closely related races produced a superior hybrid. Conveniently, this principle could be

called on to explain Italian racial “progress” at two critical historical junctures: the arrival of the Aryans in the Eneolithic era, and the invasion of the Germans at the end of the Empire.¹⁷⁸

Not all Aryan racists depended on the possible beneficial effects from the miscegenation of affined races.¹⁷⁹ Some of the more scientific theorists, such as Landra, Marcello Ricci, and Arturo Donaggio, used a racist version of Mendelian genetics as a *deus ex machina*, rescuing the Italians from wallowing in the muck of racial bastardization. According to Mendel’s laws of segregation and independent assortment of genes, heterozygous or hybrid organisms could theoretically produce offspring that had only homozygous or “pure” gene pairs. Such scenario became increasingly unlikely as organisms of greater and greater complexity are considered, and astronomically improbable in the case of human beings. But this fact did not faze Italy’s racial biologists. For example, Landra wrote that the “laws of nature” could operate to “repurify” the bastardized descendants, allowing the original characteristics to resurface with “urgent violence.”¹⁸⁰ Therefore, in the case of Italy’s late Roman racial degeneration, “the fatality of the hereditary laws made it such that in the course of the following years these outside foreign elements were completely eliminated and ... Italy continually reacquired its racial homogeneity.”¹⁸¹ This pseudo-scientific explanation for Italy’s supposed racial repurification would never have convinced anyone with even an elementary textbook level of knowledge concerning genetics. Certainly Landra and his colleagues must have realized its fatal inadequacies even while advancing it as an explanation for Italian racial purity. For them, it was presumably acceptable to distort science in order to validate higher political “truths.”

Given the views concerning Aryan and Semitic cross-breeding expressed above and Mussolini’s own statements concerning miscegenation, it is hardly surprising that all of *La Difesa*’s writers were adamantly opposed to miscegenation between the different “major” races.¹⁸² Landra spoke for many racists when he claimed that the combination of “heterogeneous racial elements” had a “degenerating function,” destroying the “perfect harmony of the pure race.”¹⁸³ Cipriani held that miscegenation was an “opprobrium – or rather a monstrosity – destined to cause a grave damage to the most civilized people.”¹⁸⁴ The dissimilarity of the parental genetic traits supposedly resulted in a host of physical and psychological problems for the offspring, such as mental instability, frequent illness, infertility, and other “degenerative characteristics.”¹⁸⁵ Consequently, miscegenation with non-Aryans such as Jews and people of color was the greatest threat to the superiority of the Aryan race.¹⁸⁶

Racists usually saw women as key to the preservation of racial purity and the conservation of their racial heritage. Male racists saw women as passive, nurturing, and conservative. Thus, they seemed to be the “preservers” of society, the conservators of the racial heritage. Some ideologues were determined to prove that women were more physically homogeneous than men, more racially stable, and more morphologically conservative. As Lidio Cipriani wrote, “In every race the woman is the most precious depository of the characteristics of a racial type.” By miscegenation, a woman “destroys the treasure of possibilities latent within her.”¹⁸⁷

Once again, the racial biologists were called upon to provide a scientific gloss to this myth. Lino Businco exploited the lack of understanding of human genetics in the late 1930s to imagine an explanation. He held that women are more racially conservative than are men because women's chromosomes dominate those of males, and are less variable (men have the odd "Y" chromosome). Furthermore, Businco thought that women donated 24 chromosomes to their female offspring, whereas men only donated 23 chromosomes. Also, the ovum was larger than the sperm, and the egg's cytoplasm probably contributed hereditary factors as well, Businco suggested. Finally, Businco noted that some biologists believed that men were actually a secondary derivation of the female sex – thus women represented the basic physical model.¹⁸⁸

Ironically, while women were regarded as the most important sex in terms of racial conservation, they were also the most likely to "breach" the fortress of racial purity. Due to their "inexperience, weakness or perversion" they were more likely to fall prey to illicit miscegenation than were males.¹⁸⁹

This determination to place the burden of racial purity on women was probably spawned by the fear that women might attempt to break out of the patriarchal control society imposed on them. Racial biology negatively empowered women: though too passive to accomplish much good for society, women were capable of great harm, and so had to be controlled to prevent their destructive potential from being unleashed. Of course such a position rationalized female repression. It almost seems as if society, while denying women equality in the real world, attempted to compensate them with equality or superiority in the mythical world of race.

Racial autarky was another aspect of the focus on genetic purity. Though the Italians were members of the Aryan race, they retained an autonomy that set them apart. Mussolini was fond of reminding his audiences that the physical, mental, or spiritual change in the Italian race since Roman times had been very minor or non-existent. Evidence of aesthetic purity in particular seems to have been especially important for the *Duce*, and inspired numerous affirmations.¹⁹⁰ Racial autarky manifested itself in cultural independence. Thus, racism

encourages in peoples the cult of their own originality, and obligates them to undergo an introspection meant to distinguish – in customs, in institutions and in culture – what is congenial and indigenous to themselves from what is imposed and imported.¹⁹¹

This included Byzantine and (for some) Romanesque and Gothic art, cosmopolitanism, urbanism, individual and sexual equality, modernity, and whatever else was not sanctioned by the regime at the time.¹⁹² Claims of racial autonomy fairly often degenerated into thinly veiled attitudes of racial superiority, technically at odds with the official position of intra-Aryan racial equality established in the Manifesto. No one seems to have much objected, however. Naturally, as a writer became more enthusiastic about racial autarky, he tended to distance the Italians from the supposedly related races. An overwhelming concern with racial autarky was characteristic of the Italian nativist racists.

Following the *Duce*'s lead, almost all Italian racists accepted the proposition that the Italian race was not static or permanent in its features, even outside of the effects of miscegenation. This was most apparent in two ways: the relationship of race and environment; and the anticipated effects of eugenics policies. Both of these modes of racial alteration were modeled on standard Darwinian evolutionary theory, but in Italian racism they took on bizarre and mystical forms.

Landra took a “moderate” position on racial change, as he saw it. While some racial elements were permanent, other “variable” elements were subject to environmental alteration.¹⁹³ He never seems to have offered a clearer definition or explanation of these different hereditary elements, probably because they had no basis in reality. Nevertheless, Landra was quite proud of his obfuscation on this issue. He later bragged to his colleagues that:

Between these two extreme theses which attribute only to heredity or only to the environment the possibility of influencing the race, Landra selects a position of just equilibrium, the only one that corresponds at once to the reality of scientific data *and the necessity of our spirit*. (Italics added)¹⁹⁴

Eduardo Zavattari and Aldo Modica advanced a much more radical position. They believed that “there is a perfect parallelism between changing environment and human transformation.”¹⁹⁵ Therefore, races were physically and psychologically molded by their environment over time. The mechanism for these alterations, Modica claimed, began when “environmental pressure” caused changes in the “internal hormonal environment” of a race, resulting in “bio-morphological reactions.” These reactions provoked “organic modifications,” which then fixed themselves in the gametes and transmitted themselves through Mendelian inheritance to the offspring.¹⁹⁶ References to Mendelian inheritance laws aside, Modica was actually reviving Lamarckian inheritance laws to bolster his argument.

According to the radical environmental thesis, superior races readily adapted to new environments. Based on the ease with which Italians settled in a wide variety of ecosystems, from Africa to the Americas, they conveniently proved to be among the most adaptable races, and hence among the most superior.¹⁹⁷ Apparent racial variations among the Italians of different regions are not due to racial hybridization, but to the effect of diverse environments on the local populations. Though some phenotypical diversity might exist, Italians still exhibited a profound “integral biopsychic unity.”¹⁹⁸

Eduardo Zavattari, whose “enthusiastic attitude” to the Manifesto Alfieri thought “particularly worth noting,” was no less enthusiastic concerning the relationship between racial change and the environment.¹⁹⁹ In the first issue of *La Difesa*, Zavattari wrote that the “modellizing and selectivizing actions exercised by the environment on the morphology of man” accentuate and impel racial characteristics, though the final effects depend upon the particular race. The environment has an especially strong impact on the racial psyche. In Italy, the dynamic seas, rivers, and mountains “unconsciously but profoundly” stimulate the Italians’ spirit of activity, their combativeness, and their lust for conquest. Broken, craggy,

diverse terrain engenders tremendous human activity, and renovates the gigantic struggle in the race; flowing water and crashing waves sublimate the sense of changeableness and provoke a sense of dynamism, a confidence in overcoming obstacles, an ability to dominate nature, to look ahead, to model their bodies and minds on these themes of movement and force. It causes a love of work, of the “hard life.” This environment, combined with the action of a brilliant sun, provokes in the brains of the Italian race

a profound imprint, unique, unmistakable, absolutely different from anyone else’s. The cult of beauty, the joy of life, the harmonious forms and acts, the sense of solidarity and brotherhood that characterize the Italian mind, come from the natural environment. Italian art comes from such inspirations. It is unconscious. It also makes Italians rational, curious about the natural world. It makes Italians love their land, their own traditions, their past, their being. Their bio-psychic characteristics are thus exclusive to them, as is their environment. It gives them homogeneity, unity.²⁰⁰

Probably no other article could better demonstrate the depths to which Italian science sank in its perversion for the purposes of racial propaganda.

Besides environment, eugenics could also alter the race. Marcello Ricci and Guido Landra were the most adamant eugenicists on *La Difesa*’s editorial board. Like Fischer, Landra considered eugenics to be an integral part of his racism. While head of the Racial Office, Landra concerned himself with the “very urgent need” to direct Italian racism “above all in the eugenic camp.” Healthy families had to be prevented from mating with the genetically deficient, lest that which wishes to “pass for racism” negate “any defense and any exaltation of race.”²⁰¹ He later elaborated his views on eugenics in *La Difesa della Razza*. He wanted Italian eugenics to

maximally stimulate the most gift elements of the Italian people, from a racial viewpoint, to place the great mass of average elements ... in favorable developmental conditions, and finally to diminish by eugenic methods, such as sterilization and castration, the gray mass of weak and asocial elements until they disappear. Such an action must be accompanied by a profound reform of a social and economic character.²⁰²

Like Landra, Ricci looked forward to the “true improvement of the race” that would result from the “effective diminution of defective genetic traits” by the “application of opportune measures tending toward the elimination of the reproductive activities of individuals dangerous to the race. ...”²⁰³

In addition to his considerable and growing duties as an editor and a principal contributor to *La Difesa della Razza*, Landra had to devote most of his time to establishing the Racial Office. The Office began operation on August 1, 1938, with Landra as Director and Lino Businco as Vice-Director.²⁰⁴ Cipriani, Franzi, and Ricci were also on the staff.²⁰⁵

The Office was entrusted with the following mission:

1. Promote the number of adherents to the initiatives of the Ministry of Popular Culture in the world of high Italian culture, either with the personal invitation of sympathetic professors who are famous and very influential in the university environment, or attract by means of appropriate circulars the attention of the various scientific societies.
2. Create at this Ministry a specialized library for racial problems. Such a library, absolutely new for Italy, would be a powerful weapon for such propaganda.

One should note that a list of books to acquire as the first nucleus for the future library has already been created.

3. To create once again at this Ministry a photographic library of racial types of Italy and Italian Africa. This precious and very original propaganda documentation will be coordinated by geographic criteria, so that every remote corner of our country and of our Empire will have its racial type represented.

The practical means to immediately initiate this collection has already been studied.

4. Initiate the publication of a series of simple and popularizing articles. Part of these articles will serve to illustrate and amplify the ten points, thus forming the basis of the new fascist racial doctrine; another part will illustrate particular or collateral sides of the problem.

One should note in this regard that there has already been established among the fascist scholars a division of labor and that numerous articles are ready for publication.

5. Support the written propaganda with an appropriate series of popular conferences, given in different environments. . . .
6. Reach with the powerful auxiliary of cinematographic propaganda where articles and conferences don't reach; one will be able to act on the great mass of people in an instructive and amusing way; they will see the exaltation of our own race and will learn to recognize other races.

The practical application of cinematographic propaganda is currently being studied.

7. Create a special instrument for racial propaganda with the foundation of a magazine of a popular character, placed under the aegis of the Ministry of Popular Culture. This magazine is absolutely necessary, because the scientific periodicals that are published in Italy have an absolutely academic and technical character. [This, of course, is a reference to *La Difesa della Razza*.]

8. Send the fascist scholars to make contact with the offices and institutions of the various states in Europe that concern themselves in the most diverse points of view with the problem of race. These contacts are absolutely necessary in order to avoid repeating in Italy an experience already made by others.

Each scholar has already been assigned a trip to make; while for some this means a brief period of contact, for others this will be a little longer trip to study the questions in depth.²⁰⁶

Based on guidelines promulgated by Alfieri, the Racial Office directed the media to adhere to the following principles: anti-Jewish propaganda should not degenerate into offensive vulgarities; Jews were to be discriminated against, not persecuted; the Jewish aspect of the racial problem was not to be overstressed, given the other threats to the purity of the Italian race; the primary function of Italian racism was the creation of a Roman race consciousness, the Italians being the physical as well as the spiritual descendants of the ancient Romans; finally, the press was instructed to ignore the debate between Romanità and *Germanismo*, since the Germans were both “fellow Aryans” and close allies.²⁰⁷

A number of important factors are embedded in this directive. First, Mussolini intended to calm down media agitation over the “Jewish problem,” perhaps because it was not being very well received by the public. Second, the document made a crude attempt to paper over the growing tensions between two most important (and mutually antagonistic) theoretical positions in Italian racism: Mediterraneanism and Nordicism. While attempting to accommodate Mediterraneanists by conceding that the primary function of Italian racism was to reinforce Romanità, Nordicists were gratified by the document’s prohibition of a Kulturkampf between the Italians and the Germans. Paradoxically, due to the very nature of Romanità, the former directive directly contradicted the latter. Though the differences were crudely papered over at first, a complete split between the two racisms was not far off.

From the very beginning, Landra had undoubtedly been instructed to emphasize the independence and autonomous development of Italian racism, contrasting it with the German variety.²⁰⁸ It appears that Landra and his colleagues believed this to be the actual truth. Lidio Cipriani asserted in a letter to Landra that Italian racism was “more scientific and more objective and original” than its German counterpart.²⁰⁹ For his part, Landra never hesitated in publicly backing away from those same connections with German racism that he had only so recently embraced. For example, he was vigilant in censoring his colleagues whenever they veered toward a too close imitation of the Germans. Cipriani himself was rebuked, apparently for encouraging the hybridization of the different racial groups that composed the Italian people. Such an intermixture, Cipriani claimed, had occurred “with maximum results” in his native Tuscany.²¹⁰ Landra retorted that “the Capo has not in fact approved the concept of racial mixing even if the Germans have. For our *politics* [italics mine] there exists in Italy only a *single* race.”²¹¹ In another document, Landra reiterated his prohibition of any

text that promoted “the miscegenation of Italian ethnic varieties in place of strengthening and defending in every way the ... best racial elements [in Italy].”²¹²

Landra rejected another of Cogni’s multitude of proposals, which recommended that the Racial Office authorize the publication of classic works of racism, because “the Italian racist movement is perfectly original, and therefore one can not find in any of the authors who have written on racism a perfectly orthodox book.”²¹³

Although Landra certainly gave maximum deference to the racist inclinations of the Capo, one can find certain elements of his thought that are characteristic of his own racial interpretation. To a great extent, these were informed by his devotion to a number of his German colleagues (above all to his mentor Eugen Fischer), to the French anthropologist Georges Montandon, and by his strong attachment to the Catholic faith.²¹⁴

Landra’s attachments to Fischer and their mutual Catholicism led instinctively to a dislike of Cogni’s spiritual racism, which was anti-Catholic and based in large part on the theories of Alfred Rosenberg. Landra reacted sharply when Cogni requested permission to publish an Italian translation of Alfred Rosenberg’s *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts* (*The Myth of the Twentieth Century*). Summarizing his decision not to allow the translation, Landra explained to Alfieri that the book was anti-Catholic, would provoke anti-German sentiments in Italy, represented a now-surpassed version of German racism, and was outdated since Rosenberg himself had, since its publication, become increasingly moderate though less influential in Germany. Such a translation, Landra predicted, would lead to scandals in Italy, “as have the theories of Cogni himself.”²¹⁵ Elsewhere, Landra warned that Cogni would only be given an audience in Italy if he adhered strictly to the Manifesto, “without crossing into any problems of a mystical or religious nature.”²¹⁶

Such strictures seemed impossible for Cogni to follow. One proposed article written by him, “Razzismo costruttore,” can be found in the files of the Racial Office, heavily marked wherever objectionable passages were found. These include an assertion that racism still remained unpopular in Italy: “One can not negate the fact the word racism still remains very unpopular [“not” is written in heavy red pen] and that, if it hasn’t aroused much reaction, it hasn’t raised in many spirits much enthusiasm either”; that some Sicilians were descended from the Arab invaders of the Middle Ages; and that “the new racial criteria should be, not dogmatic and materialistic, certainly, but spiritual and human.”²¹⁷ Landra may very well have exhausted himself simply trying to keep Cogni in check.

Besides overseeing racist propaganda, the Racial Office maintained liaison operations with other governmental bodies charged with racial duties. Principally, this included the General Directorate of Demography and Race (often referred to as the “Demorazza” Office), the High Council for Demography and Race (both agencies were under the Ministry of the Interior) and the Office of Studies of the Ministry of Italian Africa.²¹⁸ The Demorazza Office, created on July 18, 1938, was the successor to the Office of Demography. The Demorazza’s new duties included enforcing discriminatory measures against the Jews.²¹⁹ The first Director of the Demorazza Office, Antonio Le Pera, combined backgrounds in government

administration and science. He was a staunch Mediterraneanist and, as we shall see later, would quickly threaten the more Nordicist Racial Office. The High Council of Demography and Race was even more dangerous for Landra and his allies. The Council was established on September 5, 1938 under the direction of Giacomo Acerbo, to give “advice on the questions of a general character related to demography and race.”²²⁰ Acerbo was head of the faculty of Economics and Agriculture of the University of Rome, a prominent fascist leader, and an unshakable Mediterraneanist from Southern Italy. In fact, hardly had the Council been formed before it began maneuvering to change Italy’s racial policies, causing anxiety at the Racial Office. As Lidio Cipriani warned Guido Landra,

[It is necessary for us to be] actively concerned without delay with the appointments within the High Council for Demography and Race, because it seems clear to me that there are those who will do so to their advantage and hence to our harm. This would result in an effect that could be disastrous for public opinion in so far as anyone could infer from it a change of course in racial politics so soon after only a few weeks from its initial birth. I don’t see a better remedy than an immediate letter from you or from Minister Alfieri to the DUCE clarifying things and the contrast of interests that are clearly delineated and that otherwise might escape him. If we don’t succeed in this goal we must consider ourselves fully beaten and, as you know, your own situation will be in danger because one does not lack adversaries who will do anything possible to advance themselves and set us back.²²¹

In addition to domestic liaison duties, the Racial Office was assigned the even more delicate task of maintaining contacts with friendly foreign governments on racial matters. Landra himself was in frequent contact with his idol Dr Eugen Fischer since at least the spring of 1938, and was eager to send his colleagues to study under Fischer and other notable German racists.²²² Franzi appears to be the first associate of the Racial Office to embark on such a mission, later deemed to have been very successful. Businco also was sent on “delicate and important” foreign liaison missions.²²³

Naturally, the Racial Office also received foreign visitors, such as Dr Rudolf Frercks, the Vice-Director of the Office of Racial Politics of the Nazi Party (*Rassenpolitisches Amt der NSDAP*).²²⁴ Frercks visited Rome on October 10, just as curious about Italian racism as Landra was about German racism. Frercks pressed Landra for information regarding the development of Italian racism, the reasons for Mussolini’s precipitous decision to adopt anti-Semitism, the opposition of some of the fascist hierarchy to this decision, and the possibility of closer Italo-German ties on racial issues. Landra quite forcefully downplayed the anti-Semitic component of Italian racism, positing Romanità as the true foundation of Italy’s racist ideology. Italian racism was absolutely independent of German racism, Landra stressed, though in the end he confessed his suspicion that Mussolini might have adopted anti-Semitism to strengthen his ties to Germany, and perhaps also to have buttressed his claim to Southern France and Tunisia,

given the large number of Italian immigrants inhabiting both regions. Moreover, Mussolini had wanted Landra to write the Manifesto in such a way as to showcase the originality and scientific nature of Italian racism. Landra did not fail to express once again Italian disgust over continued German assertions that Italians south of Rome had “Negro blood” in their veins. Landra suggested that the two nations needed to clear up such matters, but also looked forward to possible scientific exchanges for racial study, and an Italo-German Academy of Racial Sciences.²²⁵

Germany and Italy agreed to pursue these goals through the creation of a secret Italo-German Committee on Racial Questions, which met for the first time in Germany from December 13 to 21, 1938.²²⁶ The Committee was kept small, with Landra and Businco representing the Italian Racial Office, and Dr Walter Gross, Director of the Office of Racial Politics and his Vice-Director Dr Frercks representing Germany. The goal of this first meeting was quite limited, and directed obviously to assuaging Italian pride: “to commence a preliminary examination of the opportune means to avoid in the respective racial propaganda those arguments that could harm the amicable spirit between the two Peoples.”

Landra, certainly following the instructions of his superiors, took great pains to drive home to the Germans that Italian sensitivities had to be respected. He insisted that the Germans recognize once and for all that Italians were a perfectly Aryan people. The Germans were also requested to refrain from taking credit for the Italian Renaissance (a request no doubt spawned by the claim in Ludwig Woltmann’s book *Die Germanen und die Renaissance in Italien* and similar works that almost all of the Italian Renaissance notables were of Germanic descent or at least racially Nordic). Landra also chastised the Germans for their repeated deprecating remarks about Romanità and the Christian religion. In response to his litany of complaints, the Germans showed “understanding,” almost “compliance,” Landra boasted. The Germans were quick to point out that such misconceptions were rather the fault of Italian scholars. This remark probably referred to the fact that Giuseppe Sergi and his most faithful disciples continued to assert that the Mediterranean race (including at least the Southern Italians) were descended from Africans.

Besides registering his objections to German propaganda, Landra demonstrated an eagerness to learn about recent developments in German racism. What he found simply confirmed his earlier suspicions, as outlined in his remarks on Cogni’s proposal to translate Rosenberg. The Nazis, he was told, had found that the prominence of racial theorists such as Rosenberg had limited their ability to directly control racial propaganda, and had in fact proved quite embarrassing to the regime. For example, Rosenberg’s and Günther’s harping on about the wonders of the Nordic race had alienated those “Germans” who did not think of themselves as Nordic: the Austrians and Sudetenlanders among them. Once the Racial Office was able to wrest control of racial propaganda, they substituted a new glorification of the “German race,” the product of “a thousand year process of biological and spiritual fusion.” This dramatic *volte-face* Landra attributed to Dr Eugen Fischer, “the greatest anthropologist in the world.” Surprisingly enough,

Landra also hinted that he was given the impression that the influence of Italian racism played no small part in the change of direction in German racism. “In essence one could say that the racial politics of the Reich, after years of experience, is today reaching as a point of arrival a doctrinal position that for Italy has been instead an original point of departure.” Because of this maturity in Italian racial thought, Landra surmised, the German Office of Racial Politics probably “counts on Italian influence and support to better concentrate in its hands control over racial politics and to definitively liberate itself from the influence of those that were the first spokesmen of German racism.”

During his visit, Landra had a very interesting encounter with his nemesis, Alfred Rosenberg. Almost gleefully, Landra found Rosenberg to be “an ailing and weak person effected by a profound melancholy,” a description also valid for the current state of Rosenberg’s racial theories in Germany, or so Landra believed. Even Rosenberg himself seemed to have been aware that the tide had turned in Germany, and his brand of racism was on the way out. Amazingly, Rosenberg now claimed that he had always considered the Catholic Church in Italy as the Italian national religion, not an Asiatic import. His disagreement was with the Church as an international, politically motivated institution. (One wonders how he could have conceived of the Catholic Church as anything other than an international institution.) Rosenberg also threw in a retraction of his previously disparaging remarks about Romanità. Nevertheless, Rosenberg could not refrain from advising Landra that he should not restrict the racial question in Italy strictly to a biological construction, but should infuse it with an ideal spirituality. Landra does not seem to have appreciated the advice. He retorted that “since the beginning the Italian racial movement contemplated at once the biological and spiritual aspects of the problem.” Afterward, Landra noted that Rosenberg was “deeply saddened” to see “already in the official direction of German racism the first signs of Italian influence.”

Landra also had occasion to speak at length about racism to two of the most important Nazi leaders, Rudolf Hess and Heinrich Himmler. From these conversations, Landra rather naïvely concluded that, whereas Hess’s racism was moving in a more biological and scientific direction, Himmler’s SS was taking the opposite approach, toward racial spiritualism. Himmler told Landra that the SS no longer gave priority to choosing men of Nordic appearance, but rather looked for the requisite spiritual attributes. “Now it depends not so much on the color of their hair or a given cephalic index,” Landra explained, “but rather if they have the psychological quality belonging to the ideal and heroic model of the German race.”²²⁷

At the conclusion of the visit, Landra and Gross agreed to a number of vague proposals that accomplished the original goals of the mission. Both countries promised to allow the other an opportunity to review propaganda concerning its racial composition before the material was disseminated. The proposals to increase academic exchanges and establish the Italo-German Racial Academy were also included.

At the high point of the meeting, the Führer rewarded Landra and Businco’s efforts by conferring on them the Order of the German Red Cross, for scientific

merit. Before the meeting concluded, Landra and Hess scheduled the next meeting of the Italo-German Committee in Italy sometime in mid-February, 1939.²²⁸

Although Landra always considered this meeting to have been a life-long triumph, it should have been obvious that storm clouds were rapidly gathering around him. There were many indicators that a substantial change in racial policy was in the offing. As indicated earlier, public opinion had by no means shown itself uniformly in favor of the Manifesto; quite the contrary. The apparent implication that Italian fascist doctrine might now be expected to imitate the German, though not valid, was even more offensive. Mussolini was aware of this. Mussolini seems to have begun backing off from the extremist Nordic position as soon as he sensed the first signs of discontent over the new “Aryanism” of the Italians. In a July 26 article of *Il Popolo d'Italia*, he took pains to equate Aryanism with the very Romanità he had nearly repudiated one month before:

An English woman writer, traveling in Rome, has made an amazing discovery, that the said lady has noted in a widely read magazine of her country. Discussing Italian woman in general and those of Rome in particular, the woman writer testifies that: “the lineaments of the Italian women are of incontestably Aryan origin.”

Evidently this verification is a surprise to the English woman. It is noted that for the English, the blacks begin just beyond the English channel and precisely at Calais.

We are speaking of race, ladies and gentlemen. The Italian women and men do not look like, have never looked like the other Semitic or extra-European races. Only in a period of total national dejection was it possible to so insult the old, proud Italian people. Those who wish to see the Aryan type in their classical purity and nobility of line are asked to examine the high reliefs of the Ara pacis, which will be exposed, reconstructed, to the world next September: that type is revived through 50 generations in the Italians of today, which for at least one thousand years have bred among themselves, without assimilations and without the integration of foreigners through “naturalizations” so often applied in countries where the cradles are notably less than the coffins.

To say Aryan, signifies to belong to a historically-determined group of races: to the Indo-European group and precisely to that which has created world civilization.²²⁹

As the year wore on, Mussolini’s backtracking accelerated. Probably to forestall further criticism from among the fascist elite, Mussolini had appointed the Mediterraneanist Acerbo to head the High Council on Demography and Race on September 5.

By October of that year, the *Duce* had reverted somewhat to his more customary racial description. As he reasoned with the National Council of the Fascist Party,

We need to keep in mind that we are not Hamites, that we are not Semites, that we are not Mongols. And, then, if we are not of these races, we are evidently Aryans and we came from the Alps, from the North. Therefore we are pure Aryans of the Mediterranean type.

He also sought to downplay any racial impact that the Germanic invasions of late antiquity may have had on Italy. He claimed that “the barbarian invasions after the Empire were of few people: the Lombards were no more than 8,000 and were absorbed; after 50 years they spoke Latin.”

Most interestingly, Mussolini declined to pass judgment on the debate then raging over who were the original inhabitants of Italy. He pointedly prefaced his history lecture with the words, “Without going back to the origins, to the Ligurians and to 5000 or 6000 years before Christ we will say only that, from at least 1500 years, our people have kept to themselves, for which reason our race is pure, especially in the countryside.”²³⁰

In Mussolini’s “Discorso di Trieste,” published in the September 16–18 edition of *Il Popolo d’Italia*, Mussolini told his audience that the “racial superiority and higher form of civilization” of the Italians “disarmed, civilized, and absorbed would-be conquerors such as the Lombards.”²³¹ In the *Declaration of Race*, edited by Mussolini in September 1938 and approved by the Grand Council on October 6, 1938, the first paragraph was eliminated from the final published copy. It had validated the authority of the Manifesto: “The Grand Council is making [this declaration of race] on the basis of the ten propositions elaborated by the Fascist University Professors, under the aegis of the Ministry of Popular Culture and approved successively by the Secretary of the Party.”²³²

Landra’s efforts to distance Italian racial doctrine from the Germans extended back to August 1938, no doubt as a result of higher orders.²³³ Lino Businco, the Vice-Director of the Racial Office, was fiercely loyal to his native Sardinia, whose population everyone agreed was Mediterranean. Businco would defend the Mediterraneans against their detractors some years later in *La Difesa*.²³⁴

Furthermore, continued German attempts to assert their superiority over the Italians annoyed Mussolini. Although the Italo-German alliance should have ended German attacks against the Italians, racially or otherwise, Italians still bristled at the suggestions of their inferiority that would surface from time to time in the German media or elsewhere. As Mussolini would learn, publication of a pro-Nordic Manifesto would do little or nothing to abate this stream of criticism. Landra’s meeting with Frercks in October, and the Italo-German Committee on Racial Issues in December, were largely dedicated to creating a safe space for Italian racism in the racist discourse of Europe. The Germans were chastised for their negative stereotyping of the Italians, especially the occasional claims that Italians were racially related to Africans.

Nevertheless, the insults continued throughout the ensuing war years. For example, in December 1938, Dino Alfieri, the Minister of Popular Culture, complained to Dr Rudolf Frercks of the German Office of Racial Politics about a

Munich publication that had published an article claiming that the population of Southern and Central Italy had “a strong admixture of Negro blood.”²³⁵

Similarly, the Germans remained adamantly opposed to acts of miscegenation with the Italians, obviously implying that they would be polluted from such a union. For example, several years later, in September 1941, Mussolini was irritated to learn about the support of various Nazi officials for a circular which claimed that any interbreeding between nations was undesirable, but if it did occur it was to be preferred between Germans and other Nordic peoples, rather than between Germans and those of “alien blood” such as the Italians. Dino Alfieri described the German reasoning for such measures in these terms: “‘The Italian race is inferior, or at any rate the two races are different; hence, unions which could only yield degenerate offspring can in no circumstances be permitted.’”²³⁶ Despite repeated protests from Italian officials, the Germans refused to modify their stance.²³⁷ That same month Mussolini was informed that Italian laborers in Germany were being beaten up and set upon by watchdogs, and that Germans were being arrested and brutalized for talking to Italians. His anger at these events exploded on September 26, 1941: “I can not accept that the sons of a race that has given to humanity Caesar, Dante and Michelangelo are being devoured by the bloodhounds of the Huns.”²³⁸

F. Suvich recorded in his memoirs that:

I had in my hands – I don’t remember how it came to me – a program that circulated among the Gauleiters on the future organization of Europe; the directional center would have been in the hands of the German element, assisted in certain conditions [*a parità di condizioni*] by the English and other Nordics. The French were also admitted in the directional group. Italians, Iberians, Greeks, and other Mediterraneans were in the subject group. I do not know if this document was authentic; however, it signified the mentality and the tendencies of the Nazis.²³⁹

As we have seen, Mussolini’s decision to adopt a racial ideology for fascism in the summer of 1938 met with derision from many Italians, who were embarrassed by what to them seemed Mussolini’s desire to emulate German racism. This was in fact not the case, and Mussolini was infuriated by such suggestions. He sarcastically remarked: “Those who believe that we have obediently imitated anyone [with regard to racism], or worse, acted on suggestions, are poor deficients toward whom we do not know if we should direct our disapproval or our pity.”²⁴⁰ Mussolini kept to the same theme until the dying days of fascism. Giacomo Acerbo recalled Mussolini ridiculing the Germans, claiming that they had nothing in common with fascism except their attempts to poorly copy the system; rather, they advocated ideas and norms that were not acceptable to the Italian temperament, if not actually repugnant to it.²⁴¹

In December 1943, Mussolini made a confession to Bruno Spampanato that seems to indicate that he regretted the extent to which he had been seduced into emulating the Nordic race, as reflected in the Manifesto of the Racial Scientists. As the *Duce* put it,

The Racial Manifesto could have been avoided. It dealt with the scientific abstruseness of a few teachers and journalists, a conscientious German essay translated into bad Italian. It is far from what I have said, written, and signed on the subject. I suggest that you consult the old issues of *Il Popolo d'Italia*. For this reason I am far from accepting Rosenberg's myth.²⁴²

As the *Duce's* and the public's reaction against the Germanization of Italian racism became more obvious, the Mediterraneanists were beginning to stir themselves into action. We have already discussed the initial reactions of Nicola Pende and Sabato Visco to the Nordic elements of the Manifesto. Pende, the more vocal of the two, had lost his bid to force a reconsideration of the document in early August. But he was unwilling to let the matter rest.

Pende had continued to attack the Manifesto, and the doctrines that informed it, apparently believing that his prestigious status as a pillar of the Italian scientific establishment would save him from official censure. He was quite mistaken. His remarks at the Seventeenth Congress of the Italian Society for the Progress of Science, in Bologna, on September 7, 1938, prompted a severe memorandum from the Racial Office to Alfieri a week later:

The activities of Sen. Nicola Pende, which are found in the journals, appear increasingly in contradiction to the principles of racism, which have been laid down officially by the Regime. These activities of Pende are becoming increasingly dangerous and have pernicious consequences in Italian public opinion and elsewhere. It is necessary to energetically insure that the press does not expound further on the concepts propounded by Sen. Nicola Pende.²⁴³

Alfieri apparently did not yet feel comfortable in authorizing Pende's suppression. But Pende continued to up the ante. His articles in *La Vita Universitaria* on October 5 and in *Gerarchia* that same month made it quite evident that he had little respect for Nordicist racism, biological determinism, or the anthropologists who were propagating these concepts. He opened the first article with a blistering attack against the writers of the Manifesto:

Now, unfortunately, as happens at the beginning of all great intellectual movements, a few quick, superficial and aggressive writers of racism in Italy have professed judgments that are not shared by anthropologists nor by our own political hierarchy. Thus there are those who have forgotten that they belong to the progeny of Rome, constantly forgetting, as our Duce has affirmed, that we have our own Italic type ethnically speaking. That this type can not be confused with the ethnic types of other peoples, even other Indo-Europeans, has been universally recognized, but some still dream of Vikings coming down from the North pole in prehistoric times as the pure specimen and aesthetic model of the true Italic race, a morphological–psychological model that not even the Germans of today (see Lenz) want as their own,

given its delicate aesthetics predisposed to tuberculosis and to mental dissociation or disintegration.

The *Gerarchia* article, after repeating the criticism of “subpolar models,” denounced point seven of the Manifesto:

To want therefore for the Italian people to strive for an ideal racial or corporeal or especially psychological type which does not have its natural *habitat* in Italy, but for example in Scandinavia or Scotland, is as illogical as hoping that blacks raised for centuries in Italy will turn white!

Pende goes on to criticize a racism that sees itself superior to everyone else, even other Europeans, and so considers its chosen race as destined to rule the world:

Fascism doesn’t admit to there being inferior or superior races, but rather to races that are more adapted to this or that form of thought and of feeling, and therefore greater in one or another field of human elevation. Nothing can therefore justify that which the Duce has rightly called *racial delirium*, and that can only continually disturb the peace among the nations.

His readers could hardly fail to miss this reference to German geopolitical ambitions.

Pende called biological determinism “subjective and not scientific.” According to Pende, the determinists maintained that the ethnic mix of each nation never merged to form a new race. He disagreed.²⁴⁴

Rather than such a static biological determinism, Pende called for an Italian racism based on “dynamic–synthetic–evolutionary” principles. Races, according to this paradigm, were dynamic, undergoing continual evolution in response to spiritual, hereditary and environment factors over long periods of time. Under the appropriate conditions, people of different physical types but with similar psychologies could merge into one race over time:

On the spiritual side, great human groups live together for millennia one next to the other in the same climate, under the influence of the same social environment, breathing the same spiritual atmosphere, so that even if a few ethnic characteristics such as cranium, eye and hair color remain different from one group to another, [these ethnic groups] in the end amalgamate themselves and finally resemble each other from the psychological and dynamic or functional side. Since spirit and body constitute an indissoluble unity and act upon each other, even the bodies of these various national human groups finally homogenize themselves, and at least with respect to the most visible features begin to constitute a new great common biological–spiritual type, distinct from those of other people.

Herbert Jennings in the United States and Fritz Lenz in Germany admitted that such a process occurs, Pende noted.

Such a synthesis had occurred in Italy. “Fortune wanted our Italy to have in its various regions, for millennia, different ethnic treasures” with their own “anthropological–psychological characteristics”: the “Aryo-Italics” and the “primitive Mediterraneans of the pre-Roman and Roman epochs.” These groups were “all of a very ancient and noble blood,” though “not all equally gifted in somatic and spiritual values.”²⁴⁵ As the *Duce* “first recognized,” there occurred during the Roman Empire “a happy mix of the blood” of these ethnic groups, with the merger forming “a superior ethnic unity” of “great harmony and strong vitality”: the “great racial Romano-Italic synthetic type.”

The synthesis was still incomplete, however. Therefore, “matrimonial racial eugenics must also consider the great utility and stability of human genetics, by favoring marriage between subjects of different ethnic races” and by internal migration. In fact, Pende decided that it was necessary that the demographic laws of Italy be subordinate to “this necessary racial eugenics,” encouraging “above all marriage between distant ethnic races.” Pende promised his readers that the benefits from catalyzing the racial synthesis would include “the emergence of children of superior quality, and even geniuses.”

The new Romano-Italic race was distinct from all other Aryan groups of Europe, Pende declared, and should remain so. He looked forward to marriage only between those of different *Italian* ethnic groups. Pende rejected the Nordic claim that Italy had re-Aryanized itself through the German invasions: “it is not useful in trying to preserve the purity of the progeny of Rome” to “look for new blood outside of the borders of our country, even among people of the same Indo-European stock.”

Pende’s article made a number of concessions to orthodox racism. Most importantly, he considered himself to be a biological racist. His article criticized those who had a “historical traditional concept of race, that confounds race and the common cultural–traditional complex of a people.” Rather, Pende argued, this “folk” racism was only one aspect of the expression of the “spiritual side” of a race, only one manifestation of the “original biological–psychological complex.”

Pende had been advocating an environmental racism since at least 1934. Some races were better adapted to some environments than were others, he claimed, though all had a natural habitat. This is the reason why some of Italy’s invaders had been absorbed more or less rapidly by the “prepotent vitality of the native people,” whereas others had perished.

Pende’s articles included a standard denunciation of miscegenation with Jews and blacks. Pende claimed that these latter peoples were “very different spiritually from the romano-italic progeny.” As a result, “marriage with them must be prohibited.” Society had to be especially vigilant against miscegenation between these non-Italian races and Italian women, since “women are the most essential conservators of the character and virtue of the race.” Faithful to fascist anti-feminist rhetoric, Pende denounced working women, female hedonists, and generally any woman who refused to accept the role of housewife.

Pende also called for a strong eugenics program, and a unique one. He disparaged those countries that forcibly sterilized people with hereditary physical or

psychological diseases. Interestingly, his eugenics would have actually encouraged individuals with hereditary diseases to marry perfectly healthy partners with normal genetic traits, so that the recessive trait carrying the disease would not be expressed.²⁴⁶

As discussed above, Pende was also willing to grant the Aryans a significant role in the Italian racial mix. We should perhaps note here that the Mediterraneanists in general were willing to make such a concession. With Mussolini so adamantly in the Aryan camp, it would have been almost impossible to completely deny any Aryan influence in Italy. Nor was it theoretically necessary: even Sergi had admitted to an Aryan presence in Italy. Furthermore, Mediterraneanists like Pende could accept the official condemnation of racial links with Jews and blacks without sacrificing their core theoretical propositions. Though Sergi had traced Mediterranean ancestry back to Africa, and believed that Jews were quite closely related to the Mediterranean race, neither concept was essential for Mediterranean racism, and both were often jettisoned by the more moderate Mediterranean racists.²⁴⁷

Sops to official propaganda aside, Pende's blatant attack on some of the key features of official racism, such as his denunciation of Nordicism and his rejection of biological determinism, finally prompted the Ministry of Popular Culture to inform Italian journalists on October 16 to "no longer occupy yourselves with what Senator Professor Pende does or writes."²⁴⁸

Interlandi led the attack against Pende in the press. The next day he published his article "Canovaccio per commedia" in *Tevere*. Interlandi took great offense at Pende's criticism of the authors of the Manifesto, and shot back that Pende was "on the other side of the barricades" when the racial movement began. As evidence, Interlandi dredged up Pende's book *Bonifica umana razionale*, written five years before. The book was lambasted for its assertion that there were "various races in Italy," and that miscegenation with Jews was beneficial to Italy. Interlandi accused Pende of wanting to promote anti-racism, "or better yet individual orthogenetic reclamation." In other words, Pende wanted to control "the Institutes, Chairs of science, appointments, commissions" dealing with racism; to put it simply, "control of the whole new movement."²⁴⁹ Landra, some years later, would accuse Pende of instigating the first racist "deviation" from true fascist racism. Pende's orthogenesis, Landra held, had little to do with real racism.²⁵⁰ Interlandi's fear that Pende might attempt to control the racial movement in Italy probably stemmed from the government's approval, the previous May, of the construction of an Institute of Human Improvement and Orthogenesis, at the cost of ten million liras, to begin operation in late 1940 under Pende's direction.²⁵¹

Pende was hardly cowed by Interlandi's criticisms. Pende marshaled the support of a number of powerful figures and institutions in Italy, including some in the Catholic Church.²⁵² On October 18 he wrote directly to Mussolini to report on Interlandi's attacks: "In yesterday's issue of *Tevere*, the director has covered my name with contumelies based on furious attacks and lies about my racial ideas."²⁵³ Pende fired off several letters to Alfieri in rapid succession. In the first, he took Alfieri's acquiescence to the publication of Interlandi's article as a "direct

personal insult.”²⁵⁴ The second was even more strident, written after another anti-Pende article appeared in *Tevere*. This time, Pende asked if he hadn’t the right to defend himself “as a man that has given to science and to Fascism so many proofs of honor? and of fealty!”²⁵⁵ Apparently, Alfieri quickly resolved to quench the firestorm. The attacks on Pende ceased, and a month later he was even engaging in planning for an exhibition called “Fascist Racial Orthogenesis” for the E42 exhibition.²⁵⁶

The events discussed above culminated in the sacking of Landra on February 15, 1939, less than a month after his triumphant visit to Germany. He was replaced by Sabato Visco. Visco was the founder of the National Institute for Nutrition, a committed Mediterraneanist, and the closest ally of Pende on the Manifesto Committee. Landra was allowed to stay on at the Office only as a technical consultant.²⁵⁷

Several years later Landra would complain to Mussolini that he was never told why he had been removed from his post.²⁵⁸ We might surmise, however, that Landra was simply too closely associated with the Nordic Aryan faction that was now rapidly slipping out of favor. Landra’s close connection to Eugen Fischer, and the zeal he had shown in establishing formal links with the Germans in matters of racial policy, probably compromised Landra too much in Mussolini’s eyes to allow him to remain as head of the Racial Office. In 1940, when he was being forced out of the Office altogether, Landra would complain bitterly to Giovanni Preziosi that “between parentheses I must tell you that all the work of the [Italo-German Racial Committee], regularly approved by the Duce and the Führer, has been a dead letter since my substitution [as head of the Racial Office].”²⁵⁹ Landra’s replacement in 1939 by Visco was probably meant to quiet those in the academic and political communities who objected to fascist Italy’s flirtation with Nordicism. In the February 20, 1939 issue of *La Difesa della Razza*, the first after his dismissal from the directorship of the Racial Office, Landra accused the “Italian university faculty” of “treacherously” continuing to impede the teaching of racism, which they still considered “scandalous,” even after eight months of racial propaganda.²⁶⁰ Indeed, this sudden change in the landscape of Italian racism was so stunning to Landra that he felt compelled to acknowledge it in his own work. Henceforth his racist writings would play down Nordic superiority somewhat, concentrating instead on Aryan superiority, a relatively broader and hence safer term. In fact, when he spoke on “The Scientific and Political Problem of Race in Italy” at the University of Berlin only little more than a week after he was demoted, he denounced the concept of Nordic superiority and its assertion that the Italians were no less a superior race than were the Germans.²⁶¹



Plate 1 Giulio Cogni



Plate 2 Giacomo Acerbo

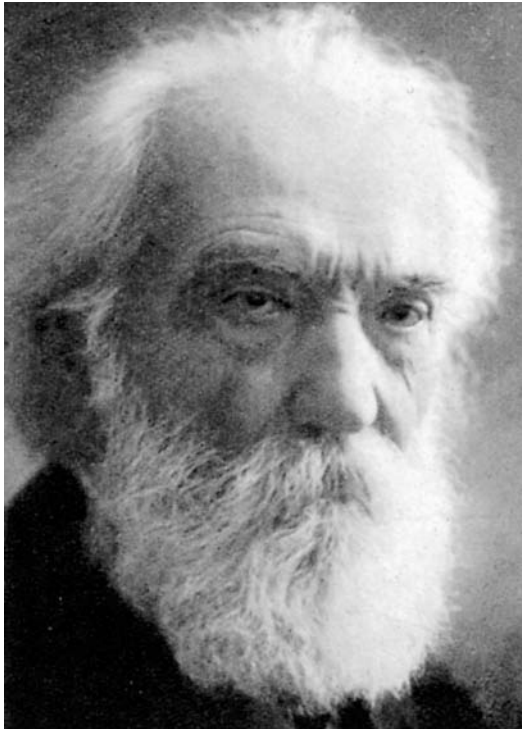


Plate 3 Giuseppe Sergi



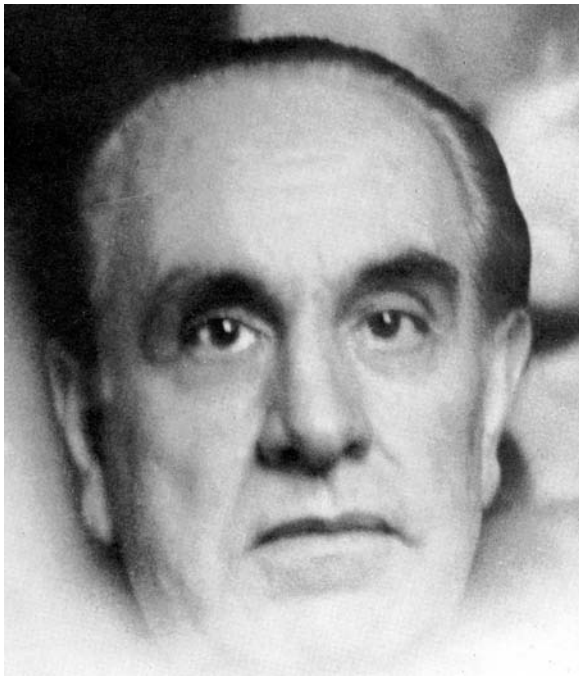
Plate 4 Guido Landra



Plate 5 Guido Landra touring Sachsenhausen concentration camp, near Berlin, December 1938



Plate 6 Telesio Interlandi



Plates 7 and 8 Julius Evola

5 Mediterranean racial ascendancy, 1939–1940

Although Pende was the first leader of the Mediterraneanist faction to challenge the Nordacist dominance, he did not remain the leader of the movement for long. Perhaps he did not have the stature necessary to attract political allies in what was shaping up to be a very sensitive controversy; or possibly his earlier adherence to the Manifesto alienated potential supporters. Rather, Giacomo Acerbo rose to lead the Mediterraneanists in the Fascist Party in the fall of 1938.

Baron Giacomo Acerbo was born at Loreto Aprutino (Pescara) in the southern province of Abruzzi in 1888. He received a degree in agricultural sciences from the University of Pisa in 1912. Acerbo fought in World War I, showed nationalistic tendencies thereafter, and became head of the fascists of Abruzzi after the war. He entered the parliament in 1921, and became Secretary of the Fascist Parliamentary Group. He participated in the march on Rome with the Abruzzi fascists, then served as Undersecretary to the President of the Council of Ministers, Vice-President of the Chamber of Deputies, Minister of Agriculture and Forests, and President of the International Institute of Agriculture. In 1935 Mussolini named him to the Grand Council of Fascism. Since 1927 he was a full professor of economics and agrarian politics of the University of Rome, and presided over the faculty of Economics and Commerce.¹ He eventually rose to become the President of the General Commission on the Budget of the Chamber of Fasci and Corporations, and in the winter of 1943 Minister of Finance.²

Acerbo was proud of his Abruzzi heritage. Not surprisingly, his concept of Italian racial identity was based squarely on a Sergian, Mediterraneanist model. Thus, Acerbo was quite naturally taken aback by the sudden and unexpected triumph of a Nordic identity in the Manifesto. As Acerbo wrote later,

It happened that one fine morning the Italian people were stupefied to learn from the newspapers that they had been rebaptized with the label of “Aryans.” Perhaps not even one in ten thousand had ever heard of this term; and it is a fact that not a few among the most educated, remembering the heresy of the same name from the time of Constantine, feared that this was intended to hurl some offensive schism against the Papacy.³

Acerbo had thought Italian Nordicism more or less dead by the 1930s, and so was shocked to find it now suddenly “reinvigorated by ourselves and repainted in the crass illusion of pleasing, unrequested, German Nazism.”⁴ As he later wrote,

it seems really inadmissible that in the intellectual circles of Italy in 1938, even of the second rank, there were bigwigs who were not aware in some way of that epithet [Aryan], around which in the half century before gravitated one of the most bandied about idolatries of the apologetic Germanic literature, which was by now empty of all scientific sense.⁵

Indeed, with the Manifesto and the “treacherous erudition” that it represented, “the business exhibited itself in the most depressing ways.” Italians would find themselves “confused among the minor peoples,” destined to occupy only a subordinate place in the German racial hierarchy.

After the war, Acerbo discussed his objections to the direction German culture had taken since the Enlightenment. He believed that modern German culture evolved as a reaction to the Latin culture that Napoleon tried to impose upon Germany:

The Germans, rejecting the cosmopolitanism of Goethe, embraced an authoritarian egotism. Fichte advocated the new mission of the German people, the “elect people,” to spread their culture throughout the world under a dictatorship – hence anticipating Hitler. In such a way, reviving the semi-conscious soothing dreams of atavistic pride, the Germanic conscience irremediably overflowed in the raving exaltation of the individual and of the predominance of force over reason; intoxication that had to soon manifest itself in a growing series of excessive pretensions up to the deification of the biological race in the dogmatic propositions of the Führer....⁶

Acerbo also claims to have disapproved of the anti-Semitic orientation of Mussolini’s racial program.⁷ Such a model simply contradicted “historical and ethnological” reality: the Italians belonged to the Mediterranean race. Instead, the Manifesto seemed to lump anyone not Semitic or a person of color into the category “Aryan.”⁸

Finally, Acerbo was appalled by the lack of credentials of the authors of the Manifesto. He described the whole business as “a form of decalogue [written] by a small group of imitative popularizers, without any scientific competency, with a scattered collection of rehabilitated worn-out and faded material....”⁹ He concluded that “apart from the patent discrepancies in the same terms of similar assertions, a more absurd distortion, or rather attempt at subversion, of the essence of our history has never been perpetrated....”¹⁰

On this basis, Acerbo felt it imperative to object. He drafted a memorandum on the issue of Italian racial identity, and sent it to Mussolini as well as to the relevant government ministries and Party officials. Apparently, this memorandum

concorded well with the thinking at the Ministry of the Interior. The Undersecretary of the Ministry, Guido Buffarini-Guidi, was impressed enough with Acerbo's ideas to propose to Mussolini that he be named to head the "National Council on Race" (a reference no doubt to the High Council of Demography and Race).¹¹ As discussed earlier, the High Council of Demography and Race was even more dangerous for Landra and his allies. The Council was established on September 5, 1938 to give "advice on the questions of a general character related to demography and race."¹²

Acerbo's initial memorandum can probably also account for a vague counter-thrust aimed at him, probably by the Nordacists. Later in September, an anonymous letter was reprinted in *Il Tevere* accusing Acerbo's International Institution of Agriculture of being riddled with Jews, a veritable "solid rock of Judaism in the agricultural sector."¹³ Telesio Interlandi would later publish an article in *La Difesa della Razza* that criticized those who had engaged in an attempt to weaken racism by twisting it into a simple patriotism, no doubt with Acerbo and his allies in mind. Their "ethereal" racism was based on "patriotic trappings rather than biological notions," he complained.¹⁴

Acerbo probably felt that his best opportunity for a wholesale reconsideration of fascism's official racial doctrine would be at the meeting of the Grand Council of Fascism, on October 6, 1938, when the forthcoming racial laws were to be accepted. During the meeting, he asserted that

All the energies and all of the glorious national traditions [of Italy] can not build themselves on a racial theory of organic heredity, but must take into account the function of the great spiritual and civil achievements that have been elaborated for over three thousand years on the soil of Italy and that in their turn have contributed to amalgamate in their well-defined historical complex the original races of our country.

He went on to demonstrate that the most recent research in ethnology and history showed that, since the Bronze Age, there was a homogeneous anthropological complex in Italy that had been capable of rapidly absorbing the successive ethnic groups throughout the ages. Therefore, they had little impact on Italian demography. Acerbo pointed out that "all the major exponents of the prehistoric disciplines and the ethnological and anthropological sciences in Italy today" accepted his theory. Finally, in light of his thesis, he advised the Council that the term "Italian race" be substituted for "Aryan" in official parlance. Consonant with his thesis, Acerbo voted against the racial laws with three other members of the Grand Council (Luigi Federzoni, Emilio De Bono, and Italo Balbo).¹⁵

The appeal, unfortunately, fell on deaf ears. Acerbo later noted that Mussolini was rather annoyed at this unexpected opposition. Acerbo attributed the Council majority's acceptance of the racial laws as a consequence of "the craze to align themselves, in any way, with Nazi politics."¹⁶

Though Acerbo did not yet meet with success in this endeavor, he certainly must have been pleased when his Mediterraneanist allies took control of the

Racial Office. Naturally, policy changes were forthcoming. On March 1, 1939 the Secretary of the Fascist Party, Achille Starace, issued new directives to the INCF for the fascist discussion of race that drove it in a more nativist and spiritualist direction. They included the following five points on which fascist writers were to dwell:

1. The individuation of the typical and permanent characteristics of the Italian race from ancient Roman times to today.
2. Initiation, continuation and development of the action of the Regime in defense of the race. Measures and institutions for the defense and the improvement of public health and the morals of the Italian people (political demographics, ONMI, provisions and assistance, labor hygiene, integral education of the youth, etc.).
3. The new aspects and new importance of the racial problem after the conquest of the Empire, which began the defense of the unity and the purity of the Italian race as conditions of our superior colonizing mission.
4. The consciousness of the racial problem as a function of the spiritual autarky of the nation.
5. The Jewish problem in the world and in Italy.¹⁷

In this new, post-Manifesto period the term “Aryan” was still used more often than “Mediterranean,” though this was not always the case. Many writers began to stress the autonomous and ancient roots of the Italian race to a greater extent than they had under Landra’s direction. There was also a very notable shift towards an increased emphasis on the “spiritual” aspects of the Italian race.

Excerpts from the daily press collected by the Racial Office demonstrate the effects on the media of the changes enumerated above. For example, the journal *Liguria* reported that the Ligurians (the ancient inhabitants of the modern Italian province of Liguria) were not Aryans, or at least were a mix of native and Aryan blood, “according to recent scientific findings.” Even *La Vita Italiana*, a bulwark of the Nordicist press, allowed that the ancient Cretans were a pre-Aryan Mediterranean people, thus allowing room for a valuation of ancient non-Aryan European civilizations.

The biological determinism of Landra and his associates seems to have provoked an even stronger reaction. *Origini* opined that, though race was founded on a “biological reality,” it could not be distanced from the “philosophical realm” as the writers of the Manifesto had done. *Libro e Moschetto* explained to its readers that an exclusively biological racism excluded the Italians from “that supernatural and universal valuation that belongs to the Roman people.” Both *La Nobiltà della Stirpe* and *La Tradizione* elevated spiritual racism over biological materialism. *La Tradizione* even called for an end to “materialistic racism.”¹⁸

Likewise *La Difesa della Razza* seems to have been affected by this trend. In an article of March 10, 1940 by Lino Businco, one of the signers of the Manifesto and a member of the editorial board of *La Difesa*, the previously forbidden concept of spiritual racism raised its head for the first time in that journal. Specifically,

the article maintained that “every race has its own peculiar characteristics, physical *and spiritual*.”¹⁹ Remarkably enough, Guido Landra himself recognized the necessity of acknowledging a spiritual side to racism in this (essentially) post-Manifesto era. In an article published in the February 20, 1940 issue of *La Difesa* concerning a conference on the concept of race sponsored by the Fascist Party’s Center for Political Preparation in Rome, the student participants concluded (under Landra’s guiding hand) that spirit, sentiments, and will were part of the racial concept. Thus, they proclaimed that there was a strong spiritual element in race, including “the feeling of belonging to the same racial group.” The race was, in their opinion, guided by will and by daily struggle.²⁰ In 1939 Claudio Calosso published an article in which he denied that the concept of Indo-European was anything more than a linguistic group. Rather, Calosso postulated the existence of a “Mediterranean racial unity” that included not only Italy but much of the rest of the continent! The Germanic invasions of Italy were minor and did not affect the native race or culture.²¹ Finally, we should note that *La Difesa*’s originally fierce partnership with German racism seemed to decline into a quiet distancing of Italian racism from its German counterpart.

Indeed, early in 1939 the collaboration with the Germans sought so eagerly by Landra the year before degenerated into perfunctory statements of principle. The March 6–11, 1939 convention of the Committee of Italian–German Juridical Collaboration was representative of a new mood between the two countries. The resolution approved by the convention, *Razza e Dritto*, stated that:

every people, which are united by their collective life, must also resolve the problem of its individuality according to its own spiritual and racial characteristics. On this basis fascism and National Socialism both demand the right to defend and perfect European civilization. The judicial regulations of the totalitarian state put forth as their aim the moral integrity and the physical–psychological health of the future generations of its own people.²²

The statement was, self-evidently, of no import.²³

Perhaps to indicate these changes in direction, the Racial Office was renamed the Office of Racial Studies and Propaganda on April 5, 1939. Instead of the earlier emphasis on “racial problems,” the title of the office now emphasized its propaganda functions in regard to race.²⁴

Besides the replacement of Landra by Visco, it seems that many of the other employees were turned out of the Racial Office at this time, having been stigmatized as too politically close to the Landra faction.²⁵ At least some of the collaborators remained, however. These included Giulio Cogni, who continued to pester the government about allowing him to play a more active role in racist propaganda. In late 1939 Cogni proposed that he teach a course on racism at the University of Rome, as part of a new program in racial biology scheduled to begin with the new year. The Racial Office noted, however, “because of the preparation and the direction that he has followed up to today” his course proposal would not fit well into the curriculum. “With the consequence,” the official

reported, “that I do not see any possibility of utilizing the work of Prof. Cogni – At most he could be given some isolated conference, with the certainty however that he wouldn’t have an audience.”²⁶

Gino Sottocchia’s book, *Razza e razzismo nell’Italia fascista*, is fairly typical of the sort of propaganda now being approved through the Racial Office. Sottocchia affirmed that race is realized through both the spirit and the body.²⁷ Physically the Italians were a Mediterranean Aryan people. Spiritually they were products of “Latin Romanità,” and adherents of the “Roman and Latin Catholic faith.”²⁸ Italian culture was born in ancient Rome, which bequeathed to modern Italians a “spiritual patrimony so great and precious, that no other people could ever dream of having an equal in all the centuries of history.”²⁹ Not even the subsequent barbarian invasions had an effect on Italian “biological homogeneity” or culture.³⁰

Many books came out in 1939 that were highly critical of German racism even before Mussolini reacted against his ally with the outbreak of World War II. Antonio Banzi’s *Razzismo fascista* was one such work. *Razzismo fascista* was written in January 1939 and published two months later, apparently under the auspices of the INCF. Banzi pointedly remarked in the preface to his book that Italian racism rejected the Nordic racist apostles, such as De Gobineau, Chamberlain, Grant, Clauss, Woltmann, and Rosenberg, as foreign to the concepts embodied in Italian racism. “Mussolinian Italy ... has nothing to learn from other peoples,” Banzi announced.³¹

Banzi’s definition of the Italian race also strongly defied the Manifesto’s guidelines. For Banzi, the Italians were composed of a “variety” of “ethnic human forms,” but nonetheless were united physically and psychologically in one racial entity, the “Roman–Italic type.” This process of amalgamation had occurred historically through the mediation of the ancient Roman spirit. Though the Roman–Italic “type” was unique, it belonged to the “great sphere of Latin families.”³²

Razzismo fascista displayed an almost fanatical devotion to the concept of racial autarky. The Italian race had remained pure for thousands of years.³³ The Romans had never intermingled with the peoples that they had conquered, due to the consciousness of their racial superiority.³⁴ Even less had the Romano-Italians of the early Middle Ages shown a deterioration that could be corrected through the injection of Germanic blood, as the Nordics asserted: “[The Roman race] has never had a need of outside infusions to empower its people, and rejects with all of our force any accommodational theory that wants to make them appear like a mixed people, that still has need of original blood.”³⁵ Similarly, the modern Italian conquerors had to remain on their guard against the pitfalls of miscegenation with the dark peoples over whom they now ruled.³⁶

Banzi’s anti-German racial sentiments were echoed even by one of the original Manifesto collaborators. Leone Franzì, a signer of the Manifesto and an original contributor to the work of the Racial Office and *La Difesa della Razza*, seems by 1939 to have had a timely change of heart concerning his German mentors. Franzì now considered it dangerous, for example, to over-emphasize anti-Semitism or the Nordic Aryan element in Italian racism.³⁷

We can find an interesting discussion of the concepts of Lamarckian racial evolution and the effect of environment on racial development in the work of Mario Canella that was published during Sabato Visco's tenure at the Racial Office. He was an assistant professor of biology and general zoology at Bologna. Canella began addressing the issues of racial psychology and race formation in the *Rivista di psicologia normale e patologica* that year, expressing a Lamarckian conception of racial formation typical of Italian racists.³⁸

Visco was highly impressed with Canella's work; in September 1940 he offered him a position with the Racial Office.³⁹ Visco sweetened the deal with a professorial position at the University of Rome. Canella was commissioned to research and supervise the preparation of the National Convention on Race, write on "Racial and Ethnic Psychology" for the "Problems of Race" series of the Racial Office, and reorganize the Racial Office's library.⁴⁰

In the *Rivista di psicologia* Canella had defined race as

a group of men characterized by the unique collection of morphological, physiological and psychological traits, individually variable within certain limits, that transmit themselves hereditarily from generation to generation.

The psychological traits were "certainly" the most important of the three for defining a race, Canella noted.⁴¹

Like Eduardo Zavattari and most Italian racists, Canella was a convinced Lamarckianist.⁴² He rejected outright the possibility that psychic traits could be inherited according to Mendelian genetics.⁴³ Rather, races learned to adapt to the environment in which they found themselves. These adaptations engendered various physical changes, which in turn influenced psychic development.⁴⁴ As Canella explained it,

Certainly, living in society, autodomestication ... the complex system of reciprocal actions and reactions, must gradually have created ... those structural and functional bases (cerebral, nervous, sensory, muscular, skeletal, etc.) that conditioned the development and extrinsication of those psychic traits and those behaviors that characterize man in as much as they are components of a collectivity....⁴⁵

Like Eugène Pittard and Giovanni Marro, Canella believed that the differences in regional Italian types were not due to the presence of racially different invaders, but were the result of different regional environments that induced physical variation among the Italians. These variations were much less important than the overall unity of the Italian race, which had not substantially varied in its basic composition since the Bronze Age.⁴⁶

Canella accepted the conclusions of Guérout René Martial, Egon von Eickstedt, and others that this process of adaptation to new environments was the key to forming new races:

Now, in a well individualized ethnic group, historically and politically well integrated, even if racially heterogeneous, the same civic life, the same laws, the same practices and customs, the same language, the same official religion, the same soil, the same state-guided instruction and education, the same cultural climate, the same aspirations and collective ideas, along with the mixture of the blood of various regional races, can lead to the constitution of a new median racial type, represented by this given ethnic group. A nation, that is to say, and this is the opinion of most anthropologists, can constitute the focus of a new race in formation.⁴⁷

Emanating from the world of science, Canella had no patience for racial theories based on spiritual mysticism, as Julius Evola would promote. The premise that the spiritual idea preceded and determined the physical reality was founded on “metaphysical” not “biological” principles.⁴⁸ Evola’s recently published *Sintesi* was vitriolically scorned. Canella described the *Sintesi* as, for the most part, “very bizarre, metaphysical, unscientific.”⁴⁹ Several aspects of Evola’s thought seemed particularly outrageous. For one, this “devotee of magical sciences and esoteric traditions” demanded “nothing less than the liquidation of the ‘foolish’ Darwinistic theory of the evolutionary ‘myth,’” claiming that “the human species has been subject since the most remote times to a process of involution: primitive peoples ‘are the degenerate residue of prehistoric superior races.’”⁵⁰ Thus, Canella continues, the ancestors of present-day Indo-Europeans

are considered the repositories of every supreme truth and of every divine knowledge, according to which the “true and essential” origin of the white man dates back to “superior races that already in prehistoric ages possessed a civilization of limited material development, but of a very notable spiritual level, so much so that they came to be symbolically designated, in the myths about them passed down to all peoples, as ‘divine’ or ‘celestial’ races.” (Evola)⁵¹

It would seem that the significant role that Visco imagined for Canella, and his model of the plasticity of the Italian type, might have assured him a significant role in shaping Italian racial policy. Yet, as we shall see, Visco’s sudden fall from grace in favor of Alberto Luchini, a follower of Julius Evola, would cut short Canella’s career as the young rising star of Italian racism. It would seem that Canella’s fatal flaw, relative to Evola, was a lack of appreciation for the power of the spirit so essential to the basic fascist conception of reality.

Italian nativism

The indigenous origins of the Italian race, another concept popular while Sabato Visco was head of the Racial Office, found its most refined development in the work of the Italian anthropologist Giovanni Marro. To nativists, the antiquity of the Italian people was so profound that Italians pre-dated the subdivision of the

white racial group into regional races, such as Mediterraneans or Nordics. By 1939, when the Mediterraneanists were in the ascendancy, nativism became a politically “safe” racial theory. True, it rejected any special relationship with a broader Mediterranean racial identity. Yet it did preserve the autonomy of the Italian race and culture from the attempts by Nordicists to ascribe Italy’s cultural achievements to the Nordic peoples.

Ugo Rellini was one of the original creators of nativist racial theory. Rellini was a professor of paleontology at the University of Rome from 1928 to 1941. His archeological research in Marche and Puglie on human remains from the pre-historic period convinced him that the Italians were an essentially indigenous people, descended from the Cro-Magnons already inhabiting Italy in the inferior Quaternary period. Rellini rejected the notion of large-scale invasions into Italy in the Eneolithic or Bronze Ages. Rather, peaceful settlement by small numbers of Mediterraneans and Aryans served as a sort of “human yeast,” through fusion with the native inhabitants and the instigation of a new Italian civilization in the first Iron Age.⁵²

Ugo Rellini’s colleague Giovanni Patroni was even more adamant that Italian culture was primarily indigenous. Patroni was professor of archeology at the Royal University of Milan during the fascist period. He originally accepted much of Sergi’s work, but eventually embraced an understanding of paleontology that de-emphasized the importance of cultural change through the large-scale migration of racial groups, a concept in vogue since the publication of Eugène Pittard’s book, *Les races et l’histoire*, in 1924. Based on his reconstruction of the diffusion of the Indo-European languages in Italy, Patroni did not accept the notion that each race had its own particular civilization. He was much more concerned with “ethnic groups or peoples, an historical–spiritual formation that has nothing to do with race in the zoological or generically biological sense (that in which the word is used in physical anthropology). . . .” The Aryans in particular were a linguistic group, rather than a race, according to Patroni.⁵³

By the late 1930s, Patroni had concluded that both the Mediterranean and the Nordic races were indigenous to their respective regions.⁵⁴ Patroni blamed Mommsen in particular for the misleading notion of a mass Aryan invasion of Italy in the Bronze Age. Patroni believed that Mommsen’s *Storia Romana* demonstrated an

undervaluation or mental suppression of the pre-existing population, [and an] enormous overvaluation of the new comers. Thus one is led to imagine the diffusion of the Indo-European or Aryan as an immense migration of people, that, like the immense influx of Europeans in America, practically succeeded in wiping out the preexisting populations.⁵⁵

Rather, the Mediterraneans had developed their own highly developed civilization by the time of the Eneolithic (Bronze) Age.

Some Italian archeologists, following German scholars, believed that the invading Aryans brought to Italy both knowledge of bronze and the Indo-European

language. Patroni rejected both assertions out of hand. In each case, Patroni argued, cultural change occurred through peaceful commerce or the sporadic immigrations of individuals. Rather, Italy learned the use of bronze through commerce with the Eastern Mediterranean.⁵⁶

Linguistic change was no different. Originally, the Mediterranean Italians spoke an indigenous language. Later, Indo-European languages spread into Italy by the influence of commerce and by the migration of individuals of Mediterranean race but Aryan language (the Villanovians) from the northeast Adriatic hinterland.⁵⁷

Patroni was no more impressed by the impact of post-Roman Germanic culture on Italy than he was by the impact of pre-Roman Aryan culture. For example, he did not believe that the Lombards could have contributed any cultural or artistic elements to Italian civilization, as the native Italians were already far superior to the Lombards in cultural development.⁵⁸

The Italian anthropologist Giovanni Marro became the most prominent nativist. Marro was born on January 29, 1875 in Limone, Piedmont. Giovanni's father, Antonio, was a noted eugenicist.⁵⁹ Giovanni studied medicine and surgery at the University of Turin and abroad. He seems to have interested himself in anthropology, and was able to secure a position as an anthropologist on Ernesto Schiaparelli's expedition to Egypt, in 1911. Marro was charged with the study of ancient Egyptian skeletons on this mission. The venture must have inspired him to devote himself entirely to anthropology, as he would follow that profession for the rest of his life. In 1914 he began teaching anthropology at the University of Rome, transferring in 1923 to Turin. Three years later he founded the Institute and Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology at the University of Turin, basing the initial collection on skeletons that he had brought back from Egypt.

We can trace Marro's interest in Italian racial origins back to an archeological expedition to the Valcalmonica area in Italy, which he joined in 1929. There he discovered prehistoric cave dwellings, probably related to the native religious system and the Camunic civilization. This was the first of a number of expeditions in Italy that would establish Marro's claim to expertise on Italian anthropology, and his devotion to the nativist interpretation of Italian racial origins. We can trace Marro's later thought back to this period. In his book *Costume ornamentale precolumbiano e suo riscontro oggi nel Gran Chaco*, published in 1932, Marro established his conviction that customs and norms are the products of a people's spiritual orientation.⁶⁰

Marro was careful to cultivate connections with the fascist regime. This would certainly foster his ascension to prominence once the racist campaign was under way. Marro joined the Fascist Party in 1925. In 1933 Marro was elected to the Vice-Presidency of the Roman Society of Anthropology. Interestingly enough, he does not seem to have been involved in the first phase of the racial campaign under Guido Landra, perhaps because his dedication to the concept of racial nativism precluded an alliance with Nordicists. Still, Marro expressed his racial views through the Turinese newspaper *La Stampa*, beginning on July 30, 1938 with a series of articles stressing the primacy of the Italian race.⁶¹

Marro's involvement in the Italian racial movement received an enormous boost from the turn of official fascist racism toward nativism and Mediterraneanism in 1939. Apparently on the recommendation of Dino Alfieri, Marro was selected by the Federal Secretary Piero Gazzotti to organize the "Racial Room" at the second exhibition of "Torino e l'Autarchia," which began on May 14, 1939.⁶² Naturally, Marro's exhibition emphasized the indigenous nature of the Turinese people. Thereafter his career was ever more closely tied to official racism. Alessandro Pavolini, the Minister of Popular Culture since October 31, 1939, appointed him to the executive committee that was organizing the First National Exhibition on Race, as part of the anticipated EUR exhibition of 1942. Marro was invited by Giuseppe Bottai, the Minister of National Education, to participate in the new program of human racial biology at the University of Rome.⁶³

Mussolini visited Marro's "Racial Room" at the Turinese exhibition on May 14, 1939, followed by a visit from the king a month later.⁶⁴ Marro spoke directly to Mussolini about his racial studies in October 1939, when he was granted an interview with the *Duce* to present to him some of his writings on the Italian race. Mussolini was apparently quite taken with Marro, as he was made a Senator of Italy on December 20, 1939.

It seems that the *Duce* was easier to impress than the Italian anthropological community. In 1940, Marro joined Giuseppe Genna, Arturo Sabatini, Guido Landra, and Lidio Cipriani as a candidate in the competition for a professorship in anthropology at the University of Palermo. Though Marro proudly presented an impressive record of 139 publications to the judges, they felt his work warranted only lukewarm praise. "Marro has a very vast and varied production of a very heterogeneous character of unequal value," they opined. Although they acknowledged that he had done a lot of work in ethnology and prehistoric archeology, they felt that he had only a limited number of works in anatomy and anthropology. These works tended to be old, and did not demonstrate a knowledge of modern techniques. Some had an "unacceptable interpretation" of Italian anthropology. Nevertheless, given his long and fervid work in the study of the origins of the Italian people, and the merit of founding the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology of the University of Turin, as well as his extensive teaching experience, the committee accepted Marro to a professorship with the lowest number of votes of any successful candidate. Marro thereupon took up the post at the University of Turin.⁶⁵

We should pause here to consider Marro's relationship with the Institute of Fascist Culture. As we discussed earlier, Pietro De Francisci, an ardent advocate of Romanità, was the director of the INCF until 1940. Since nativists were as imbued with the cult of Romanità as were the Mediterraneanists, it was quite natural for the INCF to be impressed with Marro's work. Marro's work quite naturally followed the March 1939 INCF directives on racism. Thus De Francisci asked Marro to write a book on racism for the INCF, *Caratteri fisici e spirituali della razza italiana*, published through the INCF in 1939, as well as his second, *Primato della razza italiana*, published in 1940 as part of the "library of political

culture” series edited by the INCF. The *Primato*, with a few significant exceptions, was largely an expanded version of the 1939 book.

Marro believed that both individuals and races had two basic aspects: the body and the spirit. Physical traits can be understood through the science of anthropology. Study of the racial spirit (which encompasses social behavior and psychology), however, requires the tools found in a much broader range of social science disciplines, including ethnology and linguistics.⁶⁶ Marro believed that most anthropologists failed to realize that understanding the spirit was more important in defining a race than was the analysis of its physical characteristics.⁶⁷

Marro claimed that there were notable differences in the spiritual development of the races. Lower races were governed more through their physical aspects; higher races by their spirit.⁶⁸ This was particularly important because races also had two “natures”: the exogenous nature, influenced by the environment, and the endogenous nature, derived from internal hereditary factors.⁶⁹ Since the physical aspect of the race was most influenced by the exogenous factors, whereas the racial spirit was essentially endogenous in nature, the inferior races were shaped by and dependent on their immediate environment.⁷⁰ Superior races, on the other hand, were resistant to outside influences.⁷¹ Indeed, superior races could reshape their environments at will, or survive entirely removed from their original environments.⁷²

Such an interpretation of racial biology allowed Marro to accomplish a number of critical feats for his theory of Italian racial identity. For one, he could still use scientific methodologies and traditional physiological data to explain the physical manifestations of race while allowing himself to break free from any rational constraints when addressing the issue of racial psychology and spirit. Here he was free to allow his imagination to roam, creating whatever fanciful illusions about the Italian spirit that might be desired. We might note that Marro had ample precedent for his racial dichotomy. This sort of metaphysical dualism has been standard practice at least since the work of Thomas Aquinas, if not inherent in the Platonic worldview.

Marro’s theory also allowed him to dismiss the obvious differences between many of the regional physical varieties of Italy. He acknowledged that Italy was peopled by several different physical types, and realized that a purely physical racism could raise doubts about “our racial unity” along with “similar concerns of the legitimacy of the racial campaign in Italy ... how can one maintain the existence of an Italian race when one observes so many markedly different physical types among the Italians of various regions?”⁷³ Fortunately, Marro could confidently solve this dilemma. He claimed that physical variability in Italy was to be expected given the country’s great variations in climate and terrain.⁷⁴ “The natural environment is, without doubt, a formidable shaper of men and its influence is felt either in individuals or in a collectivity. ...”⁷⁵

Rather than being drawbacks, the varied geographical terrain of Italy and the consequent physical variability of the Italian people actually stimulated the evolution of the Italian race. The great natural contrasts of Italian geography, and the difficulty of life in certain regions, prompted industriousness, adaptability, and

intellectual and physical development.⁷⁶ Morphological differences between the various Italian types kept the race from degeneration and aging, we learn, which happened when procreation occurred consistently between individuals who were too similar genetically.⁷⁷

In any event, physical appearance was not nearly as important a factor in racial identity as was the racial spirit. The unity of the Italian racial soul transcended insignificant variations in physical form. Indeed, “all the regions of Italy offer uninterrupted and resplendent data that show a unity of literary, scientific, as well as civic and political views” regardless of physical type.⁷⁸

Thus, the Italian spiritual unity demanded by the fascist regime could be theoretically demonstrated even while asserting the physical diversity of the Italian race. This was, in fact, critical for acceptance of any theory by the *Duce*. The fiction of Italian spiritual unity had to be preserved at all costs. Those racial theoreticians who seemed to have some success in this endeavor, such as Giovanni Marro or Julius Evola, were duly noticed by the regime.

Marro’s work, and that of nativists in general, pivoted on a peculiar claim that the Italian race possessed a unique ability to ward off hereditary pollution caused through miscegenation with other races. As perhaps the highest race in existence, the Italian endogenous factors almost entirely dominated it, and preserved it from contamination.⁷⁹ This effect was fostered (mysteriously) by Italy’s natural environment.⁸⁰ Additionally, the work of Corrado Gini, René Martial, Giuseppe Genna, and Eugène Pittard showed that the conquerors of a region were rarely able to impose their physical characteristics on a conquered people.⁸¹ This was particularly true for Italy. The Italians, we learn, had always been able to eliminate those foreign elements that contrasted with their own civilization and spirit, and fused with those that enriched and harmonized with it.⁸² This applied to influences on both the physical and the spiritual aspects of the Italians. Thus, “it seems to be a characteristic of our country to exercise a selective action, inducing the disappearance of inferior morphological characteristics and determining the persistence and the assimilation of those, instead, of a superior order.”⁸³

Such episodes of assimilation were, however, rare and involved only small groups. In evidence for the relative lack of physical alterations caused by randomly located settlements of foreigners, Marro pointed out that the variable physical traits of the Italian people showed only a gradual change as one went from north to south.⁸⁴ Italian geography not only caused diversity among the Italian types, but it thrust up such formidable barriers between Italy and its neighbors that it helped protect Italy racially from large-scale incursions of other races.⁸⁵

As it went for the physical, so it followed for the spiritual. Superior races created their own civilizations, free from cross-cultural influences. The Italians, we should not be surprised to learn, were a model of spiritual autarky:

It is certain that, in spite of centuries of foreign invasion and domination, no element of civilization in contrast to the indigenous [people] has been able to last long on our soil. One can speak of political domination, it is true, but

never spiritual domination. And every foreign people has been the more easily eliminated or assimilated in so far as its contribution has been small, linked essentially to customs and traditions, which increased our experience and oriented our progress in particular directions.⁸⁶

Besides its ability to reject or absorb foreign racial elements at will, the Italian race also had a spectacular power for “perpetual renovation, and always in a perfect direction.”⁸⁷ This internally generated, mystical force allowed for a periodic resurrection of the ancient Italian characteristics throughout the ages, marking them as the only people who had flourished in both ancient and modern epochs.⁸⁸ Indeed, the Italian race was always improving itself, learning to live “more completely and more freely in perfection.”⁸⁹

In general, Marro seems to have been most comfortable lavishing attention on those aspects of his racial theory that coincided with the common elements of all officially recognized Italian racial theories. For instance, he did not hesitate to assert that the Italian race was superior to most others. The Italian spirit, down through the ages, had shown a plethora of virtues: the aspiration to dominate space; a love of agriculture; the ardent practice of war; adherence to reality; the inclination toward craftsmanship; a spirit of adaptability and universality; an elevated judicial sense; and the tendency toward progress in all areas; plus general aesthetic inspiration, and a unifying language.⁹⁰

As for many other Italian racial theorists, the ancient Romans represented for Marro the “apogee” of Italian identity in both his 1939 and 1940 books.⁹¹ However, he changed his views about the Germans in those years to match the expediencies of official propaganda. Indeed, Marro was even more opportunist than Giacomo Acerbo in this regard, and was willing to bend his racial ideology this way and that in the hope of remaining on the crest of Italy’s swiftly changing international political allegiances. For Marro as for Landra, science existed to serve as the handmaiden to fascist political ideology. Certainly Romanità nicely supported Italian nationalism, but the Axis alliance necessitated bending nativist racism into uncomfortable contortions during the war years.

The alterations Marro’s nativist racism underwent as the wartime alliance with Germany took its toll on Italian racism might best be illustrated by his writings on the relationship of the Italian race to the Germans and to the Mediterranean peoples. In 1939, while the INCF was under De Francisci and his zealous advocacy of Romanità, Marro wrote disparagingly about the Germanic invasions. In 1939, he claimed that the Romans of the late empire suffered from the arrival of small waves of barbarian peoples on Italian soil.⁹² Successive incursions of Gauls, Goths, Vandals, Franks, and Saracens defiled the Italian people by leaving some of their human detritus to mix with the Italians. Still, these stains were miraculously washed clean from the pure Italian soul, allowing for the inevitable reawakening time and again of the Italian people to their ancient glory.⁹³

In the late spring of 1940, Marro maintained that the Italians were an indigenous, Mediterranean people. Mediterraneans, Marro noted, had

a lucid intelligence, and a readily active comprehension and no less an intuition, an elevated sentimental style that often aids them in facing and conquering adversity, a lively fantasy that brings versatility to the spirit, an exquisite aesthetic sentiment from which proceeds an inclination for beautiful, good and grand things, a strong consciousness of their own personality that brings confidence in their own abilities, in their versatile initiatives, and in the development of their courage and audacity, all under the control of a wise judgment and a coordinating tendency.⁹⁴

The Italians were the greatest representatives of this race, and the most exalted elaborators and propagators of Mediterranean civilization.⁹⁵ At this point, Marro was almost in the Mediterraneanist camp, apparently because he felt that Acerbo and his allies would carry the day. But his opinions, and his allegiances, would radically change.

Marro's early work, before it was overwhelmed by racist backbiting, was generally well received by the Mediterranean/nativist racial press. *Razza e Civiltà*, a new nativist journal, in particular was impressed by his Italianità and his commitment to Italian racial autarky in the face of Germanic invaders. The reviewer of Marro's book *Caratteri fisici e spirituali della razza italiana* considered him "profoundly competent" to judge that "notwithstanding the centuries of foreign invasion and domination no [foreign] element of civilization, in contrast with those native to Italy, have lasted long in our soul." Rather, the Italian race had striven to remain "jealously pure," and had "always reacted victoriously to any dangerous infiltration."⁹⁶

La Difesa della Razza found much less to praise in *Caratteri fisici e spirituali*. The reviewer found Marro's thesis "not completely original," and noted that it strongly limited the physical factors of race in favor of the spiritual factors. The first part of the book, which placed a great deal of emphasis on the interaction of the race and the environment, "in ... many points appears debatable"; the second part, which discussed the Italian race, "shows a certain confusion between science, history, and culture in general."⁹⁷

Marro's later book, *Primato della razza italiana*, though slightly more pro-Nordic than *Caratteri fisici e spirituali*, still came in for lavish praise by *Razza e Civiltà*, at least in so far as it continued the nativist line. The *Razza e Civiltà* reviewer noted that Marro addressed the "spiritual personality" of the Italian race, and offered an explanation "with clear vision and precise analysis for the first and only time among the Italian anthropologists."⁹⁸ Once again, Marro's discussion of Italian racial autarky elicited the most enthusiastic response:

the author pursues his studious work on the *Italian race*, through an especially vast and helpful vision, not only by using current racial research, but still more by a new and more logical development than could have the anthropological sciences, [which are still] confused and confined by not always well defined limits [between itself and] related sciences.⁹⁹

The conclusion arrived at through this broader approach, that the Italian race had a “primacy and a clearly Italian successive development,” seemed to the reviewer to be the heart of Marro’s work.¹⁰⁰

Positive reviews aside, Marro’s work found a rather limited following. Quite a few racists – such as Pasquale Pennisi, Vincenzo Mazzei, and even Giacomo Acerbo – made some use of his work.¹⁰¹ Enzo Leoni was one of Marro’s most important disciples. Leoni’s *Mistico del razzismo fascista* won the 1938–9 monograph competition “Mysticism of fascist racism” held by the School of Fascist Mysticism Sandro Italico Mussolini. The monograph was first edited and published by the journal *Dottrina Fascista*, then released as “notebook number three” of the School of Fascist Mysticism.

For Leoni, Italian racism was summed up in the March 1, 1939 directives for the INCF study of race: “Race, Autarky, Empire.”¹⁰² Leoni was not shy in criticizing German racism for its anti-Roman and anti-Catholic biases.¹⁰³ It was too oriented toward biological materialism. Italian racism, on the other hand, was “eminently spiritual” and “inspired by a sense of Romanità.” Italian racism marked a resurrection by fascist Italy of the ancient Roman freedom and pride.¹⁰⁴ The “Nordic–Aryan” expression in the Manifesto was meant, according to Leoni, merely to aver clearly that the Italians were a European people.¹⁰⁵ The modern Italian race was formed through a fusion of indigenous peoples with Aryan invaders.¹⁰⁶ Leoni asserted that the modern Italians were equal to the Germans and not related at all to Africans, as Giuseppe Sergi had alleged.¹⁰⁷

Leoni’s work did not even receive the response in the racist community that Marro’s work elicited. For all its posturings, Italian nativist racism remained something of a secondary movement in Italian racism. Nativist writings served as adjuncts to the more powerful currents that resonated through Italian racism. Perhaps nativist leaders such as Marro proved too willing to distort nativism to please the fascist regime’s enthusiasms at any particular moment, hence weakening nativist ideology’s internal consistency and its appeal as a heuristic device useful for interpreting Italian identity from a racist viewpoint.

During the period in which Canella and Marro began expressing their racial views publicly, Giacomo Acerbo also began to consider that the best route for effective expression of his ideas might lie in public dissemination rather than through bureaucratic channels, where he had been stymied. On August 20, 1939, the Secretary of the Fascist Party, Achille Starace, invited Acerbo to explain his racial thesis to a convention in Rome of middle-school teachers of fascist history and of provincial delegates of the Institute of Fascist Culture. In response, Acerbo gave two lectures on the Italian race in the basilica of Massenzio. He later reported that his views “received general approval, with undoubted signs of relief” from the audience. Apparently at least several delegates suggested to Starace that, if political reasons justified the anti-Semitic line fascism was now taking, it was much more difficult for “the Italians, and first among them the fascists” to accept “certain obtuse premises” otherwise still part of official racial ideology.¹⁰⁸

It is important to note that Acerbo's ideas were already finding an outlet among the fascist intelligentsia before the war. Once the war began, on September 3, 1939, Italy maintained a rather cool neutrality toward German aggression. Mussolini resented German duplicity in forming an improvisational alliance with the Soviet Union to facilitate the attack against Poland, while trying at the same time to drag Italy into the war. This irritation toward the Germans would last until the spring of 1940. Partly as a consequence of the Italo-German estrangement, and no doubt partly due to continued pressure by the Mediterranean faction, Mussolini was willing to consider embracing Acerbo's radical Mediterraneanist and blatantly anti-German thesis.

Thus official notice of Acerbo's theories was revived on December 7, 1939. Mussolini was then in a particularly negative mood about Italian–German relations. Acerbo was approached about his racial views by the new Fascist Party Secretary, Ettore Muti, later that evening. He asked Acerbo to explain to him his racial theory “‘contrary to that of the Germans,’” Muti added suggestively. Muti was intrigued by Acerbo's impromptu lecture, and took Acerbo to visit Mussolini the next day. At the meeting, Mussolini admitted to Acerbo that he had only “‘very fleetingly glanced” at his earlier memorandum on race. Acerbo, ever at the ready, handed another copy of it to the *Duce*. Mussolini read it attentively. He was impressed enough immediately to order Acerbo to “‘take the first occasion to espouse your concepts in a conference, in any important city except for Rome, in order to keep it far away from the bitter polemics [there].”¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, Mussolini still insisted that Acerbo modify the part of his thesis regarding the Aryans.¹¹⁰ The *Duce* no doubt felt that Acerbo's assertion that the Aryan invaders of Italy had a negative impact on Mediterranean Italian culture should be dealt with more diplomatically.

Acerbo discussed his thesis with Alfieri several weeks later, explaining that the original Italian peoples were formed

in the most remote Metal Age (and not just one thousand years ago, that is after the so-called medieval barbarian invasion, as the German scholars claim), which lends the greatest dignity and prestige to our history, and also confirms that the race that gave life to the universal empire of Rome is essentially the same that, after eventful vicissitudes, created humanism and the Rinascimento, and completed the national Risorgimento and the march on Rome, without the need to receive, between the Ancient Age and the Modern, the injection of new energies and new blood from peoples beyond the Alps, or only to so little an extent that it did not have a biological, cultural, or moral effect.

This, Acerbo emphasized, was the essential point that he wished to develop in the conference, while leaving aside for the moment the more controversial issue of the Aryan or Mediterranean origin of the Italian people, in conformance with the *Duce*'s wishes. For the time being, Acerbo wrote, he was willing to adopt “‘the terminology that most conforms to that currently in use in Italian racism.”¹¹¹ This

last is a very important point. We will find that, over the next several years, some of the more moderate Mediterraneanists will use the term “Aryan” or “Aryan–Mediterranean” in order to facilitate publication of their work. Nevertheless, the structure and import of their arguments will remain solidly in the Mediterranean camp.

The conference was held on January 27, 1940, at the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, under the auspices of the local chapter of the National Institute of Fascist Culture.¹¹² Muti and a number of government officials attended the conference, as well as a sizable audience of Italian notables. Acerbo later claimed that many expressed consent with his views, though those not “in the know” expressed surprise at this new “official heresy.”¹¹³

Soon after the conference, Mussolini ordered that the text of the conference be expanded and published in book form by the Racial Office. In fact, the new Minister of Popular Culture, Alessandro Pavolini, wrote an introduction to the book, further enhancing its official status. The result, *I fondamenti della dottrina fascista della razza*, was the most radical Mediterraneanist text ever to receive official recognition. In *I fondamenti* Acerbo emphasizes the spiritual nature of race over its biological aspects. The goal of fascist racism, we are now told, is to “preserve the ideal and spiritual substance of our race.” Rather than harking back to the Manifesto for inspiration, Acerbo chose to acknowledge the *Razza e Dritto* resolution approved by the Italo-German Juridical Convention of the previous March. The resolution, the reader will recall, essentially confirmed the independence of Italian racial policy. Acerbo noted that he was not alone in this interpretation of Italian racism: the racial theories of Mario Canella, Nicola Pende, and Giovanni Marro were based on the same premises.¹¹⁴

Acerbo made clear his opposition to the German Nordic “race is destiny” type of thinking. For Alfred Rosenberg, race made history. For Giacomo Acerbo, history made race. Such impetuses as “the diverse processes of culture, in its turn conditioned by environmental forces and the particular demands of the self-protection of the group,” migration, regional segregation, and physical selection have influenced the formation of races. The ancient Italian spirit kept alive the nation’s sense of unity, an ability for periodic resurrection, and a desire for “national greatness and power.” These values can be discovered in Italian morality, political concepts, art, science, and philosophy, but not in “an examination of cephalic indexes and more or less prominent thyroid or zygoid glands.”¹¹⁵

Since the Pleistocene era, according to Acerbo, Italy had been inhabited by “vigorous races, which were gifted with truly creative and assimilative qualities and destined to make their own biological type and their own culture prevail.”¹¹⁶ Mediterranean peoples arrived in Neolithic times. As evidence, Acerbo cites the excavations of Ugo Rellini at Maiella, in Acerbo’s home province of Abruzzi, where Rellini discovered a human skeleton nearly 20,000 years old. This skeleton represented for Acerbo the oldest example of the Mediterranean race in Italy, “of the type of Pericles and Augustus.” The amalgamation of the indigenous and Mediterranean races created the Italian race, which even at this early date constructed a sophisticated civilization in Italy.¹¹⁷ Later Aryan invaders were very

few in number, and had little cultural impact.¹¹⁸ Latin, though related to the Indo-European tongues, really had partly indigenous origins. Acerbo asserted that the Aryan influences in Latin might not even be due to contact with Aryan invaders, but rather due to contact with Aryanized native Italians.¹¹⁹

Even the metallic cultures so often attributed to Aryan influence really came from the Aegean–Mycenaean peoples, who were fellow Mediterraneans.¹²⁰ Thus the metallic civilizations of Italy were not the product of “new Nordic peoples,” but rather

the later product of a cultural evolution of Mediterranean origin operating essentially from the living and strong creative and assimilative capacity of the ancient races of Italy; of which in our pre-history and protohistory we find developed through a long and grand unitary process, an incomparable attribute of the nobility of our origins.¹²¹

Thus, as Acerbo explained it, the Italian race was based on

a substratum of a vigorous and very remote progeny, who fixed through the prehistoric centuries their fundamental ethno-anthropological characteristics in a well defined and dynamic complex that has been like a powerful crucible in which the last ethnic accession [the Aryan invaders] have been unified to the [pre-existing] race through the successive millennia. This [new addition], however, has not been able to vary the primordial amalgamation, nor alter the moral eurhythm of the Italic ethnoses, because of the scarce numerical importance [of the invaders] on one hand, and the vital forces of fusion emerging from the physical environment of Italy on the other hand, as well as the potent capacity of assimilation exerted on the more impoverished [Aryan] culture. [These factors] have created in the last thirty centuries the Italian ethnicity – biological, social, and spiritual together – appearing with the most firm and resistant characteristics of a union. [This is a] racial synthesis according to Pende’s terminology, or a racial complex, but well individuated and differentiated, Italic and only Italic, whose descendants arise therefore beyond the ages of history and myth.¹²²

Italian geography has aided in this racial amalgamation. It was unique in Europe in that it was a geographically compact peninsula. Thus, foreigners “hardly settled [in Italy] before they felt themselves entirely attracted by their destiny.”¹²³ Geographical unity also worked to “weaken the biological resistance of the immigrants and rendered their absorption by the indigenous masses that much easier.”¹²⁴

Acerbo announced that his reinterpretation of Italian racial history was “truly a total reversal of those theories that had for more than half a century dominated our culture without contradiction.”¹²⁵ These “foreign origin” theories Acerbo alludes to centered on a belief that Italy was originally inhabited by an inferior race, which was improved only by the introduction of new blood from superior

peoples, thus allowing the great Roman civilization to form.¹²⁶ Indeed, given this profound contribution to Italian scholarship, at least in his own eyes, Acerbo now ranked himself among the great Italian scientists of his generation. At least on the matter of race, Acerbo boasted, he “personally felt the equal of some of the most important anthropologists, linguists, historians and even sociologists and biologists that Italy ever boasted (among them: Rellini, Sergi, Patroni, Marro, Blanc, Pallottino, Devoto, Pace, Niceforo, Pende, etc.).”¹²⁷

From such an unassailable scholarly prominence, Acerbo declared that the use of the term “Aryan” to describe the Italian people was inappropriate. For Acerbo, “there is no doubt that in regard to scientific rigor such qualifications would appear improper and imprecise.” Not only did the Aryans play only a minor role in Italian biological and cultural development, but there really was no “Aryan race” at all. Aryans were simply a collection of various peoples unified by linguistic affinities.¹²⁸ Acerbo ingenuously claimed that fascists only used the term “Aryan” to emphasize the differences between the Italians on one hand and the Jews and Africans on the other, and to emphasize the affinity of Italians to other European peoples.¹²⁹

Like other Mediterraneanists, Acerbo gave somewhat more recognition to the ancient Greek colonists in Italy than did the Nordacists or the nativists. To Acerbo and his allies, Greeks were fellow Mediterraneans, and their immigration to Italy did not alter its racial composition.¹³⁰

Acerbo’s explanation of the fall of the Roman Empire also contradicted the typical Nordacist interpretation. Instead of seeking answers in Italian miscegenation with inferior Asian or African races, Acerbo believed that the Roman Empire declined due to a “general moral, civil, and economic breakdown.”¹³¹ No one could deny that the Germans invaded Italy. But they were not the saviors of the Italian race as some German scholars imagined. Rather, they were the cause of “nightmares and oppression.”¹³² Throughout this bleak period, however, the Italian spirit remained resilient in the face of these foreign elements, absorbing only those peoples who were consonant with the native Italians. Thus, “the physical and moral fiber of the Italian remained what it had been.”¹³³ As a consequence, once the Goths were forced to leave Italy, they left “almost no” impact on Italian culture, and “absolutely no” impact on the Italian racial composition. As Acerbo wrote, the Goths were “entirely extirpated from our country, without leaving any trace on the institutions nor language, and even less in the blood, of the Italians.”¹³⁴ Acerbo grants that the Lombards had a more significant initial impact on some areas of Italian culture than had their Gothic predecessors. This was particularly apparent in the political and judicial structure of the Lombard domain. Still, “the consequences of the Lombard domination on our ethnic and anthropological structure were insignificant.”¹³⁵

Finally, Acerbo claimed that the Italians’ gift for self-directed renewal, combined with their brilliant spiritual endowments, allowed them periodically to reincarnate their original pre-eminent civilization. This was first manifested in the Roman Empire, then was resurrected as the Renaissance. It was suppressed through foreign political control once more, but re-blossomed with the Risorgimento and the rise of fascism.¹³⁶

Though Acerbo, with his back up against the wall, would later repudiate the debt his thesis owed to Giuseppe Sergi, the relationship between the two was as glaringly obvious to Acerbo's contemporaries as it is to the present reader. Both men lent greater importance to the racial spirit than to the corporeal traits common to a race. Both asserted that the Italians were essentially a Mediterranean people who developed sophisticated civilizations. The metal culture in both historical interpretations came from fellow Mediterranean peoples in the Aegean. To both theorists, Aryans were a minority who had little impact on Italian culture. Even the Latin language was only partly Aryanized, Sergi and Acerbo claimed. In both theories, the Italians are perfectly adapted to their environment, and capable of absorbing invading minorities. Finally, Acerbo follows Sergi in contending that the unique Italian spirit was forged in the Roman Empire, and had remained a permanent feature of Italian culture ever since.

The political exigencies of fascism required that Acerbo deny some parts of the Sergian thesis outright. Any hint that the Italians were related to black Africans, as Sergi maintained, was anathema to Mussolini, and therefore could not be incorporated into a fascist racial theory. Also, Acerbo and his colleagues could not cast blame on the contemporary (i.e., fascist) Italians for their own social failings, as Sergi so often did.

All indications suggest that Acerbo's book was received as a godsend by many. The Jesuits saw it as a possible bridge between fascist racism and Church's rejection of biological racism.¹³⁷ The new journal *Razza e Civiltà* heaped lavish praise on the Florence convention and Acerbo's book. Pericle Ducati, reviewing *I fondamenti* in *L'Italia che scrive*, considered Acerbo's work as eminent as that of scholars who specialized in anthropology. *I fondamenti* was described as an "agile book" which embraced the current anthropological data with depth and breadth.¹³⁸ Alberto Carlo Blanc, an eminent anthropologist, wrote a very favorable review of it.¹³⁹ As we will soon see, the Demorazza oriented itself wholly towards Acerbo's racism.

While Acerbo was at the height of his influence, his thesis inspired the Demorazza Office to radicalize their own Mediterraneanist position. A document found among the records of the Racial Division of the General Directorate for Demography and Race presents the prevailing views on racial theory in this office from about this time. Most of its elements are unmistakably inspired by Acerbo and Giuseppe Sergi.

The document asserted that the Italian race originated during the Neolithic period. Following Sergi, the document claimed that the early Italians were a mix of native and Mediterranean elements, and eventually coalesced into the new "Romano-Italic" race. This combination had been "stable" and "unaltered" for millennia.

The "intake of foreign elements," either physical or cultural, was never substantial. Over time, the Italian race kept itself racially pure and thus able to renew itself. "For this – says Giuseppe Sergi – Italy has accomplished a number of times. (See *Da Alba Longa a Roma*)."

The so-called Aryans had a minimal impact on Italy, the document maintained. Even the very concept of Aryan was fraught with difficulties, since it was

accurately applied only to a particular linguistic group. Its use as an anthropological or ethnic label was misleading. The “Aryan immigration” was essentially an unsubstantiated myth. Later, the Lombards had even less impact on Italian racial composition. Thus,

There is a need to banish the so-called Aryan–Nordic direction from Italian racism, not only because it is unjustifiable scientifically and based on false premises, but also because it is dangerous from the national point of view. It is, in fact, anti-national to point out to the Italians a particular model, different from that already universally recognized as the most wide-spread and the most characteristic, and hide the definite indigenous, pre-Aryan character of our race and of its ancient and inexhaustible civilization.

Sergi is quoted numerous times by the author to bolster his thesis that the Italic peoples are an ancient race that has successfully resisted miscegenation down through the ages:

It is, instead, generally recognized in Italy and elsewhere that our civilization is perfectly autochthonous and has an essentially Mediterranean origin and had already reached the summit [of civilization] in the Roman period while other European peoples were still barbarians. “The attribution of the primordial culture to peoples who came later, and who usurped rather than created, deforming and obscuring the first light of civilization” (G. Sergi) is false.

The document concludes with the assertion that the “fusion of biological and spiritual values” of the original peoples was possible because of their “common environment.”¹⁴⁰

The radical Mediterraneanism inherent in this document may have informed policy at the Demorazza, but it could not be propagated in such an aggressively anti-German form once the Axis alliance was reinvigorated in the spring of 1940. Nevertheless, the Mediterraneanists were now a strong enough presence in the corridors of the Palazzo Venezia to warrant their own journal, so long as it espoused a more moderate Mediterraneanism or nativism.

Thus was born, in March 1940, the tri-monthly Mediterranean–nativist racial journal *Razza e Civiltà*. The journal was directly sponsored by the Demorazza office, whose director, Antonio Le Pera, was its editor. Le Pera had been a member of the Roman Society for Anthropology since 1935.¹⁴¹ Sergi had founded this Society, and it remained consistently dedicated to his memory. Quite a few of *Razza e Civiltà*’s writers were members of Acerbo’s High Council on Demography and Race (which was also in the Ministry of the Interior), thus demonstrating the close ideological alliance between the two government organs.

Razza e Civiltà would rapidly become the intellectual antithesis of the Nordic-inspired *La Difesa della Razza*. Besides their opposing interpretations of the Italian race, these premier racial journals also differed somewhat in style and audience. *La Difesa della Razza* generally took a “popular science” approach to

race, endeavoring to explain scientific racism to the layman. This posture may well have been the result of Guido Landra's influence. Otherwise, certain articles in *La Difesa* had a brassy, hard-edged stridency that may well have come from the journalistic flair projected by those writers who were associates of Interlandi. *Razza e Civiltà*, on the other hand, retained an academic, calmer tone, and was obviously directed toward better-educated Italians.

The introductory article of *Razza e Civiltà*, the first and only essay in the journal ever signed by Le Pera, laid out the journal's ideological stance with stark clarity. "Racial autarky" (a doctrine that identifies a race as an indigenous people with a unique biological, spiritual, and cultural heritage) was the leading principle of the journal. In some senses, racial autarky allowed Italians to distance themselves from German influence without the need to set up an opposing ideology, as Mediterraneanism inevitably was wont to do. Nonetheless, racial autarky allowed *Razza e Civiltà* to evince a disparaging attitude toward "foreign influences," which, as it turned out, often referred to Teutonic culture. As always in an anti-Nordicist perspective, ancient Rome was the real cultural binding agent in the evolution of the Italian race. As *Razza e Civiltà* proclaimed,

Italy has a racial composition that is its own and whose origin, essentially indigenous and Mediterranean, dates back to the most distant prehistoric epoch, according to scientific data. Foreign elements invading Italy from other European regions [i.e., Germany] had almost no influence on this particular biological patrimony; rather [the Italian race] received its definitive and unmistakable imprint from the Romanization of the peninsula.¹⁴²

Autarky was realized through several avenues. One was oriented toward the strengthening of communal identity by a reaction against the "Other." Italian Jews were condemned even in *Razza e Civiltà* to serve this role, at least occasionally, because of the official anti-Semitism. (This was even more true for *La Difesa della Razza*.) But, for *Razza e Civiltà*, there was a more dangerous enemy still: the Germans. Of course, it was difficult (though not always impossible) bluntly to state such a predilection. Most often, anti-Germanism was sublimated in disparaging comments concerning the Germanic barbarians of the early Middle Ages, especially the Goths and the Lombards. Le Pera's article hinted at this policy when he wrote that "the conscience of and feeling of race, in Italy, has existed since the ancient Romans called barbarians those people of different descent."¹⁴³ The true target of these polemics, Nazi Germany, was quite obvious to many, as it was in fact meant to be.

Naturally, autarky also meant defense of the race against outside contamination. In *La Difesa della Razza*, this fear usually focused on Jews or people of color, and was biological in nature. In *Razza e Civiltà*, very often, the fear of contamination manifested itself as an opposition to the political and cultural imperialism exerted on Italy by other European countries, especially the Germanic nations and France. To signal this ideological platform, Le Pera claims in his

introduction that Italian political consciousness was “born as a defense of our racial structure considered in its entirety. . . .”¹⁴⁴

The preservation of Italian cultural purity was especially important to the editorial board of *Razza e Civiltà*. As always, native Italian art was always considered as the most authoritative depiction of the Italian racial norm. Thus, Le Pera asserts that the models of Italian art “were not the reproduction of models borrowed from beyond the Alps, but living representations, if perhaps spiritualized, of concrete types of our immortal race.”¹⁴⁵ An active cultural defense had to be maintained to prevent the encroachment of non-Italian mores into Italian society:

And above all it is necessary that every Italian becomes convinced that every habit and tendency that – by influence of foreign origin – aims to distance them from the healthy and moral norms of Italian life, must be combated and despised.¹⁴⁶

Le Pera noted that cultural autarky would best be accomplished through

reorganization of the schools; the protection of the Italian language from foreign influence; the preservation of Italian folkways, art, theater, and cinema . . . to banish from all of our activities the imitative and often dangerous foreign influences, to live a healthy and industrious Italian life, to think in the Roman way, to work in the fascist style, these must be the contributions that all Italians must make, without noticing it, to the defense of our race.¹⁴⁷

These editorial programs certainly accorded well with Giacomo Acerbo’s racism. Indeed, the predominant influence of Acerbo was quite apparent in at least the first issue of the journal. *Razza e Civiltà* carried a long and favorable summary of Acerbo’s Florence conference, emphasizing Acerbo’s principal theses. For example, *Razza e Civiltà* explained Acerbo’s attack on the concept of “Aryan.” As Acerbo told his audience,

All the schools now agree in the recognition that the prehistoric peoples called Aryan or Indo-European are far from constituting a bio-anthropological unity, that is a race, but instead represent a mix of various genetic origins tied together among themselves only by a linguistic relationship. The qualification of Aryan attributed to the Italian race thus appears inappropriate and imprecise.¹⁴⁸

Over time, all three possible conceptions of the nature of the Italian race – as Mediterraneans, as an indigenous race, and as Aryans – would appear in *Razza e Civiltà*.¹⁴⁹ No doctrine ever appeared in the journal that asserted that the Italians were a Nordic people, or more than distantly related to the Germans.¹⁵⁰ Nativism was usually the safest bet for an author not inclined to Aryanism, and is the most common choice for the writers of *Razza e Civiltà*. Regardless of which origination myth was selected, writers inevitably emphasized the importance of ancient

Rome in shaping the Italian race, both physically and culturally. Rafaelle Corso, a noted anthropologist from the University of Rome and a member of the inner circle of Acerbo's High Council on Race, explained that modern Italian customs, usages, beliefs and superstitions, morals, spirituality, language, civil, political, and social life, family structure, property rights, virility, male heroism, female modesty, and so on are derived from the Romans. "All is Roman in us," Corso proclaimed.¹⁵¹

With the ancient Romans as the heroes, the Germanic invaders were the villains in *Razza e Civiltà's* racial morality play. For example, a number of scholars from various disciplines took great pains to demonstrate that the Lombards, the longest resident Germanic tribe in Italy, had no effect on the "national ethnic and anthropological complex."¹⁵² Their presence in Italy was also bereft of any impact on Italian religion, morality, art, or culture. "Their works, at most, were negative, destructive, not creative." As a consequence, "that which was still vital in the inheritance from the ancient world, the *religion, economic-social assets, laws, culture*, remained intact."¹⁵³

Rafaelle Corso provided anthropological data to buttress these claims of racial autarky. Corso observed that the physical features of the Italian people, such traits as hair color, for example, changed gradually as one moved from north to south in Italy.¹⁵⁴ Such a smooth transition was due to indigenous genetic factors or environmental influences, and "excludes the possibility that such features among us can be the result of the direct influence of those ethnic groups that have invaded Italy at various times, to raid us or dominate us":

The historical critic [Giacomo Acerbo?] has rightly pointed out the oddity of such an explanation, demonstrating that the contingent invaders were absorbed by the great mass of Italian people, in what one could call an ethnographic phagocitism. It is enough to remember that in the territory of Benevento, which was held by the Lombards for 500 years, one can not find a trace of the Nordic type, neither in regard to height, nor in regard to other characteristics. And this is even without mentioning the fact that the Italian characteristics are very ancient, before the invasion of the barbarians and other foreign conquerors.¹⁵⁵

Like the theoreticians gathered around *La Difesa della Razza*, the writers of *Razza e Civiltà* explained the continuity of Italian hereditary traits through a model of female inheritance. In fact, the feminization of heredity seems to have been a unifying theme among most Italian racists of whatever racial paradigm. Cesare Serono, for example, wrote an article in *Razza e Civiltà* that was meant to elaborate on the importance of the feminine role in reproduction and racial heredity. In the article, Serono attempts to justify male dominance and his own apparent insecurities with regard to female sexuality through a transparently ridiculous model of embryonic preformation, which seems entirely antiquated according to the knowledge of genetics accepted at the time.¹⁵⁶ Serono wrote that the female ovum contained all of the hereditary material for the offspring, while the

male provided the “energetic and directive element.” Furthermore, women stored up the “psychic experiences” and biological adaptations of the past in their gametes. Men, “oriented to externalities,” lacked this capacity. Since invaders were predominantly men, and men had so little impact on heredity, invasions seldom altered the hereditary or racial composition of an indigenous people. This was not to deny men any role in reproduction; as we said earlier, Serono granted male semen a “stimulative” function. To preserve this essential ability, a civilization had to avoid the feminization of male culture, and retain a gendered division of labor in society.¹⁵⁷

6 The struggle for control, 1940–1942

The discussion on the Aryans is now open, and God alone knows when it will be over.

Uno studioso, "A Proposito di studi razziali," *Il Tevere*, July 18–19, 1940

Though Acerbo must have been basking in his newly won reputation as dean of Mediterranean racial theorists, Mussolini was once again allowing political considerations to color his theoretical proclivities. As Acerbo later wrote, "hardly had the first hundred copies [of *I fondamenti*] been printed, when the order came to stop the printing. The reason was because Germany had invaded the west and Mussolini decided to tighten the alliance."¹ In fact Mussolini was daily moving back toward his earlier awe of the Germans, as they conquered country after country without cessation in the spring and summer of 1940.

As Hitler swept through France in a matter of weeks in the spring of 1940, Mussolini's impatience to take a bite from the French carcass overwhelmed him. Victory on the side of Germany seemed certain. Thus, on June 10, 1940, Mussolini announced Italy's entry into the war.

The onset of war accelerated the resurgence of the Nordicist faction. Acerbo's anti-German position now proved untimely and quite unsustainable publicly, given that the Axis was united in a life or death struggle. This position was pointedly expressed in a memorandum from the Ministry of Popular Culture to Pavolini and Gherardo Casini, the General Director of the Committee for the Improvement of Books:

The German journalists in Rome are indignant about two more or less recent Italian publications. . . . This is especially with reference to the very recent book of Acerbo on the problems of race; the Germans affirm that Acerbo is incompetent on these matters, and that he based all of his doctrine on the antiquated ideas on Sergi; besides, in his book he did not speak at all about the Jews, and what is worse, the Germans are designated here and there as "barbarians."²

The pro-German faction, led by Preziosi, Interlandi, and Farinacci, with Landra as their racial spokesperson, was very sympathetic to the German complaints.

They had been furiously campaigning behind the scenes against Acerbo's racism for months. Indeed, Landra would credit them with being the fundamental force that had stopped Acerbo.³ Now, with the Germans openly complaining about Acerbo's influence on Italian racial policy, the Italian Nordicists felt secure enough to launch a major propaganda offensive against the wounded Mediterraneanists, specifically targeting Acerbo. Through the summer of 1940 a fierce literary battle between the two factions was in progress, reaching the most bitter level yet between the opposing sides.

Preziosi signaled the onslaught of the new anti-Acerbo propaganda campaign in his article "Per la serietà degli studi razziali italiani (Dedicato al camerata Giacomo Acerbo)," published in the July 1940 issue of *La Vita Italiana*. The article simply expanded on the complaints made by the German press agents. For example, Preziosi went out of his way to attack Acerbo's connections with Sergi, and the obvious anti-German implications of this alignment:

It is simply stunning that, in the year XVIII of the Regime and after two years of racism, we can not do better than resurrect the manifestations of the positivistic theories of the last century that were led by the old Giuseppe Sergi. Theories that today can make the Jews, masons, and enemies of the Axis very comfortable.

Preziosi was surprised to find Acerbo foolish enough to base his racism on "the old and surpassed Sergian theory of the Mediterranean race." Preziosi even wondered if Acerbo agreed with Sergi that the Italians were of the same origins as the discredited peoples of North Africa and Asia Minor.

Furthermore, it seemed amazing to Preziosi that Acerbo entirely neglected the official support of Aryanism, as expounded in the Racial Manifesto. In connection with this, Preziosi was particularly incensed at Acerbo's "bitterness" towards Italy's German allies, daring to continue calling "‘barbarians’ the people with whom today we are fighting side by side." As a corollary, Preziosi drew attention to Acerbo's thinly veiled assault on the Germans in the guise of disparaging remarks concerning the Germanic invaders of Europe in late antiquity. "Does Acerbo deny that the modern world has come from the intimate Italo-German collaboration?" Preziosi asked. The fact that Preziosi's Nazi comrades were quite aware of the anti-German implications of *I fondamenti* was also duly noted.

Finally, Preziosi angrily pointed out the relative lack of anti-Semitism contained in Acerbo's book. He was aghast that Acerbo would dare quote the "Jew" Henri Berr that "history makes race more than race makes history." Preziosi demanded, "Why has Acerbo completely ignored the existence of the Jewish problem, and instead of attacking the Jews, has written so many pages to demonstrate that the Italians are not of Aryan origin, and to show hatred toward Germany?"⁴

After Preziosi, Interlandi was anxious to take his own pot shots at Acerbo. He published an article with the same title as Preziosi's, "Per la serietà degli studi razziali italiani (dedicato al camerata Giacomo Acerbo)," in the July 16–17 edition

of *Il Tevere*. The article sought to drag *Razza e Civiltà* through the same mud that was now being slung at Acerbo:

It is truly sad that Italian Racism ends up in the hands of persons that did not even have a suspicion [of being racist] until a doctrine and legislation were elaborated by others; thereafter it appeared necessary and opportune to attempt great alterations of racism in order to “make fun of the saint and close down the festival.” That which comrade Preziosi says of the thought of the good Acerbo one could also say of a journal entitled *Razza e Civiltà*, full of haughty anti-racist affirmations and of puerile generic sentiments from the popular universities. The arrogance and the sufficiency with which these last have spit out sentences on the matter of racism are disconsoling; especially for those who fought the first and the only battles for that doctrine and diffused its principles with success and defended its essential integrity. They would like to ask for a little vigilance on such exhibitionist and substantially *anti-racist* activity.⁵

Following the latest trend established by his patrons, Guido Landra now revived his attacks against the Mediterraneanists, which had been all but suspended since his dismissal in February 1939. In an article published on July 5, 1940 in *La Difesa della Razza*, Landra reaffirmed the validity of his Manifesto of the Racial Scientists. He criticized those “judaized” writers who “continue to repeat, in the name of a too easy spiritualism, that race can be created, transferred, changed completely by our will.” Rather, Landra maintained that the physical and psychological characteristics of the race were hereditary.⁶

Though undoubtedly stunned by these vicious diatribes against his work, Acerbo’s supporters were not intimidated into silence. Interestingly enough, a letter by one of them was published in *Il Tevere* several days later. The letter retorted that the criticism of Acerbo in *La Vita Italiana* was simplistic. It claimed that the definition of race changed over time, especially since races were then being examined in their “philosophical and psychological” aspects. “I do not see what relationship there is between the propositions of the Manifesto and a scientific discussion of the concept of race,” the author asserted.

The writer boldly goes on to sustain Italy’s cultural primacy relative to Germany:

I want to emphasize here that when Italy was inhabited by people who already had manufactures and had begun to give undoubted signs of artistic concepts, Northern and Central Europe were still covered by ice, and were not yet inhabitable by human beings. Nor do I see for what reason, and without decisive facts, one has the sadism to renounce our precocious manifestations of civilization and to rave about other people who brought us what we already had.⁷

Probably about this time Acerbo himself wrote a government memorandum defending his thesis. Given the intense criticism of *I fondamenti*’s reliance on

Sergi, Acerbo found it expedient to discover new precursors. He claimed that it was “inexact” that his thesis was “exclusively derived” from Sergi’s work. “Rather it is more closely based on G. Patroni, and others who have thought along similar lines include M. Boule, Y. Czekanowski, G. Posisson and A. Moret.” Ugo Rellini propounded a thesis similar to Acerbo’s in the journal *Universitaria*.

Given such illustrious precedents, Acerbo confidently reasserted the essential points of his thesis, emphasizing where he could those aspects most in line with the Manifesto and other official racial documents. The Mediterranean race advanced into Italy in the Mesolithic Age, and mixed with Paleolithic elements, and developed the “Mesolithic Mediterranean” civilization. “This race has constituted the substrate of the great historic Italic race that was called to such a great destiny.” Acerbo was quick to note that the Italian race was not related to the Semites, “as Sergi showed in his 1926 book.” Furthermore, the North Africans should at least *no longer* be considered Mediterraneans, given the slow infiltration of other peoples there.

We should note that Acerbo’s defense continued his support for the traditional Romanità claim that the Italians had greater racial and cultural links with other Mediterranean peoples, such as the Greeks, than they had with the Nordics.⁸

In August, a curious incident would add fuel to the fire and eventually result in Landra’s abrupt dismissal from the Ministry of Popular Culture. Acerbo had written a letter in defense of his thesis and submitted it to the Racial Office, with the request that Visco review it and send it for publication in an appropriate journal. But someone in the Racial Office (accusations would later center on Guido Landra) lifted the document and passed it on to Farinacci, who gave it to Preziosi for publication and rebuttal. These linked documents (Acerbo’s original letter, Farinacci’s introduction, and Preziosi’s rebuttal) were presented together in the August 15 edition of *La Vita Italiana*. Farinacci introduced Acerbo’s letter by sarcastically noting that since racism in Italy became official fascist doctrine, it had been “easy, or useful” to be a racist. Consequently “there has sprung up, like mushrooms, four or five [racist] journals, which have gotten along like cats and dogs” (referring quite obviously to *La Difesa della Razza* and *Razza e Civiltà*, among others). “What can the readers learn when they find themselves before doctrines and orientations so at odds?” Farinacci asked. They would learn that “the Jews are certainly not scared by the prose of our friend Giacomino [i.e. Acerbo] nor by his scientific attitudes,” he replied.

Thereupon followed Acerbo’s letter. He accused Preziosi of not being “well documented about the most recent historical and anthropological studies,” otherwise

he would have seen that the theories accepted by and developed by me do not coincide at all with those propounded twenty years ago by Giuseppe Sergi, of whom however one can not speak of without respect, for the value that he had in the history of Italian and world scientific thought.

Acerbo beat a strategic retreat in his letter, differentiating himself from Sergi by emphasizing that the modern Italians are the direct descendants of “an indigenous

Paleolithic stock and can therefore be considered autochthonous on the soil of Italy.” Nevertheless, the Mediterranean race did “participate in the millennial movement of evolution” of the Italian race. Those who inhabited modern North Africa were not for the most part descendants of the “ancient Mediterranean race established there during the centuries of prehistory,” Acerbo maintained, because of the slow influx and miscegenation with other peoples, such as the Vandals and the Moslems.

Acerbo recognized that Preziosi hoped to embarrass him by emphasizing Acerbo’s denial of the Aryan identity of the Italians. But, Acerbo proudly replied, this was not an embarrassment, “because the most essential part of my work is directed at negating and demonstrating as false and anti-historical that assertion.” His position was based on a scrupulous use of historical, anthropological, and linguistic evidence, he asserted. “Nor have I forgotten to explain why the term ‘Aryan’ has in fascist literature a purely conventional value and a transitory use” which, he adds boldly, “would now seem an opportune time to end.” Acerbo asserted that the notion of Aryan was an outdated “romantic–apologetic” concept born out of a dilettantistic culture of the past century, that even the modern Nazis had rejected. For Acerbo, it was absurd for Italians to believe that a people came from the North and mixed with them, thus destroying their racial homogeneity, but at the same time fortifying them and setting their future destiny. Rather, Acerbo concludes, Italy and Germany had “two world views and two civilizations that together, by often common and often different ways, have contributed to the advancement of world culture.”

Preziosi, for his part, was primed to attack. He asserted that Acerbo was fooling no one by now backing out of his obvious earlier reliance on Sergi’s work. As a jab at Acerbo, Preziosi did not hesitate to exclaim that the Mediterranean elements of the Italian race were “not the most numerous and important.” Nor were Northern Italians Mediterranean. Concerning Acerbo’s view on the Italians’ Aryan identity, Preziosi simply noted that “all the Jewish and philo-Jewish writers express the same concepts.” He once again criticized Acerbo for referring to the ancient Germans (and no one else) as “barbarians” in an effort apparently to win points with his German comrades. Preziosi added a postscript to his comments in which he claimed:

For us it is necessary to say that the ancient German people were not at all “barbarians.” Their civilization, different from that of the Romans, arrived at very high levels; it is enough to see any museum in central and northern Europe to be convinced that the German people at the time of the emigrations were very far from being those savages that, for reasons historically explainable, popular opinion imagines. The great states of modern Germany, France, England, Spain, Russia were constructed through the merit in part of the Germanic peoples. Nor can one deny the Germanic influence in the re-establishment in Italy of those heroic principles of life that were attenuated in the Levantine epoch and by the egalitarian [principles] of decadence.⁹

Mussolini, aware of the German complaints about Acerbo's thesis, placed his need for tranquillity in the Axis above allowing the racist factions to continue sparring. It appears that both Acerbo and Preziosi were ordered to cease and desist from creating further uproar. We know that the debate was publicly muted after August. Indeed, the Racial Office denied Acerbo permission to publish another rejoinder defending his thesis in *Giornale d'Italia*.¹⁰

Unwilling to let matters rest, Acerbo wrote another long memorandum to the Racial Office detailing Preziosi's racial blunders: "Preziosi has been, and remains, outside of the scientific camp, in a land that I can not follow because my work had to be and has been coordinating my critical and *scientific* popularizations." In particular, Preziosi was criticized for the facile interpretation of the term Aryan as signifying that all European races were close enough morphologically and psychologically to be considered under the same heading. Acerbo accused Preziosi's theory of being

at best a long since surpassed summary idea which uses a free and careless cultural empiricism to deny that the Italian people were a true ethnic mix at the very moment in which they step out in the great light of history under the banners of Rome, but instead claims that they were bastards who did not even have the great privilege of promoting the Renaissance and therefore glorious modern history.

Acerbo did not object to more German history being taught in Italy, he wrote, but added that more Mediterranean history ought to be taught also, especially if people like Preziosi erroneously thought that the Mediterranean race was closely related to the Berbers of North Africa. Finally, Acerbo reported that the letter which had inspired the latest round of argument had been dishonestly lifted from the Racial Office and submitted to Farinacci.¹¹

Later, Acerbo decided to use another tactic to free himself from the current imbroglione. He decided that the best way to smooth over the situation was to get right to the heart of the matter, and calm down the Germans directly. Thus, he requested permission from the German embassy in Rome to deliver a lecture in Germany on the problems of racial policy in order to clear up the "misunderstandings" that had occurred since the publication of his book. The German government searched for a German racial expert to consider the request, and settled on none other than Professor Eugen Fischer. They probably could not have found a more unsympathetic adviser. Fischer drafted a heated response to Bernhard Rust, the Reich Minister of Education and Science, indignantly denouncing Acerbo and his hatred for the German people:

True, scientific theories are a matter of controversy, but it does not follow that [Acerbo] has a right to make insulting remarks about German ideas and about the German people. He refers to the setting up of the Gothic and Lombard states as barbarian invasions. He describes the Teutons of that time as bearers of archaic cultures, shepherds and hunters. In his view they were

not conquering peoples but undisciplined gangs whose aim was not the creation of States but only pillage and plunder. . . . The descendants of the Goths, he claims, have been absorbed into the lowest strata of the Italian population. . . . The whole tenor of the book is anti-racialist. With truly Jewish skill everything is twisted in such a way as to make it appear that the concept of race is no more than a piece of scientific sophistry; the concept of the Aryan is . . . literally torn to shreds, all that remains is a term that serves as a pretext for separating the Jewish minority from the . . . national organism.

Fischer was so angry over the whole affair that he threatened to cancel his anticipated lectures on race at the University of Rome unless the Italian government dissociate itself from Acerbo.¹²

Dr Gross, who was also following the discussion, agreed with Fischer's assessment. Gross opined that Acerbo's book had "made a disastrous impression on German academic circles, given his complete and utter ignorance of the real problems involved." Gross foresaw an intensification of racial polemics between the Italians and Germans if Acerbo was given free rein to vent his spleen to German audiences. Thus, the request was finally turned down in December 1940.¹³

Meanwhile, Acerbo and Preziosi continued to snipe at each other back in Italy. In October 1940, Preziosi came out with an article in *La Vita Italiana* complaining about the Mediterraneanist line taken by Aurturo Sabatini in *Razza e Civiltà*. Preziosi noted that Sabatini, like "95%" of the other current racists in Italy, discovered racism only after it became "fashionable." Acerbo was also lumped into this category.¹⁴

Tired of the whole affair and clearly losing patience, Acerbo wrote to Pavolini and demanded that Preziosi be called to order. He complained:

While I am precluded from the possibility of explaining my thought with all serenity and objectivity, my competitors are left free to torment me and degrade me at their pleasure. . . . Now I, as you well know, have heard with full discipline the order not to protract the polemics, and have understood very well the superior reasons that have motivated it, but I can not withhold from you that the style with which this type of campaign against me has been conducted is very close to that which I recall was honored by the "Yellow Beak" during the "quartarella." . . . I leave it to you to hear an old comrade, and render justice on the state of these things.¹⁵

Pavolini wrote back to Acerbo that same day and promised to silence Preziosi "once and for all" in regard to his attacks against Acerbo.¹⁶

During the Preziosi–Acerbo struggles, the Nordicists picked up a rather surprising convert: Giovanni Marro. Marro probably found it convenient to allow his own racial views to shift towards Nordicism when the Nordicist Camillo Pellizi replaced De Francisi as the director of the INCF. Marro's next book, *Primato della razza italiana*, reflected his new orientation. He now claimed that German civilization actually added a positive, practical element to the humanistic, idealistic

Latin civilization. The synthesis that followed gave modern western civilization a healthy practical side.¹⁷ Marro published an article in *Razza e Civiltà* as late as mid-1941 that continued this theme. He now asserted, oddly enough, that a race derived greater benefits from cultural exchanges with more distant races than from contact with more closely related races:

As a practical application, a race derives much more utility from establishing and maintaining relations and contact with another more different [race] than with one rather more alike. For example: the Italian race has much more to gain from a rapprochement with the German race, in sum very different [from the Italian], than to maintain unity with the French [race], in several points of views not very dissimilar [from those of the Italian race].¹⁸

Furthermore, in an attempt to inspire his readers with the benefits of World War II then being fought, Marro now emphasized that Darwinian racial struggle through war and similar competitive endeavors strengthened a race. Civilizations flourish under the pressure of contact and competition with other peoples:

The encounter, the contrast and also the more or less violent clash among the various ethnic groups – especially among those that show major differences among themselves – resolve themselves in a factor of the first order for the betterment of the complex human consortium.... This will maintain, or better yet, reinforce and perfect the racial characteristics, especially in the superior orders – with the consequent antagonism, pacific or violent among the various races – being necessary not only for life, prosperity and the progress of the ethnic race but also for the betterment of all of humanity. The persistence and even better the self-affirmation of such characteristics constitute, in the mixture of the races, a potent ferment for the total ulterior evolution; as those that, with the awakening of reactive energies, impede the stasis and the transformation of humanity into a herd of sheep, all equal and without particular initiatives.¹⁹

No doubt Marro's entente with the Nordacist faction, as it developed during the war years, increasingly distanced his views from those of *Razza e Civiltà*. Thereafter, he would find a more welcome home in the Nordacist-oriented journals, such as *La Difesa della Razza* and *La Vita Italiana*. In 1941 Marro published a series of articles in *La Vita Italiana* attacking several of his former competitors in the Palermo Concorso for being Sergian Mediterraneanists, a condition Marro now denounced.

If Sergi's followers came in for rebuke, the master himself was anathema to Marro. Already in *Primato della razza italiana* Sergi was criticized for his weak defense of Italian greatness.²⁰ In "Un alarme per il razzismo italiano," published in the March 15, 1941 edition of *La Vita Italiana*, Marro lamented the growing power of "Sergian-type fallacies." Marro thereupon launched a barrage of criticism against Sergi. Sergi's work was seriously flawed because it sought to make

the ancient Roman and modern Italian peoples look inferior, Marro claimed. The Romans, according to Sergi, were a semi-barbarous people until the end of the republic and had not been justified in conquering other peoples. Furthermore, Sergi had wantonly asserted that the Italic race was a heterogeneous mix of races. Southern Italians especially were lazy, and were physically and spiritually like the Northern Africans. Because the modern Italians had continued to dwell on the Italian past and lacked sufficient interest in the future (a mindset furthered by the Catholic Church), they had sunk into a stupor, a decline similar to those of other Latin cultures.²¹ Rather, Marro took for his nationalist hero Napoleone Colajanni. Marro described Colajanni's work *Latini e Anglo-Sassoni* as "acute and rich in erudition."²² Marro felt that Colajanni "affirmed the inexhaustible rush of force and of moral and intellectual elevation in our race" as opposed to those scholars, such as Sergi, who "announced our inferiority and our fatal decline as a prelude to our passing away."²³

Marro also criticized in his article the over-emphasis on physical racism he found in official circles. He accused the biological determinists of a "unilateral-ity and insufficiency of judgment on the racial problems" while at the same time deploring their bid "to monopolize the official studies on race."²⁴

Diving in for the kill, Marro attacked the Mediterraneanist Giuseppe Genna for his misguided attachment to Sergian racism. Marro reported that Genna's recent article in *Razza e Civiltà* attempting to exonerate Sergi and claim Sergi as the major precursor to fascist racism had been rejected by the editors of *Razza e Civiltà* the previous year because it was too radical. Similarly, Genna published an article in the August 1, 1940 edition of *Nuova Antologia* asserting that "in an epoch in which Italian racism had not yet begun, he [Sergi] was, in fact, a true and very great racist, creator more than precursor, having always claimed that the auchthonic racial structure of Italy was the primary reason for its many millennial civil greatness."²⁵

Marro felt it incumbent on himself to repeat the attack half a year later, in another article published in *La Vita Italiana*. This time Giuseppe Sergi was accused of being anti-patriotic and an Anglophile. Marro pointed out that those works of Sergi that took a more complimentary line toward modern Italy came out only in the last years of his life, when he was trying to curry favor with the regime. This time even Giuseppe's son, Sergio Sergi, a professor of anthropology at the University of Rome, was disavowed as an anti-racist.²⁶

Marro ended his association with *Razza e Civiltà* after these bitter polemics against some of the journal's most important contributors. In fact Marro even contributed an article to *La Difesa della Razza*, *Razza e Civiltà*'s chief rival, in June 1942, when Camillo Pellizi was endeavoring to undermine Acerbo's control of the High Council for Demography and Race. Once again, Marro harped on about the wickedness of Sergi's followers. This time we learn that Sergi had denied the existence of an Italian race (as would have any legitimate anthropologist before such an absurd concept became part of official fascist ideology). Marro asserted that Sergi's brand of Mediterraneanism was simply a type of internationalism in disguise, a trick that would hardly be expected to earn praise

from the man who had organized the Racial Room for the Turinese exhibition on Italian autarky.²⁷

During this phase of his work Marro made sure to condemn the Jews as the worst degenerate racial pollutants the Italians had ever faced. The Jews had a tendency to recidivism, as evinced by their faulty customs and their pertinacious and intentionally deprecatory social comportment. The Jews were chained to tradition, were static, and were incapable of physical conquest.²⁸ Yet, paradoxically, the nefarious Jews sought “nothing short of universal domination,” for which “they strive with all their energy.”²⁹ The degenerative qualities of the Jewish spirit could “infect” other peoples. Thus was it necessary for Italy to adopt anti-Semitic laws to protect the Italian people.³⁰ By 1942 Marro seemed to have moved so far over to the Nordacist extreme that Aldo Capasso judged him (quite inaccurately) to be one of the racist intellectuals closest to Landra’s Manifesto.³¹

These numerous and perhaps unexpected sops to Nordic sensibilities no doubt were trumpeted about in response to the resurgence of the pro-German faction after Italy entered the war. From these indications we can conclude that Marro’s racism contained opportunistic elements that came and went according to his perception of the political strength of various racist factions.

The Mediterraneanists strike back

Though under fierce attack by the Nordacist faction, the Mediterraneanists still had allies in important posts throughout the fascist and scientific communities. For example, they were aided by the fact that the Racial Office under Visco still remained faithful to the Mediterraneanist alliance. This proved to be the key in undermining the positions of Interlandi, Landra, and perhaps others who were aligned with the Nordacist faction.

In the case of Interlandi, wartime demands weakened his control over *La Difesa della Razza*. The situation was duly exploited by the Mediterraneanists. It began in the summer of 1940 when Mussolini informed Interlandi that henceforth he would personally review each issue of *La Difesa* before it went to press. We can speculate that this move to supervise the journal more tightly may have been provoked by concerns that *La Difesa* was continuing to follow German racial arguments too closely. In any event, Mussolini must have felt too pressed by wartime demands to carry out the agreement; rather, he simply sent the journal down to the Racial Office for review. There, the Mediterraneanists greedily set to work tearing the journal apart. For example, one issue carried an article that claimed that the Romans were a moral and material shambles until the Germans arrived to regenerate them and create the Renaissance. The article was forwarded to the *Duce*, who indignantly reprimanded Interlandi and forced him to retract it.³²

Indeed, the whole tenor of the articles run by *La Difesa della Razza* began to change at this time. Gone were the fervent and confident Aryan epistles in the vein of the Manifesto – in their place were more technical articles (usually by Landra), articles on “safe” themes such as the danger of the Jews or miscegenation with Africans, and even articles with a Mediterraneanist slant. As the following

letter written by Interlandi directly to Mussolini implies, the Ministry of Popular Culture was apparently controlling the editorial policy of *La Difesa*:

In my absence (I am mobilized by my request and taking service in the Maritime Artillery Militia) the compilation of *La Difesa della Razza* is being done by my detractors. . . . The examination of the drafts of the issue, which I thought was done by you personally, is being done by an anonymous official of the Ministry of Popular Culture; and for some time has been done with a polemical spirit and obstructionism that disheartens the writers. It is worth while for me to put these examples before you: the criticisms of the issue occupy almost three typewritten pages, which are included in this letter, with a tone that clearly seeks to throw a suspicion of incompetence, and worse, of tendentiousness, on whatever the journal wants to publish . . . such a system paralyzes the life of the journal [and] . . . places its director, once chosen by you with a trust that I will always honor, in a condition of inferiority and disability.³³

In conclusion, Interlandi reiterated that “the examination of the journal is being done by someone with hostility and bad faith.”

Another document found in the same file in the Ministry’s archives is most probably the Ministry of Popular Culture’s criticisms of the *Difesa* issue (July 20, 1940) referred to by Interlandi. The document criticizes Landra’s article “Il metodo dei gemelli” because it lavished too much praise on German research with twins, ignoring similar Italian work being done. The article “Il retaggio di Roma” was faulty because it so closely followed the typical German Nordic boast that the Germans were responsible for all the progress Italy had experienced since the Roman Empire:

the decline (of the Romans) was so unrestrainable, that they were not even able to protect Christianity, were it not for ethnic miscegenation with Germans. From which, one is glad to know, came the seeds that, after long incubation during the Middle Ages and the crises of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, would be able to germinate in the flowering splendor of the Renaissance.

The Ministry of Popular Culture opined that “we can not agree to this lest we simply confirm what the Germans say about us.”³⁴

Interlandi would continue to be hounded by government censorship of his journal. And this was not all. On November 21, 1940, the length of each issue of the journal was reduced by one-third, from 48 to 32 pages, apparently as a cost-cutting measure based on orders from the *Duce*.³⁵

Further changes were in the offing. On January 20, 1941, Leone Franzì, Marcello Ricci, and Lino Businco were dropped from the editorial board of *La Difesa della Razza*. A month later, the journal itself announced that it intended to give “maximum diffusion to racial studies” even those “that do not seem entirely

orthodox,” to the point of warning readers to “be on guard” against “those that could lead their judgment astray.” The editors also informed the public that it would carry longer, more simplified, articles, many more of which would be dedicated to popularized discussions of anthropology. They were to concentrate more on “organicity and continuity of treatment” to give “the most clear and complete vision of the principal arguments as possible.”³⁶

The editors kept their word. Landra frequently contributed articles on the history and current research interests of anthropology. Aldo Modica, another of the more frequent contributors to the journal, explained in an article in the July 20, 1941 issue of *La Difesa* that recent research indicated that the Italian race was, after all, a Mediterranean people and excluded the possibility of an interdependence of Italian and German civilizations.³⁷

Several months later, in October 1941, Claudio Calosso published an article in *La Difesa* that reflected classic Mediterranean concepts. Calosso explained that neither the “Nordic, dolicocephalic blonds” nor the Indo-Europeans were the ancestors of the Italics, Greeks, or the Celts, as had been alleged. Rather, the pre-Roman and pre-Hellenic peoples, and the Etruscans and Hittites, were members of the “Mediterranean ethnic group.” Their civilizations largely derived from Minoan–Cycladian Mediterranean civilization.³⁸

Though the Mediterraneanists, through these maneuverings, had humbled the Nordacist faction, they did not neglect to pursue other tactics aimed at eliminating key Nordophiles from Italian racism. Guido Landra in particular was marked for retaliation, presumably for his attempts to undermine Acerbo’s work. We have already mentioned that Acerbo was aware that someone in the Racial Office had surreptitiously passed along Acerbo’s letter of defense to Farinacci, certainly not a sympathetic figure. It cannot be a coincidence that shortly afterward, Sabato Visco began hurling a barrage of charges at Landra that accused him of dishonesty on a number of occasions. The attack began on September 12, 1940, when Visco informed Landra that, among other complaints, he had received information that the assaults published in *Tevere* and *La Vita Italiana* against Acerbo’s book were “substantially promoted by you and that the counter reply published in no. 19/20 July of *Tevere* itself was drafted by you along with an editor of the journal. You have thus been involved in activities contrary to the Ministry which has undertaken to publish the book by Acerbo.” Landra was also reprimanded for slackness on the job.³⁹

Landra replied immediately, denying the charges. The reply to Acerbo in *Tevere* had been written by Giuseppe Pensabene, Landra informed Visco. Otherwise, much of his attention was being devoted to running *La Difesa della Razza*, because of the “complete inactivity” of Businco, Franzi, Ricci, and Cipriani, and the wartime call-up of Interlandi and Almirante.⁴⁰ His defense was to no avail. On September 26, Landra received a letter from Pavolini dismissing him from the Ministry.⁴¹

The next day, Landra immediately appealed to the *Duce* for a redress of the wrongs that he had suffered for over a year. After detailing the history of his efforts in propagating racism, fulfilling the direct orders from Mussolini, Landra arrived

at the point of extraordinary sadness by which I am constrained to turn myself to your illuminated judgment.

Yesterday, following a few charges denied by me from the current Head of the Office of Race, National Councilor Visco, I received a letter from Minister Pavolini in which I was told I would be freed from all duties at the Ministry of Popular Culture the next month of October.

I haven't allowed myself to discuss this in any way with Pavolini, but I ask you DUCE to examine what happened:

In June 1938 you, DUCE, gave me precise directives for the racial campaign and to the actuation of it I have dedicated all of my work, incurring the inevitable enemies and often meriting your praise...

In pursuit of this mission, Landra informs Mussolini, he had resigned from his teaching post when he was made head of the Racial Office, acting on Mussolini's orders. But the next two years were filled with "sad disillusionments." He had only recently applied for the Chair of Anthropology at the Royal University of Palermo, but had been informed off the record that his racial politics prevented him from rejoining an academic career in the future. Now, with no prospects for employment and a family to support, he was appealing to his *Duce* for a reprieve:

DUCE, I ask you to hear the plea of a young man of 27 years, that on your orders I compiled the Manifesto that officially began the racial politics of fascism, that I was Head of the Racial Office in the most bitter period of the fights and arguments and that I taught racial politics in the highest school of the P.N.F.¹⁴²

To bolster his appeal, Landra sent an even more frank letter to Preziosi. In it, Landra bitterly recalled a conversation between himself and Preziosi, in which they lamented the changes that had befallen Italian racism since the rise of their Mediterraneanist opponents: "As for what you told me some time ago concerning the gradual elimination of the racists of the first hour, this has happened even in my case." Landra explained to Preziosi that his final dismissal from the Racial Office occurred because of Visco's accusation that "I was working against the ministry because – according to the accusation – I have been the promoter of the polemic against the book of Acerbo, published by the Ministry." Landra believed that his collaboration with Preziosi was an important cause of his downfall: "Now, dear Preziosi, the fact has been verified that because of collaboration with *Vita Italiana* and having been on good terms with you, I have lost my post at the ministry." Landra was still dazed by his replacement as head of the Racial Office by Visco, given that "the greatest criticisms of the Manifesto itself came from Professor Visco, who was then suddenly nominated to my position as head of the Office of Race. ... Between parentheses I must tell you that all the work of the [Italo-German Racial Committee], regularly approved by the Duce and the

Führer, has been a dead letter since by virtue of this substitution.” Since then, “I have not had any university position given the permanent hostility towards me, alone among scientists [because I have] frankly fought on behalf of racism.”

Shocked by this unexpected turn of events, Preziosi forwarded Landra’s letter to Mussolini, along with a prefatory note supporting Landra’s claims:

Duce, if someone at the end of 1936 had told me that the day would come when Italy would deal with the Jewish aspect of the racial problem by appointing Professor Sabato Visco head of the “Office of Study and Propaganda on Race,” I would have declared the battle “finished.” I can never forget with what stubbornness, talking to me, he negated the existence of a Jewish problem one night that we left together from the house of the current Accademico d’Italia Angelo Zanello (who is thoroughly familiar with the Jewish problem) at which, with Senator Bastianelli, we were staying. And this is not all.⁴³

The *Duce* apparently felt sorry for his former protégé. On September 30, 1940, Mussolini ordered Pavolini to find some post for Landra at the Ministry of Popular Culture.⁴⁴

As Landra had mentioned to Mussolini, he had applied for a fiercely contested position of Chair of Anthropology at the Royal University of Palermo. The position was created as a result of a decree by the Minister of Education, Giuseppe Bottai, that allocated funds for the institution of four additional teaching positions in anthropology at Italian universities: Florence, Palermo, Turin, and Padua. This was part of a larger expansion in higher education designed to reflect Italy’s new official interest in the study of race.⁴⁵

The competition for the Palermo Chair had been decreed on February 19, 1940. We should note that among the judges, Raffaele Corso, a Mediterraneanist, was the only anthropologist deeply involved in the racial debate. Among the contestants, Giuseppe Genna, Arturo Sabatini, Raffaello Battaglia, and Giovanni Marro adhered to the Mediterraneanist/nativist interpretations; Lidio Cipriani and Guido Landra were Nordicists.⁴⁶

As Landra had written to Mussolini, he already knew by late September that the committee had disparaged his “politicization” of race. In response, Landra appealed directly to Bottai, asking for assistance in finding a chair of anthropology somewhere in Italy. Apparently, Bottai favorably received Landra’s petition. Not content to leave well enough alone, Landra then pressured Sebastiani to influence the committee on his behalf by “a word from the Palazzo Venezia.” Landra felt that such a favor was warranted considering his work on the racial campaign.⁴⁷

Once again, Landra was stymied in his career. The committee does not seem to have been effectively pressured by anyone on his behalf, since on October 3 they announced the selection of the Mediterraneanist Giuseppe Genna as the successful candidate, and declared the runners-up, the Mediterraneanist Raffaello Battaglia and the nativist Giovanni Marro, qualified to occupy a similar position in the near future.⁴⁸

Landra was heartbroken by the results. As he wrote to Sebastiani the next day, the “Jews and the anti-racist scientists” had worked against his career ever since he had joined the anti-racist campaign. Now, he continued,

You can imagine my disappointment to see after two years of racism, the chair given to those who have been in the antiracist camp or those who have been indifferent and I feel completely beaten, I, who was the only Italian anthropologist that put my science in the service of the DUCE, while the others thought of racism as something to fight against or to laugh at. Among the numerous publications presented at the competition, more than 60 dealt with the racial problem. . . . I was made to understand that these racist publications harmed my candidacy, but I couldn't avoid presenting them while still following my conscience. Also how could there be an anthropology separated from politics in fascist Italy?⁴⁹

Rather than attributing Landra's cold reception to “Jews and anti-racists,” it is more likely that the selection of the judges expressed their antipathy for Nordicist racism, if not their active appreciation for Italian Mediterraneanist racism. It is interesting to note the apparent confidence that the selection committee, all Fascist Party members in good standing, had in selecting Mediterraneanist or nativist candidates to the top three positions in the competition, and the passivity of the government in the face of the defeat of the Nordicist candidates in the university competition.

Indeed, the Nordicist camp continued to suffer serious blows that autumn. Landra was sent out of the country on an almost permanent basis, working for the Foreign Ministry to propagate Italian racism in Eastern Europe. Most of his time, until the end of the war, was spent in Bucharest – not a very promising assignment for advancing one's career. Lidio Cipriani, Landra's long-time Nordicist colleague and an unsuccessful contestant for the Palermo position, suffered an even more bizarre fate. On October 29, 1940, Cipriani was summarily dismissed from his position at the Museum of Anthropology in Florence. Cipriani, it seems, had secretly sold and kept the profits from a number of valuable African facial masks belonging to the museum that he had originally collected while on government-funded research missions in Africa.⁵⁰ Cipriani soon thereafter also lost his teaching position at the Royal University of Florence, and most of his memberships in professional organizations.

Cipriani's theft of the African masks naturally affected his association with the official racist propaganda organizations. Cipriani had been receiving a stipend of 2000 liras per month (500 liras for his collaboration with the Racial Office and 1500 liras for his work on the *Mostra della Razza*). But, concluded the Ministry of Popular Culture, Cipriani had proven to be a bad investment. He had done precious little collaboration with the Racial Office, the Racial Exhibition that he was to work on had been postponed due to the war, and his loss of professional standing substantially lessened his value to the government. Nor was this all.

The Racial Office also protested that “in the racial camp Cipriani has not had precise ideas and has either oscillated between the most diverse tendencies or

has had dangerous ideas.” As evidence for this accusation the report cited Cipriani’s review in *Archivio per l’antropologia e la etnologia* of the famous Baur, Fischer, and Lenz book, *Menschliche Erblichkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene*.⁵¹ In the review, published before Italy was officially anti-Semitic and pro-German, Cipriani claimed that the Jews were members of the Mediterranean race “with a religion from the same stock as Christianity and possessed of non-negligible gifts of abstraction that supplements the Latin temperament.”⁵² Such a position was untenable by 1941, though the Ministry conveniently overlooked the fact that Cipriani had naturally changed his own position in the meantime. The accusation illustrated a common tactic used by racial polemicists. To smear an opponent, it may simply have been necessary to look through his publications from an earlier phase of the racial campaign. If the individual in question had elevated adherence to the official party line of the day over any “objective truth” found through “good” science, the inevitable convolutions of fascist ideology over time could then be used as a trap to catch the opponent. This tactic, lamentably, was all too readily implemented in fascist Italy. Thus, justifying its action in part by using these tactics, the Ministry decided to cut off Cipriani’s stipend.

As the Nordicists “of the first hour” were apparently systematically eliminated from their positions in the racial bureaucracy, at least one of the Mediterraneanists of the first hour resurfaced. In November 1940, Nicola Pende, who had been rather marginalized by the swift development of the Mediterraneanist leadership, robustly reasserted his own version of Mediterraneanism in *Gerarchia*. Pende once again outlined his concept of race, emphasizing environmental evolution and the action of the spirit.

As a final devastating blow, Pende now felt free to reveal his true sentiments about the Aryans and the Nordic Germans. Aryans, we now learn, were only a minor component of the Italian race, which was composed of a Mediterranean majority. Italian civilization was based on “Mediterranean harmony”: the “immortal Mediterranean civilization, Mediterranean art, science, Mediterranean philosophy” all in harmony and equilibrium with the climate of the region. On the other hand, the Nordics were characterized by a “disintegrating” conflict between opposing forces.⁵³ That such vituperative insults against the Germans could be published in the Fascist Party’s premier journal in 1941 dramatically illustrates the power still wielded by the Mediterraneanists during the war.

It is important to note that these events were occurring during World War II, when Italy could hardly afford to alienate Germany, upon which Italy was increasingly dependent. Yet the dislike of Nordic and Germanic racial theories was so intense among many powerful fascist scientists and government bureaucrats that Mediterraneanists, nativists, and other anti-Germanic theorists continued to exert substantial influence on government policies and propaganda. This could not have gone unnoticed by the Italian people.

Mediterraneanism during the war

A number of events revealed the influence of the Mediterraneanists during the war. While Mediterraneanist propaganda continued to find its way into the press, the Ministry of the Interior, probably prodded on by Giacomo Acerbo, developed a comprehensive, Mediterraneanist definition of the Italian race. Nevertheless, the process was disrupted by Mussolini's changing enthusiasms. In May 1941, Sabato Visco was removed from his position as head of the Racial Office and replaced by Alberto Luchini, a committed spiritual Nordicist. Several months later the *Duce* himself became a convert to Julius Evola's spiritual Nordicism. Nevertheless, Mediterraneanism would never entirely lose its influence in the fascist political and intellectual circles.

During the war, the Ministry of the Interior continued to follow the Mediterranean ideology. Certainly Acerbo's High Council on Demography and Race was actively attacking the remnants of official Nordicism, such as Landra's Manifesto of the Racial Scientists. The council wrote a critique that pointed out the weaknesses inherent in each point of the Manifesto. The heaviest beatings were reserved for those points that supported Nordicism or undermined Mediterraneanism. For example, point four of the Manifesto was criticized for its racial interpretation of the concept of "Aryan." Rather, the Council explained that the Aryans were simply a linguistic group. Furthermore, to deny that the pre-Aryan civilization had much of an impact on modern Italy, Acerbo and the other members of the council wrote, "constitutes an unjustifiable and undemonstrable negation of the anthropological, ethnological, and archeological discoveries that have occurred and are occurring in our country."

Indeed, the obvious superiority of the Greeks and Italians in ancient times compared to the ancient Germanic tribes made it quite inconceivable that much in Italian culture could have owed a debt to the Aryan Germans. While discussing Italian history after the fall of Rome, the Manifesto made a similar error by once again "implicitly" crediting the Germanic invaders, now in the guise of Lombards, with having "a formative influence on the Italian race in a disproportional degree to the number of invaders and to their biological predominance." Rather, it was the native Italians who had the biological predominance over the other invaders.

Point seven of the Manifesto, which asserted that Italian racism must be in a "Aryan–Nordic direction," really meant that it must base itself on Nordicism:

that, as everyone knows, sharply denies any virtue to the Mediterraneans, considering them as slaves. . . . This also signifies a repudiation of the entire Italian civilization, which, according to the Nordicists, was a corrupt and deviant expression of pure Nordic culture. This latter, vice versa, was actually slavishly dependent on [*succubi*] Mediterranean civilization in general and that of Italy in particular. A strange contradiction in terms that the Nordicists have not made the effort to remove from their writings.

Furthermore, this “Aryan–Nordic” direction appeared too slavishly imitative of German racial models. It destroyed any claim to Italian racial autonomy. Indeed, in so far as one of the main considerations of racism was to insure that the Italians chose the best mates,

one might think that the authors intended to point out the opportunity for Italians to procreate with human types that bore the morphological and psychological characteristics of Nordics, but one doesn’t understand how this implicit devaluation of the physical and psychological type of the Italians can elevate them to an ideal and superior consciousness of themselves and to a greater responsibility [of empire].

Point eight of the original Manifesto, which objected to the idea that Italians might be related to Africans, was also undermined by the Council’s analysis. The Council’s exegesis first protested that:

In scientific circles, one can objectively expound on or deny the African origin of the European population, without this representing a danger; what is dangerous, rather, is to forget that there was a Mediterranean unity that was realized under the aegis of Rome.

The document then tried to back-handedly support the African connection by emphasizing that Northern Africa has always been more closely tied to the rest of the Mediterranean basin than to sub-Saharan Africa.

Given that the 1938 Manifesto was so defective, the Council met under Acerbo’s direction on April 15 and 25, 1942 to devise a new official position on the origins and development of the Italian race. A select committee drafted a document laying out the Council’s position, which was then submitted to the full Council for a vote. The committee membership, packed with prominent Mediterraneanists, included: Giacomo Acerbo; Senator Giunio Savi, Professor of Human Anatomy, University of Naples; Arnaldo Fioretti, a designate of the Fascist Party; Biagio Pace, Professor of the Topography of ancient Italy, University of Rome; Sergio Sergi, Professor of Anthropology, University of Rome; Antonio Pagliaro, Professor of Linguistics, University of Rome; Raffaele Corso, Professor of Ethnography, University of Florence; and Umberto Pieramonti, Assistant Professor of Genetics and Racial Biology, University of Naples.

The committee created a document that was essentially a distillation of Acerbo’s racial thought. They affirmed that culture and civilization were derived from hereditary racial characteristics. Nevertheless, the committee admitted that environmental and cross-cultural influences could modify the cultural development of a particular people through the mediation of “reactive forces” innate in the race. They took the common position that the particular geography of Italy protected it from “large-scale mass invasions” while at the same time still allowing cross-cultural exchanges to occur.

The committee boldly proclaimed that the Italians could trace their ancestry back to the “proto-Mediterranean Italians” of the superior Quaternary period.

These peoples were gifted with “great creative and assimilative powers” and built a brilliant native civilization. The Indo-Europeans only arrived much later. Rather than the massive, overwhelming invasion that was a fundamental premise for the Nordacists, Acerbo’s committee described this episode as a peaceful infiltration of the Indo-Europeans into the stable, well-established native Mediterranean culture. The ensuing voluntary fusion preserved the essential Mediterranean character of the Italians, while giving them an Indo-European language strongly influenced by the indigenous linguistic substrate. From this fusion flowered a brilliant civilization superior to any other for centuries. Others would also come to Italy over time, like the Greeks and the Celts, but these peoples were readily assimilated due to racial similarities.

Thus, by the time ancient Roman civilization was born, the Italian people were a perfect, homogeneous racial entity. Thereafter, no other people ever reached Italy in sufficient numbers to affect its racial composition. Thus, the modern Italians were essentially the same as they were in Augustan Rome. The committee also dutifully (but only briefly) mentioned that the Jews had always remained a group apart.

After the committee had drafted their report, it was apparently submitted to the full Council for a vote. The other Council members included: Antonio Le Pera; Frontoni; Gian Giacomo Borghese, President of the Fascist Union for Numerous Families; Camillo Pellizi, Director of the National Institute of Fascist Culture; Renzo Meregazzi, designate of the Ministry for Italian Africa; Dall’Armi; Giuseppe Lanzara, designate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Giuseppe Lampis, designate of the Ministry of Welfare and Justice; Raffaele Formosa, designate of the Ministry of Finance; Collalto Collaltino, designate of the Ministry of National Education; Alberto Luchini, Director of the Racial Office of the Ministry of Popular Culture; Giuseppe Tallarico; Alessandro Ghigi, Professor of Zoology, University of Bologna; Vito De Blasi, Lecturer in Obstetrics and Gynecology, University of Genoa; Cornelio Di Marzio, publicist; Cesare Frugoni, Professor of General Clinical Medicine at the University of Rome; Livio Livi, Professor of Statistics at the University of Florence; Ugo Rellini, Professor of Paleontology at the University of Rome; and Francesco Valagussa, Lecturer on Clinical Pediatrics at the University of Rome.⁵⁴ Although the later vote was officially unanimous, complaints about the perfunctory nature of the decision process soon arose.

This new definition of the Italian race may have directly inspired the General Directorate for Demography and Race’s own version of a Mediterraneanist revision of official racism. The Directorate generated a number of drafts leading to an authoritative declaration on the Italian race. Once again, these documents were uncompromisingly Mediterraneanist. One of the drafts points out a number of problems that follow from the insistence that the Italians are an “Aryan” race. It prevented Italians from marrying those Europeans considered “non-Aryan,” such as the Finns, Hungarians, and Basques, while allowing marriage with non-European Aryan peoples (presumably Iranians and others). Even the official German racial laws do not mention Aryans but only refer to “blood that is or is

not German or German-related.” Furthermore, this draft relates, “the distinction between Aryans and non-Aryans is exclusively linguistic and without significance in regard to the biological relationship of the peoples.”

Rather than describing the Italians as a branch of the Aryans, as the Nordicists would have it, the Directorate explained that the Italian people were essentially Mediterraneans who traced their origin back to the Neolithic Age, citing Giuseppe Sergi’s work for support. In addition, Giuseppe Sergi, Biagio Pace, Conte Pietro Orsi, Ugo Rellini, Francesco Colini, and others proved that the culture and industry of prehistoric Italy had evolved into their modern forms without interruption.⁵⁵

Modern Italians were the direct physical and spiritual descendants of the Romans. Evidence for this continuity between the ancient Romans and the modern Italians included the persistence of the same regional varieties, skeletal comparisons, and artistic depictions of the people through time.

Nor had Italy been a land of large-scale immigration, either before or after the Roman period. “Thus one can no longer speak of an Aryan immigration or civilization in Italy.” Certainly, the development of the Italian people had not been affected by the “barbarian domination of Odoacre, the Ostrogoths, [or] the Lombards.” Rather than attributing the Renaissance to the infiltration of German blood, as the Nordicists would have it, the Directorate insisted that such glorious episodes in Italian culture were entirely due to the achievements of the Italian people themselves.

Yet, after all these elaborations, the final draft of this new Manifesto was never officially promulgated. This is probably due to the rising influence of the spiritual Nordicists, such as Alberto Luchini, a member of the council *ex officio*, and Camillo Pellizi, the Director of the National Institute of Fascist Culture and a fascist intellectual of long standing. Luchini was the most vocal dissenter from the Council, and certainly one of the most powerful. On June 8, 1942, he wrote to the head of the Cabinet of the Interior Ministry to express his and Camillo Pellizzi’s grave misgivings concerning the direction of the Council. They objected to Acerbo’s attempt to force their compliance with the Council’s final document. Luchini claimed that his disapproval was made “in an extremely decisive and clear manner” during the meeting, “but was apparently ignored.”

Their objections regarded several key points made in the document. For one, Luchini felt that the role of the pre-Aryan and pre-Roman peoples in Italy was overly stressed. He could not accept the declaration that the Italian race had not been affected by outside peoples since the time of Augustus. Luchini pointed out that millions of non-Italian slaves were taken to Italy in Imperial times as prisoners of war. But they “had not taken a vow of chastity.” In addition, many of the soldiers in the late Empire were not Italian. And these “healthy young men” had “vigorous reproductive faculties.”

Furthermore, the invasions of the Middle Ages brought “unnegligible traces” of new elements. Many of the Italian nobility, for example, had a non-Italian origin. And the impact of the Lombards was self-evident in the very name of the province. To deny that these groups influenced the racial composition of Italy

was “gratuitously boastful, and not critically defensible.” Rather, it would be “truer and more fascist” if the “patriotic–indigenous [theorists] did not attempt such claims,” for “the racial pride of us Italians has too many genuine sources from which to derive nourishment, to have need of such truly insecure sources.”

Fortunately, Luchini had a ready-made solution to this seeming dilemma. “The truth is, that all of these foreign influences were powerless against a spiritual force truly superior and almost divine: the virtual unity of the collective Italian psyche in the idea of Rome.” He boasted in his statement that

Our unitary perpetual principle, as Italians, is Rome, and nothing but Rome. The idea-force, that makes us fascists an ethnic unity, is founded on the Roman spiritual principle, and not on other myths or pseudo-myths, paleontological or mysteriosophical [*misteriosofici*], however beyond that of Rome.

Luchini also felt quite uneasy about the anti-Aryan direction of the document. He felt almost instinctively attracted to the “clarity and concreteness” of point four of the Manifesto, which affirmed the Aryan nature of the Italians. For Luchini, the Aryans were the “solar, hyperboreal” peoples of his friend Evola. In any event, Luchini adds, science had not yet reached the stage in which any definitive conclusions could be reached regarding the prehistory of Italy.

Luchini’s internal bureaucratic attack against the Mediterraneanists was supplemented through the media by Telesio Interlandi and Guido Landra. Interlandi wrote a scathing article, “Dicorso alle nuove linfe,” for *La Difesa della Razza* that April which bitterly denounced the Mediterraneanists’ recent work. He described them as “restless herds of half-breed intellectuals” bent on destroying Italian racism.⁵⁶ Ironically, Landra complained that “the most visible scientists have derided our affirmations and have accused us of having prostituted science to politics.”⁵⁷ These anti-racists included the older generation of anthropologists. Others, willing to consider racism, deviated into Mediterraneanism.⁵⁸ This “right wing” of racism, as Landra called it, criticized the Manifesto’s claim that the Italians were Aryans, that Italian racism should follow a Aryan–Nordic direction, and that the Italians had a “racial unity” (probably a reference to some Mediterraneanists’ rejection of Landra’s assertion that the Italians constituted a biological race).⁵⁹ Furthermore, the recent Mediterraneanist discussions of racial spirit seemed to Landra to be entirely too convenient, given the growing influence of racial spiritualism on the government’s official racism in 1942. He sarcastically remarked that “it has been truly humorous to see how the word ‘spirit’ was pronounced by someone [probably Acerbo] that had not so long ago raised altars to positivism and how ‘the new lymph’ in their attacks have always religiously respected the old positions [probably a reference to Giuseppe Sergi] and have instead concentrated their attacks solely against us.”⁶⁰ Preziosi no doubt chafed at the bit with a zealous desire to join his comrades in the latest campaign against Acerbo, but had been prohibited from doing so a year and a half earlier, as we have discussed.

Mediterraneanist spiritualism

Although the anthropologically based Mediterranean racism of Acerbo became the most influential, several of his colleagues attempted to arrive at similar conclusions from the philosophical perspective. Certainly the most notable example of this approximation of Mediterranean spiritualism was Vincenzo Mazzei's book, *Razza e Nazione*, published in the summer of 1942.⁶¹ Mazzei was an assistant professor of public law and social legislation at the University of Rome. His book attempted to synthesize Crocean idealism and Acerbian racism to create a Mediterraneanist spiritual racism that could appeal to Catholics, anti-German traditionalists, and racists alike.

Mazzei concentrated his attention on the spiritual aspects of the nation. Indeed, race became only one of the binding agents of the national spirit. The "biopsychical uniformity" of the race facilitated "the dissemination of the interior and always continuing formative process of that spiritual unity in which resides the most true essence of the concept of nation." The race also acted as a "nationalizing principle" by virtue of the "feelings and the states of collective consciousness" of the people.⁶² Racial feelings and racial consciousness enhanced the cohesiveness and unification of a human group, which then led to the formation of a nation.⁶³ Thus the nation had a more direct link to the spiritual community than it did to the biological substratum.

Indeed, the spiritual sympathies that existed among diverse peoples living in the same geographical region caused them to coalesce, and repulse or separate out those who didn't share these traits.⁶⁴ After this spiritual purification, the members of the new community would interbreed, leading to the formation of a new racial entity and the creation of a new nation:

It is obvious that, if originally diverse ethnic groups are driven by historical situations to cross-breed and these hybrid peoples always (or almost always) continue to live among the same original peoples or their descendants, with the passage of centuries one will inevitably have a unifying harmonization of these biopsychic attitudes determined from birth.⁶⁵

It seems that Mazzei took this idea from Ludwig Gumplowicz's *Lotta delle razze*, though Mazzei himself gave credit above all to Giuseppe Carle, Vincenzo Miceli, and Taparelli D'Azeglio.⁶⁶ Mazzei also recognized the work of Giovanni Marro, and agreed with him that the physical environment played an important role in influencing racial evolution.⁶⁷

Mazzei closely related his concept of race to that of Giacomo Acerbo. In fact, the ideological alliance between the two professors of the University of Rome was deliberately made obvious. Mazzei cited Acerbo in claiming that race is primarily a spiritual phenomenon. It was a "myth," an "idea-force," that affected national development more through linguistic and cultural forces than it did through "bioanthropological elements." Yet, Mazzei admitted, this racial spirit was "innate" and "natural" to a people.⁶⁸

As a good Mediterraneanist, Mazzei devoted considerable attention to bashing the notion of a Germanic influence on Italian culture, and to undercutting the claims of the Manifesto. Mazzei agreed with Carlo Pisacane, Gioacchino Volpe, Arrigo Solmi, and Gabriele Pepe that the Italians were the direct descendants of the ancient Romans. The German barbarians had only “limited influence” on medieval Italian civilization, “which was for the most part negative.”⁶⁹

Mazzei found many fatal flaws in the Manifesto. It was, in his words, “an immature and faulty document.” Perhaps the most serious fault was the document’s claim that the Italians were Nordic Aryans. This thesis, according to Mazzei, was derived from the “fantastic ingenuousness of the old German racists” and “easily confuted in view of the results of the most authoritative anthropologists” such as Giuseppe Sergi, Giacomo Acerbo, Angelo Mosso, and Francesco Lorenzo Pullè.⁷⁰ Rather, the Italians were a Mediterranean race. Like most Mediterraneanists, Mazzei believed that Aryans were not a biological race, but a linguistic group. Nor were the Italians a pure race. Like all races, the Italians were derived from a combination of earlier races. Though there were certain physical and psychological traits that were more typical for Italians than other peoples, they were not necessarily derived from heredity. Some traits that might at first glance appear biologically founded might, in fact, simply have been a product of political or social conditions.⁷¹

The most controversial and courageous part of Mazzei’s thesis rested upon his assertion that the Jews were not the race enemy that the Manifesto and official fascist racism had claimed. The Jews were not an inferior race, Mazzei countered. In fact, many of the Italian Jews were Greco-Roman in origin. The problem with the Jews was that they maintained themselves as a separate entity, outside of the Italian nation. There was no reason, in theory, why they could not be assimilated into the nation, much as the medieval Arabs had in Sicily.⁷² Naturally, such claims were not new. In fact they were a reversion to the official fascist position on Jews from 1936 to 1938, best exemplified at that time in Paolo Orano’s book, *Gli ebrei in Italia*.

Mazzei’s book attracted a lot of attention after its release. The book was not well received by all commentators. Telesio Interlandi published articles against it in the September 11–12, 1942 issue of *Il Tevere* and in the September 20 issue of *La Difesa della Razza*. According to these articles, Mazzei’s sins were legion. Interlandi accused Mazzei of trying to sabotage racism; indeed, of trying to write a manual for the anti-racists. He was manifestly anti-German and pro-democratic, “like ‘his’ Acerbo – amply cited.” Mazzei was derided for using Crocean idealism to substantiate his claim that spiritual harmony, history, and culture, rather than biological determinism, were the most essential ingredients in creating a nation. Interlandi defended the Manifesto as a still-relevant document of which the *Duce* “recently confirmed his unchanged approval” (referring no doubt to the rejection of Acerbo’s bid to rewrite it). Interlandi was outraged that Mazzei did not acknowledge Jewish racial inferiority; in fact, Mazzei was described as “philo-Semitic.”⁷³

Even the journal *Razza e Civiltà*, in a review of the article on which *Razza e Nazione* was based, rejected Mazzei’s assertion that the Jews were not an inferior

race. Though they found “many points” of disagreement with Mazzei’s work, they still “willingly” summarized his work in their journal, and pronounced that it “merits recognition.”⁷⁴

Mazzei’s book was the last major Mediterraneanist text before the downfall of Mussolini less than a year later. By the summer of 1942, Italy was in a desperate situation, clearly losing the war and relying heavily on German backing. It was not a good time to anger the Germans by making major revisions in racial policy. In fact, as we shall discuss later, the fascist philosopher and racial theorist Julius Evola, then coming into favor with Mussolini, would be shot down in part due to German opposition. Evola’s work would conclude the last serious attempt to assert a truly Italian racial ideology.

7 Julius Evola and spiritual Nordicism, 1941–1943

Julius Evola was one of the most influential fascist racists in Italian history. His importance stems not so much from the impact his philosophy had on fascism in its heyday, but the unifying force his occult ontology had on a post-war fascism that sought some sort of cosmological underpinning for its precipitous fall and hoped-for return to relevance. The revival of interest in Evola and his work since the 1970s has uncovered a gold mine of information that allows us particularly sharp insight into the racist mentality. Evola's late notoriety is not to say that Evola himself was a non-entity during the fascist period – far from it. His version of spiritual Nordicism fit remarkably well into his cosmology, and ultimately had a profound impact on the course of development of Italian fascist racism in its final years.

Evola was born in 1898 of a minor baronial family of Rome. He abandoned the stifling bourgeois pragmatism of a university education for a free-wheeling intellectual nomadism that led him toward an interest in irrational thought early in life. Evola found special inspiration in the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche. He felt himself attracted to Nietzsche's exaltation of a spiritual elite (no doubt made easier by Evola's own aristocratic background). Evola imbibed Nietzsche's disgust with the complacent bourgeois world, and its attendant values – modernity, egalitarianism, conformism, and humanitarianism. Like Nietzsche, Evola concluded that Christianity was a religion for the weak.¹

Not surprisingly, Evola immediately before World War I discovered kindred spirits in those young intellectuals who wrote for the journals *Leonardo*, *Lacerba*, and *La Voce*. Evola admired Giovanni Papini in particular, and agreed with Papini's emphasis on anarchic individualism, nihilism, and reaction against bourgeois values, positivism, the official moral order, and democracy.²

Action in World War I only heightened Evola's devotion to a destruction of the existing order. He expressed the intensity of his convictions through Dadaism, and swiftly became the leading proponent of the Dadaist movement in Italy. Though his artistic achievements during this period remain notable,³ he soon became disgusted with the encroaching commercialization and academization of this art form, and abandoned the movement in 1922.⁴

While retaining the radical anti-establishment and anti-bourgeois attitudes of Dadaism, Evola's philosophical journey tended to follow increasingly arcane

paths. He acquired a taste in the 1920s for cyclical models of civilization from Oswald Spengler,⁵ then turned toward a study of oriental philosophy, particularly Taoism, Tantra, Buddhism, and Vedism.⁶ Here at last Evola seemed to find certain eternal truths that had as yet escaped him. Hierarchy, caste, myth, ritual, heroism, asceticism, and mysticism became cornerstones of his later philosophical work.⁷ His appreciation for the Vedic religious and cultural values of the Aryan invaders of India would be especially relevant for the development of his spiritual racism a decade later.

Evola complemented his selective collection of eastern religious principles with equally important concepts gleaned from the writings of the French reactionary René Guénon, the Austrian occultist Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels, theosophism, and anthroposophism.⁸ Through a synthesis of these disparate components Evola created his “traditionalism” or “magical idealism.” The traditionalist paradigm constructed a cosmos that was divided into “two natures,” a world of being, and a world of becoming. This dualistic ontology owed much to Plato’s idealism.⁹ The “world of being” was a superior, eternal, absolute realm infused with a supra-rational occult force. This force imparted form and quality on the earthly realm of quantity, the “world of becoming.”¹⁰

When human societies were in harmony with the realm of being, they exhibited eternal qualities and values: hierarchy, monarchy, loyalty, honor, community, ethnocentrism, tradition, myth, Olympian classicism, religion, spiritualism, and intuition.¹¹ The ideal state in this case was an empire, resting on a hierarchical, caste-based social structure.¹² The monarch of such an empire presided over ruling castes which included warriors, men of action who fought sacred wars; and priests, ascetics who acted as the custodians of the divine and eternal truths emanating from the world of being.¹³ Myth, ritual, law, and caste were the ordering principles used by the warrior-priest elite to keep their pristine society free from the corrupting and degenerate forces emanating from the lower merchant and servile castes. Lower castes brought in their wake secularism, egalitarianism, individualism, and transience.¹⁴

Evola did not accept the idea of human progress. Based on the writings of Guénon and Oswald Spengler, Evola saw civilizations as cyclical in nature.¹⁵ The cycles were driven by a spiritual force.¹⁶ They proceeded through four human ages, as in Hesiod’s Gold, Silver, Bronze, and Iron Ages, or Hinduism’s Yuga (Satya or Krta, Treta, Dvapara, Kali). Each age is dominated by an elite that emerges from one of the basic hierarchical orders in descending order. The first, god-like Golden Age is represented by holy priest-kings of prehistory. The next phase, identified with warrior-kings, existed in Europe from the ancient Greek Heroic Age until the downfall of the *ancien régime* in France. The liberal-democratic revolutions of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century brought in the rule of the merchant caste, the haute bourgeoisie that formed a plutocratic oligarchy. Finally, socialist and communist revolutions had initiated the “Modern Age,” a dark time of democracy, the masses, and the “spirit of the herd.”¹⁷ This decrepit state would only be relieved through a cleansing apocalypse, which would set the cycle in motion once again and inaugurate a new

Golden Age.¹⁸ A new aristocracy, nourished on the ancient Aryan myths, would take its rightful place in society.¹⁹

The ages of a civilization were gendered. The noble stages were masculine. Thus, following Otto Weininger, Evola claimed that these stages harmonized with the hierarchical, heroic, warlike, decisive and classical values that characterized men. The later, degenerate phases were feminine. Societies in these phases indulged in a lust of promiscuity, communism, natural rights, and general equality that were characteristic of women.²⁰

In the first two tradition-oriented cycles, each individual had an innate relationship to the “principle of quality,” which Evola called the person’s “fidelity.” Individuals used their will to power to discover their fidelity. Their fidelity dictated their proper position in the social caste. Members of the higher castes had greater fidelity to the realm of quality, the supra-rational state of being.²¹

The inequalities between people that were manifested through the caste system were not simply biological, but were also psychological and spiritual.²² Body, soul, and spirit existed in a sort of trinity that made up the human being. The physical, material principle was understood through biology and nature. It was the least significant element of the human entity. Spirit was heroic and virile, the most exalted element of being. It was the most direct link with the realm of quality. Body and spirit were connected via the soul.²³ The soul formed the individual’s character, sensibilities, natural inclinations, “style” of action and reaction, and attitude in the face of one’s own experiences.²⁴ Only the elite castes exhibited the proper balance between body–soul–spirit.²⁵

Much of Evola’s philosophy was developed during the rise and consolidation of the fascist regime. He was ambivalent about fascism. On one hand, he applauded its traditionalist orientation on many issues, its acceptance of heroism and hierarchy as guiding principles, its statism and corporative organization, and its anti-bourgeois, anti-American, and anti-Marxist rhetoric. Evola was impressed by the *Duce’s* goal of remaking the Italian people into hardened warriors with ancient Roman ideals.²⁶ Yet he criticized many of fascism’s most basic aspects: the cult of the *Duce*, the affiliation with the masses, and the political party structure. Nor was he pleased with its nationalism, arrivism, willingness to compromise, leftist tendencies, acceptance of the Catholic Church, or diminution of the role of the monarchy.²⁷ These criticisms were expressed in Evola’s journal *Torre*, a forum for advocating a more radical, elitist fascism. Though the journal alienated fascist moderates, it gained the favorable notice of Giovanni Preziosi, who invited Evola to begin publishing in *La Vita Italiana* in 1931.²⁸ Preziosi introduced Evola to Roberto Farinacci, who sympathized with Evola’s pro-Nazi views. Evola would occasionally publish a column entitled “Diorama filosofico” in Farinacci’s paper from 1934 until the collapse of the regime during the war.²⁹

Though Evola’s ties to the fascist regime grew over time, he nevertheless felt more at home among the German reactionaries. He saw Adolf Hitler, Nazism, and the SS as more nearly embodying his ideas than any of their counterparts in Italy.³⁰ In particular, Evola had an “almost total adherence” to the principles of the SS and an “almost servile admiration” for Himmler, whom he knew personally.³¹

It was apparently through the Germans that Evola first became interested in the advantages one could derive from utilizing racism as an auxiliary to his philosophical system. Evola seems to have first expressed his thoughts about racism when he read Alfred Rosenberg's *The Myth of the 20th Century*, in 1931.³² Evola was appalled at the Nazi's excessive reliance on a biological materialistic interpretation of racism.³³ The disparity between body and spirit as seen by Rosenberg did not exist for Evola. For Evola, the physical reflected the spiritual.³⁴ Thus, Evola probably adopted racism because it allowed him to better express on the physical level several of his fundamental transcendental concepts: tradition, communal identity, inequality, and the predominance of spiritual values. He apparently had no trouble accepting the common European deprecation of blacks and Jews as dangerous and troublesome racial vermin; the Jewish stereotype was particularly convenient as a symbol of modernism.³⁵ Race also served as a vehicle for the transmission of ancient Aryan values. As Evola explained it, "racism conceives and valorizes the individual as a function of a given community either in space – as a race of living individuals – or in time, as a unity of race, of tradition, of blood."³⁶

Given this, Evola would react all the more negatively to the biological racist clique in Germany, led by such racial scientists as Walter Gross, Eugen Fischer, and others. Too much had been made of eugenics, demography, and the other physical manifestations of race.³⁷ This faction neglected the spiritual element of race that Evola considered the most important element in his hierarchy of being. In March 1939 Evola opined in "Diorama" that the Germans should infuse their own racism with Italian spiritual racial elements, thereby giving Nazi racism "reference points that are superior to the various, uncertain myths" stemming from biological racism that the Germans were fond of indulging in.³⁸

This is not to imply that Evola made no use of German sources for his racist ideology. Far from it. Like all Italian Nordicists, Evola relied heavily on German models, though certainly he showed a greater degree of creativity than did most others. Evola made use of the standard German anthropological accounts compiled by Hans Günther, Fritz Lenz, and others in his physical descriptions of the races. But for his spiritual interpretation of the different racial psychologies, he found the work of Ludwig Ferdinand Clauss invaluable. Originally a student of Edmund Husserl, Clauss eventually became a popular German writer on race.³⁹ His books *Die Nordische Seele* (*The Nordic Soul*) and *Rasse und Seele* (*Race and Soul*) went through numerous editions in Germany. Clauss, like Evola, believed that physical race and spiritual race could diverge in an individual of mixed parentage. Though Clauss was particularly interested in studying the "Nordic soul," he did not believe that races could be placed in hierarchies, since each race had its own scale of values.⁴⁰ The Nazis did not appreciate Clauss's apparent even-handedness, and hounded him from his professional positions in Germany.⁴¹ Evola was also strongly influenced by Johann Jakob Bachofen, a nineteenth-century Swiss historian who utilized "evidence" from myths, legends, and symbols to reconstruct a history of the prehistoric "masculine" and "feminine" civilizations that struggled for control of the Mediterranean basin.⁴²

Evola's published work on race increased steadily from 1934. That year Evola wrote an article, "Responsibilità di dirsi ariani," which stressed the need to define Aryan in spiritual and ethical terms, and be dedicated to the responsibilities of the Aryan identity. He stressed that the term "Aryan" meant nothing if it was interpreted to mean only "not Jewish or colored."⁴³ The article claimed that "heredity is destiny"; that the races remain essentially pure; that there was in fact a racial hierarchy; and that miscegenation does not produce new races.⁴⁴ The next year Evola's article "Razza e cultura" appeared in *Rassegna italiana*. It emphasized the power and pre-eminence of the "formative idea" with respect to the simple biological and ethnic elements. The article gained the approval of the *Duce* himself, if we are to believe Evola's own account.⁴⁵ Several years later, in 1937, the editors of Hoepli asked Evola to write a book on the history of racism (*Il mito del sangue*). While researching the book, Evola's own racial ideas took on definitive form.⁴⁶

Naturally one might wonder why Evola wasn't chosen as the harbinger of the forthcoming Italian racial campaign. We can conjecture that Evola's alignment with the radical faction of fascism (which includes Preziosi and Farinacci) did not endear him to the *Duce* at this time. Mussolini's obvious desire to control the racial campaign would have conflicted with Evola's tendency toward reactionary free-thinking. There was also a clear proclivity on the part of Mussolini to follow the biological determinist line of thinking at the time. Though it was relatively short-lived, and more or less permanently abandoned in early 1939, it still precluded Evola from playing a prominent role in formulating early official racist doctrine.⁴⁷

Furthermore, we should mention that Evola was not very well received by most Nazi officials, regardless of how warm his own feelings about the Nazi regime may have been. Evola spent a considerable amount of time in Germany in 1937 and 1938, and gave a series of lectures to the German-Italian Society on June 13, 20, and 27, 1938. The Nazi Ahnenerbe (Ancestral Heritage Office) reported that his lectures were not well received – many considered his ideas to be pure "fantasy" which ignored "historical facts."⁴⁸

Evola was quite unimpressed with the Manifesto of the Racial Scientists after it was issued in July 1938. He described it as a "hasty and superficial" document, flawed by its "purely biological" definition of racism and its "absurd" references to a pure Italian race. Nor did it show much precision in its definition of "Aryan," Evola complained.⁴⁹

Evola did not rush to correct the mistakes of the Manifesto. Though he published an enormous number of articles about race in such journals as *La Difesa della Razza*, *Il Regime Fascista*, and *La Vita Italiana*, his racial masterpiece, *Sintesi della dottrina della razza*, was not published until January 1941.

Based on the material expressed in the *Sintesi* as well as his other writings, we may now examine Evola's racial world. Evola defined race as a

composition more or less stable and homogeneous, that with the concurrence of various factors has given place to a certain common type based in part on anthropology, in part on an affinity of feeling and behavior, and in part on a community of destiny.

Pure races did not exist physically, but were rather an ideal toward which the racial spirit strove.⁵⁰

Evola accepted a monogenist explanation for races, though he entirely rejected Darwinian evolutionary theory and Mendelian genetics.⁵¹ His objections came from a number of different angles, often reminiscent of creationist arguments offered by a later generation. For one, Evola held that the races did not change over time. Spiritually superior races had never displayed a “bestial barbarism” as the evolutionists claimed. Rather, they were as spiritually developed as they were in Evola’s day.⁵² More primitive hominoids, Evola conjectured, were simply a collateral species distantly related to humans.⁵³ Another of Evola’s objections rested on the fact that the evolutionists could still not explain how humans could have evolved their spirit and soul from lower animals who did not possess these faculties.⁵⁴ Finally, Evola could not accede to the idea that the environment somehow influences human development. “Rather, racism asserts hereditary in place of environment. [Racial] differences are internal and essential, conditioned by heredity,” Evola wrote. To claim otherwise was to accept Marxist and humanist conceptions of human history, an assertion that could not have won much favor with Giovanni Marro or other environmental racists of his ilk.⁵⁵

Evola’s rejection of scientific positivism allowed him to devise a free-wheeling explanation of racial development and heredity that made use of a very selective interpretation of human genetics.⁵⁶ Evola’s genetics was an uneasy amalgamation of anti-Darwinian notions of genetic mutation and heredity, those Mendelian laws that proved useful, and miscellaneous ancient Aryan mythology. Evola rejected Darwinian evolution as a “foolish” attempt to resurrect “vitalism” and the Aristotelian concept of “entelechy.”⁵⁷

Pure Mendelian genetics did not fare much better. Evola saw Mendel’s laws as an attempt to chain life to an absolute determinism, thus contradicting the research of Eugen Fischer and others who developed the concept of “idiovariation.” Idiovariation, or internal variation, was a sort of genetic self-mutation that transmitted itself through the idioplasma to the gametes, and so was hereditary. Idiovariations caused the formation of the different races in remote prehistory, and continued to transform, improve, or degrade races.⁵⁸ The driving force behind idiovariation was a mysterious “superbiological element” that guided racial development and even the creation of new races, such as the American “Yankees.”⁵⁹ Psychological changes in the organism could also influence idiovariations.⁶⁰ Since these psychological changes were induced by environmental factors, we seem to arrive once again at an environmental explanation for racial development.

Evola was willing to accept the Mendelian concept of dominant and recessive genes, and the manifestation of the dominant phenotype even in the heterozygous genotype.⁶¹ But he decided, based on ancient Aryan sources, that the male genes usually dominated the female genes.⁶² This inference was supposedly supported through the scientific observation of inter-racial crossings in humans. Yet, Evola feared that male genes could in fact be overwhelmed by female forces, causing the female characteristics to dominate, and hence lead to degeneration.⁶³ Evola offered a convoluted description of the process that does little to elucidate the idea:

The true woman ... should be presented as something of a danger, as a foreign principle that attracts, insinuates, and calls forth an interior reaction [from men] ... either of a revival, a reaffirmation and vivification, or a dissolution and an abasement. In the first case, the men maintain their superiority through their dominant genes; in the second case, in a more or less hidden way, degeneration creeps in, at least internally, into this race; uncontrollable forces will overrun the process of heredity, and the protection of the races becomes problematical, until it reaches the limit, meaning to say the return, in a new form, of the spirit and the promiscuity of the gynecocratic civilizations characteristic of the anti-Nordic races or of the degeneration of the Nordic race.⁶⁴

Evola's idea of "idiovariation" did allow him to diverge from a purely biological conception of race. Sentiment, "idea-forces," "formative energies," and other mystical influences could act on the race through idiovariation.⁶⁵ For Evola:

Race ... is something very different from that which biology and anthropology used to discuss. Our racism goes well beyond the limits of such disciplines that, at least in their most current formulations, infused with a positivist and scientific spirit, essentially stand in clear contrast with the true racist idea. True racism, more than a special discipline, is a *mentality*.⁶⁶

Evola combined idiovariation with the consequences of historical encounters between different races to produce an omnipotent racial hermeneutics. For example, he claimed that new races were created through the reification of the racial sentiments of a people. This began when ideals, attitudes, inclinations, sensibilities, racial "myths," and other intense unifying emotions affected a group's psychological life. These myths, feelings, and emotions manifested themselves in the world of becoming through their ability to cause their adherents to act:

By saying myth we do not intend a simple fiction, an arbitrary part of fantasy, but rather an idea which principally traces its persuasive force from non-rational elements, an idea whose worth lies in the suggestive force condensed in it and therefore for its capacity to translate itself, in the end, into action. ... The summation of single elements and of single causes are not enough by themselves to explain the mysterious force of a passion. In the same way, the "Myth" transcends as well what one can call the various elements, either scientific, or philosophical, or historical, of which it is composed, from which it arises or with which it pretends to justify itself. And it is for this [reason] that the analysis of a myth working from a cold rational critical perspective leads to little. It [the rational analysis] will never reach the most profound nucleus, that is to say the intimate necessity, the fact of feeling that gives sustenance and force to the myth itself.⁶⁷

Through idiovariations, these feelings were manifested racially:

An idea, given that it acts with sufficient intensity and continuity in a given historical climate and in a given collectivity, finishes by giving way to a “racial soul,” and, with the persistence of the action, can create in the generations that immediately follow a new type of common physique, which can be considered, from a certain point of view, as a new race.⁶⁸

Conveniently, Evola claimed that such a process was then occurring in fascist Italy. Because of the new heroic climate and competitive tension permeating fascist life, concomitant with fascist mysticism, anti-sentimentality, and hardness of character, the Italian people were undergoing profound racial transformation. The new fascist man of the younger generation was distinctly closer to the ancient Aryan–Roman type, according to Evola, than were his parents.⁶⁹ Evola called the new race, ingratiatingly, the fascist or “Mussolinian” race.⁷⁰ As we have discussed, this elaborate theoretical explanation of the racial transformation then supposedly occurring in Italy greatly appealed to Mussolini, who fervently hoped that he could effect such change.⁷¹

Besides the effects of idiovariations, historical change could also occur through the interaction of different races. Combining his pseudo-Hegelian “superbiological force” with a racial interpretation of history that owed much to Gobineau and Chamberlain, Evola claimed that civilizations rose and fell in part because of the effects of contact, conflict, and miscegenation between different races.⁷²

Race was such an all-encompassing phenomenon for Evola that he considered it as a vehicle to immortality, much as did the Nazis:

[We] dissolve [ourselves] in the vital mix of the race, in the collective and terrestrial collectivity of blood and heredity, only in this way surviving – in a very relative sense of the word – the destruction of our physical individuality, and transmitting to others the task [of improving the race].⁷³

Evola’s infusion of his body–soul–spirit trinity with racial overtones was one of the most characteristic aspects of his racial ideology. The racial element became fundamental to Evola’s philosophy by the late 1930s. Following typical theosophical models, Evola claimed that each individual actually had two distinct heredities – the first was spiritual and subterranean; the second was historical and terrestrial. The spiritual and racial aspects of a person existed before their physical existence on earth. Nevertheless, body, soul, and spirit were all expressions of the same “formative energy,” though on different planes.⁷⁴ Thus the physical body reflected one’s spiritual identity and personality.⁷⁵ Even bodily movements, gestures, and facial expressions were hereditary expressions of the soul.⁷⁶ Indeed, according to Evola,

Race, here, exists in the “soul,” before its physical, anthropological and biological expression. This interior race acts creatively on a given body: it seeks to reduce it to a continually more adequate instrument of expression

and almost into a mirror. When it succeeds, one has – according to this racial theory – the true “racially pure” type.⁷⁷

As such, each person had a hierarchy of racial components that were equivalent to the material–spiritual hierarchy that had long been present in his work.⁷⁸ The *least* important (the “first level” of race) was their physical being, which as we have shown merely reflected the higher racial elements of body and spirit. Indeed, Evola stressed that we inherit only our genotype, not our phenotype.⁷⁹ Inferior races were marked by a particularly strong physical identity.⁸⁰

The racial soul occupied the “second level” of race. The racial soul dictated one’s character, way of understanding the world, and interpretation of symbols. The racial soul caused one to act, think, and feel in a particular way or “style.”⁸¹

The racial spirit constituted the highest (third) level of race.⁸² Racial spirit transcended the material world and interfaced with the realm of being through philosophy, myths, symbols, and religion.⁸³ These abstract principles were expressed in such varied cultural productions as the race’s epistemology, world-view, traditions, art, politics, costume, ethics, ancestral laws, language, and even consciousness itself.⁸⁴ For example, Evola maintained that there was an unmistakable Aryan science, a Jewish science, and so on.⁸⁵ The superior races were also the most spiritual.⁸⁶

Though each race had its own set of values, the value structures and cultural productions of the most superior races surpassed all others qualitatively, and so had an unmistakable universal appeal.⁸⁷ These super-races had given the world civilization. They dominated and directed history, and the lesser races could merely imitate their exalted culture without contributing to it. The higher races usually had a past filled with tales of divine origins and ancient heroes, thus symbolizing their special link with the world of being.⁸⁸

The counterbalance of body and spirit, physical reality and metaphysical reality, life and superlife, was a product of the “heroic and ascetic tension” that was the “central and essential element” for the individual’s reawakening, liberation, and reaffirmation of himself.⁸⁹ This august state of spiritual tension was fostered by an environment replete with spiritual forces and heroic vocations common among the higher races.⁹⁰ Thus superior races manifested a perfect equilibrium between body, soul, and spirit.⁹¹ Indeed, such a quintessential state was only attained by a select few in any society. Others might belong in a fundamental sense to a superior race, but their physical form might allow for only an incomplete expression of their spirit.⁹² To protect this racial vanguard from contamination even by the inferior members of its own race, a caste social structure was necessary.⁹³ Following the Vedic tradition, Evola maintained that those individuals who attained perfect harmony freed their personality for union with the divine.⁹⁴

The destruction of this counterbalance, through miscegenation or the loss of spirituality through modernization and democratization, would cause racial degeneration.⁹⁵ Miscegenation would destroy the balance between the physical, spiritual, and personality elements in a race, and thereby initiate a racial decline.⁹⁶ Because of miscegenation, an individual might have a body characteristic of one

race, the soul of another, and the spirit of yet another.⁹⁷ Since the body joined the soul to the material world, an inadequate body (inherited from another race) resulted in a decoupling of this vital link. The result was likely to be semi-hysterical people who could no longer find themselves, for whom “no one is at home” in the facetious sense of the phrase.⁹⁸ The physical elements of a superior race might even have been altered simply by sexual contact with an inferior race. Hence, Evola reported that a white woman who engaged in sexual relations with black men, and then went on to get pregnant by a white man, might still have a black baby.⁹⁹ Thus, a strong sense of racial identity was essential if a superior race was to retain its relative purity.¹⁰⁰

Racial decline could also be brought about by the loss of “spiritual tension” discussed above.¹⁰¹ This process, which Evola termed “endovariation,” would cause a dissolution of the racial spirit, a sort of involution.¹⁰² If the process were driven to its extreme, the individual would become only an empty shell, perhaps physically perfect, but nevertheless particularly vulnerable to the corruption of miscegenation. From this would rapidly follow the expected debilitating consequences.¹⁰³

Paradoxically, miscegenation between closely related races could have beneficial effects. This might happen in one of two ways. In one possibility, inspired by Houston Chamberlain, a dominant race polluted through miscegenation with an inferior race might repurify itself with substantial genetic infusions from a related superior race.¹⁰⁴ In the other case, the addition of new blood from a related race might revivify the spiritual tension necessary to maintain the organization of the racial components.¹⁰⁵

Based in part on his study of Clauss, Bachofen, other spiritual racists, and oriental philosophy, Evola conceived of an exceedingly elaborate and bizarre racial classification scheme based on the nature of the racial spirit. These spiritual races were named after various Greek gods and forces that alluded to their nature. In Evola’s mythology, there were two fundamental races that struggled for dominance of the world: the Solar or Hyperboreal race, and the Lunar or Telluric race.

The Solar race was masculine and patriarchal, active but calm, dominating, precise, absolute, centralizing, heroic, “Uranic” and “Olympic” in nature. Its members had a superiority that directly and irresistibly commanded respect, which simultaneously awakened both terror and veneration.¹⁰⁶

The Lunar or “Telluric” race was characterized by feminine and matriarchal tendencies, passivity, diffusion, pantheism, subterranean powers, ecstasism, and promiscuity.¹⁰⁷ Telluric races tended to be particularly materialistic, gregarious, fatalistic, atavistic, nature-oriented, immediate, instinctive, irrational, impulsive, explosive, fickle, and intense or gloomy, though not tragic. They tended to gravitate toward the liberated, wild forces of a decaying civilization. Typical physical races that were highly Telluric included the “Atlantic Aryans” of the East (otherwise known as Alpine–Orientals, such as the Eastern Balts), Etruscans, Minoans, and above all the Jews.¹⁰⁸

Each primary spiritual race had a variety of secondary offshoots. A Solar race might tend to have an Amazonian spirit, a corruption of their spiritual purity by

Telluric forces. Thus, Amazonian races indulged in materialistic desires. Titanistic races, on the other hand, were Solar races showing a high degree of instinct, activity, and tendency towards transcendentalism.¹⁰⁹ Dionysiac races were Solar, though deriving a strongly romantic, passionate and sensuous aspect from Telluric contamination. Dionysists found themselves in the destruction of form and finity. Both the English and the German physical races tended towards Dionysism.¹¹⁰

Aphroditic races were a branch of the Telluric race. Aphroditics displayed an extreme refinement of material life and aesthetic sense, and love of art and beauty. Yet their search for pleasure and sensation was united to a nihilistic joy of destruction and mortality. They tended to be passive and inconsistent, and dominated by women. The Celtic physical race, according to Evola, was especially aphroditic.¹¹¹

Evola considered the superior Hyperboreal race to have been the ancestor to the Aryan races of his day.¹¹² The Hyperboreals, he wrote, were Olympian, heroic, ascetic, sacerdotal, calm, dominating, sovereign, impassive, objective, distant, and aggressive. They suppressed their instinctive and passionate currents, thus preventing the possibility of miscegenation with inferiors.¹¹³ They also possessed the divine ability to resurrect themselves through spiritual renewal after periodic episodes of decline, thus initiating a new cycle of civilization.¹¹⁴

The Hyperboreal race descended from the frozen North to Eurasia in three waves. The first wave gave rise to the oldest branch, the Aryan Indians. The second wave, the Aryan–Atlantic or Nordic–Atlantic race, originally established itself in Atlantis (*sic!*), before permanently settling around the Northern Mediterranean basin. The third and most recent wave (the Nordics) settled in Northern Europe, including present-day Germany and Northern Italy.¹¹⁵

Evola's views on German racial identity were not entirely flattering, which perhaps increased Mussolini's enthusiasm for Evolian racism but failed to win Evola support from the most influential German racists. Evola did believe that the Nordic Germans were the purest physical descendants of the Hyperboreal race, due to their relatively recent arrival in Europe. Their longer residency in the frozen North encouraged a certain materialism, inventiveness, constancy, resistance, courage, and strength of character in the Nordic Germans. But they also experienced an idiovariative degeneration, causing an atrophy and involution of their spiritual side. This resulted in a loss of spiritual transcendence, and an arid and mechanistic soul: traits which ruptured the spiritual tension necessary for perfection.¹¹⁶ In consequence, the German invaders of the Roman Empire, enchanted by Byzantine decadence, easily converted to the inferior religion of Christianity.¹¹⁷ In the twentieth century, the Dutch and Scandinavians best represented the spiritual decadence of the Nordic Germanic peoples.¹¹⁸ The inevitable result of continued spiritual decadence in this manner was the disappearance of the Nordic race.¹¹⁹

We should note here that Evola, like most early twentieth-century European racists, recognized that the Italians and Germans, among others, were really amalgamations of different subraces. Both the Germans and the Italians had Nordic and Mediterranean racial elements, Evola admitted, though Nordic blood

predominated in Germany and Mediterranean blood in Southern Italy. Furthermore, according to Evola the German people also contained significant Baltic–Oriental admixtures, and even some Jewish blood!¹²⁰

While for Evola the Nordics came in for criticism, the Mediterraneans fared far worse. The Mediterranean man, Evola claimed, had a soul that was intense, explosive, and childlike, as well as fickle and chained to the moment. Mediterranean life was aflame with an irresistible and unattenuated desire for a life of passion. They displayed intuition and the momentary flash of intellectual genius. But they lacked the equilibrated and measured psyche so often praised by Evola. They thrived on external validation, and were generally extroverts. Thus they tended to have an “almost theatrical” sense of honor, and took offense too easily. They were stereotypically portrayed as a happy, enthusiastic, and optimistic people, especially in the countryside. Yet in reality they knew sudden bouts of depression, and had hidden interior gloomy and disconsolate perspectives, causing them to flee in horror from every episode of isolation, back to the realm of noisy sociability.¹²¹

The Italians were supposedly a mix of the Nordic, Falic, Dinaric, Mediterranean, and Pelasgic races. All of these races were considered Aryan; thus the Italians were themselves purely Aryan.¹²² Evola made it clear that he considered the first three races (which were also prevalent in Germany) as superior to the last two, which were older branches of the Aryan race from the second wave of invasions.¹²³ All things considered, Evola concluded, the Italians were dominated by their Nordic blood, and should be considered as a Nordic Aryan or (in their case) Ario-Roman race.¹²⁴ True, Evola admitted, the Mediterranean strain in the Italian people made them rather sentimental relative to the Germans, and the Italians always benefited from a strengthening of their Nordic spirit.¹²⁵

It is quite apparent that Evola had been offended by the German tendency to forget, even after the creation of the Axis, that the Italians were fellow Aryans. He sternly rebuked such lapses in racial political correctness, which he hoped would be laid to rest:

We have now clearly put into focus this point [that the Italians were a Nordic Aryan people of a greater antiquity than were the Germans] and furthermore highlighted the fact that the Italian people have the dolicocephalic type skull and anatomical structure similar to the blond type diffused in the Northern regions of Europe. The topic of a Roman or “Nordic” Italian element is not meant to hide anything but means a title of nobility that one must not allow to be easily contested in comparison with other nations, especially when it relates to their origin, in the first place, and their talents, in the second place. It has therefore been conclusively affirmed that the direction of the Italian race must be Nordic–Aryan even if, to obviate entirely any equivocation, it would perhaps be better to use the expression of Aryan–Roman race to characterize the central and valid element of the Italian people and distinguish them from the other branches of the same family.¹²⁶

This passage certainly must have been warmly appreciated by Mussolini.

Everywhere he examined, Evola found similarities between the Germans and the Italians. Both peoples had Nordic antecedents, and showed fundamental anatomical similarities. Furthermore, both kindred nations shared basic Aryan spiritual values, such as super-rationality, heroism, and spirituality. The Germans and the ancient Romans, in particular, had many traits in common: sobriety, severity, measuredness, dignity, discipline, and order.¹²⁷ Even the Latin language was closer in articulation and syntax to German than it was to the other Romance languages.¹²⁸ Both races had a “spiritual nostalgia” for the other.¹²⁹ Nevertheless, both now suffered from a certain cultural and biological degeneration caused by racial pollution.¹³⁰

Evola’s reconstruction of Italian history, meant to stress the integral bonds between Germans and Italians, followed typical Nordic models, peppered with his own unique twists. Already at the dawn of time, Evola wrote, Italian civilization was a degenerate descendant of the more spectacular Nordic–Occidental culture. Due to contamination from the indigenous non-Aryan peoples of Italy, most Italians revealed Demetric, Amazonian, Telluric, or Dionystic tendencies. Yet here and there in Italy remained cultural nuclei that “miraculously” remained intact and were illuminated by sudden revivals of heroism or other solar qualities. These were usually found among the upper classes or in adherents to the mystery religions.¹³¹

Naturally, Evola counted the ancient Roman civilization foremost among these episodic revival periods. The Romans, a Latin people, were unquestionably Nordic Aryans (this is “incontestable” to any “competent person,” Evola exclaimed).¹³² The early pre-Cato period of Roman history most excited Evola’s admiration. The Romans of that time demonstrated a genius and creativity that would later be found wanting. The early Romans, Evola noted, were more like the later Germans than they were the later Romans or the Byzantines.¹³³

Like his German colleagues, Evola believed that the Romans degenerated as they mixed with the Semitized Mediterraneans of the Empire.¹³⁴ The degenerative cycle was interrupted when the invading Germans reinvigorated the decadent Romans through miscegenation, “often with particularly fecund effects.”¹³⁵ Modern Italians were the descendants of these Aryan Romans and the Nordic German invaders.¹³⁶

A minor revival occurred during the Middle Ages. This was centered in the feudal aristocracy of the Holy Roman Empire in Italy, especially those advocates of the Ghibelline movement and Frederick I. Here the “supranational and sacred principle” of an ordered, hierarchical and traditional empire conserved a “notable measure” of the Nordic Aryan values.¹³⁷

Thereafter, Italian history to Evola seems to have been caught in one long downward spiral.¹³⁸ The medieval Italian communes (the Guelphs) were a sort of bourgeois antithesis of his utopian medieval empire. Even the modern episodes of Italian history most often praised by Italian racists were scorned by Evola. The Renaissance, he believed, was a sham. It instituted such horrors as the Modern Age, individualism, and superficial classicism. The Risorgimento, although patriotic,

was tainted by Masonism, Jacobism, and Liberalism. Even World War I, the high point of modern Italian glory to the fascists, was flawed according to Evola since the Italians fought in the war on the wrong side – the Central Powers had been the champions of the virtues of hierarchy, aristocracy, tradition, and racism. Nevertheless, the Great War had at least reawakened the Italian people, and restored their sense of heroism. These virtues were then fostered and strengthened by the ensuing fascist regime.¹³⁹

Evola saw two serious threats in particular to the Italian revival: women and Jews. Women were used to playing with men, threatening their masculinity by emphasizing sexuality and sentimentality. They were huntresses, luring men into their constrictive grasp by displaying their sexual desirability. “Her interior life ... exhausts itself in sexual preoccupations and all that could serve to ‘look’ good and attract men into her orbit.”¹⁴⁰ To prevent the degenerative effects such games have on the masculine qualities of Italian culture, Evola exhorted women to become more spontaneous, clear, and sincere. Men must encourage women in this transformation, especially by letting them know that “love and sex can have only a subordinate part in a life based on the Nordic Aryan principle.”¹⁴¹ Women were not to act masculine nor become “emancipated,” but should accept relationships that were “sincere, direct, and organic ... relationships that naturally cannot be egalitarian, but a meeting and a balance of two different ways of being.”¹⁴²

Jews represented the second serious threat to the fascist revival. The Jewish soul, Evola thought, was the antithesis of the Solar soul. The Jews were not a true race, but combined all of the negative elements of the Telluric, Dionystic, Aphroditic, and Lunar races. They were steeped in materialism, cosmopolitanism, anti-racism, and positivism: qualities that were anathema to the Aryan Italian soul. Yet the Jews had succeeded, in the preceding era of Aryan decadence, in transferring these vices to the Aryans, and thereby “Judacizing” many of them.¹⁴³

As the Jew has succeeded to make himself important in non-Jewish civilization, the non-Jew has often taken on the mentality and mode of being that was originally Jewish. Thus, as things stand, one sees the practical utility of racism in the second degree. It permits anti-Semitism to be coherent, complete, impartial, giving to it the means to identify and combat the Jewish mentality even where it manifests itself without a direct relation to Jewish blood, in individuals Judacized in their soul and in their way of being and of acting, even though they might physically be from one of the races derived from the Nordic Aryan branch.¹⁴⁴

Evola looked to fascism to save the Aryan Italians from these menaces. The new fascist race would be instinctively adverse to miscegenation. Through war and a dose of “barbaric character and iconoclasm,” they would be toughened up, reminiscent of their ancient Roman forebears. War in particular would provide for a cathartic reawakening of the martial spirit in Italy.¹⁴⁵ No longer would Italy be thought of as the land of “mandolins” and of *O Sole mio*, the “tarantella” and “moonlit nights in gondolas,” but a heroic land of goose-stepping legions.¹⁴⁶

Evola knew that his complex racial theory and utopian visions were not shared by all of the Italian racist intelligentsia. Indeed, his failure to make common cause with those racial ideologies most like his own undoubtedly dampened his own effectiveness. For example, he considered the ideas of Giulio Cogni, who was in actuality quite close to Evola,¹⁴⁷ as a feminized, “Demetrical–Lunar” and “Amazonian” version of an otherwise constructive racial ideology.¹⁴⁸ Initially, Evola functioned in a sort of alliance with the biological Nordacists. He was a frequent contributor to *La Difesa della Razza*, for example. Yet the groups were simply ignoring some fundamental differences between their ideologies. Evola rejected the scientism and rationalism that were part of an inescapable heritage for the biological racists. He felt that their concentration on the material body, eugenics, and physical improvements was superficial. On the other hand, Evola’s mysticism and spirituality was “so much gibberish” to them.¹⁴⁹ As we shall see, tensions between the two camps mounted as Evola rose in prominence during the war years, leading to an irreparable rift between the two camps.

Naturally, Evola saw even less to recommend itself in the Mediterranean version of Italian identity. Indeed, he praised the Manifesto of the Racial Scientists as exploding two dangerous myths “dear to certain of our intellectual and aesthetic circles of yesterday”: the Mediterranean and the Latin myths.¹⁵⁰ The Mediterranean myth Evola directly attributed to the work of Giuseppe Sergi.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, Evola found Sergi’s anatomical association of the Europeans with the Africans particularly “dangerous.”¹⁵² Evola derided Sergi’s contemporary followers, the older generation too set in their ways to accept his new racism. Rather, they continued to languish in the outdated notions of a common “Latin” culture belonging to a number of European nations. They continued to evince a deep suspicion that the more “modern” and Aryan racism was nothing more than a German importation.¹⁵³ Given that the Mediterraneanists still controlled so much of the educational system, Evola decided to address his work *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale* particularly to educators.¹⁵⁴

Evola published his *Sintesi* just before the spiritual Nordacists began their precipitous rise to prominence in the fascist government. For reasons that are still unclear but no doubt meaningful, Sabato Visco was replaced on May 26, 1941 by Alberto Luchini, becoming Director of the Office of Studies and Propaganda on Race at the Ministry of Popular Culture.¹⁵⁵ Luchini was an admirer of Evola, a believer in the occult, and a formidable opponent of Mediterraneanism. We can glean some idea of Luchini’s approach to racism from an article he published in *Gerarchia* in May 1942. He believed that the spirit, through the soul, created its physical manifestation in the form of the body. Thus, “race ... for us, is first of all a spiritual and psychic reality, and, secondarily, physical.” Physically ugly races had a deformed racial spirit. Luchini claimed that race was a potentiality, which created or realized itself, “as J. Evola explains.”¹⁵⁶ One instance of the sort of projects carried out by the Racial Office under Luchini is particularly illustrative. In August 1942, Luchini asked Lidio Cipriani to investigate the stories of the metaphysical abilities of the islanders of Naxos. Luchini had learned from the

journal *Ricerca Psichica* that the people of Korinos “are gifted with supernatural faculties,” and had predicted the Italo-Ethiopian War some years in advance.¹⁵⁷

Luchini was also a more active anti-Semite than had been his predecessor. Luchini co-authored (along with Evola, Massimo Scaligero, Preziosi, and others) the pamphlet “The Jews wanted the War” (“Gli Ebrei hanno voluto la guerra”), and supervised the establishment of the Center for the Study of the Jewish Problem in Florence in early 1942.

Besides Luchini, we should count among the pro-Evolian faction also the old racist war horses, Giovanni Preziosi and Roberto Farinacci, now converted from championing a biological emphasis to racial theory to Evolian spiritualism.¹⁵⁸ This spiritualist alliance sought radicalization, spiritualization, and Nordicization of Italian racial policies. Basing their campaign on Evolian philosophy, they sought a revision of the biological-oriented Manifesto in a spiritualist direction, the reorganization of racial policy by creating one unified office to deal with racial matters, the acceptance of Lamarckian inheritance; and a massive introduction of racial studies into the university curriculum.¹⁵⁹

The inclusion of Preziosi and Farinacci into the spiritualist alliance might suggest that Evola’s rise to prominence had much to do with the German alliance. Indeed, Farinacci was interested in racism only in so far as it furthered his pro-German political views. As he wrote to Mussolini when the racial campaign began,

To tell you frankly what I think, the racial problem, seen from the anthropological point of view, has never persuaded me. It is an exquisitely political problem; I am once again convinced that when the scientists want to render a political service, they compromise any problem.

On the philosophic and scientific terrain one can always discuss, on the political terrain, where there are reasons of state, one acts and one conquers.¹⁶⁰

Almost immediately after Luchini acceded to the directorship of the Racial Office, Evola was off on a speaking tour of Germany. Evola was in Germany from May to June, and spoke to groups in Munich, Berlin, Frankfurt, and other cities. He also participated in an anti-Semitic conference at Erfurt.¹⁶¹ The German press reported on May 8 that Evola spoke at the Munich Kuenstlerhaus on “The Aryan–Roman Decision of Fascist Italy.” Evola stressed his interpretation of Italian fascism in this revealing lecture. He told his audience that when Italy made the decision to accept racism, it moved to recognize the community of blood between Italy and Germany and acknowledged Italy’s Nordic Aryan spirit at the expense of the “Latin Mediterranean myth”:

This myth of a Latin community and of a common Mediterranean race is an ideology of intellectuals and literati. Against this the conference emphasized that Latinità is simply superficial, a veneer that covers the most profound differences in blood and spirit. Latinità does not gather together the truly creative forces of the people. Baron EVOLA has thus demonstrated most

precisely that the true representatives of the state and the culture of ancient Rome were people of the Nordic race. Also in the Middle Ages and the modern epoch the most important element of the Italian race was the Nordic component. Fascism thus professes itself to be a follower of this Nordic–Aryan or Nordic–Roman creative element. From this the result is a complete turnaround in the appraisal of Italo-Roman history. For example the aesthetics praised as classical culture must be rejected as the result of racial miscegenation.¹⁶²

Other newspapers emphasized Evola's rejection of the Italian Mediterranean tradition and those who still dared adhere to it. The *Voelkischer Beobachter* reported to its readers that

With this [conference] he [Evola] decisively rejects the concept of the so-called Mediterranean Latin race, coming from a democratic spiritual direction and created by an intellectual circle that has before them the decadent manifestations of the late Roman Empire characterized by a miscegenation of people without tradition.¹⁶³

The *Muenchner Neueste Nachrichten* expanded somewhat on this theme. It related that Evola considered the decision to adopt racism as a turning point in Italian self-identity. At that moment, the ideals of ancient Roman culture rose again from under the suffocating weight of the myth of Latinità. This now superseded myth had worked to distance the Italians and the Germans, an estrangement useful only to “foreign interests.” Now, however, Italy had taken up once again the symbol of the wolf, the eagle, and the sword, “the virile symbols of Roman force” that translated Italy's Nordic origin analogically “to that of the Doric immigration in ancient Greece that led to the foundation of Sparta.”¹⁶⁴ One would be hard pressed to find a better summary of Italian Nordic thinking in relation to Italy's ancient past than that given by Evola in this round of conferences.

Unfortunately for Evola, the Italian diplomatic corps, which was monitoring his lectures, was considerably less impressed than was the Nazi press. The Italian embassy reported back to the Ministry of Popular Culture that Evola

violently expressed himself against the “Latin myth” and the “Mediterranean cult ...” [and] Evola deprecates a few elements that make up the Italian race [i.e. the Mediterraneans]; 2) in the racial deprecation of them, he tends to exaggerate, so that the readers remain disconcerted in their opinion concerning Italy, and are not inclined, especially the old admirers of our culture, to favorable judgments with regard to Evola; 3) since Evola is speaking from a racial viewpoint, his combination of expressions and measures of the Duce (e.g., “Prussian Italy”; institution of the “passo romano”) seems arbitrary and not inherent in the scientific argument of the article.

Given such unsavory polemics,

the general impression of the co-nationals present was rather unfavorable to the thesis of Evola. His judgments on the Italian Renaissance, on the Risorgimento, on the Catholic religion, on the population of Southern Italy seemed to be somewhat hazardous; and it was considered not at all convenient that it was espoused in an quasi-official form before a public the majority of whom were foreigners.”¹⁶⁵

The report undoubtedly encouraged Ciano (Minister of Foreign Affairs) and Pavolini (Minister of Popular Culture) to turn against Evola.¹⁶⁶

Yet the report did not yet make an impact on Mussolini, if he read it. Certainly, we cannot expect that Luchini, Evola’s chief admirer, could have taken it very seriously.

Perhaps it was Luchini who persuaded Mussolini to read Evola’s *Sintesi*, which he did while in Germany from August 25 to 29, 1941.¹⁶⁷ And the *Duce* was suitably impressed. Indeed, Mussolini met with Evola several weeks later personally to applaud his work. According to Evola’s account years later, Mussolini considered the *Sintesi* “just the sort of doctrine that he was in need of”¹⁶⁸ because it could be used as the basis of “an autonomous and anti-materialistic fascist racism,”¹⁶⁹ thus giving him

a way to consider problems analogous to those that confronted Germany [yet still maintain] an independent attitude, finding value in its spiritual orientation, that primacy of spirit that was excluded for the most part from German racism. In particular, the theory of the Roman–Aryan race and its corresponding myth could integrate the Roman idea, as expounded by fascism, as well as give Mussolini a theoretical base to rectify and elevate the average Italian type, with his “revolution” and with his state, and from this type to form the nucleus of a new man.¹⁷⁰

Evola also persuaded Mussolini to allow him to create a new journal, *Sangue e Spirito*. The journal was to be published in an Italian and a German edition, dedicated to propagating spiritual Nordic racism, Evolian philosophy, and fascist politics. Mussolini instructed Evola to set the programmatic points of the journal.¹⁷¹ Finally, Evola received permission to set up a committee charged with investigating the racial composition of the Italian people.¹⁷²

Numerous consequences flowed from this meeting. For one, Alessandro Pavolini wrote a very favorable review of the *Sintesi* which was released to the press on September 12, 1941, and prompted a cascade of dutiful imitations.¹⁷³ The *Sintesi* was also revised for a German edition issued by Runge-Verlag of Berlin.¹⁷⁴

Evola also proceeded to assemble his commission. An anthropologist was selected to investigate the physical characteristics of the Italian race; a professor of psychology at the University of Florence and Ludwig F. Clauss were appointed to examine the Italian racial soul (e.g. psychic behavior, reactions, and

so on); Evola himself was to dissect the Italian spirit. The commission prepared to study families long established in various urban and rural locales. The exigencies of the war intervened, however, and the project was never realized.¹⁷⁵

The *Sangue e Spirito* project also reached a fairly advanced state of preparation. Evola lined up powerful support for his journal, perhaps anticipating the opposition his activities would arouse among the competing racist factions. Evola secured the backing of Fernando Mezzasoma and Carlo Ravasio, Vice-Secretaries of the PNF, the School of Fascist Mysticism, various Italian intellectuals, and key figures in the German racial hierarchy.¹⁷⁶

Evola also succeeded in attracting the attention of a number of fairly prominent racists for work on his journal, including Giovanni Preziosi. Alberto Luchini was to serve as “coordinator” for the journal.¹⁷⁷

Though Evola could rely on support from certain sympathizers and associates, as discussed above, his theory was still far from achieving a consensus among fascist racists. In an interesting turn of events, Evola apparently felt that continuing opposition in some quarters to his racial philosophy stemmed from an overly sycophantic attitude toward the Germans. This perception was not necessarily true, since the Germans themselves were seriously divided into racist factions. For example, Evola was very close to Ludwig Clauss, who was out of favor with the Nazis. These facts may explain the reasoning behind Evola’s article “On the contribution of Romanità for the new Germany” in the November 16, 1941 edition of *Il Regime Fascista*. There Evola deplored the “‘anti-Roman’ implications of the Nordic gospel, accusing the German ‘racial experts’ of ‘muddled thinking and mental aberrations,’ and denouncing Hitler’s idol, Richard Wagner, as a falsifier of Nordic mythology.”

Evola visited Germany in the late winter of 1942 to drum up support for the journal. In February 1942 he secured approval for German collaboration on the journal from a commission composed of Walter Gross (head of the political office of race of the NSDAP), Alfred Bäumler (a philosopher from Rosenberg’s office), Franz Rademacher (SS-Obersturmbannführer, of the Foreign Ministry), Wüttig (of the Political Office of Race), and Vollmer (Office of Information in the Foreign Ministry).¹⁷⁸

Like so many before him, Evola would soon find that the darlings of Italian racism were readily disposable. Opposition against Evola rose from a number of quarters. The Catholic Church was increasingly perturbed over the degree to which Evola’s non-Christian philosophies were gaining official prominence. Father Tacchi Venturi, a prominent Jesuit and mediator between the Vatican and the fascist government, was chosen to voice the Vatican’s disapproval. He was concerned that Evola’s ideas threatened the spiritual hegemony of the Catholic Church in Italy. He also pointed out that Evola’s opinion’s concerning the different Italian types destroyed the idea of national unity and relativized the concept of the nation, and the notion of Aryan–Romans contradicted the concept of “Latinity.”¹⁷⁹

Vincenzo Mazzei backed up the Church’s pronouncements. He accused Evola of assigning racism the “supreme value” in the fascist worldview, a status it did not warrant. Also, Evola’s racial determinism was contrary to “the fascist and Catholic conceptions and the most pure philosophical–political Italian traditions.”

Evola was too mystical, relying on the three racial grades (body, spirit, and soul) that Mazzei judged were “mythical and fantastic conceptions that do not seem able to create a construction capable of practical results.” Similarly, the racial spiritual groups (e.g. Telluric, Dionystic, Amazonic, Aphroditic, and so on) were “not precisely helpful and clarifying.” Still, Mazzei granted that Evola’s theories were “perhaps the only organic and truly interesting attempt in the recent Italian racist literature.”¹⁸⁰

The biological racists were furious over their sudden loss of influence, and the treason of Preziosi and Farinacci in going over to the Evolian camp.¹⁸¹ Beginning in March, *La Difesa* published a plethora of articles directly attacking Evola. Interlandi wrote what was to be the lead article for the March 20 issue of the journal, “Richiamo alle origini e all’onestà.” Interlandi emphasized to his prospective readers that “zoological racism” was based on dignified and serious experimental research and so was superior to the “vain chitchat” of the spiritual racists. Spiritual racism was not open to examination from a scientific vantage point, and so could not be taken seriously.

In fact, the anti-racists hurl against us the accusation of “materialism” because they want to drag us far from the ground of positive facts, where there is no doubt, to obtain facile victories in the “spiritual” camp, where we without discussion are disposed to let them have the victory.

As Interlandi reminded his anticipated audience, point seven of the Manifesto demanded that “The question of race in Italy must be treated by a purely biological point of view, without philosophical or religious intentions.” This was never more true than in the current life-and-death struggle in which Italy found itself.

Our racism today, especially in wartime, is purely zoological, animalistic, and one can say, bestial. . . . The animal racism that smells itself, recognizes itself, forms a united front, we affirm is racism! To the devil with spiritualism, and the equality in the mystery of the pure spirit.

Unable to avoid a jab at his old nemesis Nicola Pende, Interlandi included in his condemnations “those poor conference goers that identify racism with health and male children, and think that it is enough to fight tuberculosis or the scientific straitening up of twisted legs to pay their debt to racism.”¹⁸²

In a prefatory letter to the article, Interlandi begged Mussolini to let him publish the article. He told the *Duce* that he wanted to restore seriousness to “a doctrine menaced by drowning in the magical–spiritualistic lucubrations of superstitions represented by the national *occultists*.”¹⁸³ Not surprisingly, given his own sympathies, Mussolini did not approve publication of the article.

Guido Landra, taking a somewhat more mild approach to the dispute, did succeed in having his work included in the journal. Landra claimed, quite indefensibly, that *La Difesa* had always

departed, as was natural, from a few biological principles and [we] have followed in our exposition an essentially scientific method, basing it always on concrete facts. We have willingly left to others the treatment of the spiritual aspect of the problem of race, and have willingly avoided passing into myth.¹⁸⁴

These “others,” Landra lamented, were growing in number, becoming “increasingly more abstract and nebulous, as if [racism] was comprised only of adepts of a mysterious sect, dedicated to magic practices.”¹⁸⁵ “In fact,” he noted, “the tendency to make racism deviate toward an increasingly metaphysical and nebulous conception of race has become truly preoccupying. . . . Overcoming the concrete concept of race with a spiritualistic vision could make it change toward arbitrariness.”¹⁸⁶ Spiritual racists, he bitterly complained, saw “all considerations of a biological nature” as “useless junk.”¹⁸⁷

There were many drawbacks to a spiritual racism, according to Landra. For instance, biological racism avoided conflicts with religion.¹⁸⁸ Landra found Evola’s breakdown of human identity into the discrete and independent categories of body, soul, and spirit to be quite bizarre.¹⁸⁹ Like Interlandi, Landra found that Evolian theories were simply untenable from a scientific viewpoint. For example, Landra described as “absurd” the spiritualists’ Lamarckian claim that spiritual forces could alter the hereditary matter of the individual.¹⁹⁰

Landra stressed that solidly based Mendelian eugenics was a much more practical benefit derived from biological racism. “How can we look to create a spiritual aristocracy of race, when we are still preoccupied with eliminating the most dangerous hereditary traits?” Landra asked.¹⁹¹ Emulating the Germans, he called for “a law to prevent a schizophrenic, an epileptic or a hereditarily blind person from transmitting to future generations their tragic infirmity.”¹⁹² “It is necessary to act first, and philosophize later,” Landra concluded.¹⁹³

Finally, Landra was concerned that a concentration on spiritual racism was taking energy away from “eliminating the Jewish problem,” a task that even countries like Romania and Croatia had accomplished to a greater extent than had Italy. Thus, Landra observed, “we are content to wander ever higher toward the summit of metaphysical racism, to the great joy of the Jews.”¹⁹⁴ Several months later, while attempting to strike a more conciliatory note, Landra lamented that the rift between the biological and spiritual racists was apparently unbridgeable.¹⁹⁵

In the end, Landra, Interlandi, and the other biological racists worked in concert with the Catholic Church (and perhaps the Mediterraneanists) to combat Evola’s virulent strain of spiritual racism. They persuaded Mussolini to withdraw official support for Evola’s activities. While collaborating with the Germans on *Sangue e Spirito* in Berlin, Evola received orders from the Italian embassy to cease work on the project and return to Italy.¹⁹⁶ Though the various projects discussed by Evola and Mussolini in the summer of 1941 were all canceled, Evola remained on the payroll of the Ministry of Popular Culture, where he was employed as an “attaché.”¹⁹⁷

Though Evola might have received a severe setback, Preziosi emerged from the débâcle relatively unscathed. Indeed, Preziosi’s authority would grow

concomitantly with that of the Germans. As the powerful leader of the Nordic faction for the remainder of the regime's hold on power, Preziosi was able to deal another blow to the Mediterraneanists in early 1942. This time, the target was Antonio Le Pera, head of the Demorazza. One of the most important duties of the Demorazza after 1938 was the granting of exemptions to Jews subject to the anti-Semitic laws of that year. Le Pera oversaw the exemption program. Around the beginning of 1942, Preziosi received information that Le Pera was granting unwarranted exemptions in return for bribes. Preziosi knew in particular of cases involving a jeweler in Trieste and an industrialist in Rome. Preziosi's report prompted a thorough investigation of Le Pera's financial dealings, turning up wide-scale evidence of fraud in his directorship of the Pio Istituto degli Ospedali Reuniti of Rome. These findings subsequently led to Le Pera's dismissal in August 1942 (though he retained control of *Razza e Civiltà*).¹⁹⁸

No doubt exhausted from the interminable racist conflicts, Mussolini replaced Le Pera by the bland Lorenzo La Via, head of the Foundation for the Cult and the Foundation for Welfare and Religion in the City of Rome. La Via was somewhat neutral in the racial debate: he conceived of racism more as a "belief and a myth" than as a concrete reality.¹⁹⁹ It appeared that, in the end, Mussolini could only find peace in the racial debate by ignoring it.

8 Racial stalemate and the end of the regime, 1942–1945

La Difesa della Razza, in its fifth year, has been surrounded by “the approval of few, the hostility of many and the indifference of most.”

Guido Landra¹

We find, then, that by the summer of 1942 all major racist factions had worked to suppress their opponents, leaving Italian racial policy prostrate before the coming German onslaught. A consensus had proved impossible. Nordicists of the spiritual and of the biological stripes were effective in preventing Pende or Acerbo from dominating Italian racial policy; on the other hand, the Mediterraneanists had periodically dealt severe blows to the Nordicist camp, and remained a formidable force throughout the era of fascist racism. Yet Nordicists were themselves unable to maintain their alliance, given the rift between the biological and spiritual ideologies. While the biological Nordicists came to the fore early in the campaign, Mussolini had shown continued interest in spiritual racism, favoring first Mediterraneanists that had spiritualist leanings, then throwing his weight behind Evolian spiritualism. As Evola’s activities attracted attention in the late winter and early spring of 1942, he found himself overwhelmed by a combination of antithetical forces, including his former biological Nordicist allies and the Catholic Church. Furthermore, it cannot be a coincidence that Acerbo’s High Council on Demography and Race would make their most serious bid to regain control of Italian racial policies immediately after the débâcle of Evola’s schemes. In June 1942 Mussolini was moved to predict that the “theories of Rosenberg” (i.e. the spiritual Nordicists?) would not survive in Italy after the war and the need for the German alliance had passed.² But this time had not yet come. Thus, Acerbo’s bid to regain the pinnacle of racial policy was defeated by his Evolian opponents in July 1942.

This racist stalemate provoked increasingly desperate cries from Guido Landra that racists of all persuasions had to band together lest racism itself disappear from Italy. Landra saw the increasingly desperate struggles of the Axis in World War II as part of a racial Armageddon. In such dire circumstances, he encouraged racists of all persuasions to form a united front against “the true enemies of our revolution” until the war was over and they could sort out their differences.³

The “united front” line taken by Landra began in February 1943, while Evola was collaborating with the Germans on *Sangue e Spirito*. In an article published in *La Vita Italiana*, Landra called for a common front of the biological and spiritual racists against the anti-racists. He claimed that there was no essential difference between the leading journals of these two movements: *La Difesa della Razza* and *La Vita Italiana*. Though the editorial board of *La Difesa* maintained that “the biological element is necessary for race,” they did not have “the slightest intention of maintaining that it is the only element,” Landra sheepishly offered. Rather, “given our agnostic mentality [on spiritual racism], we are disengaged from taking part in a discussion that surpasses biological data, given that we do not have sufficient means for confronting this problem.”

Yet Evola was not to be let off quite so easily as that. Landra pointed out that German official racism “is very close to our mode of thinking.” (An ominous remark, indicating perhaps the growing importance of German backing for racial theories toward the end of the fascist regime.) For example, the “greatest German scientists” had proven that the notion of dominant or recessive souls in miscegenation was incorrect; rather, only psychic qualities could be described as dominant or recessive. Thus, Evola’s use of Mendelian genetics was “very arbitrary.” Furthermore, the biological racists conceived of a unity of body and soul, not the sort of “useless” dichotomy of “internal race” and “external race” that Landra saw in Evola’s work. Still, these differences aside, Landra hoped that the Evolian racists would join with him to “proceed forward together.” “We want to be able to complete at least the minimum program that we have proposed,” he suggested. “If some others want to do more, so much the better. We wish them the best success.”⁴

The hopeful picture painted by Landra was not to be realized. From March 1942 onward, Landra bitterly poured scorn on those he felt were responsible for the obvious paralysis of Italian racism, caused by “dissident and internal polemics, which our enemies can only enjoy.”⁵ The guilty parties included Jews, philo-Semites, Clericalists, Masons, the scientific community in general, and “the cultists of magic rites,” all of whom had “muddied the crystalline waters of our racism” since his tenure as Director of the Racial Office in 1938.⁶ The populace was preoccupied with the daily exigencies of war, and so found their interest in racism diminishing. Many “superficial” people now regarded racism as “a type of luxury reserved for times of peace,” Landra lamented.⁷

Policy errors were also to blame. Italian racism had been obsessed with “negative racism,” simply defending the race against contamination through miscegenation. Rather, Landra had long called for a more “positive” racism, a eugenics program that would have improved the race.⁸ Furthermore, he believed that too many Jews had been granted status as Aryans, and Slavic Italians in the area around Trieste should also have been held under suspicion as disloyal to fascism.⁹

By November 1942 Landra seems to have given the war up for lost, and began prophesying the future of racism in post-war Italy. He hoped that biological, materialist racism would live on, and in fact grow in influence.¹⁰ Yet, by the time of his last article in *La Difesa della Razza*, only several months before the regime collapsed and the journal ceased publication, Landra had lost hope that racism

had any future at all. He acknowledged that “most people believed that racism would be a doctrine of the past.”¹¹

Landra was fortunate to be stationed in distant Bucharest when the regime finally did collapse, on July 25, 1943. Preziosi and Farinacci fled to Germany with the downfall of Mussolini; Le Pera and Interlandi were immediately arrested and imprisoned by the Badoglio government.¹² Of course, the Badoglio interlude was short-lived – Mussolini was rescued by the Germans on September 12; several weeks later, the *Repubblica Sociale Italiana* (RSI) was set up under the nominal control of Mussolini and the Fascist Party. “Nominal” is the operative word here. Hitler had no intention of allowing a defeated and demoralized Mussolini real control in Italy. Thus, the RSI was a German puppet government, and the Germans would henceforth control Italy’s racial policies.¹³

Naturally, the racial polemics of the fascist regime were entirely reconstructed around this dramatic turn of events. Preziosi was favored by the Germans as the most pro-German and anti-Semitic racist in Italy, and so was allowed artificially to exert enormous influence on Italian racial policy thereafter. Even Telesio Interlandi, generally close to the Germans, was thought by them to be too independent and too nationalistic for an important role in their new Italy.¹⁴ Though Mussolini now attempted to put the brakes on German racism in Italy, the storm had been unleashed.¹⁵

Preziosi’s toadying to the Germans during this period is little short of astonishing. He wrote to Mussolini on January 31, 1944, recommending a total harmony between the Italian and the German racial laws: “the only way to recover the betrayed honor ... [is] to eliminate all the irresponsible anti-German ambitions of whatever form ...” and to create a “united Aryan Europe.” To accomplish this, “nothing would work better than the German racial laws.” Preziosi was particularly inspired in his racial theories by Alfred Rosenberg, “a great friend ... with whom he shared every idea and every view in matters of blood and of race.”¹⁶ Even the Germans concluded that Preziosi had “a head not completely in order.”¹⁷

Nevertheless, a copy of the letter was sent by Preziosi to Hitler, Goebbels and Rosenberg, thus generating pressure from the Nazi leadership on Mussolini to create an Inspectorate General for Race, on March 15, 1944, with Preziosi as its head.¹⁸ The new office served as the successor to the Demorazza and the Office for Racial Studies.¹⁹ As soon as his appointment was confirmed, Preziosi proceeded to draft new racial laws modeled after the Nuremberg Laws, which were submitted to Mussolini on May 15, 1944. In his proposal, Preziosi defined as “Italian-blooded” “Italian citizens whose forefathers, resident in Italy at least since January 1, 1800 [!], are of Aryan race and free from interbreeding with Jews or other heterogeneous races.” Those not meeting this definition were to be excluded from the community.²⁰ Also, each person would have a “genealogical card” to establish their racial purity. Guido Buffarini-Guidi, now Minister of the Interior and Preziosi’s bitter foe, worked feverishly the night of May 17 to compose “Some observations on the racial laws.” Buffarini-Guidi denounced Preziosi as an

unscientific dilettante, whose proposal would only have the effect of alienating the Italian people and world opinion. The *Duce* agreed despite Preziosi's counter-attacks, and the law never went into effect.²¹ But then it hardly mattered, as the Germans and their fascist allies went on catching and deporting Jews regardless of Mussolini's wishes.

Another rising star in the Republican Fascist Party, Giorgio Almirante, was very worried about the contamination of Italian blood by the invading American and British troops at this time. He wrote:

That which has happened on our soil could be understood as a great challenge to our race. Non-Aryan, inferior foreign peoples, in some cases positively primitive and wild, have invaded Italy to cause this treachery. Marching in our countryside, invading our cities, penetrating our homes and perpetrating violence against people and things....

Only the rigid application of a healthy racial politics will be able to save our people.... It is above all possible to bring forth a clear consciousness of this necessity in the Italians, in such a way that they begin to form a phalanx around the fascist flag.... If we are to save our blood, we will also save our honor, our ideas, and our dignity; and we will be strong and pure. Pollute our blood, and all will be lost.²²

So far as Mussolini himself is concerned, he apparently had come to the conclusion that his attempt to use racism as a tool to create the new fascist man had unleashed an uncontrollable and destructive entity with a life of its own. As he told Bruno Spampanato in December 1943, Mussolini's "own kind of racism," was "a long way from the myths of Rosenberg": rather, it encompassed a mild, positive eugenics, and "a moral racism" that advocated "the pride in belonging to this millenarian race born between the snows of the Alps and the fire of Etna." Regretting the proclamation of the Racial Manifesto, Mussolini declared it "a long way from what I said, wrote and signed on the subject." Rather,

I have always considered the Italian people to be an admirable product of the fusion of diverse ethnic groups on the basis of a single geographic, economic, and especially spiritual entity. It is our spirit that has put our civilization on the by-ways of the world. Men of different blood were the carriers of a single splendid civilization.²³

Mussolini had also finally lost his fascination with Nordics and Aryans, it seems. On February 11, 1944, Mussolini referred to fascism as "a great Mediterranean idea."²⁴ In one of his last interviews, on April 20, 1945 with Gian Gaetano Cabella, editor of *Popolo di Alessandria*, Mussolini said of fascism: "The world, once I have disappeared, will still need the idea which has been and will be the most daring, the most original, and the most *Mediterranean* and European of ideas" (emphasis mine).²⁵

At this point it did not matter much what Mussolini thought. The intellectual debate over Italian racial identity was effectively over. No consensus on Italian racial identity proved possible. The struggle over race demonstrates that Mussolini's dictatorship was, in fact, severely limited by the powerful influence of conflicting groups. In this case, the traditional Italian elites, in the Church, the academic establishment, and the foreign service, usually supported Mediterranean racism. Mussolini could find only a relatively limited number of generally lesser figures and mavericks to uphold a pro-German, Nordic racism. Even with his backing, Nordicism could never establish itself with any authority in Italy. Mussolini himself wavered in his allegiance to this essentially unpopular and foreign-inspired import. As with many of his other ideologies, he came full circle at the end of his life, distancing his memory from Nordicism and supporting Mediterranean racism.

Another obstacle to consensus over the nature of the Italian race was even more fundamental: the entire concept of "race" is essentially itself a fantasy. Racial theorists built their elaborate and contorted racial models on quicksand. Thus, we must ask, what motivated so many to stake their careers on such fallacies? It might at first seem that an individual's allegiance to a particular racial theory reflected little other than their disposition toward the Germans. Yet a thorough analysis reveals that much more was at issue. If we look below the surface of the racial debate, we find that one's concept of racial identity was only the tip of a much deeper view of reality. Racial identity was really, in the end, dependent on one's self-identity. This involved philosophical, moral, religious, cultural, and historic ties that went far deeper than international tactical maneuverings. At issue were perceptions on tradition, the modern age, women, the nature of heredity, and the individual's role in society. Some scholars, focusing on the "kultur kampf" now being waged over courses such as western civilization in American universities, have suggested that our politics and vision of the world shape our perception of history. I believe that the research presented here demonstrates the possibility of the reverse: our perception of history can shape our view of the contemporary world. And so, ultimately, did the historical perception of key intellectuals in fascist Italy give rise to theories of racial identity. If we briefly consider once again the origin of Julius Evola's racism; the native pride of Giacomo Acerbo and others, we find that historical conceptions were the cornerstone of their racial thought. This was probably not true for all racial theorists: Giulio Cogni and Guido Landra, for example, seem to have fallen into the trap of attributing a nation's technological or economic superiority to racial superiority – a view quite common at the time. And, as Nicola Tranfaglia has observed concerning fascist intellectuals, simple opportunism – the prospect of personal power and influence – held for them a much more enticing prospect than the dissemination of the "objective truths" of science.²⁶

Epilogue

Who knows what will be taught about the Aryans in 1950?

Houston Stewart Chamberlain in Juan Comas, "Racial Myths"

Racial theorists after the war

After the end of the RSI, the new Italian government proceeded to prosecute those most active in the formulation and implementation of the racial laws. Few were actually punished. The losers in the end, not surprisingly, were the Nordicists. Their active collaboration with the Germans left them reviled and rejected after the war. Giovanni Preziosi, perhaps becoming the most hated man in Italy after Mussolini, committed suicide on April 26, 1945.¹

Telesio Interlandi served the RSI in the last years of the war. After fleeing to Bedizole at the end of the war, he was eventually caught and imprisoned by the partisans. He was released from prison by mistake on November 18, 1945, and once again hid until the government canceled his arrest warrant some months later for lack of grounds to incarcerate him.²

Lidio Cipriani fought in World War II as a major. He was eventually taken prisoner by the Germans on the island of Crete. Once the war was over, he was jailed at San Vittore for having signed the Manifesto.³ In court, Cipriani claimed that his name had been arbitrarily included among the signers; he had not protested against the inclusion, lest he found himself at odds with the regime. He was acquitted. Cipriani continued his anthropological travels after the war, studying the Andaman and Nicobare populations in the Indian Ocean. He is not known to have returned to Africa. He died in 1962.⁴

Marcello Ricci's defense before the courts was that he occupied a position too low in the bureaucratic hierarchy to have influenced policy decisions. He too was acquitted.⁵ Ricci resumed teaching zoology at the University of Rome, eventually becoming a full professor there.

Guido Landra lived in Bucharest throughout the remainder of the war. After returning to Italy, he taught natural sciences at the secondary school level until his retirement in 1978. He died in 1980.

Giulio Cogni continued to live in Germany during the war. Afterwards, he returned to his native Siena, and taught philosophy. He died in 1980.

Evola escaped to Germany after the downfall of Mussolini, and there began work on a project to build a radio station next to Croatia to send anti-Badoglioian, anti-Jewish, and anti-Masonic propaganda to Italy.⁶ Evola returned to Rome once the RSI was established, but fled the American entry into the city in June 1944. He then established himself in Vienna, where he studied SS-confiscated archives of freemasonry and various magical groups. Evola was severely crippled during the Soviet bombardment of the city in 1945.

Yet, interestingly enough, Evola's political career was only beginning. His reactionary brand of fascism caught on among many in the European neo-fascist movement after the war. Evola himself became a neo-fascist icon. He continued to write until his death in 1974.⁷ Evola eventually concluded that the Germans had in fact shown themselves the superior race, as they had a "love for discipline" which enabled them to fight on "until the end without a lament and without a rebellion."⁸

The winners in the racial struggle were the Mediterraneanists. Indeed, a much watered-down version of their racial theory remained in force in Italy after the war. Their work even had some repercussions in international scholarship. For example, Mediterranean theory influenced Juan Comas, a professor of anthropology at the Mexican School of Anthropology and one of the original writers of the UNESCO 1950 Statement on Race. In his contribution "Racial Myths" to the UNESCO-sponsored *Race and Science: The Race Question in Modern Science*, published in 1951, Comas makes a number of references to key points in Mediterraneanist theory. He believed that Western Europe had been invaded by the Mediterranean race in the Neolithic Age. Furthermore, "the influence of Caspian–Mediterranean immigrants into Northern Italy may well have been a factor in the brilliance of the Renaissance in that area."⁹ When discussing the Negroid race of Africa, Comas makes several references to (Giuseppe) Sergi as an eminent anthropologist.¹⁰ Finally, Comas describes the Manifesto of the Racial Scientists' assertion that the Italians are a "pure Italian race of the Nordic-Aryan type" as "laughable if it were not tragic."¹¹

No doubt the fact that most of the prominent Mediterraneanists continued their academic careers largely unhampered by their fascist past aided in the preservation of Mediterranean racial theory.

Giacomo Acerbo was condemned to death in absentia on January 10, 1944 in Verona by the Special Extraordinary Tribunal of the RSI. He was never captured, but lived clandestinely for several months until the Allied Liberation. Thereupon he was arrested by the police and the Abruzzi partisans and placed under the judgment of the High Court of Justice. He was accused of activities in organizing fascist squads in the early years of the movement and of promoting the March on Rome, of being a promoter of fascism and in aiding the overthrow of the Liberal constitutional regime and assisting in the maintenance of fascism in power, and of betraying his nation. In consequence, he was sentenced to 48 years in prison in January 1945. Several years later the Supreme Court of Abolition annulled the condemnation, and Acerbo was allowed to resume teaching in economics at the University of Rome in 1951. He made several unsuccessful forays into politics as a candidate for the Monarchists, in the 1950s. On November 15, 1962, he was awarded the Gold Medal for Achievements in

Education, Culture and Art by President Antonio Segni of the Republic of Italy in recognition of his accomplishments as an educator.¹² Acerbo died in Rome on January 9, 1969.¹³

Nicola Pende told the post-war Commission for the Purge of the Universities (Commissione di epurazione universitaria) that his name had been attached to the Manifesto against his will. He was later nominated for the Nobel Prize in Medicine for his work in endocrinology. His nomination was withdrawn, however, once it was learned that he had been a signer of the Manifesto. He died on June 10, 1970.¹⁴

Giuseppe Genna continued to teach anthropology at the University of Rome after the war. In fact, he succeeded as Director of the Institute of Anthropology there. He also served as President of the Italian Society of Anthropology and Ethnology of Florence from 1941 to 1953 and from 1969 to 1986, when he was made president for life of the institute.¹⁵

Sergio Sergi, the son and successor of Giuseppe Sergi at the Institute of Anthropology of the University of Rome, won accolades for helping keep the institute free from fascist racism during the regime. In 1945 he was a member of a commission to remove those compromised by ties to fascism from the institute. He also continued a successful teaching career.¹⁶

Giovanni Marro died on July 20, 1952.¹⁷

Racism in Italy since World War II

Racism in Italy did not die in 1945. Since World War II, Italy has seen a “great migration” of Southern Italians to the North in search of work. These immigrants engendered widespread hostility among the indigenous Northerners, who indulged themselves in the stereotypes of Northern superiority and Southern inferiority that had long existed among some Italian racial theorists.¹⁸ The problem remains with us still. Probably the most glaring examples of current intra-Italian racism can be found among the followers of the Lega Lombarda and allied groups. Here, the alleged “ethnic” and even racial differences between the superior Northern Italians and the inferior Southern Italians reveal themselves, sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly, from behind a thin veil of “cultural” differences. Daniele Vimercati relates several jokes told in Lega Lombarda circles that illustrate this point. Maps have appeared in Italy showing the peninsula split in two, with the northern half, including Emilia Romagna, Rimini, and Bologna remaining with the continent, whereas the southern half of the peninsula has been detached and is now labeled “New Africa Island.” Another joke suggests that, for the Southern Italian immigrants to better fit into Milanese society, it would first be necessary to “Bleach their hair to let up a little on the ugly look of the Southerner [terun].”¹⁹

On a more academic level, Gianfranco Miglio’s article “Toward a Federal Italy,” published in *Telos* in 1991, offers numerous examples of a Northern Italian racial self-identity opposed to the Southern Italians, much as existed one hundred years before. Miglio boldly asserts that “the Italian peninsula contains populations which, because of climatic, anthropological and historical reasons, are so different that for centuries they have developed constitutions even more different

[from Northern Italians] than those of major European nations.” “Po Valley” Italians were “European,” unlike Southern Italians. Analyzing the political climate of his day, Miglio asserts that

The elections of May 6, 1990 suddenly revealed to all Italians the real political and institutional conditions of their country. All of the sinister diagnoses about the lack of a true national homogeneity, the existence of two Italies – one “European” and the other “Mediterranean” – and the irreversibility of the institutional and political crisis have been confirmed.²⁰

Immigrants to the North from the southern part of the country come in for particularly severe criticism. Miglio claimed that the Southern Italians “retain unchanged their ‘Mediterranean’ life-style different from that of ‘European’ Northerners [i.e. Northern Italians], which is based on impersonal rule and individual rights rather than relations of personal dependence.” Miglio offered one particular example of the harm caused by immigrants: a “silent ethnic transformation” engendered by the transferal of minor officials from one part of the country to rule over another, thus leaving “many citizens with the impression of having been conquered and being governed by a different people.” The authority of these bureaucrats

was rooted in their ethnic and linguistic diversity. No one ever questioned the high bureaucrats from Sicily, Basilicata or Campania who went from one city in Central and Northern Italy to the next, without becoming integrated with the local population, but always accepted because of their role.²¹

Much like the spiritual racists of earlier days, Miglio called for a rebirth of Northern Italian folklore as one means to counter these disturbing tendencies:

Thus the Lombard Region has wasted its available resources in searching for a non-existent “working-class culture” which was alleged to have arisen there instead of, for example, sponsoring the preparation of robust dictionaries of dialects and of the customs surviving in its territory, as was done in nearby Swiss cantons. As a result, it has ended up with modest and laughable transfigurations of the only true local culture; that of the peasants. If, against this general trend, Alto Adige has been able to preserve its identity, this is due to the commitment of local cultural institutions to evaluate and study every particularity of their traditions, archeology, and history. Thus in the Tyrol Valley there is practically no stone that has not been catalogued.²²

The Lombard League saw itself as more closely related spiritually to the Northern Europeans than to the Mediterraneans. They claimed to be heirs of “Calvinist” culture, extolling the virtues of hard work, organization, and discipline.²³ For example, Miglio noted approvingly that “Not by accident, the federalism imagined and practiced by the German Calvinists within the Hanseatic framework as an alternative and antithesis to the ‘Roman’ idea of the absolute State is returning today in the wake of German rebirth.”²⁴

Final considerations

As we conclude the present work, a number of important questions can be answered. For one, we must assess the impact scientists had on formulating and influencing fascist racial theory, and the effect that fascist racial policies had on the development of science in Italy. It would also be interesting to examine the dynamics of science and racial theory in Nazi Germany compared to fascist Italy.

A number of scholars have recently maintained that, contrary to earlier opinions, science in Germany informed Nazi racial theory, rather than the other way around.²⁵ Scientists, explains Ute Deichmann, remained free from political interference in their work. Rather, the Nazi state patronized those scientists whose work they felt best reflected Nazi ideology, and eliminated those whose work substantially conflicted with this ideology.²⁶

Diechmann also concludes that scientists played a significant role in the formulation of Nazi racial ideology:

in Nazi Germany, charlatans ... did not at any time acquire substantial influence over the biological sciences. The majority of non-Jewish biologists were able to work in relative safety. The National Socialists based their race policy and later their murderous measures on racial-volkish ideologies, in particular the racial doctrines of the teacher and anthropological autodidact Hans F. K. Günther. They also invoked – without opposition and with the support from renowned anthropologists, medical researchers, and biologists – genetics and evolutionary biology ... This anti-Semitism and the evaluation and classification of peoples and individuals with racial criteria formed the foundation of National Socialist ideology.²⁷

Robert Proctor argues even more forcefully that German scientists had enormous influence in the formulation of Nazi racial doctrine:

biomedical scientists played an active, even leading role in the initiation, administration, and execution of Nazi racial programs. In this sense the case can be made that science (especially biomedical science) under the Nazis cannot simply be seen in terms of a fundamentally “passive” or “apolitical” scientific community responding to purely external political forces; on the contrary, there is strong evidence that scientists actively designed and administered central aspects of National Socialist racial policy.²⁸

I do not believe that we can come to the same conclusion for racial science in fascist Italy. Like their counterparts in Germany, prominent Italian scientists such as Nicola Pende and Sabato Visco did attempt to influence the development of fascist racial policies, but ultimately had considerably less success than did the racial hygienists of Germany. We must ask ourselves why this was the case.

Fascism seemed to see itself more rooted in philosophy than did National Socialism, which saw itself rooted in biological science, and specifically racial hygiene. Also, science as a well-funded and widely practiced discipline was

weaker in Italy than in Germany. Therefore, there was less opportunity for Italian scientists to influence racial policies in Italy. Rather, we find that influential fascist politicians and philosophers with an interest in racial questions tended to manipulate science to support and advance their own particular racial programs.

Those scholars, politicians, and scientists who were powerful enough to influence fascist racial policies generally supported Mediterranean or nativist racism. Their theories almost inevitably also had a strong spiritualist component. The reasons for their proclivities are quite easy to explain. Fascism was a synthesis of many elements; nationalism was one of the most prominent. Italian nationalism found itself attracted to a sort of “cult of the [Roman] ancestors” and mystique of the Italian character. The notion of a purely biological–determinist racism, especially a blatantly foreign import such as Nordic racism, was simply unacceptable to most influential Italian intellectuals. Also, the Roman and Catholic traditions in Italian civilization rejected the exclusivism of Nordic racism.²⁹

Those who chose to support Nordic racism – Giulio Cogni, Guido Landra, Giovanni Preziosi, Telesio Interlandi, Julius Evola – were often marginal or frustrated fascists seeking to derive power through their support of a racial ideology which had powerful backers in Germany, Italy’s ally. Their fortunes tended to wax and wane depending on international relations, Mussolini’s proclivities at the time, or the tactical errors of their opponents.

In general, we may conclude that Mussolini’s decision to embrace moderate eugenics and work towards the creation of the *uomo fascista* was accepted by most fascists, and apparently by the public at large. His alliance with Mediterraneanists until 1938 also seemed to be widely acceptable. The critical turning point in his racial goals occurred in 1938, when Nordic racism and anti-Semitism were adopted simultaneously. Those backing these new ideologies were in the minority. Even with Mussolini’s backing, they had to struggle to remain in the ascendancy. Whenever Mussolini’s pro-Nordic convictions faltered, Nordicists were inevitably thrown back by the powerful onslaughts of their Mediterraneanist and nativist opponents. These internal squabbles in the Fascist Party and the intellectual community could not have bolstered the stability of the regime – quite the contrary. If the factionalization of the Fascist Party over racial issues directly contributed to the decline of fascism is a question that other scholars may address in the future. Others might also wish to determine the extent to which the Italian people embraced racism, and which kind; the relationship of racism to the Catholic Church in Italy; and the relationship of other branches of science to the regime in fascist Italy.

Glossary

- Biological racism** Racism which purportedly based itself on a scientific understanding of race. Nevertheless, all biological racists believed in some sort of “natural” racial hierarchy, with hereditary intelligence, linked with race, a key determinant. Biological racists were also strongly influenced by personal bias and presuppositions in their analyses.
- Brachycephalic** Cephalic measurement introduced by the Swedish biologist Anders Retzius in the nineteenth century. Brachycephalic skulls are short, with a cephalic index (width to length) of 81.0–85.4. “Alpine” peoples were often believed to have been brachycephalic.
- Dolicocephalic** Dolicocephalic skulls are long, with a cephalic index (width to length) of 1.75 or less. “Nordic” races were often alleged to be dolicocephalic.
- Environmental racism** Any racial theory that emphasizes the impact the natural environment and geography have on altering the hereditary racial characteristics of a resident racial population.
- Eugenics** Movement dedicated to the genetic improvement of a human population, usually through selectively encouraging or discouraging the birth rate of individuals hierarchically ranked according to certain supposedly measurable traits, such as intelligence or physical fitness.
- Lamarckianism** Theory of evolution deriving from the early nineteenth-century French scientist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, which stated that hereditary evolution of species occurs as the result of the combined inheritance of acquired characteristics of individuals of that species over time.
- Mediterraneanism** Racial theory that highlights the achievements of the “Mediterranean” race, a racial group believed to have inhabited Italy and the Northern Mediterranean region in ancient (and for most Mediterraneanists, modern) times. Mediterranean peoples were believed to be relatively short, dark-haired and brown-eyed. Mediterraneanists inevitably alleged that the ancient classical civilizations were a product of this race, which was particularly gifted with intellectual and creative traits.
- Mendelian genetics** Mechanism that explains biological heredity through the assortment and segregation of individual genes during formation of the zygote. Unlike Lamarckian inheritance, Mendelian inheritance does not admit the possibility of environment influencing genetic inheritance, except in rare cases such as chemical or radiation-induced mutations.

- Monogenism** Theory that the human species is descended from an original pair of individuals or some other prototype.
- Nativism** Racial theory that stressed the indigenous nature of the racial group in question. Nativists were strongly nationalistic. They opposed any suggestion that their racial group had migrated to its current territory from elsewhere in historic (and, often, prehistoric) times. They also de-emphasized the racial impact of later invasions of non-indigenous peoples on their racial group.
- Nordicism** Racial theory that placed the “Nordic” race at the top of the racial hierarchy. Nordics were invariably considered to be the epitome of the “Aryan” race. They were believed to live in Central and Northern Europe, with some theorists also placing them in France, Italy, or other more southerly countries in addition. Nordic peoples were described as tall, with light skin, light or blond hair, and light or blue eyes.
- Pangermanism** Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century movement which advocated the unification of all “German” peoples in a single state. In practice, the movement supported an aggressively militaristic and expansionistic German state.
- Polygenism** Theory that human beings are descended from several distinct ancestors or prototypes. Some variations of polygenism claim that human beings are, in fact, an aggregation of a number of separate species, each with its own unique ancestors. Polygenists often believe that each human race is in fact a separate species, ranked hierarchically.
- Positivism** Nineteenth-century philosophical movement which stressed the power of science to understand human nature and the natural world. Positivism rejected religious or metaphysical explanations for reality. Rather, reality was ultimately understandable through a continued development of the various branches of science.
- Race** For the purposes of this work, race will be understood as a term sometimes applied to groups of individuals hereditarily related to one another. This term was not applied to units small enough to have a direct kinship identity, nor to units so large as to only be linked by their common humanity. Of course, there is a wide spectrum of groups between the two extremes, and any group in this spectrum might be referred to as a racial entity. Thus Caucasians, Aryans, and Italians were all classified as racial groups under fascism, though Italians were considered (by some) a subgroup of Aryans, and Aryans a subgroup of Caucasians.
- Racial theorist** Those individuals who were involved in the creation or propagation of some theory used to describe the racial identity of a particular people.
- Racism** Any theory or belief which asserted that one race was superior to another, or that cultural traits were the product of the biological characteristics of a population.
- Spiritual racism** Racism based on an appeal to intuition, myth, historical analysis, and a variety of irrational philosophies. Spiritual racism generally emphasized the primacy of the racial “spirit” over the physical aspects of race. Many spiritual racists believed that racial struggles would result in an apocalyptic annihilation of the vanquished race. Most spiritual racists evinced a strong anti-Semitism.

Notes

Introduction

- 1 The term “race” could be applied so broadly as almost to lose coherent meaning. This term was not applied to units small enough to have a direct kinship identity, nor to units so large as to only be linked by their common humanity. Of course, there is a wide spectrum of groups between the two extremes, and any group in this spectrum might be referred to as a racial entity. Thus Caucasians, Aryans, and Italians were all classified as racial groups under fascism, though Italians were considered (by some) a subgroup of Aryans, and Aryans a subgroup of Caucasians. These controversies can be traced back to intellectual currents of the nineteenth century, and were present in some form in most western countries. The Italian language used several terms that are translated into English as “race,” chief among these being *razza* and *stirpe*. *Razza* sometimes meant what is today understood in English by the word “race”; at other times, it is more accurately translated as “people.” By *stirpe*, Italian writers often meant “subrace” or “minor races” (i.e., subdivisions of major races). This concept approaches “ethnic group” as currently used in American English.

Throughout this work, I will use the term race and its derivatives (e.g., racial concepts) to indicate a system of categorization of individuals and human populations which rests on the assumption that certain populations have particular physical features that allow them to be distinguished from other populations. These differentiating features may or may not be assumed to affect the population’s overall intellectual and moral capacities. Racism will be used to indicate a set of beliefs that have as a core value the explicit claim that some particular race differs from another in intellect and (very often) in moral worth. Racial theorists are those individuals who argue that racial differences in populations do encompass intellectual and moral capacities. Racial theorists may endeavor to prove this assertion through appeals to scientific evidence, historical events or processes, or philosophical principles. Often, racial theorists will attempt to explain certain aspects of human history, culture, or society as the result of these racial differences. We should note here that most biologists and social scientists in the twenty-first century no longer accept the existence of human races. Rather, they see the concept of race as a fictitious categorization used by groups in power to oppress other groups. See Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996), especially pp. 352–3, 391–400; and John Rex and David Mason, eds, *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), especially p. 7.

- 2 For more on the concept of the new fascist man, see Emilio Gentile, *Il culto del littorio: la sacralizzazione della politica nell’Italia fascista* (Rome–Bari: Laterza, 1994); Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il duce II. Lo stato totalitario, 1936–1940*, 2nd edn. (Turin: Einaudi, 1996); McGregor Knox, *Mussolini Unleashed, 1939–1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
- 3 See Julien Freund, trans. Mary Ifford, *The Sociology of Max Weber* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1968), pp. 227–8.
- 4 See Robert Reiner, “Crime, law and deviance: the Durkheim legacy,” in Steve Fenton with Robert Reiner and Ian Hamnett, *Durkheim and Modern Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 180, 186.

- 5 Michel Wieviorka, *The Arena of Racism* (London; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1995), p. 105.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 115; Robert N. Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine under the Nazis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 195, 199.
- 7 For more on this view, see R.J.B. Bosworth, *The Italian Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of Mussolini and Fascism* (London: Arnold, 1998).
- 8 See Léon Poliakov, trans. Edmund Howard, *The Aryan Myth: A History of Racist and Nationalist Ideas in Europe* (New York: Basic Books, 1971; 1974), p. 5.
- 9 See for example Max Weinreich, *Hitler's Professors: The Part of Scholarship in Germany's Crimes against the Jewish People* (New York: YIVO, 1946).
- 10 Principal works that should be consulted include Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews 1933–1945* (London, 1977); Karl A. Schleunes, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy towards German Jews 1933–1939* (London, 1972); Uwe Dietrich Adam, *Judenpolitik im Dritten Reich* (Düsseldorf, 1972); *Remembering the Future*, International Scholars Conference in Oxford (Oxford, 1988); R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 3 vols (New York, 1985); L. Yahil, *The Holocaust* (New York, 1990); Y. Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust* (New York, 1982); M. Gilbert, *The Holocaust* (New York, 1985); C. Browning, *Fateful Months* (New York, 1985); C. Browning, *The Path to Genocide* (New York, 1992); P. Burrin, *Hitler and the Jews* (New York, 1994); G. Fleming, *Hitler and the Final Solution* (Berkeley, 1984); Richard Breitman, *The Architect of Genocide: Himmler and the Final Solution* (New York, 1980); F. Weinstein, *The Dynamics of Nazism: Leadership, Ideology and the Holocaust* (New York, 1980); D. Cesarani, ed., *The Final Solution* (New York, 1994); Stanley Freidlander, ed., *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution"* (Cambridge, MA, 1992); Z. Buzman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Oxford, 1989). See also the ongoing *Journal Holocaust and Genocide Studies*. Works on Italy and the Holocaust include G. Antoniani-Persichilli, "Disposizioni normative e fonti archivistiche per lo studio dell'internamento in Italia," *Rassegna degli Archivi di Stato*, XXXVIII, 1–2–3, January–December 1978: 77–96; E. Apih, "Il Polizeihaflager della Risiera di San Sabba," *Quale storia*, XII, 3, 1984: 51–9; A. Cavaglian and G.P. Romagnani, *Le interdizioni del duce. A cinquant'anni dalle leggi razziali (1933–1988)* (Turin: Meynier, 1988); G. Donati, ed., *Ebrei in Italia: deportazione, resistenza* (Florence: Giuntina, 1975); G. Mayda, *Ebrei sotto Salò. La persecuzione antisemitica 1943–1945* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1978); G. Ottani, *Un popolo piange. La tragedia degli ebrei italiani* (Milan: Spartaco Giovane, 1945); L. Picciotto Fargion, *Il libro della memoria. Gli ebrei deportati dall'Italia (1943–1945)*, 2nd edn. (Milan: Mursia, 1991); S. Zuccotti, *The Italians and the Holocaust* (New York: Basic Books, 1987).
- 11 The title of George Mosse's major work on European racism, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism*, 2nd edn. (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), is an example of the tendency to view European racial concepts as contingent on anti-Semitism. One of the first major studies on anti-Semitism is Hannah Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1951). Arendt sees anti-Semitism as a product of nineteenth-century social science ignited by the Franco-Prussian War. George L. Mosse would essentially agree with this assessment. See his *Germans and Jews* (1970). Léon Poliakov, in his monumental *Histoire de l'antisémitisme*, believes that anti-Semitism is an ancient and fundamental European force. Albert Lindemann, in *Esau's Tears*, argues that too much emotionalism and subjectivity has surrounded the investigation of anti-Semitism, leading to a simplistic and overly determinist view of the course of anti-Semitism in many countries before the Holocaust, including Nazi Germany.

Works that concentrate on anti-Semitism in fascist Italy include Renzo De Felice's classic *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo*, 4th edn. (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1994), first published in 1961. Felice's study marked the beginning of serious study of Italian anti-Semitism. Over time, Felice moved away from the assumption that German influence was critical to the adoption of anti-Semitism by fascism in 1938, and toward a more nuanced interpretation that stresses the inner dynamics of Italian fascism itself in the fourth edition of 1993. Meir Michaelis's *Mussolini and the Jews: German–Italian Relations and the Jewish Question in Italy (1922–1945)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), accepts the traditional view that Nazi pressure was paramount in persuading Mussolini to embrace anti-Semitism. Michele Sarfatti's *Mussolini contro gli ebrei:*

- cronaca dell'elaborazione delle leggi del 1938* (Turin: S. Zamorani, Editore, 1994), is the most recent major work on anti-Semitism to come out of Italy.
- 12 By "modern racism" I mean the racism characteristic of the late eighteenth century until the end of World War II. Earlier racism was a more amorphous concept, based largely on religious differences and ethnocentric proclivities. Modern racism, however, utilized science (especially anthropology and the other social sciences) to justify presumed racial differences. Modern racism also developed much more elaborate explanations of history, culture, and society based on racial concepts than had ever been attempted before.
 - 13 Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution*, explains the origin of racism in relation to Enlightenment anthropology and adulation of the ancient Greeks; Gould, in *Mismeasure of Man*, sees modern racism as a product of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century anthropology, with particular emphasis on craniometry.
 - 14 See Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism* and "Race-Thinking before Racism," *Review of Politics*, 6 (January 1944): 36–73; Juan Comas, "Racial Myths" in UNESCO, *Race and Science: The Race Question in Modern Science* (New York: Columbia University Press, [1951] 1961), p. 41; Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Washington, DC: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1996).
 - 15 There is a large number of excellent studies of the history of American science and race, generally emphasizing eugenics, intelligence testing, or racism toward non-European Americans. These works include Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*; and George Stocking, Jr, *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1968).
 - 16 Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, p. 62.
 - 17 *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 338–9.
 - 18 *Ibid.*, p. 293; Sandra Puccini, "L'Antropolgia a Roma tra Giuseppe e Sergio Sergi," *Rivista di Antropolgia*, 71 (1993): 240.
 - 19 Maria Sophia Quine, *Population Politics in Twentieth-Century Europe* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), p. 135.
 - 20 See Robert N. Proctor, *Value-Free Science?: Purity and Power in Modern Knowledge* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 10–11.
 - 21 Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, p. 6.
 - 22 Ipsen, *Dictating Demography*, p. 84. See also David G. Horn, *Social Bodies: Science, Reproduction, and Italian Modernity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).
 - 23 Puccini, "L'Antropolgia," p. 237.
 - 24 Emilio Gentile, *La grande Italia: Ascesa e declino del mito della nazione nel ventesimo secolo* (Milan: Mondadori, 1997), p. 205.
 - 25 Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution*, p. 128.
 - 26 De Felice, *Storia*, p. 43.
 - 27 Horn, *Social Bodies*, pp. 59–60; Quine, *Population Politics*, p. 133. The Catholic Church was willing to discourage marriages that would produce genetically defective offspring, but refused to ban such unions. See *L'Osservatore romano*, "A proposito di un nuovo decreto-legge" (November 14–15, 1938): 1.

1 Racial ideology in Europe and Italy before the twentieth century

- 1 Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth*, p. 87. More recently, Daniel Goldhagen, in his *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Knopf, 1996), has also attempted to explain the extremism of German racism as a function of its unique history.
- 2 Poliakov, *Aryan Myth*, p. 88. As evidence of a continuing animosity toward the classical heritage, Poliakov notes that the Germans continue to create words of native combinations instead of adopting universally recognized Greek and Latin derivations, such as television or geography; p. 91.
- 3 Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 73.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 83.

- 5 Ibid., p. 82.
- 6 Ibid., p. 95.
- 7 Ibid., p. 97.
- 8 Michael Banton, *The Idea of Race* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1978), p. 36.
- 9 Poliakov, *Aryan Myth*, p. 70.
- 10 Ibid., p. 99.
- 11 Luciano Canfora, *Le vie del classicismo* (Rome–Bari: Laterza, 1989), pp. 250, 273.
- 12 Poliakov, *Aryan Myth*, p. 242.
- 13 G. Boëtsch and J.N. Ferrié, “Guisepe Sergi et la ‘race’ méditerranéenne,” *Rivista di Antropologia*, 71 (1993): 275.
- 14 Joseph Goerres, *Deutschland und die Nationen*, vol. IV, pp. 371–2, in Poliakov, *Aryan Myth*, p. 243.
- 15 Theodor Mommsen, *The History of Rome*, vol. 1 (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press), pp. 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 38, 39.
- 16 Mommsen, *History of Rome*, trans. William Purdie Dickson (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1894; London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1996), p. xii.
- 17 Houston Stewart Chamberlain, trans. John Lees, *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 1 (New York: John Lane Co., Inc., 1912), p. 257.
- 18 Juan Comas, “Racial Myths” in UNESCO, *Race and Science: The Race Question in Modern Science* (New York: Columbia University Press, [1951] 1961), p. 25.
- 19 Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution*, p. 59.
- 20 Mussolini, “Il pangermanismo teorico,” from “Il Trentino veduto da un socialista,” in *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XVI (Florence: La Fenice, [1951] 1964), p. 154.
- 21 Paul Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism 1870–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 107.
- 22 Ibid., pp. 109–10.
- 23 Mussolini, “Il pangermanismo,” p. 156.
- 24 Ibid., p. 157.
- 25 Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution*, p. 59.
- 26 Poliakov, *Aryan Myth*, pp. 54–5, 60–1.
- 27 G. Prezzolini, *Le legs de l’Italie* (Paris: Payot, 1949), p. 9, in Poliakov, *Aryan Myth*, p. 66.
- 28 Giuseppe Mazzini, *Note autobiografiche*, quoted in Maurice Vaussard, *De Pétrarque à Mussolini, Évolution du sentiment nationaliste italien* (Paris: A. Colin, 1961), pp. 46–7, quoted in Poliakov, *Aryan Myth*, p. 67.
- 29 Poliakov, *Aryan Myth*, p. 67.
- 30 Romke Visser, “Fascist Doctrine and the Cult of Romanità,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, 27 (1992): 6, 7. See for example, Enrico Corradini, *Discorsi politici (1902–1923)* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1923), pp. 477, 488.
- 31 Poliakov, *Aryan Myth*, p. 70.
- 32 Ibid., p. 68.
- 33 Carlo Pisacane, *Saggio storici-politici militari sull’Italia*, vol. I (Genoa: Stab. Tip. Nazionale, 1858), pp. 27, 64–5. Quoted in Vincenzo Mazzei, *Razza e nazione* (Rome: Edizioni Italiane, 1942), p. 36.
- 34 Vincenzo Gioberti, *Del Primato Morale e Civile degli Italiani* (Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1925), v. 2, p. 139.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Ibid., p. 147.
- 38 Ibid., pp. 149–50.

2 Racial identity in Italy, 1900–1915

- 1 See Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, 2nd edn. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), for some now classic examples of the impact of personal prejudices on scientific endeavors.
- 2 The eventual descendant of this train of thought is best represented by sociobiology. See Michael Ruse, *Sociobiology: Sense or Nonsense?* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1979).

- 3 Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics*, p. 36.
- 4 *Ibid.*, pp. 31–2.
- 5 David Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century: A History of Germany, 1780–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 390.
- 6 Spencer M. Di Scala, *Italy: From Revolution to Republic: 1700 to the Present* (Boulder, CO; San Francisco; Oxford: Westview Press, 1995), pp. 140–9; Edward R. Tannenbaum, *The Fascist Experience: Italian Society and Culture, 1922–1945* (New York: Basic Books, 1972), p. 283.
- 7 Angelo Mosso, “Le cagioni dell’effeminatezza latina,” in *Nuova Antologia* (November 16, 1897), in Michele Nani, “Fisiologia sociale e politica della razza latina. Note su alcuni dispositivi di naturalizzazione negli scritti di Angelo Mosso,” in Alberto Burgio and Luciano Casali, eds, *Studi sul razzismo italiano* (Bologna: CLUEB, 1996), p. 264.
- 8 Carl Ipsen, *Dictating Demography: The Problem of Population in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 45–6; Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, p. 31; Édouard Conte and Cornelia Essner, *La Quête de la Race: Une anthropologie du nazisme* (Paris: Hachette, 1995), p. 350.
- 9 Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, pp. 36–7.
- 10 Mario Canella, *Principi di psicologia razziale* (Florence: G.C. Sansoni, 1941), p. 201; see also Giulio Cogni, *I valori della stirpe italiana* (Milan: Fratelli Bocca, 1937), p. 66.
- 11 For a rather overly enthusiastic discussion of Gumpłowicz’s ideas on the formation of new races, see A. James Gregor, *Ideology of Fascism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969), pp. 257–9.
- 12 Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1932), pp. 165, 181.
- 13 See Michele Nani, “Fisiologia sociale e politica della razza latina. Note su alcuni dispositivi di naturalizzazione negli scritti di Angelo Mosso,” in Burgio and Casali, eds, *Studi sul razzismo*, p. 45.
- 14 Alan Cassels, *Fascist Italy*, 2nd edn. (Arlington Heights, IL: H. Davidson, 1985), p. 62.
- 15 Jean Finot, *Le préjugé des races* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1908), pp. 354–7.
- 16 Gaetano Trezza, *Studi critici* (Verona, Lipsia, Padua: Drucker & Tedeschi, 1878).
- 17 See, for example, Alessandro della Seta, *Italia Antica: dalla caverna preistorica al palazzo imperiale* (Bergamo: Istituto Italiano d’Arti Grafiche, 1922), p. 45.
- 18 Alfredo Niceforo, *Italiani del nord e italiani del sud* (Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1901), pp. 19–21, 25, 53–4, 116.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 138.
- 20 *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6, 146–7.
- 21 Hans Günther, *The Racial Elements of European History* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1928), p. 57.
- 22 See Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). Niceforo also influenced the work of Mario Canella, a prominent Italian spiritual Nordacist, who acknowledged Niceforo for his help on *Principi di psicologia razziale*.
- 23 Martin Clark, *Modern Italy 1871–1982* (London and New York: Longman, 1984), p. 119.
- 24 Bruno Bongiovanni, “Anthology of the Problem of the South,” in Banca Nazionale del Lavoro, *Modern Italy: From Expansion to the Second World War, 1900–1945* (Milan: Electa Editrice, 1983), p. 46.
- 25 G. Boëtsch and J.N. Ferrié, “Guiseppe Sergi,” p. 276.
- 26 Enrico de Michelis, *L’Origine degli Indo-Europei* (Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1903), p. 181. Sergi himself criticized the German Nordacists Hermann Pösche, Karl Penka, and Hermann von Hölder in *The Mediterranean Race: A Study of the Origin of European Peoples* (London: Walter Scott, 1901), p. 16, and in *Italia, Le origini: antropologia-cultura e civiltà* (Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1919), p. 108.
- 27 Giuseppe Sergi, *Origine e diffusione della stirpe mediterranea* (Rome: Società Editrice Dante Alighieri, 1895), p. 92; Giuseppe Sergi, *Arii e italici: attorno all’Italia preistorica* (Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1898), p. 181.
- 28 Giuseppe Sergi, *Le prime e le più antiche civiltà* (Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1926), pp. 64, 106, 308.

- 29 Ibid., p. 310.
- 30 Sergi, *Mediterranean Race*, p. 34.
- 31 Ibid., p. 252.
- 32 Sergi, *Arii e italici*, p. 172.
- 33 Ibid., pp. 104–5, 136, 199.
- 34 Ibid., p. 223; Giuseppe Sergi, “Germani e indogermani,” *Rivista di antropologia*, XIV (1936): 658–9; Giuseppe Sergi, *Le prime e le più antiche*, p. 258.
- 35 Giuseppe Sergi, *Arii e italici*, pp. 191–2, 194–5, 198; Giuseppe Sergi, *La Decadenza delle nazioni latine* (Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1900), pp. 238–9.
- 36 Giuseppe Sergi, *Arii e italici*, p. 170.
- 37 Giuseppe Sergi, *Le prime e le più antiche*, pp. 247, 248; Giuseppe Sergi, *Gli Arii in Europea e in Asia* (Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1903), p. 257.
- 38 Sergi, *Mediterranean Race*, p. 16.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Sergi, *Arii e italici*, p. 220.
- 41 Sergi, *Italia, Le origini*, pp. 447–8.
- 42 Ibid., pp. 216–17.
- 43 Sergi, *Origine e diffusione*, p. 7.
- 44 Sergi, *Arii e italici*, p. 211; Sergi, *La Decadenza*, p. 208; Sergi, *Mediterranean Race*, p. vi; Sergi, *Arii e italici*: pp. 210–12; in *Da Alba Longa a Roma* (Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1934), Sergi explains that the Aryans who eventually arrived in Italy “usurped without creating, deforming and obscuring the first civilizing lights.” p. viii.
- 45 Sergi, *Mediterranean Race*, p. 265.
- 46 Sergi, *Arii e italici*, p. 188; Sergi, *La Decadenza*, p. 208.
- 47 Sergi, *Arii e italici*, p. 173; Sergi, *Italia, Le origini*, p. 407.
- 48 Sergi, *Le prime e le più antiche*, p. viii.
- 49 Sergi, *Da Alba Longa*, p. ix.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 Sergi, *Italia, Le origini*, p. 195.
- 52 Ibid., p. 444.
- 53 Sergi, *La Decadenza delle nazioni latine*, pp. v–vii.
- 54 Sergi, *Italia, Le origini*, p. 84.
- 55 Ibid., p. 86.
- 56 Ibid., p. 330.
- 57 Ibid., p. 33.
- 58 Ibid., p. 329.
- 59 Ibid., pp. 332–3.
- 60 Sergi, *Gli Arii in Europea e in Asia*, pp. v–vii.
- 61 Sergi, *Da Alba Longa a Roma*, pp. x–xi.
- 62 de Michelis, *L’Origine*, p. 181.
- 63 Sergi, *Italia, Le origini*, p. xii.
- 64 de Michelis, *L’Origine*, pp. 181, 182, 190–91.
- 65 Guido Landra, “Necrologia: Giuseppe Sergi,” *Rivista di biologia*, vol. XXII, fasc. II, (1937): 5. We should also note that Sergi was an advocate of eugenics. In his book *Le degenerazioni umane*, published in 1889, Sergi proposed an educational system that focused on the most intelligent children. This was the first indication of Sergi’s eugenicist inclinations, which would grow ever more pressing over the years. In 1912 Sergi and Corrado Gini founded a committee for the study of eugenics at the Roman Society of Anthropology. At the 1916 meeting of the Italian Society for the Progress of Science, Sergi was nearly obsessed with a fear that the superior races were decaying. Quine, *Population Politics*, p. 29; Landra, “Necrologia: Giuseppe Sergi,” p. 5; Sandra Puccini and Massimo Squillacciotti, “Per una prima ricostruzione critico-bibliografica degli studi demo-etno-antropologici italiani nel periodo tra le due guerre,” in *Studi antropologici italiani e rapporti di classe* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1980), p. 62; Galeazzo Ciano, *1937–1938 Diario* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1948), p. 63.

- 66 See, for example, Angelo Mosso, “Le cagioni dell’effeminatezza latina,” in *Nuova Antologia* (November 16, 1897): 249–65; Angelo Mosso, *Escursioni nel Mediterraneo e gli scavi di Creta* (Milan: Treves, 1907).
- 67 de Michelis, *L’Origine*, p. 459.
- 68 Benito Mussolini, “Dio non esiste,” from “L’uomo e la divinità,” July 1904, *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XXXIII (Florence: La Fenice, 1951; 1964), p. 11.
- 69 Emil Ludwig, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul, *Talks with Mussolini* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1933), p. 202.
- 70 Benito Mussolini, “Il pangermanismo,” pp. 153–4.
- 71 *Ibid.*, p. 161. Mussolini is most probably referring to Josef Ludwig Reimer’s book, *Ein pangermanisches Deutschland. Versuch über die Konsequenzen der gegenwärtigen wissenschaftlichen Rassenbetrachtung für unsere politischen und religiösen Probleme* (Berlin; Leipzig: F. Luckhardt, 1905). Renzo De Felice believed that Mussolini’s aversion to Nordicism was at this point inspired by his desire to win over the Trentines to Italian socialism. Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il rivoluzionario*, 2nd edn. (Turin: Einaudi, 1995), p. 68.

3 Racial theory and fascism, 1915–1935

- 1 Only the Austrian heartlands had a majority German-speaking population. Several Austrian territories, including Trentino, Trieste, and Istria, had Italian-speaking populations as well.
- 2 Sergi, *Italia, Le origini*, pp. 233–4.
- 3 *Ibid.*, pp. xiii, 104.
- 4 *Ibid.*, pp. 107–8.
- 5 Sergi, *Le prime e le più antiche civiltà*, p. 290.
- 6 *Ibid.*, pp. 58 note 1, 251, 304.
- 7 Sergi, *Italia, Le origini*, pp. xiii, 104.
- 8 Benito Mussolini, “Il crepuscolo della Germania,” *Popolo d’Italia*, no. 47, February 16, 1915, II; *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, VII (Florence: La Fenice, 1951; 1964), pp. 203–4.
- 9 Gregor, *Ideology of Fascism*, p. 247.
- 10 Benito Mussolini, “La vittoria fatale,” Discorso di Bologna, May 19, 1918; *Popolo d’Italia*, no. 142, May 24, 1918, *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, V, p. 81.
- 11 As Giuseppe Bottai observed, “Mussolini had an all but good opinion about the people he governed, in spite of the public elegies and attestations of esteem. He in reality felt himself in a state of permanent war against the alleged ‘Italian character.’” Giuseppe Bottai, *Diario, 1935–1944*, ed. G.B. Guerri (Milan: Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, 1982), p. 187, in Emilio Gentile, “La nazione del fascismo. Alle origini del declino dello stato nazionale,” *Nazione e nazionalità in Italia: Dall’alba del secolo ai nostri giorni*, ed. Giovanni Spadolini (Rome–Bari: Giuseppe Laterza, 1994), pp. 85–6.
- 12 Giovanni Papini, “Il nostro impegno” [Our task], *Lacerba* (November 15, 1914); reprint in *Lacerba* (Milan: Gabriele Mazzotta, 1970), pp. 305–7; as quoted in Roger Griffin, ed., *Fascism* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 23.
- 13 Zeev Sternhell, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 59–60.
- 14 Gentile, *Il culto del littorio*, p. 160; see also Gentile, *Le origini dell’ideologia fascista (1918–1925)* (Rome–Bari: Laterza, 1975), p. 5.
- 15 Horn, *Social Bodies*, pp. 18–20, 25.
- 16 Enrico Corradini, in a review of M. Morasso, “L’imperialismo artistico,” in *Marzocco*, 43 (October 26, 1902), cited in Enrico Corradini, *Scritti e discorsi*, xvii, quoted in Lynn M. Gunzberg, *Strangers at Home: Jews in the Italian Literary Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 230.
- 17 Enrico Corradini, “La vita che non muta,” *La vita nazionale* (Siena: Lumachi, 1907), p. 194.
- 18 Enrico Corradini, *L’unità e la potenza delle nazioni* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1922), pp. 44, 113.
- 19 Enrico Corradini, in a review of M. Morasso, quoted in Gunzberg, *Strangers at Home*, p. 230.
- 20 “Associazione Nazionalista Italiana,” in *Il nazionalismo* (Rome: ANI, 1920): 6–9, 14–15, quoted in Griffin, ed., *Fascism*, pp. 37–8.

- 21 Benito Mussolini, "Programma del PNF," in Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il fascista*, I. *La conquista del potere, 1921–1925* (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1966; 1995), p. 756.
- 22 Benito Mussolini, "'Orifiamma del nastro azzuro,'" April 21, 1923; *Giornale d'Italia*, no. 96, April 23, 1923, XXIII; *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XIX, p. 204.
- 23 Benito Mussolini, "Il primo anniversario della marcia su Roma," Discorso di Milano, October 28, 1923; *Popolo d'Italia*, no. 259, October 30, 1923, X; *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XX, p. 64.
- 24 Benito Mussolini, "Al popolo di Venezia," June 3, 1923; *Popolo d'Italia*, no. 133, June 5, 1923, X; *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XIX, p. 234.
- 25 Benito Mussolini, "Al popolo di Cagliari," June 12, 1923; *Popolo d'Italia*, no. 140, June 13, 1923, X; *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XIX, p. 267.
- 26 Benito Mussolini, "Discorso di Bologna," April 3, 1921, *Popolo d'Italia*, nos 81, 82; April 5, 6, 1921, VIII; *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XVI, pp. 239, 240.
- 27 Benito Mussolini, "Il programma fascista," *Popolo d'Italia*, nos 267, 268, 269; November 8, 9, 10, 1921, VIII; *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XVII, p. 219.
- 28 Horn, *Social Bodies*, pp. 18–27.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 31.
- 30 Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il duce I: Gli anni del consenso, 1929–1936*, 2nd edn (Turin: Einaudi, 1996), p. 41.
- 31 Benito Mussolini, "Al popolo di Reggio Emilia," *Popolo d'Italia*, no. 260, October 31, 1926, XIII; *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XXII, p. 246.
- 32 Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 64–5.
- 33 Ipsen, *Dictating Demography*, pp. 73, 157, 176–7, 180, 184, 193; De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women*, p. 71.
- 34 De Felice, *Mussolini il duce*, pp. 116–17.
- 35 Benito Mussolini, "Relazione alle camera dei deputati sugli accordi del Laterano," May 13, 1929, *Parliam. act. dep.* vol. 1, pp. 129–54; *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XXIV, p. 90.
- 36 Benito Mussolini, "Messaggio per l'anno nuovo," October 30, 1930; *Popolo d'Italia*, nos 254, 255, 256; October 25, 26, 27, 1930, XVII, *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XXIV, p. 283.
- 37 Nino D'Aroma, *Mussolini segreto* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1958), p. 48.
- 38 Mussolini to the Athletes of Italy, October 28, 1934, *Scritti e discorsi*, vol. IX, p. 141, quoted in "La consegna di Mussolini: raccolta completa delle frasi sulla razza contenute negli scritti e discorsi del Duce," *La Difesa della Razza*, 2, 19 (August 5, 1939): 12.
- 39 Benito Mussolini, "La razza bianca muore?," *Popolo d'Italia*, no. 209; September 4, 1934, XXI; *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XXVI, p. 314.
- 40 Mussolini's preface was first published in *Il Popolo d'Italia* as "Numero come forza." Korherr's book was first published in Germany in 1927 as *Geburtenrückgang*. Korherr later served in the SS as chief statistician, and was responsible for keeping records on the numbers of Jews executed in the East. Carl Ipsen, *Dictating Demography*, pp. 66–7; Griffin, ed., *Fascism*, p. 58.
- 41 Benito Mussolini, Preface to Riccardo Korherr, *Regresso delle nascite: morte dei popoli* (Rome: Libreria del Littorio, 1928), pp. 10–11.
- 42 Nino D'Aroma, *Mussolini segreto* (Bologna, 1958), p. 20; Benito Mussolini, "La razza bianca muore?," *Il popolo d'Italia*, no. 209, September 4, 1934, XXI; *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XXVI, p. 315.
- 43 De Felice, *Storia delgi ebrei*, p. 294.
- 44 *Ibid.*, pp. 293–4.
- 45 Alfred Rosenberg, *Der Zukunftsweg einer deutschen Aussenpolitik* (Munich: F. Eher Nachf. GmbH, 1927), pp. 41–6, 49, 60–1, quoted in Meir Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews: German-Italian Relations and the Jewish Question in Italy 1922–1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), pp. 40–1.
- 46 Gaetano Salvemini, *Prelude to World War II* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1953), pp. 170–1.

- 47 De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei*, pp. 220, 290–1, 510.
- 48 Dennis Mack Smith, *Mussolini's Roman Empire* (New York: The Viking Press, 1976), p. 58; Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914–1945* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), p. 231.
- 49 Ludwig, *Talks with Mussolini*, pp. 69–70.
- 50 Benito Mussolini, section 9, “Idee fondamentali,” in *Dottrina del fascismo*, 1932, in *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XXXIV, p. 120; Gioacchino Sera, “Razza,” *Enciclopedia Italiana*, vol. 28 (Rome: Istituto Giovanni Treccani, 1935), pp. 928–9.
- 51 Benito Mussolini, “il ‘dato’ irrefutabile,” *Il Popolo d'Italia*, no. 182, July 31, 1935, in *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XXVII, pp. 110–11.
- 52 Benito Mussolini, “Alla fonte,” *Popolo d'Italia*, no. 204, August 29, 1934, XXI (w 1); *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XXVI, p. 309.
- 53 Benito Mussolini, “Fallacia Ariana,” *Popolo d'Italia*, no. 192, August 14, 1934, XXI (w 1); *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XXVI, p. 298.
- 54 Benito Mussolini, *Scritti e discorsi*, vol. VIII, p. 250, quoted in “La consegna di Mussolini,” p. 12.
- 55 Salvemini, *Prelude to World War II*, p. 162.
- 56 Benito Mussolini, “Teutonica,” *Popolo d'Italia*, no. 124, May 26, 1934, XXI (w 9); *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XXVI, p. 232.
- 57 Benito Mussolini, “Al popolo di Bari,” September 6, 1934; *Popolo d'Italia*, no. 212, September 7, 1934, XXI; *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XXVI, p. 319.
- 58 Smith, *Mussolini's Roman Empire*, pp. 57–8.
- 59 Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews*, p. 129.
- 60 *Ibid.*, p. 35.
- 61 De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei*, p. 247.
- 62 Sergi, *Da Alba Longa*, pp. 10–11. Sergi later mentions the Italian archeologist Giacomo Boni as one of those scholars duped into accepting the Aryan invasion thesis; p. 25.
- 63 De Grazia, *How Fascists Ruled Women*, p. 48.
- 64 ACS, SPD (CO) 509.058, “Pende, Sen. Nicola”; biography, Nicola Pende.
- 65 ACS, SPD (CO) 509.058 “Pende, Sen. Nicola,” Nicola Pende, “Biologia delle razze ed unità spirituale mediterranea,” from a conference given by Pende in Nice, France, January 5, 1934.
- 66 ACS, SPD (CO) 509.058, “Pende, Sen. Nicola,” Pende, “Biologia delle razze.”
- 67 Nicola Pende, “La mentalità mediterranea nella nuova medicina dell'Italia imperiale,” reprint from *Il Policlinico*, 1936.

4 The implementation of Nordic racism in Italy, 1936–1938

- 1 ACS, SPD (CR) 480/R, busta 146, fasc. 395 [Giulio Cogni]; Letter, Giulio Cogni to Mussolini, August 7, XVI [1938].
- 2 Antonio Spinosa, “Le persecuzioni razziali in Italia I: origini,” *Il ponte* (July 1952): 975.
- 3 De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei*, pp. 192–3.
- 4 Gregor, *Ideology of Fascism*, pp. 277–9.
- 5 Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews*, p. 164.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 9.
- 7 Emilio Gentile, “La nazione del fascismo,” pp. 101–2; De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei*, p. 256.
- 8 See, for example, Zuccotti, *The Italians and the Holocaust*, pp. 28–33.
- 9 Luigi Preti, *Impero fascista africani ed ebrei* (Milan: Mursia, 1968), p. 147.
- 10 Gene Bernardini, “The Origins and Development of Racial Anti-Semitism in Fascist Italy,” *Journal of Modern History*, 49 (September 1977): 444.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 452.
- 12 Dante Germino, *The Italian Fascist Party in Power; a study in totalitarian rule* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1959), pp. 27–8.
- 13 Ipsen, *Dictating Demography*, p. 6; Giuseppe Parlato, “Polemica antiborghese, antigermanesimo e questione razziale nel sindacalismo fascista,” *Storia contemporanea*, XIX, 6 (December 1988):

1189. Mussolini himself sarcastically remarked on the “soft” bourgeoisie’s reluctance to accept racism at the meeting of the National Council of the Fascist Party, on October 25, 1938. “Even though I always spoke of race, the bourgeoisie suddenly reared up and said: ‘race?’ Then I asked myself: ‘By chance will I not be like those authors more cited than read?’”
- 14 Giuseppe Bottai, *Diario*, p. 187, in Gentile, “La nazione del fascismo,” pp. 85–6.
- 15 Bottai, *Diario*, p. 111, in Gentile, “La nazione del fascismo,” pp. 85–6.
- 16 Parlato, “Polemica antiborghese, antigermanesimo e questione,” p. 1189; Gentile, “La nazione del fascismo,” p. 87; De Felice, *Mussolini il duce*, p. 90; Emilio Gentile, *La grande Italia: Ascesa e declino del mito della nazione nel ventesimo secolo* (Milan: Mondadori, 1997), p. 174.
- 17 De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei*, p. 236.
- 18 Gregor, *Ideology of Fascism*, p. 270; Germino, *The Italian Fascist Party in Power*, p. 27.
- 19 De Felice, *Mussolini il duce*, I, p. 48.
- 20 Julius Evola, *Il fascismo visto dalla destra* (Rome: Giovanni Volpe, 1979), pp. 110–11.
- 21 De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei*, p. 253 (original in Ciano, *Diario 1937–1938*, pp. 207, 211).
- 22 Gentile, *La grande Italia*, p. 176.
- 23 Bottai, *Diario*, p. 210.
- 24 *Ibid.*, pp. 356–7.
- 25 Julius Evola, trans. P. Baillet, *Le chemin du Cinabre [Il Cammino del Cinnabro]* (Milan–Carmagnole: Archè-Arktos, 1982), p. 147.
- 26 Julius Evola, *Sintesi di dottrina della razza* (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, 1941), p. 125, in Felice, *Storia degli ebrei*, pp. 290–1.
- 27 Evola, *Sintesi di dottrina della razza*, pp. 96, 100; in De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei*, p. 82.
- 28 Evola, *Il Cammino del Cinabro* (Milan, 1963), p. 169, in De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei*, p. 246.
- 29 Quoted in Canfora, *Le vie del classicismo*, p. 254.
- 30 Visser, “Fascist Doctrine and the Cult of the Romanità,” p. 13.
- 31 “Discorsi sulla storia d’Italia,” Firenze, *La Nuova Italia*, pp. 5–6; quoted in Pier Giorgio Zunino, *L’ideologia del fascismo: miti, credenze e valori nella stabilizzazione del regime* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1985), pp. 82–3. Zunino, *L’ideologia del fascismo*, pp. 73, 79; Canfora, *Le vie del classicismo*, pp. 254, 257.
- 32 Giuseppe Bottai, “Roma nella scuola italiana,” *Quaderni di studi romani*, 1939; quoted in Canfora, *Le vie del classicismo*, p. 254.
- 33 Luigi Preti, *I miti dell’impero e della razza nell’Italia degli anni ‘30* (Rome: Opere Nuove, 1965), p. 63.
- 34 Mauro Raspanti, “Ideologia,” in David Bidussa, ed., *La Menzogna della Razza: Documenti e immagini del razzismo e dell’antisemitismo fascista* (Bologna: Grafis, 1994), p. 246.
- 35 De Felice, *Mussolini il duce*, p. 328.
- 36 *Ibid.*, pp. 307–8.
- 37 See for instance Roy MacGregor-Hastie, *The Day of the Lion: The Life and Death of Fascist Italy, 1922–1945* (London: Macdonald & Co., 1963), p. 254; Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews*, p. 139.
- 38 M. van Creveld, “Beyond the Finzi-Contini Garden: Mussolini’s ‘Fascist Racism,’” *Encounter*, XLII (February 1974): 46–7.
- 39 Sem Benelli, *Schiavitù* (Milan: Arnaldo Mondadori, 1945), p. 54. See also Dennis Mack Smith, *Mussolini: A Biography* (New York: Vintage Books, 1982), p. 281.
- 40 Bottai, *Diario*, p. 125.
- 41 Michel Wievorka, trans. Chris Turner, *The Arena of Racism* (London; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1995), p. 6.
- 42 Wievorka, *The Arena of Racism*, p. 115.
- 43 Ludwig, *Talks with Mussolini*, p. 131.
- 44 Pompeo Aloisi, *Journal (25 juillet 1932–14 juin 1936)* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1957), p. 185.
- 45 Alessandro Lessona, *Memorie*, 2nd edn. (Rome: Edizioni Lessona, 1963), pp. 58–9.
- 46 Benito Mussolini, “Discorso di Mussolini al Consiglio Nazionale del P.N.F.,” October 25, 1938; *Popolo d’Italia*, no. 298, October 26, 1938; in *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XXIX (Florence: La Fenice, 1951; 1964), pp. 185–96.

- 47 Benito Mussolini, "Discorso di Trieste," September 15, 1938; *Popolo d'Italia*, no. 258, 259, 260, 261, September 16, 17, 18, 19, 1938, XXV; in *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XXIX, pp. 145–7.
- 48 Mussolini, "Discorso di Mussolini al Consiglio Nazionale del P.N.F.," October 25, 1938.
- 49 See Benito Mussolini, "Scoperta!," *Popolo d'Italia*, no. 207, July 26, 1938, XXV (z 158); in *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XXIX, pp. 125–6; Preti, *Impero fascista*, p. 115; Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews*, pp. 101–2.
- 50 De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei*, p. 237.
- 51 Galeazzo Ciano, ed. Renzo De Felice, *Diario, 1937–8*, 3rd edn. (Milan: Rizzoli), pp. 64–5, December 3, 1937.
- 52 See, for example, Mussolini's "Discorso," October 25, 1938 (*Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XXIX, p. 190), in which he criticized the bourgeoisie for their lack of racial acuity; De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei*, pp. 290–91.
- 53 Ciano, *1937–1938 Diario*, September 4, 1938, p. 227.
- 54 Landra Papers, MCP, Gabinetto, Ufficio Razza, Guido Landra, "Il razzismo in Italia dal 24 giugno 1938–XVI."
- 55 Mussolini, "Discorso di Trieste," p. 146.
- 56 Cesare Interlandi, personal communication.
- 57 ACS, SPD (CO) 516.366, "Cogni, Giulio;" Telegram, prefect of Siena to Sebastiani, July 10, 1937.
- 58 ACS, SPD (CO) 516.366, "Cogni, Giulio;" Note, Giulio Cogni to Mussolini, 11 September 1936.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 Maria Teresa Pichetto, *Alle radici dell'odio: Preziosi e Benigni antisemiti* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1983), p. 81.
- 61 Cogni, *I valori*, p. 15.
- 62 Ibid., p. 86.
- 63 Ibid., pp. 33–4; Giulio Cogni, *Il razzismo*, 2nd edn. (Milan: Fratelli Bocca, 1937), pp. 110–11.
- 64 Cogni, *Il razzismo*, p. 230.
- 65 Cogni, *I valori*, pp. 30–31; Cogni, *Il razzismo*, pp. 110–11, 212–13.
- 66 Gould, *Mismeasure of Man*, p. 99.
- 67 Cogni, *I valori*, pp. 17, 30–31, 110–11.
- 68 Ibid., pp. 66, 113–18, 129.
- 69 Ibid., p. 62.
- 70 Cogni, *Il razzismo*, p. 73.
- 71 Ibid., pp. 189–97.
- 72 Ibid., pp. 216–17.
- 73 Cogni, *I valori*, pp. 52, 74–5; Cogni, *Il razzismo*, pp. 209–21.
- 74 Cogni, *I valori*, p. 8.
- 75 Ibid., pp. 23, 109, 111.
- 76 Ibid., pp. 138, 152–3.
- 77 Ibid., pp. 8–9, 145, 149.
- 78 Ibid., pp. 126–9; Cogni, *Il razzismo*, pp. 146–7.
- 79 Cogni, *Il razzismo*, p. 202.
- 80 Cogni, *I valori*, p. 130.
- 81 Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews*, p. 116; Cogni, *Il razzismo*, p. vii.
- 82 Riccardo Carbonelli, "Il dolicocefalo biondo in camicia nera," *Frontespizio*, no. 2 (February 1937): 129–38; Attilo Tamaro, *Venti anni di storia 1922–1943*, 3rd vol. (Rome: Tiber Editrice, 1954), p. 278; De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei*, p. 217.
- 83 Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews*, p. 116.
- 84 Giorgio Pini, *Filo diretto con Palazzo Venezia* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1950), p. 90.
- 85 Cogni, *I valori*, p. xi. For example, Interlandi allowed Cogni to publish a reply against his detractors in *Il Tevere*: "Risposta ai detrattori," *Il Tevere* (March 20, 1927).
- 86 ACS, Giulio Cogni to Benito Mussolini, June 14, 1937.
- 87 Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews*, p. 116.

- 88 Landra Papers, Ministry of Popular Culture, Gabinetto, Ufficio Razza, Prof. Dott. Guido Landra, "Cronica," September 12, 1938.
- 89 ACS, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, Direzione Generale Istruzione Superiore, Div. I fascicolo: personale insegnante concorsi 1924–1954, Concorso per la Cattedra di Antropologia della R. Università di Palermo, 1940, Guido Landra, "Notizie sull'operosità scientifica e sulla carriera didattica," and "Elenco Pubblicazioni," 1940.
- 90 ACS, Min. Pubbl. Istruzione, Concorso for the chair of anthropology, University of Palermo, November 19, 1940, "Relazione della Commissione Giudicatrice del Concorso per la Cattedra di Antropologia della R. Università di Palermo."
- 91 "Abituate a considerare l'antropologia, scienza alla quale dedicai sempre e unicamente ogni mia attività, come qualche cosa di superiore alle meschine ambizioni personali e alle necessità mutevoli e contingenti della politica ..." Landra Papers, Guido Landra, notes, "A proposito del cosiddetto congresso internazionale di antropologia di Bucarest," September 1937.
- 92 "I piccoli uomini, che prostituiscono la scienza al punto da farla ancella della malafede e della menzogna, hanno delle parole che svaniscono come l'ubriachezza e come questa lasciano solo un senso di profondo disgusto."
 "Nessuno ha creduto nè crede alla falsa propaganda, anche se questa ha costato diversi milioni, nessuno ha creduto nè crede alle affermazioni di lealtà di chi ha sempre un pensiero segreto nel cuore."
 "Indarno le lance dei donchischiotti di molti paesi hanno tentate di scalfire la realtà ineluttabile contro cui si è scagliata la velenosa rabbia del cosiddetto congresso antropologico di Bucarest."
- Landra Papers, Guido Landra, notes, "A proposito del cosiddetto congresso."
- 93 Landra Papers, Ministry of Popular Culture, Gabinetto, Ufficio Razza, Prof. Dott. Guido Landra, "Cronica," September 12, 1938.
- 94 Ibid.
- 95 Landra was apparently referring to this document in his article, "Storia vera del razzismo Italiano," when he explained that he "compiled a few fundamental points" that were "revised and corrected" and became the Manifesto of the Racial Scientists. Guido Landra, "Storia vera del razzismo Italiano," *La Difesa della Razza*, 5, 13 (May 5, 1942): 4.
- 96 Such a body, the High Council for Demography and Race, was formed under Giacomo Acerbo on September 5, 1938. Ironically, it was a stronghold of the Mediterraneanists, a turn of events that Landra would have cause to regret, as they apparently aided in efforts to have him fired from the Ufficio Razza at the Ministry of Popular Culture.
- 97 Landra Papers, "Technical councils for the development of the racial campaign in Italy."
- 98 The sentiment sounds much like one expressed by Roberto Farinacci to Benito Mussolini: "The [racial] problem is exquisitely political; I am once again convinced that when the scientists want to render a service to politics, they compromise any problem. On the philosophical and scientific plane one can always discuss, on the political plane, where there are reasons of State, one acts and one wins." ACS, SPD (CR), fasc. 242/R, 39, D, Roberto Farinacci to Benito Mussolini.
- 99 Landra Papers, "Le questioni della razza in Italia nel 1938," April 20, 1938.
- 100 Guido Landra, "Storia vera del razzismo italiano" *La Difesa della Razza*, 5, 13 (May 5, 1942): 4.
- 101 Giorgio Cosmacini, "Scienza e ideologia nella medicina del Novecento: dalla scienza egemone alla scienza ancillare," in Franco Della Peruta, ed., *Storia d'Italia*, annali 7: *Malattia e medicina* (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1984), p. 1227. See also M. Sticco, *Padre Gemelli. Appunti per la biografia di un uomo difficile* (Milan: O.R., 1974).

Other notable anti-Semitic clerics included the editorial staff of the journal *Vita e pensiero* of the Catholic University of Milan, the bishop of Cremona Monseignor G. Cazzani, and Italian Jesuits in general (especially Father A. Brucculeri, who praised the Manifesto of the Racial Scientists as a work of "the innate equilibrium of the Italian genius." Pichetto, *Alle radici dell'odio*, p. 90. See also A. Brucculeri, "Razzismo italiano," *L'Avvenire*, 17 July 1938; "La teoria moderna delle razze impugnata da un acattolico," *Civiltà cattolica*, 1938, III fasc. 2113, pp. 83–4; A. Messineo, "Gli elementi costitutivi della nazione e la razza," *Civiltà cattolica*,

- 1938, III, fasc. 2115, pp. 209–23, and E. Rosa, “La questione giudaica e ‘La Civiltà cattolica,’” *Civiltà cattolica*, 1938, IV, fasc. 2119, pp. 3–16.
- 102 “Il tentativo di liberare le scienze antropologiche da ogni influenza politica è stato e sarà sempre detinato al fallimento. Lo studio dell’uomo in verità non può essere mai come lo studio dei cristalli, quello degli animali e quello delle piante, che possono essere impostati su criteri esclusivamente naturalistici. L’evoluzione degli studi antropologici è fatalmente legata all’evoluzione dei concetti politici. La scienza dell’uomo, avulsa dalla politica, è destinata ad inaridirsi e a diventare vano gioco di cifre e di dati che non possono parlare a nessuno.” Guido Landra, P. Agostino Gemelli, and Ferruccio Banissoni, *Antropologia e psicologia* (Varese: Valentino Bompiani, 1940), p. 307.
- 103 Landra Papers, “Le questioni della razza in Italia nel 1938,” April 20, 1938; Landra Papers, MCP, Gabinetto, Ufficio Razza, Guido Landra, “Appunto per S.E. il Ministero,” Roma, 31 dicembre 1938/XVII, “Prima riunione del comitato Italo-Tedesco per le questioni razziali, relazione: Berlino–Monaco, 13–21 dicembre 1938/XVII.” Professor Dr Otmar Freiherr von Verschuer, Director of the Institute of Biology and Racial Hygiene at the University of Frankfurt, also recognized that Landra dedicated himself “with special interest to the work of the German school of Eugene Fischer on racial biology.” Letter of recommendation, Otmar Verschuer to Guido Landra, April 29, 1940, quoted in ACS, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione (hereafter MPI), Concorso for the Chair of Anthropology, University of Palermo, November 19, 1940, Document: Guido Landra, “Notizie sull’operosità scientifica e sulla carriera didattica,” p. 12.
- 104 Robert Proctor, “From *Anthropologie* to *Rassenkunde*,” in George W. Stocking, Jr, ed., *Bones, Bodies, Behavior: Essays on Biological Anthropology* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), p. 164.
- 105 Bruno Spampanato, *Contromemorale*, vol. II (Milan: Edizione di “Illustrato,” 1951, 1952), pp. 130–2.
- 106 For more on Fischer, see Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics*.
- 107 Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews*, pp. 149–50.
- 108 Bottai, *Diario*, p. 125. Quite obviously, Mussolini was thoroughly infatuated with Nordic racism. In a 25 July article of *Scoperta!*, he considered emphasizing the “blondness” of many Italians. See Michele Sarfatti, *Mussolini contro gli ebrei: cronaca dell’elaborazione delle leggi del 1938* (Turin: Silvio Zamorani, 1994), p. 22.
- 109 Landra Papers, MCP, Gabinetto, Ufficio Razza, Guido Landra, “Il razzismo in Italia dal 24 giugno 1938–XVI.”
- 110 ACS, SPD (CO) 183.506; Letter, Guido Landra to Mussolini, September 27, 1940.
- 111 Landra Papers, MCP, Gabinetto, Ufficio Razza, Guido Landra, “Il razzismo in Italia dal 24 giugno 1938–XVI.”
- 112 “È perniciosa la teoria della razza mediterranea ... dare un indirizzo nordico al razzismo in Italia non vuole dire negare l’esistenza di mediterranei in Italia o negare ad essi buone qualità, ma soltanto impedire che le cattive qualità del complesso psicologico dei mediterranei vengano esaltate. Queste cattive qualità che talora costituirono l’inferiorità di alcuni Italiani (eccessivo individualismo, sentimentalismo esagerato, mancanza di calma e di tenacia ecc.) sono propria [*sic*] del complesso psicologico dei mediterranei. D’altra parte, la teoria della razza mediterranea comprende in questa razza anche le popolazioni semitiche, portatrici di una civiltà sovvertitrice per l’Europa, e stabilisce quindi delle simpatie ideologiche [*sic*] con l’Asia e l’Africa, assolutamente inammissibili.” Mario Toscano, “Marcello Ricci: Una testimonianza sulle origini del razzismo fascista,” *Storia Contemporanea*, XXVII, 5 (October 1996): 895–7.
- 113 Toscano, “Marcello Ricci,” p. 892.
- 114 Benito Mussolini to Bruno Spampanato, December 1943, in Spampanato, *Contromemorale*, pp. 130–2.
- 115 Emilio Gentile, “La nazione del fascismo,” p. 101.
- 116 De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei*, pp. 290–1.
- 117 Giuseppe Bottai, “Politica fascista della razza,” *Critica Fascista*, 1938.

- 118 De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei*, pp. 290–1. Julius Evola, *Sintesi di dottrina della razza* (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, 1941), p. 82.
- 119 Mussolini to Bruno Spampanato, Dec. 1943, in Spampanato, *Contromemoriale*, II, pp. 130–2.
- 120 Ludwig, *Talks with Mussolini*, p. 59.
- 121 “È, questo, un dato di fatto insopprimibile. Razze superiori e razze inferiori, non ce ne sono. Non bisogna indulgere troppo – specie in questo campo – a suggestioni materialistiche. Le razze sono – talvolta – come le Nazioni: ci si allea con le une: si combatte contro le altre. Naturalmente, in tal caso, non si tratta di guerra vera e propria, armi alla mano: ed è guerra peggiore: così pericolosa che – per evitarne le conseguenze – può apparire utile ricorrere ai sistemi della guerra vera.” Mussolini to Ivon De Begnac, September 1940, in Yvon De Begnac, *Palazzo Venezia. Storia di un regime* (Rome: La Rocca, 1950), p. 642.
- 122 Quoted in Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews*, pp. 396–7.
- 123 Mussolini, “idee fondamentali” from “La dottrina del fascismo,” *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XXXIV, p. 120.
- 124 Michael A. Ledeen, “The Evolution of the Italian Fascist Anti-Semitism,” *Jewish Social Studies*, XXXVII (January 1975), pp. 15–16.
- 125 Mussolini’s speech to the National Council of the PNF, October 25, 1938, *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XXIX, p. 190.
- 126 Mussolini, “Il fascismo e i problemi della politica estera italiana,” Feb. 6, 1921, *Il piccolo della sera di Trieste*, no. 371, February 7, 1921, 37th edn, new series; *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XVI, p. 159.
- 127 Mussolini, “Al consiglio nazionale del P.N.F.,” *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XXIX, p. 190.
- 128 Guido Landra, several years later, would remind Mussolini of the “numerous attacks that came from everywhere” on the Manifesto in the months after its publication. ACS, SPD (CO) 183.506, “Dott. Guido Landra;” Letter, Guido Landra to Benito Mussolini, 27 September 1940.
- 129 Pietro Scoppola, “La Chiesa e il fascismo durante il pontificato di Pio XI,” in Alberto Aquarone and Maurizio Vernassa, eds, *Il regime fascista* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1974), p. 227.
- 130 Richard A. Webster, *The Cross and the Fasces: Christian Democracy and Fascism in Italy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1960), pp. 125–6, 155–6, 160–1.
- 131 Messineo, “Gli elementi costitutivi della nazione e la razza,” p. 217.
- 132 See “Esemplificazioni di teorie razziste,” *Osservatore Romano* (April 30, 1938): 2; see also Anthony Rhodes, *The Vatican in the Age of the Dictators* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973), p. 207.
- 133 “La ‘teoria moderna delle razze’ impugnata da un acattolico,” *Civiltà cattolica*, 89, vol. III (July 2, 1938): 71.
- 134 Galeazzo Ciano, *1937–1938 Diario* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1948), in Pietro Scoppola, *La Chiesa e il fascismo: Documenti e interpretazioni* (Bari: Laterza, 1971), p. 320.
- 135 Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews*, p. 153. (See Pope Pius XI address to the students of the College of Propaganda, July 28, 1938, in *Civiltà cattolica*, July 29, 1938, p. 373.)
- 136 Mussolini, “Discorsi,” October 25, 1938, *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XXIX, p. 190.
- 137 Daniel A. Binchy, *Church and State in Fascist Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941; 1970), p. 614.
- 138 Guido Leto, *OVRA: Fascismo – antifascismo*, 2nd edn. (Rocca San Casciano: Cappelli, 1952), pp. 191–2.
- 139 Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews*, p. 282.
- 140 Nino D’Aroma, *Vent’anni insieme. Vittorio Emanuele e Mussolini* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1957), p. 275.
- 141 “Ein revolutionärer Akt von weltgeschichtlicher Bedeutung. Italien bekennt sich zum Rassengedanken,” *Völkischer Beobachter*, July 15, 1938. Quoted in Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews*, pp. 153–4.
- 142 *Informazione diplomatica*, no. 18, reprinted in Felice, *Storia degli ebrei*, pp. 558–9.
- 143 Landra Papers, MCP, Gabinetto, Ufficio Razza, “Il razzismo in Italia dal 24 giugno 1938–XVI.”
- 144 Pende had made this claim over four years earlier. See ACS, SPD (CO) 509.058, “Pende, Sen. Nicola.” Nicola Pende, “Biologia delle razze ed unità spirituale mediterranea,” from a conference given by Pende in Nice, France, January 5, 1934.

- 145 Toscano, "Marcello Ricci."
- 146 Landra Papers, MCP, Gabinetto, Ufficio Razza, "Il razzismo in italia dal 24 giugno 1938–XVI"; Toscano, "Marcello Ricci."
- 147 G. Bottai, *Diario* (entry for July 29, 1938), p. 128.
- 148 Raspanti, "I razzismi del fascismo," p. 78.
- 149 ACS, MCP, busta 4, fasci. 43 "Pende Sen. Nicola," quoted in Felice, *Storia degli ebrei*, p. 279.
- 150 According to Bottai, Mussolini had quite consciously left Cogni out of the Manifesto. Bottai, *Diario*, p. 125 (July 16, 1938).
- 151 ACS, MCP, busta 131, fasci. 23, Gabinetto, Ufficio Razza, portfolio no. 00146; Letter, Giulio Cogni to Guido Landra, August 9, 1938.
- 152 ACS, SPD (CR) 480/R, busta 146, fasci. 395 [Giulio Cogni]; Letter, Giulio Cogni to Mussolini, August 7, XVI [1938].
- 153 ACS, MCP, Gabinetto, fasci. "collaboratori ufficio razza"; File: "Prof. Giulio Congi, Siena"; Letter, Cogni to Landra, August 22.
- 154 Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews*, p. 165.
- 155 Giampiero Mughini, *A via della Mercedes c'era un razzista* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1991), p. 146.
- 156 Interview with Cesare Interlandi, Rome, July 12, 1996.
- 157 Raspanti, "I razzismi del fascismo," pp. 75–6.
- 158 Preti, *Impero fascista*, p. 151.
- 159 Almirante would move on after the collapse of the regime in 1943 to become head of the cabinet of the Ministry of Popular Culture of the Republic of Salò. Raspanti, "I razzismi del fascismo," p. 76.
- 160 *Difesa della Razza*, 1, 5 (October 5, 1938): 7.
- 161 ACS, Min. of Interior – Gen. Div. for Demography and Race, Racial Division; busta 4, fasci. 15–23 1938–1943, Memorandum prot. no. 34, from Min. dell'educazione nazionale, Min. Bottai, 6 Aug. 1938, to "regi provveditori algi studi and presidenti degli istituti d'istruzione artistica."
- 162 Quoted in De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei*, p. 279.
- 163 ACS, MCP, fasci. "Difesa della Razza," quoted in Raspanti, "Ideologia," p. 231.
- 164 See for instance, Aldo Modica, "L'origine della specie per reattivita razziale," *La Difesa della Razza* 5, 24 (October 24, 1942): 7.
- 165 For example, see Umberto Angeli, "Tipo fiscio e carattere morale dei veri e dei falsi Italiani," *La Difesa della Razza*, 2, 14 (May 20, 1939): 25; T. Salvotti, "L'antiebraismo in Italia attraverso secoli," *La Difesa della Razza*, 3, 18 (July 20, 1940): 10; C.B. (Carlo Barduzzi?), "Disfatta Giudaica," *La Difesa della Razza*, 3, 19 (August 5, 1940): 32. A similar tendency to medicalize racism had by now become a matter of course in Nazi Germany. The Nazi euthanasia program indulged in medicalizing terms such as "special treatment," "disinfection," and "cleansing the body politic." See Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics*, p. 549.
- 166 For a discussion of scientific racism, see Gould, *Mismeasure of Man*, p. 20.
- 167 For example, see "Fratellanza di odio" [no author], *La Difesa della Razza*, 1, 5 (October 5, 1938): 13.
- 168 Guido Landra, "Razza italiana oltre confine," *La Difesa della Razza*, 2, 2 (November 20, 1938): 8.
- 169 Landra, "La razza e le differenze razziali," *La Difesa della Razza*, 1, 1 (August 5, 1938): 15.
- 170 Landra, "Il razzismo e la scienza italiana," *La Difesa della Razza*, 5, 17 (July 5, 1942): 7; Landra, "Bibliografia razziale," *La Difesa della Razza*, 3, 6 (January 20, 1940): 19; Landra, "I metodi per lo studio delle razze umane," *La Difesa della Razza*, 3, 20 (August 20, 1940): 8. One should note that Landra lapses into circular reasoning by claiming that national forces could guide racial evolution. He had already asserted in the Manifesto that racial traits determine national characteristics.
- 171 Landra, "La razza italiana nella teoria dell'ologenesi," *La Difesa della Razza*, 2, 11 (April 5, 1939): 10.
- 172 Landra, prefatory essay, *La Difesa della Razza*, 3, 1 (November 5, 1939): 7; Landra, "Due anni di razzismo italiano," *La Difesa della Razza*, 3, 17 (July 5, 1940): 15.
- 173 Francesco Callari, "Perchè ariani," *La Difesa della Razza*, 4, 1 (September 20, 1938): 20.

- 174 Arrigo Solmi, "L'unità etnica della nazione italiana nella storia," *La Difesa della Razza*, 1, 1 (August 5, 1938): 8; Giuseppe Pensabene, "Motivi trionfali nell'arte dei popoli arii" *La Difesa della Razza*, 2, 1 (November 5, 1938): 28; Landra, "Perchè ariani," p. 20; Landra, "Concetti del razzismo italiana," *La Difesa della Razza*, 1, 2 (August 20, 1938): 10.
- 175 The idea that Ancient Rome's decline was due to the degenerative influences of Semitic immigration stems from Arthur de Gobineau. See Michael D. Biddiss, *Father of Racist Ideology: The Social and Political Thought of Count Gobineau* (New York: Weybright and Talley, 1970), p. 126.
- 176 Pensabene, "Motivi trionfali nell'arte dei popoli arii," p. 28.
- 177 See, for example, Solmi, "L'unità etnica," p. 9.
- 178 Lidio Cipriani, "Razzismo coloniale," *La Difesa della Razza*, 1, 2 (August 20, 1938): 18; Giovanni Schiavi, "Ritorno alle origini del razzismo fascista" *La Difesa della Razza*, 6, 16 (June 20, 1943): 18.
- 179 For example, see Angelo Piccioli, "Nel prestigio della razza è la salvaguardia dell'impero," *La Difesa della Razza*, 1, 5 (October 5, 1938): 26–8.
- 180 Landra, "Razza italiana oltre confine," p. 8.
- 181 Landra, "Concetto del razzismo italiano," pp. 8, 10. See also Arturo Donaggio, "Caratteri della Romanità," *La Difesa della Razza*, 1, 1 (August 5, 1938): 22; Marcello Ricci, "Le leggi di Mendel," *La Difesa della Razza*, 1, 2 (August 20, 1938): 17; Landra, "il mondo delle razze eroiche," *La Difesa della Razza*, 3, 16 (June 20, 1940): 18.
- 182 See, for example, Landra, "Concetti del razzismo"; Ricci, "Le leggi di Mendel"; Leone Franzì, "Il meticciato," *La Difesa della Razza*, 1, 4 (September 20, 1938); Piccioli, "Nel prestigio della razza è la salvaguardia"; Giuseppe Lucidi, "Purezza ed unità di sangue della razza italiana," *La Difesa della Razza*, 1, 6 (October 20, 1938).
- 183 Landra, "Concetti del razzismo," p. 11.
- 184 Cipriani, "Razzismo coloniale," p. 20.
- 185 Franzì, "Il meticciato," pp. 29–31.
- 186 Landra, "il mondo delle razze eroiche," p. 18.
- 187 Cipriani, "Razzismo coloniale," p. 20.
- 188 Lino Businco, "La donna depositaria dei caratteri della razza," *La Difesa della Razza*, 1, 4 (September 20, 1938): 34–5.
- 189 Vasto Malachini, "L'europa e la razza," *La Difesa della Razza*, 6, 12 (April 20, 1943): 10.
- 190 The reader will be reminded of the reference to the Ara Pacis in Mussolini's article, "Scoperta!," *Il Popolo d'Italia*, 25 (July 26, 1938): 207, also in *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XXIX, pp. 125–6.
- 191 Quinto Flavio, "il razzismo e la pace," *La Difesa della Razza*, 1, 3 (September 5, 1938), 36.
- 192 Ottorino Gurrieri, "Genio artistico della nostra razza," *La Difesa della Razza*, 4, 13 (May 5, 1941): 11.
- 193 Landra, "Il concetto di razza in germania e in italia," *La Difesa della Razza*, 2, 9 (March 5, 1839): 12; Landra, "Due anni di razzismo," p. 14; Landra, "Fondamenti biologici del razzismo," *La Difesa della Razza*, 5, 10 (March 20, 1942): 5; Landra, "Razzismo ed evolucionismo," *La Difesa della Razza*, 6, 15 (June 5, 1943): 7.
- 194 ACS, MPI, Concorso for the Chair of Anthropology, University of Palermo, November 19, 1940, Document: Guido Landra, "Notizie sull'operosità scientifica e sulla carriera didattica," p. 20.
- 195 Eduardo Zavattari, "Ambiente naturale e caratteri razziale," *La Difesa della Razza*, 3, 8 (February 20, 1940): 8.
- 196 Modica, "L'origine della specie," p. 7. See also Aldo Modica, "Esiste una gerarchia delle razze umane," *La Difesa della Razza*, 6, 16 (June 20, 1943): 6; Modica, "Razze e sottorazze," *La Difesa della Razza*, 5, 12 (April 20, 1942): 19; Modica, "Geografia psichica e diversità razziali," *La Difesa della Razza*, 5, 18 (July 20, 1942): 11.
- 197 Zavattari, "Ambiente naturale," p. 10.
- 198 Zavattari, "Ambiente naturale e caratteri razziale," *La Difesa della Razza*, 3, 9 (March 5, 1940): 32.
- 199 Landra Papers, letter, Dino Alfieri to Benito Mussolini, July 26, 1938.
- 200 Zavattari, "Ambiente naturale e caratteri biopsichici della razza italiana," *La Difesa della Razza*, 1, 1 (August 5, 1938): 20–1.

- 201 Landra Papers, MCP, Gabinetto, Ufficio Razza, "Il razzismo in italia dal 24 giugno 1938–XVI."
- 202 "Se qualcuno ci domandasse come si potrebbe realizzare un razzismo positivo nel campo strettamente biologico, risponderemmo che basterebbe stimolare al massimo gli elementi meglio dotati dal punto di vista razziale del nostro popolo, di porre in condizioni favorevoli di sviluppo la grande massa degli elementi medi (i nove decimi circa della popolazione globale) e infine di fare diminuire con misure energiche, come la sterilizzazione e la castrazione, fino a farla sparire del tutto, la massa grigia degli elementi tarati ed asociale. Un'azione di tale genere dovrebbe essere accompagnata da una profonda riforma di carattere sociale ed economico." Landra, "Razzismo biologico e scientismo," *La Difesa della Razza*, 6, 1 (November 5, 1942): 11.
- 203 Marcello Ricci, "Ereditarietà ed eugenica," *La Difesa della Razza*, 1, 5 (October 5, 1938): 31.
- 204 Italian ambassador in Berlin to Ministry of Popular Culture, telespresso no. 9188, December 23 1938, reprinted in De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei*, document no. 29, p. 358; Landra Papers, MCP, Ufficio Razza; Memorandum, Sabato Visco, April 16, 1940.
- 205 Toscano, "Marcello Ricci," p. 887.
- 206 ACS, MCP, Gab. busta 33 fasci. 440, *Appunti e relazioni al Duce 1938–41*, July 19, 1938 memorandum for the head of the government. In Toscano, "Marcello Ricci," pp. 888–9.
- 207 Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews*, pp. 177–8.
- 208 *Ibid.*, p. 166.
- 209 ACS, MCP, Gabinetto, fasci. "collaboratori ufficio razza"; File: Cipriani, Lidio; Letter, Lidio Cipriani to Guido Landra, August 9, 1938.
- 210 These sections were struck out by a red pen from a proposed article submitted by Cipriani to Landra, "Miscugli di Razza." Cipriani had originally claimed in 1933 that the miscegenation of dolicocephalic Mediterraneans and brachycephalic Alpines in the Tuscany region was the cause of the superior hybrid that proved so fertile in art, science, language, etc. Claudio Pogliano, "Divisi, in nome della scienza," *I viaggi di erodoto*, 3, 7 (April 1989): 106.
- 211 ACS, MCP, Gabinetto, fasci. "collaboratori ufficio razza;" File: Cipriani, Lidio; Letter, Guido Landra to Lidio Cipriani, August 24, 1938.
- 212 "Quando si afferma la necessità di unire le famiglie sane con quelle portatrici di difetti ereditari e proporre la mescolanza di varietà etniche italiane in luogo di potenziare e difendere in tutti i modi le famiglie sane e gli elementi razzialmente migliori significa che nel campo eugenico si vuol far passare per razzismo ciò che è decisamente la negazione di ogni difesa e di ogni esaltazione della razza." Landra Papers, MCP, Gabinetto, Ufficio Razza, "Il razzismo in italia dal 24 giugno 1938–XVI."
- 213 ACS, MCP, Gabinetto, fasci. "collaboratori ufficio razza"; File: "prof. Giulio Cogni, Siena"; Memorandum, "Appunto per S.E. il Ministro," "Oggetto: Prof. Giulio Cogni."
- 214 Landra's allegiances can best be shown by a review of the letters of recommendation submitted in support of his bid for a professorship of anthropology at the University of Palermo in the fall of 1940. Eugen Fischer, Director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Anthropology of Berlin, wrote on April 20, 1940 that "Dr Landra is almost the only Italian anthropologist that recognizes the new direction of anthropology and fights for the new development of this science in the most decisive way. He never forgets that in place of the old descriptive anthropology has followed a science of race, based on the recognized teachings of heredity which places the questions of race and heredity first in line, and that these influence in a fundamental way the life of man, culture and the history of culture, and in this, with reason, he feels as if he is my spiritual son."
- Dr Walter Gross, Honorary Professor of the University of Berlin and head of the Central Racial Office of Germany, wrote on April 4, 1940: "He [Landra] possesses vast knowledge of anthropology and human hereditary biology and knows not only the relative [*sic*] Italian bibliography, but also has considerable knowledge of the research methods and the results obtained by the corresponding German science.... His knowledge of German thought is admirable.... With his knowledge, with his interest and with his convincing explication from the Italian point of view relative to racial politics, as well as his profound comprehension of the German thought on this subject, Prof. Landra has won the loyal esteem of the competent German establishment."
- Otmar Verschuer, Director of the Institute of Biology and Racial Hygiene at the University of Frankfurt, wrote on April 29, 1940: "He [Landra] has dedicated himself with special interest to

the work of the German school of Eugen Fischer on racial biology. He realizes that hereditary biology and racial science is of maximum importance for the life of the people and thus for politics ...”

- Georges Montandon, a lecturer in ethnology at the School of Anthropology of Paris, wrote on April 3, 1940 that “having followed the activity of colleague Prof. Guido Landra, in the field of anthropology and in its application to racial and ethnic problems, I consider him adept in carrying out *whatever work* that could be entrusted to him in this field.” ACS, MPI, Concorso for the Chair of Anthropology, University of Palermo, November 19, 1940. Document: Guido Landra, “Notizie sull’operosità scientifica e sulla carriera didattica,” pp. 11–12. For discussion of the German racial scientists mentioned above, see Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, p. 40.
- 215 ACS, MCP, Gabinetto, fasci. “collaboratori ufficio razza”; File: “Prof. Giulio Cogni, Siena”; Memorandum, Guido Landra to Dino Alfieri, November 17, 1938.
- 216 ACS, MCP, Gabinetto, fasci. “collaboratori ufficio razza”; File: “Prof. Giulio Cogni, Siena”; Memorandum, “Appunto per S.E. il Ministro,” “Oggetto: Prof. Giulio Cogni.”
- 217 ACS, MCP, Gabinetto, fasci. “collaboratori ufficio razza”; File: “Prof. Giulio Cogni, Siena”; Document by Giulio Cogni, “Razzismo costruttore.”
- 218 Landra Papers, MCP, Ufficio Razza, “Attività del prof. Guido Landra presso il Ministero della Cultura Popolare”; Landra Papers, MCP, Gabinetto, Ufficio Razza, Rome, October 4, 1938–XVI, “Attività dell’ufficio per gli studi della razza.”
- 219 Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews*, p. 165.
- 220 Regio Decreto Legge, September 5, 1938–XVI, no. 1539, Istituzione, presso il Ministero dell’Interno, del Consiglio superiore per la demografia e la razza. Republished in Michele Saffati, ed., “Le leggi contro gli ebrei,” special number of *La rassegna mensile di Israel*, LIV, 12 (June–August 1988): 69.
- 221 ACS, MCP, Gabinetto, fasci. “collaboratori ufficio razza”; File: “Cipriani, Lidio”; Letter, Lidio Cipriani to Guido Landra, October 12, 1938.
- 222 Landra Papers; Letter, Eugen Fischer to Guido Landra, July 15, 1938.
- 223 Landra Papers, MCP, Ufficio Razza, “Attività del prof. Guido Landra presso il Ministero della Cultura Popolare”; Landra Papers, MCP, Gabinetto, Ufficio Razza, Rome, October 4, 1938–XVI, “Attività dell’ufficio per gli studi della razza.”
- 224 Landra, prefatory essay, p. 7.
- 225 Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews*, pp. 176–9.
- 226 Landra Papers, MCP, Ufficio Razza, “Attività del prof. Guido Landra presso il Ministero della Cultura Popolare.”
- 227 This new policy undoubtedly had more to do with the desire to expand the SS than with a shift to “spiritual racism.” See Landra Papers, MCP, Gabinetto, Ufficio Razza, Guido Landra, “Appunto per S.E. il Ministero,” Rome, December 31, 1938–XVII, “Prima riunione del comitato Italo-Tedesco per le questioni razziali, relazione: Berlino–Monaco, 13–21 dicembre 1938–XVII.”
- 228 The above account is based on Landra Papers, as previous note. For more information on Nazi German racism, see Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, and Conte and Essner, *La Quête de la Race*.
- 229 Mussolini, “Scoperta!,” p. 126.
- 230 Mussolini, “Discorso di Mussolini al Consiglio Nazionale del P.N.F.,” October 25, 1938.
- 231 Mussolini, “Discorso di Trieste,” p. 146.
- 232 This contrast is pointed out in Raspanti, “I razzismi del fascismo,” p. 79. For the full text of the various versions of the document, see Felice, *Storia degli ebrei*, pp. 566–75.
- 233 See the Landra–Cipriani correspondence of August 9 and 24, 1938.
- 234 Interview, Marcello Ricci, Rome, July 18, 1996. See also Lino Businco, “Individuazione e difesa dei caratteri razziale,” *La Difesa della Razza*, 2, 10 (March 10, 1939): 15–17.
- 235 German Foreign Ministry Records, Foreign Office Library, London/2172/471328–38, quoted in Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews*, p. 177.
- 236 Dino Alfieri, *Dictators Face to Face*, trans. David Moore (New York: New York University Press, 1955), p. 115.
- 237 Gregor, *Ideology of Fascism*, pp. 301–2.

- 238 Ciano, *Diario*, vol. II, 6th edn. (Milan: Rizzoli, 1950), entry for September 26, 1941, p. 65; Alfieri, *Dictators Face to Face*, p. 115.
- 239 De Felice, *Mussolini il duce*, p. 308.
- 240 Mussolini, "Discorso di Trieste," p. 144.
- 241 De Felice, *Mussolini il duce*, p. 308.
- 242 Benito Mussolini to Bruno Spampanato, December 1943, in Spampanato, *Contromemoriale II*, pp. 130–2.
- 243 ACS, MCP, busta 4, fasci. 43, Gabinetto-Ufficio Razza, "Pende Sen. Nicola," September 14, 1938.
- 244 His disdain in the autumn of 1938 for the concept that ethnic groups remain distinct in a nation must have been a relatively new development, since he was advocating such a position himself as late as 1934. See ACS, SPD (CO) 509.058, "Pende, Sen. Nicola," Nicola Pende, "Biologia delle razze ed unità spirituale mediterranea," notes for a lecture given by Pende at a conference in Nice, France, January 5, 1934.
- 245 As a hint to which component ethnic groups Pende might have considered not particularly "gifted in somatic and spiritual values," we should recall his 1934 discussion of the "three brown haired races" which had "a biologically-based affinity for Roman culture," while "never in history has such an idea succeeded in being cultivated by the nordic and slavic soul, the soul of the two blonde races, so different, for biological reasons, from the descendants of Rome." ACS, SPD (CO) 509.058, "Pende, Sen. Nicola," Nicola Pende, "Biologia delle razze ed unità spirituale mediterranea," notes for a lecture given by Pende at a conference in Nice, France, January 5, 1934.
- 246 He did not explain how the heterozygous offspring would be prevented from marrying each other, and thus have offspring of whom some would inevitably express the disease.
- 247 Pende, "Noi e gli altri nella difesa della razza," *La Vita Universitaria*, 3, 1 (October 5, 1938): 2–3; Pende, "La terra, la donna e la razza," *Gerarchia*, XVIII, 10 (October 1938): 663–9.
- 248 ACS, MCP, busta 4, fasci. 43, "Pende Sen. Nicola." In Raspanti, "I razzismi del fascismo," p. 79.
- 249 Telesio Interlandi, "Canovaccio per commedia," *Il Tevere*, October 17–18, 1938.
- 250 Guido Landra, "Storia vera del razzismo italiano," p. 4.
- 251 Ipsen, *Dictating Demography*, p. 187. The Institute was never built, due to Italian participation in World War II.
- 252 The most important Catholic newspaper, *Osservatore Romano*, was supporting Pende. ACS, SPD (CO) 509.058, "Pende, Sen. Nicola"; Memorandum, Osvaldo Sebastiani to Benito Mussolini, October 20, 1938.
- 253 ACS, SPD (CO) 509.058, "Pende, Sen. Nicola"; Letter, Nicola Pende to Benito Mussolini, October 18, 1938.
- 254 ACS, SPD (CO) 509.058, "Pende, Sen. Nicola"; Letter, Nicola Pende to Dino Alfieri, October 18, 1938.
- 255 ACS, SPD (CO) 509.058, "Pende, Sen. Nicola"; Letter, Nicola Pende to Dino Alfieri, October 18, 1938.
- 256 See Raspanti, "I razzismi del fascismo," p. 79.
- 257 Landra Papers, MCP, Ufficio Razza; Memorandum, Sabato Visco, April 16, 1940.
- 258 ACS, SPD (CO) 183.506, "Dott. Guido Landra"; Letter, Guido Landra to Benito Mussolini, September 27, 1940.
- 259 ACS, SPD (CO) 183.506, "Dott. Guido Landra"; Letter, Giovanni Preziosi to Benito Mussolini, September 28, 1940. Given the whole tenor of the meeting of the Italo-German Committee on Racial Issues, and the cancellation of the project, it is remarkable that Bottai could have speculated on January 25, 1939 that Mussolini was profoundly struck by these revelations on the evolution of Nazi racism, which Mauro Raspanti follows in believing that they "probably contributed to his [Mussolini's] modification of the initial, prevalently biological conception of fascist racism, orienting it toward other directions." Raspanti, "Ideologia," p. 247.
- 260 Guido Landra, "Gli studi della razza in Italia prima del razzismo," *La Difesa della Razza*, 2, 8 (February 20, 1939): 23.
- 261 Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews*, p. 220; Landra Papers; Letter, Hellmuth Schwarz to Guido Landra, March 25, 1939.

5 Mediterranean racial ascendancy, 1939–1940

- 1 “Giacomo Acerbo,” *Il Messaggero* (February 8, 1943); ACS, MCP, pacco 38, Gabinetto, “Acerbo, Giacomo.”
- 2 A. Parisella, “Acerbo, Giacomo,” *Enciclopedia biografica degli Italiani*, vol. XXXIV, primo supplemento A–C, pp. 10–14.
- 3 Giacomo Acerbo, *Fra due plotoni di esecuzione: avvenimenti e problemi dell’epoca fascista* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1968), pp. 291–2.
- 4 As discussed earlier, I believe this interpretation of the reasons Mussolini introduced a racist program in Italy is incorrect.
- 5 Acerbo, *Fra due plotoni di esecuzione*, p. 292.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 286.
- 7 *Ibid.*, pp. 281–2, 288.
- 8 *Ibid.*, pp. 293–5.
- 9 Later in the text Acerbo refers to certain individuals (undoubtedly Landra and his colleagues) as “hack writers.” *Ibid.*, pp. 287, 294.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 289.
- 11 ACS, MCP, Pacco 38, Gabinetto, “Acerbo, Giacomo”; Letter by Giacomo Acerbo.
- 12 Regio Decreto Legge, September 5, 1938–XVI, no. 1539, Istituzione, presso il Ministero dell’Interno, del Consiglio superiore per la demografia e la razza. Republished in Michele Saffati, ed., “Le leggi contro gli ebrei,” special number of *La rassegna mensile di Israel*, LIV, 12 (June–August 1988): 69.
- 13 Letter by A.G., *Il Tevere* (September 24, 1938).
- 14 Telesio Interlandi, “Tirando diritto,” *La Difesa della Razza*, 4, 8 (February 20, 1941): 6.
- 15 Acerbo, *Fra due plotoni di esecuzione*, p. 284.
- 16 *Ibid.*, pp. 294–5.
- 17 Antonio Banzi, *Razzismo fascista* (Palermo: Liberia Agate, 1939), pp. 236–7; see also Preti, *I miti dell’Impero e della razza nell’Italia degli anni ’30*, p. 64.
- 18 ACS, Ministry of the Interior, General Directorate for Demography and Race, Racial Division; busta 4 fasci. 15–23 1938–43: *Liguria*, “Relazione delle principali discussioni in corso nei quotidiani e nei periodici italiani,” March 19–25, 1939; *La Vita Italiana*, “Relazione” March 12–18, 1939; “Razza e sangue,” *Origini*, “Relazione” March 19–25, 1939; *La Nobiltà della Stirpe*, “Relazione,” March 26–April 1, 1939; *La tradizione*, “Relazione” February 26–March 4, 1939; “Interpretazione dinamica del razzismo,” *Libro e Moschetto*, “Relazione,” March 12–18, 1939.
- 19 Businco, “Individuazione e difesa dei caratteri razziale,” pp. 15, 16.
- 20 Guido Landra, “Il convegno sul concetto di razza,” *La Difesa della Razza* 3, 8 (February 20, 1940): 18.
- 21 Claudio Calosso, “L’unità mediterranea,” *La Difesa della Razza*, 2, 24 (October 20, 1939): 12.
- 22 De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei*, 3rd edn, p. 351.
- 23 Acerbo claimed that the Italian delegation at the Vienna conference advanced a thesis very close to his own. ACS, MCP, Pacco 38, Gabinetto, “Acerbo, Giacomo”; Letter, Giacomo Acerbo to Dino Alfieri, December 20, 1939.
- 24 See Patricia Ferrara, ed., “Il Ministero della Cultura Popolare,” in G. Melis, ed., *L’amministrazione centrale dall’Unità alla Repubblica. Le strutture e i dirigenti*, vol. IV: *Il Ministero delle Poste e Telegrafi* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1992), pp. 71, 118, and note 211. Mauro Raspanti believes that changes in German racism, toward a more spiritualistic line, influenced Mussolini to change the name of the office. I would disagree. If anything, Mussolini was trying to separate Italian racism from its German counterpart at this time. See Raspanti, “I razzismi del fascismo,” p. 87.
- 25 Ricci interview.
- 26 ACS, MCP, Gabinetto, Ufficio Razza, fasci. “collaboratori ufficio razza,” File: “Prof. Giulio Cogni, Siena”; Memorandum, “appunto per S.E. il ministro,” December 6, 1939.
- 27 Gino Sotthochiesa, *Razza e Razzismo nell’Italia fascista* (Turin: G.B. Paravia, 1939), pp. 29, 45.
- 28 *Ibid.*, p. 30.

- 29 Ibid., p. 37.
- 30 Ibid. Renzo De Felice referred to Gino Sottocchia as a “fascist agent provocateur in the Catholic camp,” De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei*, p. 323.
- 31 Banzi, *Razzismo fascista*, pp. 13, 62–3.
- 32 Ibid., pp. 59–60.
- 33 Ibid., pp. 21, 48.
- 34 Ibid., p. 29.
- 35 Ibid., p. 47.
- 36 Ibid., p. 165.
- 37 Leone Franzì, *Le fase attuale del razzismo tedesco* (Rome: Istituto Nazionale di Cultura Fascista, 1939), pp. 40–1.
- 38 ACS, Ministry of Popular Culture, Gabinetto, fasci. “collaboratori ufficio razza”; Folder: “Canella, Mario Prof.”
- 39 Visco justified Canella’s appointment to Prefect Luciano by noting that Canella had published “one of the best books on the subject” of race. ACS, Ministry of Popular Culture, Gabinetto, fasci. “collaboratori ufficio razza”; Folder: “Canella, Mario Prof.”; Memorandum, Racial Office, Ministry of Popular Culture to Prefetto Luciano: “Appunto per il prefetto luciano,” October 1, 1940.
- 40 ACS, Ministry of Popular Culture, Gabinetto, fasci. “collaboratori ufficio razza”; Folder: “Canella, Mario Prof.”; Letter, Mario Canella to Sabato Visco, October 21, 1940; ACS, Ministry of Popular Culture, Gabinetto, fasci. “collaboratori ufficio razza”; Folder: “Canella, Mario Prof.”; Memorandum, Racial Office, Ministry of Popular Culture to Prefetto Luciano: “Appunto per il prefetto luciano,” October 1, 1940.
- 41 Mario Canella, “Il concetto di razza umana,” *Rivista di psicologia*, XXXV, 2 (1939): 189.
- 42 Canella quotes Zavattari’s views on the influence of the environment on race in Canella, “Il concetto di razza umana,” p. 192.
- 43 Ibid., p. 188; Canella, *Principi di psicologia*, p. 77.
- 44 Canella, *Principi di psicologia*, p. 57.
- 45 Ibid., pp. 85–6.
- 46 Canella, “Il concetto di razza umana,” p. 192–3.
- 47 Ibid., p. 195.
- 48 Canella, *Principi di psicologia*, p. 63.
- 49 Ibid., p. 203.
- 50 Ibid., p. 59.
- 51 Ibid., p. 61, note 1.
- 52 “Rellini, Ugo,” *Chi E? Dizionario degli italiani d’oggi*, 4th edn. (Rome: Cenacolo, 1940), pp. 791–2; Ugo Rellini, *Le origini della civiltà italiana* (Rome: Libreria di Scienze e Lettere, 1929); *Razza e Civiltà*, 1, 4, p. 534. We should note that Rellini believed that the oldest fossils of the Mediterranean race in Italy were to be found in Abruzzi, Giacomo Acerbo’s native province. Ugo Rellini, “Svolgimento e lacune della preistoria d’Italia” *Rivista di antropologia*, vol. XXVII: 347–66, 365.
- 53 Giovanni Patroni, “Espansione e migrazioni,” *Archivio Glottologico Italiano*, XXXII (1940), p. 43.
- 54 Ibid., pp. 28, 50.
- 55 Ibid., p. 42.
- 56 Giovanni Patroni, *La Preistoria* (Milan: Dottor Francesco Vallardi, 1937), p. 457.
- 57 Patroni, “espansione e migrazioni,” pp. 30–2, 38.
- 58 Ugo Rellini, “Le ‘Preistoria’ di G. Patroni,” extract from the *Bullettino di paleontologia Italiana*, nuova serie, II (1938), p. 36; Patroni, “espansione e migrazioni,” pp. 21–67.
- 59 Claudio Pogliano, “Scienza e stirpe: Eugenia in Italia (1912–1939),” *Passato e Presente* 5/84, p. 61; Puccini and Squillacciotti, “Per una prima ricostruzione,” p. 205.
- 60 Giovanni Marro, *Primato della razza italiana: confronti di morfologia, biologica, antropogeografia e di civiltà* (Milan–Messina: Casa Editrice Giuseppe Principato, 1940), pp. 101–2.
- 61 Namely, Giovanni Marro, “Il primato della razza italiana,” *La Stampa*, July 30, 1938.
- 62 Ibid., p. 78.

- 63 Ibid., p. 8.
- 64 Giovanni Marro, "La razza e l'ambiente nella civiltà," *Razza e Civiltà*, 2, 2, p. 216.
- 65 Venerando Correnti and Gianfranco De Stefano, "Antropologia biologica in Italia," *Rivista di Antropologia*, Vol. LXVII (1989), Part II–A, p. 425; ACS, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, Concorso per la Cattedra di Antropologia della Royale Università di Palermo, November 19, 1940, Relazione della Commissione Giudicatrice del Concorso per la Cattedra di Antropologia della Royale Università di Palermo, Giovanni Marro, "Elenco dei documenti e delle pubblicazioni del Prof. Giovanni Marro"; SPD (CO) 143.370 "Marro, Prof. Giovanni"; *Il Messaggero*, October 20, 1939.
- 66 Giovanni Marro, *Caratteri fisici e spirituali della razza italiana* (Rome: Istituto Nazionale di Cultura Fascista, 1939), p. 11.
- 67 Ibid., p. 31.
- 68 Marro, *Primato della razza italiana*, p. 350.
- 69 Giovanni Marro, "La razza e l'ambiente nella civiltà," *Razza e Civiltà* 2, 3, p. 446.
- 70 Marro, "La razza e l'ambiente," 2, 2, p. 223.
- 71 Marro, *Caratteri fisici*, p. 6; Marro, "La razza e l'ambiente," 2, 3, pp. 431–2; Marro, *Primato della razza italiana*, p. 16.
- 72 Giovanni Marro, "Dell'armonia fra razza ed ambiente naturale in Italia," *Razza e Civiltà*, 1, 2, p. 167; Marro, *Primato della razza italiana*, p. 38.
- 73 Marro, "La razza e l'ambiente," 2, 2, p. 217; Marro, *Primato della razza italiana*, p. 40.
- 74 Marro, *Caratteri fisici*, pp. 16, 18, 27–8; Marro, "Dell'armonia fra razza ed ambiente," p. 166.
- 75 Marro, *Caratteri fisici*, p. 16.
- 76 Marro, "Dell'armonia fra razza ed ambiente," p. 179; *ibid.*, p. 178.
- 77 Ibid., pp. 173–4; Marro, *Primato della razza italiana*, p. 73. Of course, if genetic variation among the Italians was judged to be so beneficial, one wonders why miscegenation wasn't therefore beneficial to the race.
- 78 Marro, *Caratteri fisici*, p. 17.
- 79 Marro, "Dell'armonia fra razza ed ambiente," p. 167.
- 80 Marro, *Primato della razza italiana*, pp. 39, 63.
- 81 Marro, "La razza e l'ambiente," 2, 2, p. 219; Marro, *Caratteri fisici*, p. 18.
- 82 Marro, "Dell'armonia fra razza ed ambiente," p. 182; Marro, "La razza e l'ambiente," 2, 3, p. 444; Marro, *Primato della razza italiana*, pp. 6, 14.
- 83 Marro, *Caratteri fisici*, p. 23.
- 84 Marro, "Dell'armonia fra razza ed ambiente," p. 168.
- 85 Ibid., p. 175; Review of Giovanni Marro, "I fattori biologici e geografici del destino storico d'Italia," in *Società Italiana per il Progresso delle Scienze*, 101, 4, 7, p. 288; Marro, *Primato della razza italiana*, p. 74.
- 86 Marro, *Caratteri fisici*, pp. 33–4.
- 87 Ibid., p. 17; Marro, *Primato della razza italiana*, p. 38.
- 88 Marro, *Caratteri fisici*, pp. 8–9; Marro, *Primato della razza italiana*, p. 73.
- 89 Marro, *Primato della razza italiana*, p. 16.
- 90 Ibid., p. 76.
- 91 Ibid., pp. 269–71, 300, 305.
- 92 Review of Marro, "I fattori," p. 288.
- 93 Marro, *Caratteri fisici*, pp. 20, 23; Marro, "Dell'armonia fra razza ed ambiente," p. 173.
- 94 Marro, *Primato della razza italiana*, p. 153.
- 95 Marro, "Dell'armonia fra razza ed ambiente," pp. 177–8.
- 96 Review of Giovanni Marro, *Caratteri fisici e spirituali della razza italiana*, in *Razza e Civiltà* 1, 3, pp. 357–8.
- 97 "Il razzismo in libreria," review of Giovanni Marro, *Caratteri fisici e spirituali della razza italiana*, in *La Difesa della Razza*, 2, 18 (July 5, 1939): 47.
- 98 Review of Giovanni Marro, *Primato della razza italiana*, in *Razza e Civiltà*, 1, 5, p. 646.
- 99 Ibid., p. 645.

- 100 Ibid., p. 645.
- 101 Pasquale Pennisi, "Principii del razzismo fascista," *Rassegna sociale dell'Africa italiana*, IV, 11 (November 1941): 949; Acerbo, *Fra due plotoni di esecuzione*, p. 288.
- 102 Enzo Leoni, *Mistico del razzismo fascista. La difesa della razza nel mondo* (Milan-Varese: Off. Grafiche Nicola, 1941), pp. 60–1.
- 103 Ibid., p. 30.
- 104 Ibid., p. 53.
- 105 Ibid., pp. 45, 47. See also Enzo Leoni, "Razza in Italia fascista," *Critica Fascista*, XVI, 10 (August 1, 1938): 290.
- 106 Leoni, *Mistico del razzismo fascista*, p. 82.
- 107 Ibid., pp. 63, 65–6, 79–80.
- 108 Acerbo, *Fra due plotoni di esecuzione*, p. 297.
- 109 Ibid., pp. 297–8.
- 110 ACS, MCP, Pacco 38, Gabinetto, "Acerbo, Giacomo"; Memorandum.
- 111 ACS, MCP, Pacco 38, Gabinetto, "Acerbo, Giacomo"; Letter, Giacomo Acerbo to Dino Alfieri, December 20, 1939.
- 112 ACS, MCP, Pacco 38, Gabinetto, "Acerbo, Giacomo."
- 113 Acerbo, *Fra due plotoni di esecuzione*, p. 298.
- 114 Giacomo Acerbo, *I fondamenti della dottrina fascista* (Rome: Ministero della Cultura Popolare, Ufficio studi e propaganda sulla razza, 1940), pp. 23, 24, 26.
- 115 Ibid., pp. 25, 27, 28.
- 116 Ibid., p. 36.
- 117 Acerbo, *Fra due plotoni di esecuzione*, pp. 296–7; Acerbo, *I fondamenti della dottrina fascista*, p. 37.
- 118 Acerbo, *I fondamenti della dottrina fascista*, p. 56.
- 119 Ibid., pp. 50–1.
- 120 Ibid., pp. 41–3, 48.
- 121 Ibid., p. 49.
- 122 Ibid., p. 32.
- 123 Ibid., p. 33.
- 124 Ibid., p. 33.
- 125 Ibid., p. 49.
- 126 Ibid., p. 36.
- 127 Acerbo, *Fra due plotoni di esecuzione*, p. 288.
- 128 Acerbo, *I fondamenti della dottrina fascista*, pp. 52–3.
- 129 Ibid., p. 56.
- 130 Ibid., p. 60.
- 131 Ibid., p. 65.
- 132 Ibid., p. 68.
- 133 Ibid., pp. 66–7.
- 134 Ibid., p. 69.
- 135 Ibid., p. 69.
- 136 Ibid., p. 73–4.
- 137 Raspanti, "I razzismi del fascismo," p. 80.
- 138 Pericle Ducati, review of *I fondamenti*, in *L'Italia che scrive* (March 1941), pp. 82–3.
- 139 A.C. Blanc, "Preistoria," *Nuova antologia* (August 16, 1940): 413–15.
- 140 ACS, Ministry of the Interior, General Directorate for Demography and Race, Racial Division; busta 3 fasci. 13.
- 141 Puccini, "L'Antropologia a Roma tra Giuseppe e Sergio Sergi," p. 238.
- 142 Antonio Le Pera, "Razza e civiltà," *Razza e Civiltà*, 1, 1, p. 6.
- 143 Ibid., p. 6.
- 144 Ibid., p. 6.
- 145 Ibid., p. 8.
- 146 Ibid., p. 8.

- 147 *Ibid.*, p. 9.
- 148 Review of Giacomo Acerbo, "Il fondamento della dottrina fascista della razza," conference held in Florence on January 27, 1940, *Razza e Civiltà*, pp. 101–2.
- 149 For an example of Mediterranean racism, see Giuseppe Genna, "L'idea razzista nel pensiero di Giuseppe Sergi," *Razza e Civiltà* 1, 1, p. 44; for nativist racism, see Arturo Sabatini, "Il concetto di razza nella etica fascista," *Razza e Civiltà* 1, 2, p. 201; Franco Landogna, "L'unità della razza e della storia d'Italia," *Razza e Civiltà* 1, 1, p. 34; for a reference to the Italians as Aryans, see Franco Landogna, "L'integrità della razza italica attraverso il medio evo," *Razza e Civiltà*, 1, 3, p. 294.
- 150 Such a thesis was banned from *Razza e Civiltà*. In the second issue of 1942 *Razza e Civiltà* reviewed Arcangelo Galli's article, "Biologia delle razze umane," *Vita e Pensiero*, 1942. Galli believed in the superiority of the Nordic race, which in reply *Razza e Civiltà* openly refused to accept. *Razza e Civiltà*, 3, 2, p. 258.
- 151 Raffaele Corso, "Sopra il concetto e le caratteristiche della razza italiana," *Razza e Civiltà* 3, 2, p. 180–1.
- 152 Review of Giacomo Acerbo, "Il fondamento della dottrina fascista," pp. 102–3.
- 153 Franco Landogna, "L'integrità della razza italica attraverso il medio evo," part V, "La conquista longobarda," *Razza e Civiltà*, 1, 5, pp. 613–14.
- 154 This conclusion is based on the information collected from Italian military draftees of the late nineteenth century as analyzed by R. Livi.
- 155 Corso, "Sopra il concetto e le caratteristiche della razza italiana," p. 179.
- 156 For more on the theory of ovidist performance, see Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 173–4.
- 157 Cesare Serono, "L'importanza del fattore femminile nella conservazione della razza," *Razza e Civiltà*, 2, 5, pp. 678, 680, 681, 683.

6 The struggle for control, 1940–1942

- 1 Acerbo, *Fra due plotoni di esecuzione*, pp. 298–9.
- 2 ACS, MCP, Pacco 38, Gabinetto, "Acerbo, Giacomo"; Memorandum to the Minister of Popular Culture and the General Director of the National Council Casini, July 26, 1940. The memorandum also mentioned that the Germans were upset by a recent history of Italy written by Salvatorelli, who often called the Germans "barbarians."
- 3 Landra, "Storia vera," p. 5.
- 4 Giovanni Preziosi, "Per la serietà degli studi razziali italiani (Dedicato al camerata Giacomo Acerbo)," *La Vita Italiana*, XXVIII, CCCXXVIII (July 1940): 73–5.
- 5 Telesio Interlandi, "Per la serietà degli studi razziali italiani (dedicato al camerata Giacomo Acerbo)," *Il Tevere* (July 16–17, 1940): 3.
- 6 Landra, "Due anni di razzismo," p. 14.
- 7 Uno studioso, "A Proposito di studi razziali," *Il Tevere* (July 18–19, 1940).
- 8 ACS, MCP, Pacco 38, Gabinetto, "Acerbo, Giacomo;" Memorandum, "Secondo Appunto sull'impostazione storica del problema della razza in Italia."
- 9 Giovanni Preziosi, "Per la serietà degli studi italiani sulla razza," *La Vita Italiana*, LVI, CCCXXIX (August 15, 1940): 135–6.
- 10 ACS, MCP, Pacco 38, Gabinetto, "Acerbo, Giacomo;" Note, "Appunto per il Duce," September 24, 1940.
- 11 ACS, MCP, Pacco 38, Gabinetto, "Acerbo, Giacomo;" Memorandum, "A Proposto di Studi Razziali."
- 12 German Foreign Ministry, 2191/472816–17, Eugen Fischer to Bernhard Rust, November 10, 1940. Quoted in Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews*, pp. 325–6. We should note that the Germans continued for the next several years to follow Acerbo's racial arguments and fret over their consequences.
- 13 The above discussion on Acerbo's proposal to visit Germany is based on Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews*, pp. 325–6.

- 14 Giuseppe Preziosi, "I razzisti di 'oggi,'" *La Vita Italiana*, LVI, CCCXXXI (October 15, 1940): 441.
- 15 ACS, MCP, Pacco 38, Gabinetto, "Acerbo, Giacomo"; Letter, Giacomo Acerbo to Alessandro Pavolini, October 22, 1940.
- 16 ACS, MCP, Pacco 38, Gabinetto, "Acerbo, Giacomo"; Letter, Alessandro Pavolini to Giacomo Acerbo, November 7, 1940.
- 17 Marro, *Primato della razza italiana*, p. 290.
- 18 Marro, "La razza e l'ambiente," p. 443.
- 19 *Ibid.*, pp. 442–3.
- 20 Marro, *Primato della razza italiana*, p. 159.
- 21 Giovanni Marro, "Un alarme per il razzismo italiano," *La Vita Italiani*, XXIX, LVII (March 15, 1941): 239.
- 22 Marro, "Un alarme per il razzismo italiano," p. 237.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 238.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 248.
- 25 Marro, *Ibid.*, p. 240. Marro was referring to Genna articles, "Per la storia dell'idea razzista italiana," *Razza e Civiltà*, 2, 2, pp. 205–14, and "Problemmi della razza," mistakenly cited in *Nuova Antologia* (August 1, 1940). We might note here that the Mediterraneanist Sabato Visco was replaced by the spiritual Nordacist Alberto Luchini as head of the Racial Office of the Ministry of Popular Culture only two months after Marro wrote this article.
- 26 Giovanni Marro, "Il cavallo di Troia nel razzismo italiano," *La Vita Italiana*, XXIX, CCCXIV (November 1941): 498. In 1925 Sergio Sergi had succeeded his father as Chair of Anthropology at the University of Rome, and as Director of the Roman Institute for Anthropology. Sergio Sergi was, like his father, a Mediterraneanist, though his racial thought was quite muted, as Marro alleges.
- 27 Giovanni Marro, "Razzismo vero e razzismo spurio," *La Difesa della Razza*, 5, 15 (June 5, 1942): 5–6.
- 28 Marro, *Primato della razza italiana*, pp. 94, 238.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 255. See also Marro, "Razzismo vero," pp. 5–6.
- 30 Marro, *Primato della razza italiana*, pp. 264–5.
- 31 Aldo Capasso, *Idee chiare sul razzismo* (Rome: Augustea, 1942), p. 40.
- 32 Giampiero Mughini, *A via della mercede c'era un razzista* (Milan: Rizzoli Libri, 1991), p. 150.
- 33 ACS, SPD (CO) 1922–1943, busta 1959, fasci. 532283; Letter, Telesio Interlandi to Benito Mussolini, July 28, 1940.
- 34 ACS, SPD (CO) 1922–1943, busta 1959, fasci. 532283. The quotation from "Il retaggio di Roma" is found on page 39 of the July 20, 1940 issue of *La Difesa della Razza*.
- 35 ACS, MCP, Gabinetto, fasci. "La Difesa della Razza," "Ministero della Cultura Popolare-Direzione generale per i servizi amministrativi gli affari generali ed il personale," November 21, 1940.
- 36 Editorial, *La Difesa della Razza*, 4, 8 (February 20, 1941): 5, 12.
- 37 Aldo Modica, "Origine e classificazione della razza italiana," *La Difesa della Razza*, 4, 18 (July 20, 1941): 24.
- 38 Claudio Calosso, "La civiltà minoico-cicladica," *La Difesa della Razza*, 4, 23 (October 5, 1941): 18, 22.
- 39 The other charges included accusations by Dr Gross and Elio Gasteiner of plagiarism (Landra had supposedly lifted one of Gasteiner's articles and published it under his own name "in the magazine of Rosenberg"), neglect in his duties of summarizing German articles on race for the Racial Office, and being absent from work without permission. Landra Papers; Letter, Sabato Visco to Guido Landra, September 12, 1940.
- 40 Landra also noted that he was at the same time teaching gratis at the Center of Political Preparation of the PNF, visiting Eastern European countries to lecture on Italian racism, working on a project for Alfieri (now the Italian ambassador to Germany), and still involved in scientific work. He had received permission to carry on such activities during official hours from the Director of the Ministry of Popular Culture, Prefect Luciano. Landra Papers, MCP, Ufficio Razza; Letter, Guido Landra to Sabato Visco, September 16, 1940.
- 41 Landra Papers; Letter, Pavolini to Guido Landra, September 26, 1940.

- 42 ACS, SPD (CO) 183.506, "Dott. Guido Landra"; Letter, Giovanni Preziosi to Benito Mussolini, September 28, 1940; Letter, Giovanni Preziosi to Benito Mussolini, September 27, 1940.
- 43 ACS, SPD (CO) 183.506, "Dott. Guido Landra"; Letter, Guido Landra to Giovanni Preziosi, September 26, 1940.
- 44 ACS, SPD (CO) 183.506, "Dott. Guido Landra"; Segretaria Particolare del Duce, Memorandum, October 1, 1940.
- 45 Puccini, "L'Antropologia," p. 239.
- 46 ACS, Ministry of Public Instruction, Concorso for the Chair of Anthropology, University of Palermo; Memorandum, "Report of the Judging Committee of the Concorso for the Chair of Anthropology of the Royal University of Palermo" to Giuseppe Bottai, November 19, 1940.
- 47 ACS, SPD (CO) 183.506, "Dott. Guido Landra"; Letter, Guido Landra, to "His Excellency," October 2, 1940.
- 48 ACS, Ministry of Public Instruction, Concorso for the Chair of Anthropology, University of Palermo; Memorandum, "Report of the Judging Committee of the Concorso for the Chair of Anthropology of the Royal University of Palermo" to Giuseppe Bottai, November 19, 1940.
- 49 ACS, SPD (CO) 183.506, "Dott. Guido Landra"; Letter, Guido Landra to Osvaldo Sebastiani, October 4, 1940.
- 50 ACS, MCP, Gabinetto, fasci. "collaboratori ufficio razza"; File: "Cipriani, Lidio"; F. Surdich, "Cipriani, Lidio," *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 25 (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1981), p. 761.
- 51 Lidio Cipriani, Review of *Erblehre und Rassenhygiene*, *Archivio per l'antropologia e la etnologia*, vol. LXVI, fasci. 1–4, 1936: 56–7.
- 52 ACS, MCP, Gabinetto, fasci. "collaboratori ufficio razza"; File: "Cipriani, Lidio"; Memorandum, Ministry of Popular Culture, "Appunto per S.E. il Ministro," July 6, 1941.
- 53 Nicola Pende, "Il principio biotipologico unitario" ["Moderna dottrina della razza"], *Gerarchia*, 11 (November 1940): 569–72.
- 54 The original members of the High Council, in September 5, 1938, did not include Camillo Pellizi, Frontoni, Dall'Armi, Alberto Luchini, and Giuseppe Tallarico. Original members no longer on the High Council included: Filippo Bottazzi, Professor of Human Physiology at the University of Naples; Giovanni Petragani, Director General of Public Health; Carlo Bergamaschi, Commissioner of the ONMI; Athos Poli and Nino Palmieri, designates of the PNF; and Emanuele Filiberto Carnevale, designate of the Ministry of Corporations. Teresio Olivelli was also at one time on the High Council as a representative of the Fascist Party. It should also be noted that Olivelli was also a prominent Catholic. Webster, *The Cross and the Fasces*, p. 117.
- 55 Biagio Pace was on the "executive committee" of Acerbo's council.
- 56 Telesio Interlandi, "Discorso alle 'nuove linfe,'" *La Difesa della Razza*, 5, 12 (April 20, 1942): 4.
- 57 Guido Landra, "Conflitto di razze," *La Difesa della Razza*, 6, 4 (December 20, 1942): 11.
- 58 Landra, "Storia vera," p. 4; Landra, "Il razzismo e la scienza," p. 6.
- 59 Landra, "Storia vera," p. 6.
- 60 Guido Landra, "Il problema della razza e la scienza sperimentale," *La Difesa della Razza*, 5, 19 (August 5, 1942): 4.
- 61 *Razza e Nazione* was an expanded form of the article "Presupposti per l'espansione imperiale: Razza e Nazione," published by Mazzei in *Rassegna Sociale dell'Africa Italiana*, 8–10, 1939.
- 62 Mazzei, *Razza e nazione*, p. 75.
- 63 *Ibid.*, p. 82.
- 64 *Ibid.*, p. 71.
- 65 *Ibid.*, pp. 60–1.
- 66 Mazzei, *Ibid.*, pp. 61–3, 68. Specifically, Mazzei cites Giuseppe Carle, *La vita del diritto nei suoi rapporti con la vita sociale* (Turin: Studio Comparativo di Filosofia Giuridica, 1890) and Vincenzo Miceli, *Il partito fascista e la sua funzione in Italia* (Milan: Imperia, 1924) as contributing to his own ideas on the relationship of race and nation. Miceli claimed that the Italians were composed of different ethnic elements that fused, leading to a unique ethnicity with common characteristics. D'Azeglio believed that the community of origin of a nation was not derived from an original racial stock, but from a historically established society. A. James Gregor, in

Ideologies of Fascism, believes that most of fascist racial thought can be traced back to the influence of Ludwig Gumplowicz. Although Gumplowicz certainly did have an influence on the concept of racial formation for several of the major racial theorists of fascist Italy, Gregor's broader assumptions seem unwarranted.

- 67 Mazzei, *Razza e nazione*, p. 72.
- 68 Mazzei, *Ibid.*, pp. 72, 73, 75.
- 69 Mazzei, *Ibid.*, p. 36.
- 70 Hans Günther and Alfred Rosenberg were two of the "old German Racists" whom Mazzei found particularly obnoxious. The reader will note that the same two individuals were chief sources for the Italian Spiritual Nordicists.
- 71 Mazzei, *Razza e nazione*, p. 11, 12, 25, 61, 66–7.
- 72 Mazzei, *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 64–5, 68–9.
- 73 Telesio Interlandi, "Antirazzismo accademico," *Il Tevere* (September 11–12, 1942); "Antirazzismo accademico," *La Difesa della Razza*, 5, 22 (September 20, 1942): 22.
- 74 Review of Vincenzo Mazzei, "'Presupposti per l'espansione imperiale: Razza e nazione' in *Rassegna Sociale dell'Africa Italiana*," *Razza e Civiltà*, 2, 1, p. 129.

7 Julius Evola and spiritual Nordicism, 1941–1943

- 1 Richard Drake, *The Revolutionary Mystique and Terrorism in Contemporary Italy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 16; Christophe Boutin, *Politique et tradition: Julius Evola dans le siècle (1898–1974)* (Paris: Editions Kimé, 1992), pp. 20–1.
- 2 Enrico de Boccard, "Julius Evola; conversazione senza complessi con l'ultimo Ghibellino," *Playmen*, 2 (February 1970): 18, quoted in Gianfranco de Turrís, ed., *Testimonianze su Evola*, 2nd edn. (Rome: Edizioni Mediterranee, 1985), p. 356.
- 3 Evola wrote poetry and prose, and painted in the Dadaist style. One of his paintings, "*Paesaggio interiore, ore 10,30*," is still exhibited at the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome. Drake, *Revolutionary Mystique*, p. 188.
- 4 *Ibid.*, pp. 116–17.
- 5 Marro Tarchi, ed., *Diorama: problemi dello spirito nell'etica fascista*, vol. 1, 1934–5 (Rome: Edizione Europea, 1974), p. 63.
- 6 Turrís, *Testimonianze su Evola*, p. 360; Boutin, *Politique et tradition*, p. 26.
- 7 Drake, *Revolutionary Mystique*, p. 118.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 117.
- 9 Thomas Sheehan, "Myth and Violence: The Fascism of Julius Evola and Alain de Benoist," *Social Research*, 48: 1 (spring 1981): 53.
- 10 Julius Evola, *Rivolta contro il mondo moderno*, pp. 82, 211; quoted in Sheehan, "Myth and Violence," p. 55. *Ibid.*, pp. 56–7.
- 11 Drake, *Revolutionary Mystique*, p. 118; Evola, *Sintesi*, pp. 11, 18; Sheehan, "Myth and Violence," pp. 52, 55.
- 12 Sheehan, "Myth and Violence," p. 59.
- 13 *Ibid.*, pp. 57–8.
- 14 Evola, *Sintesi*, pp. 129–30; Turrís, *Testimonianze su Evola*, p. 127; Roger Griffin, "Revolt against the Modern World: the Blend of Literary and Historical Fantasy in the Italian New Right," *Literature and History*, 11, 1 (1985): 104; Julius Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale* (Naples: Conte, 1941), pp. 97–8.
- 15 Turrís, *Testimonianze su Evola*, p. 107; Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution*, p. 97.
- 16 Julius Evola, "Critica della teoria dell'eredità," *Regime Fascista* (December 13, 1934), in Tarchi, ed., *Diorama*, p. 195.
- 17 Sheehan, "Myth and Violence," p. 56; Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale*, pp. 97–8.
- 18 Sheehan, "Myth and Violence," p. 62; Turrís, *Testimonianze su Evola*, p. 361.
- 19 Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale*, p. 102.
- 20 Evola, *Sintesi*, pp. 106–8.

- 21 Thomas Sheehan, "Diventare Dio: Julius Evola and the Metaphysics of Fascism," *Stanford Italian Review*, 6, 1/2 (1986): 286–7.
- 22 Evola, *Sintesi*, p. 47.
- 23 *Ibid.*, pp. 44–7.
- 24 Julius Evola, *Éléments pour une éducation raciale*, trans. French G. Boulanger, (Puiseaux: Pardès, 1984), pp. 49–50; quoted in Boutin, *Politique et tradition*, p. 188.
- 25 Boutin, *Politique et tradition*, p. 192. For the most complete introduction to Evola's thought, see his book, *Revolta contro il mondo moderno* (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, 1934).
- 26 Drake, *Revolutionary Mystique*, pp. 120–1.
- 27 Tarchi, *Diorama*, p. I; Marcello Veneziani, *Julius Evola tra filosofia e tradizione* (Rome: Ciarrapico, 1984), p. 178; Turrís, *Testimonianze su Evola*, pp. xvii; 121, 235.
- 28 Raspanti, "Ideologia del fascismo," p. 84; Drake, *Revolutionary Mystique*, p. 119.
- 29 Sheehan, "Diventare Dio," p. 281.
- 30 Tarchi, *Diorama*, p. 56; Drake, *Revolutionary Mystique*, p. 120.
- 31 Raspanti, "Julius Evola fra Salò e Vienna," pp. 14, 16.
- 32 Boutin, *Politique et tradition*, p. 236.
- 33 Tarchi, *Diorama*, p. lxvii; Evola, *Il cammino*, p. 147; Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale*, p. 42.
- 34 Sheehan, "Myth and Violence," p. 60.
- 35 Tarchi, *Diorama*, pp. lxii–lxiii.
- 36 Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale*, p. 23.
- 37 Evola, *Sintesi*, pp. 36–7, 68, 103.
- 38 Tarchi, *Diorama*, p. lxvii.
- 39 Conte and Essner, *La Quête de la Race*, p. 77.
- 40 L. Ferdinando Clauss, "L'anima della razza," *La Difesa della Razza*, 3, 1 (November 5, 1939): 25; Julius Evola, "Coscienza di razza e idea imperiale: uno scritto del teorico Clauss, commentato da Evola," *La Vita Italiana*, fasci. 329 (August 1940), in Preti, *Impero fascista*, document no. XL, pp. 348–9.
- 41 Boutin, *Politique et tradition*, p. 204.
- 42 Evola, *Sintesi*, p. 154; Boutin, *Politique et tradition*, pp. 66–7.
- 43 Evola, *Il cammino*, p. 148.
- 44 Evola, "Critica della teoria dell'eredita," p. 2.
- 45 Evola, *Il cammino*, p. 148.
- 46 *Ibid.*, p. 150.
- 47 Tarchi, *Diorama*, p. lxxv. Nevertheless, Bottai invited Evola to give a series of lectures on racism at the universities of Milan and Florence in 1938 and 1939. Turrís, *Testimonianze su Evola*, p. 363.
- 48 Griffin, "Revolts against the Modern World," p. 109.
- 49 Boutin, *Politique et tradition*, p. 237. See Julius Evola, *Le fascisme vu de Droite: suivi de Notes sur le troisième reich*, 2nd edn. (Puiseaux: Pardès, 1993), pp. 85–95.
- 50 Evola, *Sintesi*, p. 35.
- 51 Julius Evola, "La razza dell'uomo di Mussolini," *Regime Fascista* (January 18, 1940): 2; Evola, *Sintesi*, p. 64.
- 52 Evola, *Sintesi*, p. 148.
- 53 Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale*, p. 70.
- 54 Julius Evola, "Metodologia razzista: I tre gradi del problema della razza," *La Difesa della Razza*, 2, 4 (December 20, 1938): 13.
- 55 Evola, *Sintesi*, pp. 19–20.
- 56 Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale*, pp. 30–1.
- 57 Evola, *Sintesi*, p. 92.
- 58 *Ibid.*, pp. 77–8.
- 59 Evola, "Critica della teoria dell'eredita," p. 195; Evola, *Sintesi*, p. 79.
- 60 Evola, "La razza dell'uomo," p. 2.
- 61 Evola, *Sintesi*, pp. 94–5.
- 62 *Ibid.*, p. 101; Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale*, p. 39.

- 63 Evola, *Sintesi*, pp. 108–9.
- 64 “la donna vera, quella, che i nostri genitori qualificavano significativamente come ‘donna di razza’, dovrebbe presentarsi come qualcosa di pericoloso, come un principio estraneo che attira, s’insinua e chiede una reazione interiore: quasi lo stesso tipo di reazione, di cui abbiamo detto parlando degli incroci, ove un sangue estraneo ammesso mette alla prova il tipo e dà luogo a due possibilità: o ad un risveglio, ad una riaffermazione e ad un abbassamento. Nel primo caso l’uomo si mantiene all’altezza della sua funzione e, secondo l’insegnamento tradizionale già riferito, le sue qualità permarranno e si riaffermeranno intatte nella discendenza, col carattere di ‘dominanti’. Nel secondo caso, in forme più o meno larvate, subentrerà una degenerescenza, per lo meno interna, del tipo; forse incontrollabili prenderanno il sopravvento nei processi di eredità, la tutela della razza si farà una cosa problematica, fino a che si verifichi il caso-limite, vale a dire il ritorno, in nuove forme, allo spirito e alla promiscuità delle civiltà ginecocratiche tratte dalle razze antinordiche o dalla degenerescenza di quelle nordiche.” Evola, *Sintesi*, pp. 108–9. It is interesting to note that even Evola himself was seduced by the siren song of feminine wiles. A Ministry of the Interior report reveals that Evola had in the late 1930s a German lover, Annamaria Raschi. ACS, Ministry of the Interior, P.S. A1.1943 busta 33, fasci. Evola, “Julio di Vincenzo.”
- 65 Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale*, pp. 18–19.
- 66 “la razza ... è cosa ben diversa da quella di cui ieri poteva parlare la biologia e l’antropologia. Il nostro razzismo va ben oltre i limiti di tali discipline che, almeno nelle loro formulazioni più correnti, nel loro spirito positivista e scienziato, in fondo, stanno anzi in un netto contrasto con la vera idea razzista. Il vero razzismo, più che una disciplina speciale, è una *mentalità* ...,” Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale*, p. 6.
- 67 “Dicendo ‘mito’ non vogliamo intendere una semplice finzione, un parto arbitrario della fantasia, bensì una idea che trae principalmente la sua forza persuasiva da elementi non razionali, una idea che vale per la forza suggestiva che essa condensa e quindi per la sua capacità di tradursi, infine, in azione.... La somma dei singoli elementi e dei singoli moventi non basta da sola a spiegare la forza misteriosa di una passione. In egual modo, il ‘mito’ trascende quanto può riferirsi ai vari elementi, sia scientifici, sia filosofici, sia storici, di cui si compone, da cui si trae o con cui pretende di giustificarsi. È per questo che l’analisi operata da una critica freddamente razionalista in un mito conduce a ben poco. Essa non raggiungerà mai il nucleo più profondo, ossia l’intima necessità, il fatto di sentimento che dà sostegno e forza al mito stesso.” Julius Evola, *Il mito del sangue* (Milan: Hoepli, 1937), pp. xiii–xiv.
- 68 “Una idea, dato che agisca con sufficiente intensità e continuità in un dato clima storico e in una data collettività, finisce col dar luogo ad una ‘razza dell’anima’ e, col persistere dell’azione, fa apparire nelle generazioni che immediatamente seguono un tipo fisico comune nuovo, da considerarsi, da una certo punto di vista, come una razza nuova.” Evola, *Sintesi*, pp. 125. See also Julius Evola, “Appunti per una nuova teoria della razza,” *La Vita Italiana*, fasci. 306 (September 1938), in Preti, *Impero Fascista*, document no. XXIX, p. 269.
- 69 Evola, *Sintesi*, p. 266.
- 70 Evola, “La razza dell’uomo,” p. 2.
- 71 These include pages 82, 96, and 100. See De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei*, 4th edn., p. 256.
- 72 Evola, *Sintesi*, p. 23; Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale*, pp. 32–3.
- 73 Evola, *Sintesi*, p. 219.
- 74 *Ibid.*, p. 120.
- 75 *Ibid.*, pp. 135–7.
- 76 Evola, “Coscienza di razza,” pp. 342, 344; Evola, “Metodologia razzista,” p. 13.
- 77 Evola, “Appunti per una nuova teoria,” p. 271.
- 78 Evola, *Sintesi*, p. 49.
- 79 Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale*, pp. 15–19.
- 80 Evola, *Sintesi*, p. 52.
- 81 *Ibid.*, pp. 113, 116–17.
- 82 Here Evola disagreed with his colleague Ludwig F. Clauss, who asserted that the racial soul, rather than the racial spirit, represented the highest racial element. *Ibid.*, p. 127.
- 83 Julius Evola, *Éléments pour un education razziale*, p. 51.

- 84 Evola, *Sintesi*, pp. 30, 151; Evola, "Appunti per una nuova teoria," p. 272.
- 85 Evola, "Metodologia razzista," p. 11; Evola, *Sintesi*, pp. 30–2.
- 86 Evola, *Sintesi*, p. 52.
- 87 Evola, "Coscienza di razza," p. 339.
- 88 Evola, *Sintesi*, pp. 28, 50–1.
- 89 *Ibid.*, pp. 57–8.
- 90 Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale*, pp. 95–6.
- 91 Evola, *Il cammino*, p. 151.
- 92 Evola, "Appunti per una nuova teoria," p. 273.
- 93 Evola, *Sintesi*, p. 225; Evola, "Appunti per una nuova teoria," p. 278.
- 94 Evola, *Sintesi*, pp. 135, 216–17.
- 95 *Ibid.*, p. 221.
- 96 Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution*, p. 30.
- 97 Evola, *Sintesi*, pp. 80–81.
- 98 *Ibid.* pp. 80, 122.
- 99 Evola, "La razza dell'uomo," p. 2. The sexual anxieties present in this example should be obvious. German racists were also concerned about the lingering effects of miscegenation. See Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wipperman, *The Racial State: Germany, 1933–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 37.
- 100 Evola, "Appunti per una nuova teoria," p. 269.
- 101 This possibility, Evola notes, was overlooked by Gobineau and his disciples. *Ibid.*, p. 276.
- 102 *Ibid.*, p. 276.
- 103 Evola, *Sintesi*, pp. 82–3.
- 104 *Ibid.*, pp. 84–5.
- 105 Boutin, *Politique et tradition*, p. 290; Evola, "Critica della teoria dell'eredita," p. 195.
- 106 Evola, *Sintesi*, pp. 154–5, 188.
- 107 *Ibid.*, pp. 33, 157–8.
- 108 *Ibid.*, pp. 158, 160. We should note that the Minoans, often considered as particularly creative racial cousins of the Italian race by the Mediterranean theorists, were held in much lower esteem by Evola.
- 109 Evola, *Sintesi*, pp. 164–5, 188.
- 110 *Ibid.*, pp. 162–4, 188. We may speculate that the dislike of some Germans for Evola's philosophy may have been due in part to his unflattering description of the Germans as a Dionysian race.
- 111 *Ibid.*, pp. 166–7, 188.
- 112 *Ibid.*, pp. 55, 66–7.
- 113 *Ibid.*, pp. 61, 98, 107, 188.
- 114 *Ibid.*, pp. 76, 153.
- 115 *Ibid.*, pp. 70–3.
- 116 *Ibid.*, p. 245; Boutin, *Politique et tradition*, p. 190.
- 117 Evola, *Sintesi*, pp. 88–9, 70–3.
- 118 Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale*, p. 77; Evola, *Il cammino*, p. 151; Julius Evola, "Due volti della razza," *Diorama filosofico*, March 31, 1939, quoted in Franzini, "Il meticciato," p. lxxviii. Quite interestingly, Giacomo Acerbo would make much the same point. In his book *Fra due plotoni di esecuzione* he claimed that, where the Nordics remained free of racial "contamination," as in Scandinavia, they never produced any effective contribution to the progress of humanity. Giacomo Acerbo, *Fra due plotoni di esecuzione*, p. 293.
- 119 Julius Evola, "Restauration de l'Occident dans l'esprit aryen originel," conference in *Studienkreis* of Berlin, December 10, 1937, reprinted in *Totalité*, nos 21–2, (1985): 15–35, quoted in Boutin, *Politique et tradition*, p. 28.
- 120 Evola, "Coscienza di razza," p. 343; Evola, *Sintesi*, p. 231.
- 121 Evola, *Sintesi*, pp. 243–7. It would seem that the Mediterranean race, though Solar, had certain Telluric qualities, according to Evola's conception. We might also note that his description of Mediterraneans has much in common with the stereotype of women then common in the western world.

- 122 Ibid., p. 237.
- 123 Ibid., p. 238.
- 124 Julius Evola, "Razzismo nordico-ario," *La Difesa della Razza*, 5, 12 (April 20, 1942): 11; Evola, "Coscienza di razza," p. 349; Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale*, p. 35.
- 125 Evola, *Il cammino*, p. 156; Evola, "Nord e sud: supermento di un opposizione," *La Difesa della Razza*, 2, 15 (June 5, 1939): 21.
- 126 Evola, *Sintesi*, pp. 232–3.
- 127 Ibid., pp. 90, 243.
- 128 Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale*, pp. 80–1.
- 129 Julius Evola, "Nord e sud," p. 9.
- 130 Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale*, p. 78.
- 131 Evola, *Sintesi*, pp. 87, 170, 233.
- 132 Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale*, p. 82.
- 133 Evola, *Sintesi*, p. 90; Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale*, pp. 83–4.
- 134 Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale*, p. 87; Evola, "Nord e sud," p. 9.
- 135 Evola, *Sintesi*, p. 233.
- 136 Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale*, p. 77.
- 137 Ibid., p. 90; Drake, *Revolutionary Mystique*, p. 118; Griffin, "Revolts against the Modern World," pp. 104–5.
- 138 Evola, *Sintesi*, p. 187.
- 139 Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale*, pp. 90–1.
- 140 Evola, *Sintesi*, p. 254.
- 141 Ibid., p. 255.
- 142 Ibid., p. 256.
- 143 Ibid., pp. 118–19, 172–3; Evola, "Metodologia razzista," p. 11; Drake, *Revolutionary Mystique*, p. 122; Tarchi, *Diorama*, p. xx.
- 144 Evola, *Sintesi*, p. 119.
- 145 Ibid., pp. 236, 249.
- 146 Ibid., p. 258.
- 147 Gregor, *Ideology of Fascism*, p. 265.
- 148 Evola, *Sintesi*, plate 14 (the individual in the photograph is Giulio Cogni).
- 149 Marcello Ricci interview, Rome, July 18, 1996.
- 150 Evola, "Razzismo nordico-ario," p. 10.
- 151 Ibid., p. 11.
- 152 Evola, *Sintesi*, p. 74.
- 153 Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale*, pp. 7–9, 78–9; Julius Evola, "Julius Evola lamenta il fallimento di due anni di politica razziale del governo fascista," *La Vita Italiana*, fasci. 335 (February 1941), in Preti, *Impero fascista*, document no. XLII, p. 366; Evola, "Razzismo nordico-ario," p. 10.
- 154 Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale*, pp. 8–9, 78–9.
- 155 See P. Ferrara, "Il Ministero della Cultura Popolare," pp. 72, 118; Raspanti, "I razzismi del fascismo," p. 80, note 214.
- 156 Alberto Luchini, "Razza e antirazza," *Gerarchia*, XXI, 5 (May 1942): 201–4.
- 157 ACS, Ministry of Popular Culture, Gabinetto, fasci. "collaboratori ufficio razza"; File: "Cipriani, Lidio"; Letter, Alberto Luchini to Lidio Cipriani, August 28, 1942.
- 158 Herbert Müller, of the German embassy in Rome, to Auswärtiges Amt., D III of Berlin, January 13, 1942, in Nicola Cospito and Hans Werner Neulen, *Salò-Berlino: l'alleanza difficile: la Repubblica Sociale Italiana nei documenti segreti del Terzo Reich* (Milan: Mursia, 1992), p. 77.
- 159 Raspanti, "Ideologia," p. 249; Landra, "Storia vera," p. 6.
- 160 ACS, SPD (CR) 480/R, busta 146, fasci. 395 [Giulio Cogni]; Letter, Roberto Farinacci to "Presidente" [Mussolini?], August 5, 1938.
- 161 ACS, Ministry of the Interior, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Affari Generali e riservati, cat. A1, 1930–1943, busta 33, fasci. "Evola Julio di Vincenzo";

- Anonymous, Telespresso number 5941/446 (copy), Object: Deutsch-Italienische Gesellschaft di Francoforte s/M – Conferenza del Barone Evola, dal R. Consolato d'Italia in Francoforte s/M al R. Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Rome, May 12, 1941.
- 162 ACS, Ministry of the Interior, P.S. A1.1943 busta 33, fasci. "Evola, Julio di Vincenzo Dr." H.A., trans. from *Muenchner Zeitung* (May 8, 1941), "Le Decisione dell'Italia."
- 163 ACS, Ministry of the Interior, P.S. A1.1943, busta 33, fasci. "Evola, Julio di Vincenzo," trans. from *Voelkischer Beobachter*.
- 164 ACS, Ministry of the Interior, P.S. A1.1943, busta 33, fasci. "Evola, Julio di Vincenzo," *Muenchner Neueste Nachrichten*.
- 165 ACS, Ministry of the Interior, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Affari Generali e riservati, cat. A1, 1930–1943, busta 33, fasci. "Evola Julio di Vincenzo," Anonymous, Telespresso number 5941/446 (copy), Object: Deutsch-Italienische Gesellschaft di Francoforte s/M – Conferenza del Barone Evola, dal R. Consolato d'Italia in Francoforte s/M al R. Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Rome, May 12, 1941.
- 166 Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews*, p. 329; ACS, Ministry of the Interior, P.S. A1.1943, busta 33, fasci.: "Evola, Julio di Vincenzo"; Telegram, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Ministry of the Interior–Police, Demorazza, Italians Abroad, March 4, 1942.
- 167 De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani*, p. 255.
- 168 Julius Evola, "Autodéfense," *L'Eloquenza*, 11–12 (November–December 1951), also in *Quaderni di testi evoliani*, 2 (Rome, 1976), quoted in Boutin, *Politique et tradition*, p. 238.
- 169 Julius Evola, "Mussolini e il razzismo," in *Il meridiano d'Italia*, no. 49 (December 16, 1951): 3, quoted in Turrís, *Testimonianze su Evola*, p. 363.
- 170 "...il modo di considerare problemi analoghi a quelli affrontati dalla Germania, e quindi di 'allinearsi,' mantenendo però un atteggiamento indipendente, facendo valere quell'orientamento spirituale, quel primato dello spirito, che esulava da gran parte dal razzismo tedesco. In particolare, la teoria della razza ario-romana e il corrispondente mito potevano integrare l'idea romana proposta, in genere, dal fascismo, nonchè dare una base all'intenzione di Mussolini di rettificare e innalzare, con la sua 'rivoluzione' e col suo Stato, il tipo medio dell'Italiano e di enucleare da esso un uomo nuovo." Evola, *Il cammino*, p. 155.
- 171 Tarchi, *Diorama*, p. lxx.
- 172 Evola, *Il cammino*, p. 155.
- 173 Fausto Coen, *Tre anni di bugie* (Milan: Pan, n.d.), p. 111; Evola, *Il cammino*, p. 158.
- 174 Evola, *Il cammino*, p. 150.
- 175 *Ibid.*, pp. 155–6.
- 176 Raspanti, "Ideologia," p. 259. The School of Fascist Mysticism, "Sandro Italico Mussolini" was founded in 1930 by activists of the Milanese Fascist University Group (Gruppo Universitario Fascista, abbreviated GUP). It sought to elaborate and diffuse fascist ethical, political, and philosophical principles that informed the fascist conception of life. Like other fascist organizations, it suddenly discovered that it was racist in 1938 and began promoting a series of special conventions on the racial problems of the Empire in 1938–9, and courses on race and fascist mysticism for elementary school teachers in 1938–9. In 1939–40 the School held its first contest for a monograph on "The mysticism of fascist racism." Of the 24 monographs sent in, Leoni's won, and was published. Four others would have been published, had not war problems intervened. Evola was editor of the column "Fascist Racism" in its journal *Dottrina fascista*. He increasingly dominated the organization's activities in the early 1940s, and conceived of using the organization as the main center for German-Italian collaboration on his projects.
- 177 Raspanti, "I razzismi del fascismo," p. 88 note.
- 178 *Ibid.*, p. 84.
- 179 *Ibid.*, Evola, *Il cammino*, p. 157.
- 180 Mazzei, *Razza e nazione*, pp. 76–7.
- 181 Landra, "Storia vera," pp. 4, 6.
- 182 ACS, SPD (CO) 1922–1943, busta 1959, fasci. 532283, T. Interlandi, "Richiamo alle origini e all'onesta," *La Difesa della Razza*, March 20, 1942 (not published). Evola, in *Il cammino del cinabro*, mentions that the *Difesa* editorial staff demonstrated to Mussolini the diametrically

- opposed points between Evola's philosophy and the Manifesto. He was, perhaps, referring to Interlandi's "Richiamo alle origini e all'onesta."
- 183 ACS, SPD (CO) 1922–1943, busta 1959, fasci. 532283; Letter, Telesio Interlandi to Mussolini, March 19, 1942.
- 184 "Siamo così partiti, come era naturale, da alcuni principi di biologia e abbiamo seguito nella nostra esposizione un metodo essenzialmente scientifico, basandoci sempre su fatti concreti. Abbiamo, volutamente, lasciato ad altri la trattazione dell'aspetto spirituale del problema della razza e, volutamente, abbiamo evitato di passare nel mito." Guido Landra, "Biologia e razza," *La Difesa della Razza*, 5, 9 (March 5, 1942): 6.
- 185 Ibid.
- 186 Landra, "Fondamenti biologici," p. 4.
- 187 Landra, "Biologia e razza," p. 6.
- 188 Ibid., p. 7. This statement perhaps hints at the biological racist–Catholic alliance that was to offer effective resistance to Evola's projects.
- 189 Landra, "Razzismo biologico," p. 10.
- 190 Landra, "Fondamenti biologici," p. 4.
- 191 Landra, "Biologia e razza," p. 8.
- 192 Ibid., p. 7. See also Landra, "Fondamenti biologici," p. 4.
- 193 Landra, "Biologia e razza," p. 8.
- 194 Ibid., p. 7.
- 195 Landra, "Storia vera," p. 6.
- 196 Tarchi, *Diorama*, pp. lxx–lxxi; Evola, *Il cammino*, p. 157. We should note that the German collaborators, at least those through the German Racial Office (and thus imbued with biological racism) became increasingly disenchanted with Evola. By September 1942 the office considered Evola anti-German, anti-racist, vague, and a representative of Italy's "racial decline." Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews*, p. 330.
- 197 Raspanti, "I razzismi del fascismo," p. 85.
- 198 ACS, SPD, File: "Antonio Le Pera."
- 199 Michele Sarfatti, "Le 'carte di Merano': La persecuzione antiebraica nell'Italia fascista", *Passato e Presente*, XII, 32 (1994): 120–28; Raspanti, "Ideologia," p. 244.

8 Racial stalemate and the end of the regime, 1942–1945

- 1 Guido Landra, "Il razzismo e la gioventù italiana," *La Difesa della Razza*, 6, 3 (December 5, 1942): 4.
- 2 Ciano, *Diario, 1939–43*, II, pp. 174–5, quoted in De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei*, p. 249.
- 3 Guido Landra, "Fronte unico razzismo italiano," *La Difesa della Razza*, 6, 8 (February 20, 1943): 13.
- 4 Guido Landra, "Scienza, razza, scientismo," *La Vita Italiana*, 31, 359 (February 1943): 151–3.
- 5 Landra, "Razzismo biologico," p. 9.
- 6 Guido Landra, "Le razze umane esistono," *La Difesa della Razza*, 5, 12 (April 20, 1942): 8; Landra, "Biologia e razza," p. 6.
- 7 Guido Landra, "La guerra e il razzismo italiano," *La Vita Italiana*, 31, 362 (May 1943): 458–64.
- 8 Landra, "Razzismo biologico," p. 11.
- 9 Landra, "Il razzismo e la gioventù italiana," p. 6.
- 10 Landra, "Razzismo biologico," p. 11; Landra, "Conflitto di razze," p. 11.
- 11 Guido Landra, "Presente e avvenire del razzismo italiano," *La Difesa della Razza*, 6, 12 (April 20, 1943): 4.
- 12 Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews*, pp. 340–41.
- 13 De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei*, p. 433.
- 14 Cesare Interlandi, personal communication.
- 15 Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews*, p. 397.
- 16 Cospito and Heulen, *Salò-Berlino*, p. 177.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Pichetto, *Alle radici dell'odio*, pp. 97–8.

- 19 Raspanti, "I razzismi del fascismo," p. 86.
- 20 De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei*, pp. 444–5.
- 21 Pichetto, *Alle radici dell'odio*, p. 99.
- 22 Giorgio Almirante, "Il nostro sangue," *La Repubblica fascista*, August 23, 1944, in Burgio and Casali, *Studi sul razzismo italiano*, p. 12.
- 23 Spampinato, *Contromemoriale*, II, pp. 130–2.
- 24 Benito Mussolini, "Libertà di sfruttamento," *Corrispondenza repubblicana* (February 11, 1944), in Philip V. Cannistrato, *La fabbrica del consenso: fascismo e mass media* (Rome–Bari: Laterza, 1975), p. 347.
- 25 Benito Mussolini, Interview with Gian Gaetano Cabella, *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XXXII, pp. 191–9, reprinted in Griffin, *Fascism*, p. 89.
- 26 Nicola Tranfaglia, *Dallo stato liberale al regime fascista: Problemi e ricerche*, 2nd edn. (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1981), p. 115.

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- 1 Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews*, p. 406.
- 2 Interview, Cesare Interlandi, Rome, July 12, 1996.
- 3 Pogliano, "Divisi, in nome della scienza," p. 104, note 5.
- 4 Paolo Chiozzi, "Autoritratto del razzismo: le fotografie antropologiche di Lidio Cipriani," *La Menzogna della Razza*, p. 91; Correnti, "Antropologia biologica in Italia," p. 425.
- 5 Interview, Marcello Ricci, Rome, July 18, 1996.
- 6 Raspanti, "I razzismi del fascismo," p. 85.
- 7 Sheehan, "Myth and Violence," pp. 50–1.
- 8 Drake, *Revolutionary Mystique*, p. 123.
- 9 Juan Comas, "Racial Myths" in UNESCO, *Race and Science: The Race Question in Modern Science* (New York: Columbia University Press, [1951] 1961), p. 26.
- 10 *Ibid.*, pp. 30–1.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 34.
- 12 Acerbo, *Fra due plotoni*, p. 10.
- 13 Parisella, "Acerbo, Giacomo," p. 14.
- 14 Correnti, "Antropologia biologica in Italia." See Nicola Pende, *Documenti contro l'acusa di antisemitismo* (Rome: Saet, 1961).
- 15 Correnti, "Antropologia biologica in Italia," p. 434.
- 16 Puccini, "L'Antropologia," p. 241.
- 17 Correnti, "Antropologia biologica in Italia," p. 425.
- 18 See Goffredo Fofi's classic study, *L'immigrazione meridionale a Torino* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1964), for a discussion of this post-war migration.
- 19 Daniele Vimercati, *I lombardi alla nuova crociata: il "fenomeno lega" dall'esordio al trionfo* (Milan: Mursia, 1990), pp. 65–6.
- 20 Gianfranco Miglio, "Toward a Federal Italy," *Telos*, 90 (winter 1991): 21, 25, 36.
- 21 Miglio, "Toward a Federal Italy," p. 28.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 27, note 4.
- 23 Bernard Poche, "The Lombard League: From Cultural Autonomy to Integral Federalism," *Telos*, 90 (winter 1991): 75.
- 24 Miglio, "Toward a Federal Italy," p. 42.
- 25 For earlier claims concerning the Nazis' manipulation of science, see Joseph Needham, *The Nazi Attack on International Science* (London: Watts & Co., 1941) and J. D. Bernal, *The Social Function of Science* (London: George Routledge, 1943).
- 26 Ute Deichmann, *Biologists under Hitler*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 319, 322, 325, 331.
- 27 Deichmann, *Biologists under Hitler*, p. 328.
- 28 Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, p. 6.
- 29 Gentile, "La nazione del fascismo," pp. 103–4.

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