

course of action would mean a universal acclamation for, and adoption of, "fascist" institutions throughout the world. Winning adherents to fascist principles thus became one of the goals of fascist activity, and the object of much of this activity was now European youth.

Within Italy, the expansion of fascism was viewed by some as a continuation of the process of "revolutionizing" it which had begun some time before. This theme was the subject of an editorial in *Critica Fascista* in the summer of 1933:


The motor of spiritual renovation, which we began in the Italian provinces just a decade ago in the name of revolutionary fascism, only now begins to have repercussions and to produce its first consequences in the life of the young peoples of Europe....

... Ours was truly a *politics of the new generation* because it was born out of the confrontation with the traditional systems and forces....<sup>2</sup>

Throughout Italy the call for the creation of a Fascist International was repeatedly joined with the call for the creation of a truly revolutionary fascism, inspired by the spirit of Youth. We have seen how Giuseppe Bottai became the spokesman for many of these young fascists, and Bottai's own stress on the close connection between the expansion of fascism and its increasingly revolutionary nature was paradigmatic for much of the "new generation." But in the early thirties, Bottai's prestige among young fascists was severely challenged by the son-in-law of the Duce, Galeazzo Ciano, soon destined to become the Foreign Minister. For the remainder of the fascist epoch in Italy, young fascists looked primarily to Bottai or Ciano for guidance.<sup>3</sup> Since Ciano was above all involved in foreign affairs, those concerned with the spread of the doctrines of universal fascism more often went to him for support and advice, and were generally pleased by his attitude. Ruggero Zangrandi has

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Fascist International

 The emergence of the *Comitati d'azione per l'Universalità di Roma* must be viewed as a significant act by Mussolini, who thereby confirmed institutionally that his famous claim: "Fascism is not merchandise for export" had been proven wrong by the course of events. There was, indeed, a considerable market abroad for fascist output. Shaken to its foundations by the worldwide economic depression of the early thirties, torn over demands for revision of the Versailles Treaties, distressed and perplexed by the emergence of Hitler's Nazi State from the ruins of Weimar, "old Europe" appeared to be on the verge of complete transformation. For many of the alarmed statesmen and intellectuals in centers of power, Mussolini's Italy seemed to offer the possibility of a new model for Western nations, and Roosevelt's request for a study of the Italian Corporate State is symptomatic of this state of mind in 1933. In the whirlpool of Western society, many seemed willing to grasp at the apparently buoyant straw of fascism.

As the eyes of the world turned toward Rome in search of solutions to their increasingly urgent problems, Mussolini himself apparently came to believe in the universal destiny of fascism.<sup>1</sup> The centers for fascist propaganda were created partly in response to genuine interest abroad, and partly because Mussolini was desperately searching for enhanced prestige, both at home and abroad. The confirmation of the rightness of his own

described a conversation with Ciano in 1937, when Zangrandi was trying to win support for a Center for International Fascism:

... the "new man," the man of the day, was Galeazzo Ciano. ... More responsible voices attributed to him ... new and "ardent" ideas, a great dynamism, an obvious mania for popularity and the desire to capture for himself the sympathy of young and renovatory currents, that is to say, of those whom he believed ought to represent the "fresh energies" to which the regime had given birth.

He was, therefore, our man. . . . Ciano was not the traditional hierarch. . . . Above all, in my case, he liked to stress that there was only a dozen years' difference between us, and that I offered him the chance to re-establish direct contact with youth, something which he said he valued greatly. . . .<sup>4</sup>

This attitude of Ciano's was of signal importance in the development of the *universalfascismo* movement, for in 1935 Ciano became Undersecretary of Press and Propaganda, and the expansion of the activities of those sections of the press devoted to spreading the message of universal fascism was directly linked to the parallel growth of Ciano's power within the regime.<sup>5</sup>

The desires of Gravelli and Coselschi fitted well with those of the new man within the Fascist Regime, for Ciano was full of ambition and possessed an ego second only to Mussolini's in its need for affection and adulation.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, the tasks of spreading fascist propaganda abroad and gathering tributes to Mussolini and the Fascist State were very congenial to Ciano's talents and personality. And his conception of the role of press and propaganda was calculated to excite the advocates of a Fascist International:

Shortly, an organization will arise here which will be the first in Italy. Everything will pass through my hands, we will speak to the whole world. We will tell all other countries about Italy

and her great men. We will use radio, theater, and the movies. And, naturally, we will use the press. But above all we will use men.<sup>7</sup>

Gravelli's response was both exuberant and public. "The creation of the Undersecretariat for the Press and Propaganda, entrusted to Galeazzo Ciano," he told the readers of *Ottobre* in 1935, "is the result for which we have fought." Ciano was evidently the perfect man, being "of our generation," and endowed with those qualities which would enable him to represent "the dynamic element of the European fascist action."<sup>8</sup>

The emergence of Ciano as a key figure in the Fascist Regime was symptomatic of the new direction Mussolini was taking in foreign affairs, and it is significant that when he decided to make a change in the leadership of the Foreign Office in 1936, Ciano would be the man to whom the Duce turned. Yet the significance of individual personalities, even one as dramatic and charismatic as Ciano's, must not be overstated in a transformation of this importance. Coselschi's Action Committees were, after all, created before the establishment of Ciano's Press Bureau. The key, as always, was Mussolini and his continued search for recognition as a leader of a young fascism.

The adherents of the project for a Fascist International were very encouraged by the attitude of the regime, and the creation of Ciano's new office later on reinforced their excitement. Yet no amount of enthusiasm and encouragement from within Italy could substitute for foreign support for the International. From the very beginning, Italian ideas and Italian leadership were tied to cries from outside the peninsula for the creation of the International. Significantly, at the banquet in 1934 which celebrated the founding of the CAUR, at least two non-Italians occupied positions of honor.<sup>9</sup> The first, a certain Giovanni Di Silvestro—representing the *Figli d'Italia* (Sons of Italy) of the United States—paid tribute to Asvero Gravelli, and contributed

the startling information that Gravelli was very well known in America. The second foreigner was Simon P. Ooms of Holland, already known to many as a contributor to *Ottobre* and *Antieuropa*. Ooms' ties with official fascist groups in Holland were somewhat cloudy, and his only known connection was with the so-called Black House of Rotterdam, a fascist propaganda center and meeting house. He was evidently associated with the *Front Noir*, or "Black Front," of Holland, but whether he held any official position in its ranks is not known.<sup>10</sup> Ooms' speech, however, represented a certain attitude shared by many fascist movements on the continent. He was concerned about the integrity of national fascism, and stressed the degree to which the International envisaged by the CAUR would guarantee the independence of each particular fascist movement: "Fascism will give every nation its own national pride again. . . . Young Europe will justly be this complex of nations, each one of which, proud of its own race, will give Europe its function in the world."<sup>11</sup>

After this enthusiastic endorsement of the CAUR, Ooms significantly alluded to the Nazi alternative to an International of independent fascisms, grayly remarking that "extreme racial prides, which conceal within them future conflicts, must be avoided."

The concluding speeches at the CAUR banquet were given by the two court philosophers of the movement, Coselschi and Gravelli. (These two, along with Ciano later on, would bear the brunt of the activity on behalf of the creation of a Fascist International.) Coselschi limited his remarks to stressing that the CAUR would be universal, not international (a distinction which would become more significant later), while Gravelli rose to tell his followers that at the moment of the foundation of the International, the memory of the guiding spirit of the movement should be honored: that of Arnaldo Mussolini.<sup>12</sup>

The CAUR, then, represented the first institutionalization of the ideology of universal fascism, and the hopes for the spread of fascist doctrine and the emergence of a fascist Europe rested with Eugenio Coselschi and his various collaborators until Ciano emerged the following year as a figure of prime importance. Coselschi himself revived much of the rhetoric which had been used by D'Annunzio in his picaresque adventure in Fiume more than a decade before, and his constant reiteration of the theme of Imperial Rome would play a major role in his conception of the International. The universality of Rome was conceived in very broad terms, and entailed a kind of syncretism which had been deplored by some of the younger intellectuals mentioned earlier. In 1933 Coselschi dealt with the theme "The Universality of Fascism" in these terms:

The physical greatness of a city is not enough to establish its true function as a *Capital*, its riches are not enough, its monuments are not enough. One can not dominate forever unless by virtue of an immortal idea, and the force of an inextinguishable civilization.

Now this eternal civilizing and animating mission forms a single unity with the stones, the streets, and the piazzas of Rome. . . .

. . . This unity . . . can only have one name, because this name alone lives and perpetuates itself throughout the centuries, this name alone has been able to resist the centuries.

It is the name of the Past and the Present.

It is the name of the Future and the Eternal.

It is the name of the Church and the Empire.

It is ROME.<sup>13</sup>

The general direction of the CAUR can be seen from these lines. Its aim would be to cull statements of allegiance from various foreign movements calling themselves "fascist," and to integrate these "fascisms" into a loose organization which paid fealty to the genius of Mussolini and the leadership of Italian

fascism. Just as the proponents of "young Europe" had stressed that the International would not be an organization of nations, but a unity of movements, the CAUR did not deal with foreign governments but with foreign fascist organizations. As an arm of the government, the CAUR would finance various journals and propagandists, as well as serve as a means for distributing funds to many of the burgeoning philo-fascistic groups on the continent.<sup>14</sup>

The propaganda aims of the CAUR were obviously in direct conflict with the kind of monolithic "International" which would soon be proposed from Berlin, and the tension between fascist Italy and Nazi Germany was clear from the very beginning of the CAUR. Insofar as the CAUR was committed to the independence of local fascisms, it could attack the Nazis both on the grounds of their racial theory (often considered a heresy from the standpoint of Catholic Rome),<sup>15</sup> and on the basis of the expansionist national goals of the *Reich*. Thus, fascist or philo-fascist movements in Catholic countries were more likely to find a friendly reception in Rome than those from Protestant lands, as witness the extended treatment given to the ideas of the young leader of the Spanish Falange, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, in *Ottobre* in 1934.<sup>16</sup> The Spanish leader was extremely impressed by Italian fascism even though he was insistent on the uniqueness of the Falange, and his remarks on the difference between Italy and Germany were very revealing, especially to the readers of the journal for the Fascist International:

... Herein lies the spiritual illumination of the Mussolinian movement. In every country fascism assumes styles and characteristics of its own, which are the circumstantial and local element surrounding the permanent and unique essence of the movement....

... Hitlerism has some essential principles which coincide with our own, but it also has some Germanic and Lutheran characteristics which obviously do not fit in with the Roman idea of

universality, nor the Spanish one, and these principles are summed up in the word "racism."<sup>17</sup>

In the debate between the principles of Rome and Berlin, the propagandists for fascist Italy did not hesitate to stress their own historical primogeniture in the family of civilized peoples. Noting that Charles the Great had found the Germans in a totally barbaric and uncivilized condition, Gravelli ridiculed the ideas of Arthur Rosenberg in May, 1934, and then turned to a discussion of Italy's primacy in the field of modern culture.<sup>18</sup>

This distinction between Rome and Berlin was not lost on the leaders of other European fascist movements, many of whom feared the power of the Nazis, whether or not they found the racist doctrine congenial. If the notion of a Fascist International which permitted individual movements to retain substantial autonomy was an attractive one in the thirties, it would appear to have been a veritable Nirvana to the shattered survivors of European fascism after the Second World War. For example, Horia Sima—Codreanu's successor as the leader of the Rumanian Iron Guard—in his often delirious but highly instructive memoir recalled the CAUR with considerable warmth. His attitude may be considered representative of many of the European fascists in the middle thirties:

The Duce of fascism sought only spiritual pre-eminence for his doctrine, a recognition by the other movements of the route he had opened up in history. It is his merit to have recognized early the political and spiritual inquietude of the European peoples, and to have found a way of expressing it.

He also realized the necessity for a systematic contract between nationalist movements. To this end he patronized the foundation of the CAUR....<sup>19</sup>

What is crucial here is not the obvious whitewashing of Mussolini's motives, but rather the degree to which the doctrines of universal fascism appealed to leaders of other fascist movements. Léon Degrelle was similarly warm towards the CAUR

and Mussolini during this period. It is hardly surprising to find Degrelle speaking sympathetically of fascist Rome, since he was the recipient of considerable financial support from the Duce; nonetheless, his words during a visit to Rome in the summer of 1936 were notable:

The Rome of the Caesars and the Popes, liberated, once again renewed, is the new symbol of regenerated Italy: youth reveals all the forces of history and race, and exalts them in a powerful and genuine expansion, which both renews and creates. . . .

You Italians and we Rexists, in the act of building a new land, raise our spirits by thinking of our mission and the grandeur of our task.

We also think of our common enemies. . . .<sup>20</sup>

Degrelle had come to Rome under the auspices of the CAUR, and the rhetoric of his speech shows once again how congenial the idea of an International of national fascisms was to many foreign movements. Indeed, the document stipulating the goals of the CAUR reads much like the propaganda surrounding the United Nations, calling as it does for world peace and the development of the talents of each nation, and condemning any interference in the internal affairs of one nation by another.<sup>21</sup>

The spokesmen for the International were also active in other similar organizations outside Italy, seizing any opportunity to beat the drum of their own movement. Thus in November, 1934, we find Gravelli in Vienna at a meeting of the nonfascist, pacifist *Pan-europe* group, led by Count Coudenhove-Kalergi.<sup>22</sup> The subject of the meeting was the world economic crisis, and Gravelli took the opportunity to deliver the saving gospel according to Mussolini, reciting the Duce's famous slogan that the difficulties besetting Europe constituted a crisis of the system rather than a difficulty within the economic structure, and that a full-scale transformation of the economic institutions of Europe was necessary if a final catastrophe was to be avoided.<sup>23</sup>

In the beginning of December, 1934, Gravelli represented Italy at a conference of a group called the "International Action of Nationalisms," a neo-Nazi organization meeting in Zurich.<sup>24</sup> The slogan of this group was: "Nationalists of all countries, unite!", and its membership included representatives of Ireland (General Eoian O'Duffy), England (Oswald Mosley was in Zurich in 1934), Germany (Keller), France (General Poudoux), Holland (Simon Ooms), and the United States (J. F. Hurst). The International Action of Nationalisms seems to have been financed at least in part by the German Nazis. It met in Berlin in March, 1935, when Gravelli again represented fascist Italy. At the 1934 meeting Gravelli tried to illustrate the differences between fascist and Nazi world-views. Attacking the limitations of racist doctrine, he urged the delegates to remember that each nation had a special mission to fulfill, and that no single monolithic doctrine could possibly permit the various nations of Europe to assemble under its banners. And, in an attempt to weaken the attraction of National Socialist calls to arms, he reminded his listeners that thousands of young men had died for the ideas of Italian fascism, and that the youth of Europe had been entranced by the universal goals of Mussolini.<sup>25</sup>

The fall of 1934 was a busy time for Gravelli. Just a few weeks earlier he had been in Berlin at a meeting of a group called the Society for the Study of Fascism, which met at the Kaiserhof and had an illustrious membership list, including Prince Starhemberg from the *Heimwehr*, the Italian Marchese Antinori, Baron Dr. von Brakel, Dr. Hans Ewers, Otto Freytag, Baron von Manteuffel, and such men of importance in German finance as von Eichborn. The membership of the Society was limited to 143, 82 of whom were "regular" members of the group.<sup>26</sup> The composition of the Society suggests that some elements of the German and Austrian nationalist Right, above

all the *Heimwehr*, were seriously interested in cultural collaboration with the Italian fascists.<sup>27</sup> And Gravelli's presence at a gathering of this sort re-emphasizes his role as at least a semi-official representative of the Fascist Regime abroad. Whatever his precise relationship to Palazzo Venezia during this period, it is known that Mussolini made frequent use of journalists in his dealings with the *Reich* in the early thirties,<sup>28</sup> and Gravelli would fit this model. In any case, Gravelli's speeches and writings during the period could hardly have been designed to win the sympathies of the Germans, for he continued to insist upon the ability of fascist movements to develop their own doctrine and their own political style.

We can summarize the movement for a Fascist International, then, as a three-pronged affair. First, an attempt to woo foreign movements by guaranteeing their independence and integrity. Second, a theory of the Corporate State which provided a unique solution to the economic crisis of Europe. Third, a universal, Christian, yet tolerant doctrine which resisted any claims to racial superiority or regional dominance on the continent. All of these elements came into play at the Congress organized by the CAUR at Montreux in December, 1934. This marks the high point of fascist activity on behalf of an International, and offers us a chance to judge the potential for such an organization and the European fascist reaction to it.

At first the Montreux Congress seems to confirm the belief that fascism had won wide support throughout the continent, for no less than thirteen countries were represented. The Austrian *Heimwehr* sent a delegate named Dr. Rimaldini. Belgium was represented by two movements, the *Légion Nationale Belge*, and the *Ligue Corporative du Travail*. Thomas Damsgaard Schmidt, the head of the Danish *National Corps* attended, as did his countryman Fritz Clausen, representing the Danish National Socialist Party. France was represented by Marcel

Bucard, the head of the *Françistes*, and Greece sent Georges Mercouris, the head of a Social-Nationalist organization. The colorful General Eoian O'Duffy from the Irish Blue Shirts was there, along with Vidkun Quisling of the Norwegian *Nasjonal Samling*, Arnold Meyer of the Dutch *Front Noir*, Eça de Queiroz from Salazar's Portugal, Ion Motza from the Rumanian Iron Guard, and Reutger Essen of the Swedish National Union of Youth. Finally, Jimenez Caballero from the Falange, General Fonjallez from the Swiss Fascist Federation, and M. Tamosi-aitis of the Lithuanian Nationalist Party were also present. Significantly, there were no representatives from Nazi Germany.<sup>29</sup>

From the standpoint of the organizers of the Congress, the attendance was encouraging. The main address by Coselschi to the fascists seemed aimed at alleviating any fears they might have had about the role which Mussolini's Italy intended to play, assuring them that *no* nations were formally represented at Montreux, but only parties and movements.<sup>30</sup> For that reason, Coselschi told his listeners, anyone who adhered to the doctrines of the CAUR could join, even if he were not a member of any movement, any party, or any organization. The CAUR was open to all those, he said, who "have their spirit oriented towards the principles of a political, economic, and social renovation, based on the concepts of the hierarchy of the State and the principle of collaboration between the classes."<sup>31</sup> In keeping with the inspiration of those who had initiated the concept of universal fascism, membership was to be a spiritual question, not one of belonging to particular groups. The proper mentality, not the proper pedigree, was to be the main criterion for entry. These assurances were in response to very serious qualms on the part of some of the foreign delegates. As early as September, 1933, Simon Ooms had written in *Ottobre* of his nervousness regarding the CAUR. Ooms feared

that it might become a mass organization in which the voices of lesser countries were drowned out by greater powers. He insisted that the CAUR function purely as an organization for the dissemination of ideas.<sup>32</sup> Coselschi was therefore attempting to allay the fears of the delegates before turning to any concrete proposals.

Having assured his audience that Mussolini's Rome desired no suzerainty either at the Congress or within the CAUR, Coselschi went on to guarantee the broadest possible freedom of action for each national element. He stated his dogmatic belief that each nation had to find the solution to its own problems according to its own methods and within its own soul. "I will be," he said, "the most severe and jealous guardian of the national sentiment of each of you."<sup>33</sup>

If each nation was to be permitted to fulfill its own destiny, and if no enforced coordination was to come from Rome, what was to hold the CAUR together? Was there no ideological coherence to the vaunted International? Coselschi turned his attention next to this dilemma, and neatly resolved the difficulty by proclaiming that there was no contradiction in maintaining that fascism was simultaneously national and universal. Fascism's primary point of reference was surely the nation, and as such represented, for Coselschi, the highest development of nationalism in modern times. Yet at the same time, out of the national experience of fascist Italy had emerged certain principles which demonstrated a universal applicability. But unlike the socialists, a fascist need not renounce his own nationality in order to be a true fascist. It was this element which, according to the director of the CAUR, made fascism the true antithesis to Marxism, for the fascists were nationalists in the highest sense, while the Marxists were inevitably internationalists. What was the universality of fascism?

... nothing prevents . . . all our nationalisms from proclaiming the *universality of fascist doctrine* on certain fundamental points

as, for example: *the reconstitution of a State on new bases, of a unified, strong, and disciplined State, the organization of labor, liberties contained within sane and honest limits; installation of order and justice; agreement between social classes; coordinated and solid collaboration between producers. . . .* And so the "super-national" idea harmonizes perfectly with the *national* idea.<sup>34</sup>

The "nationalist" principles were those commonly associated with the Italian Corporate State, and Coselschi made it plain that the "Corporate Idea" was the concept which would lead to a genuine unity of fascist elements in Europe. Further, the vehicle for the transmission of the Corporate faith was to be the youth of Europe. The leader of the CAUR presented his vision of the "fascistization" of Europe to the Congress, a vision which awaited the messianic forces of fascist youth for its fulfillment:

When the youth of Europe, or better yet of the entire world, acquires a revolutionary consciousness in our terms, a consciousness as far from Bolshevik materialism as from individual egoism, then Corporatism will have definitely found the way to conquer the world.<sup>35</sup>

Thus the message of universal fascism found its explicit formulation at the Montreux Congress. The interesting thing about Coselschi's speech was its very positive approach to the difficult question of uniting many diverse movements under a single rubric. The extent to which he was able to stress the common beliefs which united all the groups gathered at Montreux suggests that the kind of Fascist International of youth envisaged by the leader of the CAUR had substantial appeal. This is supported by the attitudes of people such as Horia Sima, long after the failure of the International, as well as by the very positive statements which followed Coselschi's address.

There was virtually unanimous support for the notion of an International which would unite the forces of youth on the continent against the dual enemies of Bolshevik materialism and

capitalist egotism.<sup>36</sup> But there was some discussion of the leadership of the International and, as we shall see, a very serious dispute about the role of the Jews in Europe.

As for the leadership of the International, Quisling voiced some concern about the primacy of Rome, and stressed his belief that Rome needed the support of "Nordic civilization."<sup>37</sup> This clumsy reference to Hitler's notable absence from the Montreux Congress set the stage for a fascinating and ultimately decisive debate of the role of the Jews *vis-à-vis* European fascism. The discussion raised the serious issue of the conflict between Rome and Berlin, and exposed the reason for the impossibility of a coherent Fascist International.

The debate itself was initiated by Ion Motza of the Rumanian Iron Guard. He told the delegates that Rumanian Jews had become dominant in his country in the areas of commerce, industry, and the press, and that Jews had heavily infiltrated centers of culture. The Jews, he said, "are a separate group with their own interests and strict solidarity." Motza then went on to demand that the meeting take a position on the Jewish question, on the grounds that Jewish activity was antithetical to the fascist ideal: "The fascist idea, characterized essentially by the desire for order and justice, cannot be realized when one people is dominated by another, as in the case of the Jews in many countries."<sup>38</sup>

The domination of one people by another could take many forms, of course. And, as we have seen from the remarks of Sima and José Antonio, many fascists and philo-fascists might have some sympathy for Italian or German fascism without being willing to be absorbed into an organization dominated by the one or the other. Thus, while Motza was very close to the Nazis in his hatred for the Jews, he might still resist an attempt at Nazi domination of other nations. Furthermore, even those who shared Hitler's conviction that the Jews represented a

mortal peril to European societies might be willing to grant other nations the right to deal with their own Jews as they wished, even when that entailed complete equality and toleration. The reactions to Motza's demand that the Congress take a position on the Jewish issue varied widely from country to country, and it is highly instructive to compare these different responses.

The Belgians took an ambivalent position on the question. Paul Hoornaert of the National Legion observed that there were two different kinds of Jew, the "integral" or assimilated Jew, and the "international Jew," the representative of international masonry. The first was to be considered as a responsible citizen of his land; while the second, as a threat to national integrity, ought to be denounced and fought.<sup>39</sup> Somville of the *Ligue Corporative du Travail* agreed with Motza that the Congress ought to make a general statement about the Jews, but felt that the "solution" to the problem might lie in giving the Jews their own land. Consequently, he proposed the possibility of giving Palestine to the Jews so that they could "manifest their own civilization."<sup>40</sup>

Mercouris opposed any attempt to make a general statement about the Jews, arguing that it was a purely internal question, different in each country, and therefore in keeping with the guidelines of the Congress the issue ought to be left to each nation to resolve as it wished.<sup>41</sup> This position was echoed by the spokesmen for Italy, Portugal, and Austria, and the representative of the Austrian *Heimwehr* went so far as to say that in the new Corporate structure of fascist Austria the Jews would be formally represented, along with the representatives of other "autochthonous populations."<sup>42</sup> Wouter Loutkie of the Dutch *Front Noir* openly decried anti-Semitism, but agreed that the question was essentially an internal one for each nation.<sup>43</sup>

The others diverged somewhat from the main thrust of the



argument. Fritz Clausen, speaking for the Danish National Socialists, argued that the Jews were not a nationality but a race, and that therefore the issue was not a national one at all. Further, he observed, echoing the anti-Semitic tones of Ion Motza, the Jews had come to be the symbol for a worldwide materialism, and since fascism represented the forces of an anti-materialist civilization, it must oppose the Jews on all fronts.<sup>44</sup> The Swiss representative, Fonjallez, agreed in principle with Clausen's argument, saying that the nation could not tolerate any foreign force. If the Jews constituted a serious menace to the nation, they must be eliminated.<sup>45</sup>

General O'Duffy observed that there was no Jewish problem in Ireland, but pointed out that only Christians were permitted to join the Blue Shirts.<sup>46</sup> And finally Bucard, who was to become known as one of the most vicious anti-Semites in France in the later thirties, reiterated the general consensus of the Congress, that each nation must act as it judged best and that many countries, such as Italy, had no such problem at all.<sup>47</sup> One of Coselschi's aides, Bartoletto, agreed with Bucard that there was no "Jewish problem" in Italy, observing that of 43 million Italians, a mere 40,000 were Jewish.<sup>48</sup> Yet no *ideological* rejection of anti-Semitism was forthcoming at the Congress from any of the Italians, probably because such a position would have produced an open rupture within the ranks of the delegates. Whatever the reason, it was hardly necessary for anyone further to elaborate a conflict which had already been made crystal clear.

The issue raised by Motza was clearly of considerable significance to the delegates at the Montreux Congress, and presents us with a microcosmic view of the conflicts implicit in any attempt to establish a viable Fascist International. While the anti-Semitism of the Iron Guard was not of the Hitlerian variety, the dominant conflict was between two ideologically

opposed views of the world: the Italian fascist conception and the German National Socialist *Weltanschauung*. It was a conflict between those who, like the Nazis, were committed to the defense of the Aryan race, viewed as a supra-national entity, and those who, like the Italians, regarded such notions as mythical nonsense and concentrated on the traditional national units of European society. The interesting thing which emerges from the debate in Montreux is that even those who agreed with the Nazis that the Jews as a race constituted a serious menace to Western civilization were also able to agree with the fascists that national integrity precluded a continental solution to the "Jewish problem." Thus, belief in the Nazi notion that the race had to be defended against its corruptors, the Jews, did not necessarily lead to support for the expansion of the German Reich.

This is demonstrated by the final resolution on the Jewish issue passed by the Congress. Drafted by Bucard, Somville, and Clausen, the resolution gave full force to the declarations of support for national integrity, and began with a reassertion of the principle that each country had to judge what was best for itself in matters of citizenship, race, and religion. Therefore, the Congress declared that "the Jewish question cannot be dealt with by a universal campaign of hate against the Jews."<sup>49</sup> But, it went on, when the Jews engage in various nefarious activities, fail to contribute to the development of the nation, remain a kind of State within the State, or aid and abet the international revolution so destructive of the ideas of nation and Christian faith, then the Congress "denounces this loathsome action of these elements and undertakes to combat it."<sup>50</sup>

It is not surprising that people with all sorts of differing ideas could be united by their common hatred for Jews, but it is significant to note the divergence of ideas within fascist ranks in the middle 1930's. We shall return to this at greater length

in the next chapter; but any claim for the existence of a monolithic fascist ideology in Europe in this period is effectively dashed by an examination of the debates at Montreux. To the extent that agreement was possible, it had to be based upon the Italian conception of a loose association of independent states. The tie between them was the general belief in the principles of Italian fascism, that is to say a strong, monolithic, and hierarchical State, a Corporate structure, and a common desire for the forces representing Youth to take control of the destiny of Europe. Thus, the final communique from the Congress established the conditions of the existence of the International.<sup>51</sup> First, the relations between the various organizations would be limited to an exchange of ideas and propaganda. Second, only those groups would be admitted to membership in the CAUR who were committed to national revolution, "a revolution inspired by a true mysticism and an elevated ideal, founded on Corporativism." Finally, the Congress provided for the creation of a permanent commission for universal fascism, headed by Coselschi, Clausen, Bucard, Mercouris, Fonjallez, Quisling, O'Duffy, and Schmidt. This was to be the Secretariat for the Fascist International, a supreme coordinating committee for fascist propaganda and communication.

The object of Coselschi and his Italian associates was to continue to act as a center for fascist propaganda, and to serve the prestige of Mussolini by gathering statements of support and adulation for the Italian regime. By continuing to act as a rallying point for foreign fascist movements, the CAUR could hope to enhance the position of Italy as a leader in the reconstruction of Europe, and serve as an inspiration for the younger generations which, it was firmly believed, would create a fascist Europe nation by nation. The lack of a rigidly defined criterion of "true fascism" is evident from the statement issued at the end of the Montreux Congress by the members of the permanent

commission, inviting the cooperation and participation in its work of

all those who have participated in this Congress as well as in all the similar movements attached to the fascist and Corporativist idea in all its expressions and under all forms, provided that their action is in accord with the declarations and resolutions approved by the Montreux reunion.<sup>52</sup>

Such a statement was sufficiently broad to include most of the extreme Right in Europe, as well as some traditional Catholic corporate groups. The all-embracing nature of the attempt by the CAUR to serve as a focus of European fascism became even clearer when the commission met for the first time in Paris on January 30, 1935. Those present were Coselschi, Bucard, Quisling, O'Duffy, Schmidt, Mercouris, and Mussert, the head of the Dutch *Nationaal Socialistische Beweging*. The document issued by the commission hailed the mission of fascism as one of peace, of mutual understanding, and of the renovation of peoples and nations. After calling for the systematic coordination of propaganda, which would enable movements to contact each other all over Europe, the commission launched an appeal to the youth of Europe to give its passionate energies to the struggle against materialism, capitalism, and paganism.<sup>53</sup>

Aside from some rhetorical flourishes, the commission at Paris foresaw no particular institutional organization to bind the various fascist movements together. Indeed, this was the next-to-last public gasp of the "Fascist International" which, so far as one can judge, held but one more meeting, organized no further congresses, and made no substantial impact on European affairs.<sup>54</sup> The last recorded meeting, in Amsterdam on April Fool's Day, 1935, was significantly devoted to a critique of racism. The commission condemned "any materialistic concept which exalts the exclusive domination of one race over

others."<sup>56</sup> From time to time one finds the CAUR mentioned in terms of some propaganda campaign in some corner of the world, but the great expectations which were associated with the founding of the CAUR were not realized. How does one account for this sudden expiration of an organization which seemed to have had the support of Ciano, the enthusiastic backing of several leading spokesmen for Italian fascism, and the Duce himself? Further, what consequence did the deflation of the campaign for a Fascist International have in terms of Italian foreign and domestic policy in the mid-thirties?

The explanation for the sudden deflation of the CAUR is to be found in a report to Ciano in 1935 from a former school-mate of his, Dr. Carlo Lozzi.<sup>56</sup> Lozzi was in a unique position to evaluate the impact of the CAUR, since he spoke no less than fourteen languages and had a keen eye for bluff in any tongue. His evaluation of the CAUR is a masterpiece of sarcastic invective, and throws a blinding light on the nature of Coselschi's would-be International.

Lozzi reviewed the history of the CAUR, remarking that the groups had originally received very few members from outside Italy, and had turned to new areas of activity, especially that of posing as the center of a vast international movement:

To realize this idea of theirs, the CAUR organized . . . an awesome Congress of Universal Fascism, held in the most expensive hotel in Montreux. . . . The CAUR scattered invitations left and right, in order to get the maximum possible number of persons there, since this was the principal aim of the meeting.<sup>57</sup>

The motives of Coselschi and the organizers of the Montreux Congress are painted in very somber tones, suggesting that their previous failure to establish any substantive international ties had forced them to make some kind of show of strength, and that they had brought the group to Montreux more to guarantee the continued support of the CAUR in Italy than out of a serious desire to form a viable international organization.

Further, Lozzi went on, the random invitations produced no end of difficulties and embarrassments for the regime, since many of the delegates represented no party or movement. Reuter Essen, for example, was not a representative from the National Union of Young Swedes, and later stated that he had come to Montreux on his own private initiative. Professor Tamosciatis had left Montreux and later refused to accept packages of propaganda documents sent to him by the CAUR.

Lozzi continued with scathing denunciations of various other delegates, decrying the Dutch *Front Noir* as an "insignificant and obscure" organization, and noting that Mussolini had barely been saved the embarrassment of having an interview with Arnold Meyer, the head of the group. Lozzi further maintained that Jimenez Caballero had not been at Montreux, despite the claims of the CAUR, and that Primo de Rivera had been very irritated when he saw his name listed as one of the supporters of the Congress.

While the delegates were people of little consequence, the debate at Montreux was substantial, but detrimental to the prestige of the regime: "We will not speak of the Jewish question, raised most inopportunistly there, which gave rise to acute dissidence. . . ."

Finally, Lozzi turned his attention to the commission:

Dr. Clausen, head of the Danish Nazi Party, is notoriously the long arm of Hitler in Denmark, and is abundantly financed by him: however, thanks to the CAUR he is a member of a committee for fascist coordination!

Bucard . . . is a noted pederast. . . .

Mr. Thomas Damsgaard Schmidt is the head of a Danish Party which exists only in his own mind: he has no following in Denmark, where he is perfectly unknown. . . .

. . . The Commission is a brazen bluff. . . .

For Ciano's analyst, then, the CAUR represented a gigantic hoax. Coselschi, rather than organizing an international propa-

ganda network of the sort Ciano had envisaged for the aggrandizement of the regime (and of his own person), had gotten the regime involved with a group of fascist, pseudo-fascist, and neo-fascist entrepreneurs, involved in the enterprise of soliciting funds from Rome for their own diversion and advancement. The inference from all of this was clear: Coselschi and his associates did not know the difference between a true fascist and a *poseur*:

... given their ridiculous organization, and thus also the phenomenal ignorance of their directors, they enter into relations with movements that have nothing in common with fascism. . . .

For Lozzi, the foreign movements with whom the CAUR were dealing were not in the least interested in participating in a great work of fascist indoctrination, but only in Italian lire.

This report explains the otherwise perplexing contraction of the activities of the CAUR following the Montreux Congress. There seems to be little reason to doubt that Ciano had soured on the organization, and decided to drastically cut back the scope of its operations. We might note in passing that Ciano continued to have trouble explaining the "true" content of fascism to Coselschi, who evidently failed to realize that anti-Semitism was something to be studiously avoided. In January, 1936, Coselschi wrote to Ciano to ask whether contacts should be continued with the Rumanian Iron Guard, citing a letter from Motza offering to send food parcels to Italian troops in Africa. Motza had unleashed one of his typically wordy attacks on the "international Jewish conspiracy," claiming that "all of our Jews anticipated, and still anticipate with almost mystical passion, the downfall of fascism and the ruin of the Duce following the attacks by the Masons and the English."<sup>88</sup> Ciano scribbled a terse "No" at the bottom of the letter.

The Lozzi report, exposing the shabbiness of Coselschi's oper-

ation, is significant for two reasons. In the first place, it shows that the attempt to organize a Fascist International had been ineptly managed and conducted with surprising gullibility and naïveté. This helps to account for the restraints imposed upon the CAUR after Montreux, and for the highly critical attitude taken by Ciano towards the organizers of the Congress. Secondly, Lozzi's remarks about the actual course of the debates at Montreux tell us a good deal about the criteria employed by the Italian regime to distinguish between those movements it considered "fascist" and those it did not. In particular, it is important to note that anti-Semites were not taken to be good fascists, and philo-Nazis were downgraded as agents of Hitler (and hence presumably poor candidates for recruitment to "fascist" ranks). From Lozzi's point of view, then, neo-Nazi movements had "nothing in common with fascism," and should not have been included at the Montreux Congress.

Yet despite the paucity of results produced by the Montreux reunion, it is important to an understanding of both Italian and European fascism. The debates at Montreux illustrate the conflicts within a movement which many have taken to be highly unified, and at the same time they help us recognize those themes which were actually shared by most, if not all, of the movements which called themselves "fascist" in the early thirties. Foremost among these themes is the *leitmotif* already discussed so frequently here—that fascism was the embodiment of the forces of Youth in the West.

Even some of the CAUR's former friends were disillusioned by the course of events, albeit for different reasons from those held by the leaders in the seats of power in Rome. Following his brief appearance at the inaugural banquet of the CAUR, Asvero Gravelli had been notably absent from the functions of the organization of which he had presumably been a prime mover. Excluded from the formal structures of the

CAUR, not invited to the Montreux Congress, and not even mentioned in the propaganda activities proposed by the Paris Commission, Gravelli and his followers voiced their frustration and anger at the CAUR early in 1935, observing that they had been left out of an organization they had created.<sup>60</sup> Indeed they had been excluded, and furthermore their own views on the universality of fascism, based upon an extreme tolerance for regional and national variations on the basic Corporate theme, were fast being repudiated by the leaders of the International. On January 1, 1935, a group of those who had been present at Montreux met in Rome to establish an international center for Corporate studies.<sup>60</sup> The list of names is clearly indicative of their ideological predilections: O'Duffy, Meyer, Loutkie, and Fonjallez. These represented the reactionary, ultramontanist elements of the International, and appropriately enough they found their institutional support in Rome not from the CAUR, but rather from a group called *Italia e fede* (Italy and Faith), a Catholic center and publishing house.<sup>61</sup>

This brings us back to one of the important elements in the discussions at Montreux which has significant implications on the Italian domestic scene: the theory of Corporate universality. The establishment of the Center for Corporate Studies outside the sphere of CAUR control indicates that theories of the Corporate State were still controversial within Italy. The contending elements were many indeed, and an analysis of this question would take us far afield. It is important to note, however, that the very concept of a Corporate State involved problems which brought the relationship between Church and State into question, and that several spokesmen for the Vatican were not prepared to leave this field entirely open to the intellectual formulations of secular theorists. The *Italia e fede* group was simply one of the most important Catholic organizations attempting to maintain a strong Catholic influence over the

development of Corporate theory,<sup>62</sup> especially since there seemed to be a strong possibility in the early thirties that a genuinely profound restructuring of the State might take place.<sup>63</sup>

The resolution passed at the Montreux Congress was general enough that no group need have felt threatened by the idea of an international Corporatist movement. But the foundation of the international center under the aegis of *Italia e fede* indicates that the Catholic-secular tension existed on the international level as well as within Italy, and that this tension had produced a cleavage within the ranks of delegates at Montreux. Those who supported the *Italia e fede* would have a far less radical concept of the Corporate transformation of society than, for example, the supporters of Giuseppe Bottai.

This division over the nature of the Corporate State was a further blow to the supporters of universal fascism, and disillusionment with the CAUR was not long in coming. Weakened by the devastating picture of its activities which Ciano had received, alienated from Gravelli's group, and torn by internal debates over the nature of Corporatism, the CAUR gradually faded into the background of Italian politics.

Of the groups we have discussed within Italy, the only one which continued enthusiastic support of the CAUR after the spring of 1935 was that around Oddone Fantini and his journal, *Universalità Fascista*.<sup>64</sup> In February, Fantini pledged unconditional support for the CAUR, and as late as June, 1935, we find him reporting enthusiastically that the *Légion Nationale* in Brussels had opened an exhibition of Universal Fascism, and that the CAUR had received a position of honor in the exhibition.<sup>65</sup> Not surprisingly, it seems that Fantini's stock with the regime had fallen to a low level indeed. In an unsigned report sent to Mussolini in the winter of 1933, the Duce's informer dealt with developments surrounding the Fascist Institutes of

Culture, in particular the Institute in Rome, which Fantini directed:

... [the Roman Institute] has been given to the *medaglia d'oro* Fantini, who enjoys a very meager moral reputation, and who headed a certain institute of a Corporative nature, of miniscule scientific importance. . . . [giving the Institute to Fantini] has produced a very damaging impression. . . .<sup>66</sup>

So the groups dedicated to the promulgation of universal fascism were under heavy criticism in Rome by the turn of the year 1935. It is not surprising that when *Antieuropa* returned to normal publication in January, 1936, after a number of special issues, the subtitle, "Review of Fascist Expansion in the World" had been dropped from its masthead. At the same time, the criticism of Nazi racism, previously endemic in its pages, decreased substantially.<sup>67</sup>

This is not to say that the rhetoric associated with the expansion of fascism vanished from the fascist press. But the "movement" henceforth was channeled into more official guidelines, and brought under control of the Party. As Zangrandi acutely observes, the problem for young Italians seeking to establish contact with other young intellectuals abroad interested in universal fascism was to avoid the stultifying control of the Party hierarchs, especially those connected with GUF.<sup>68</sup>

Mussolini was certainly eager to continue his cultivation of European youth, and young Europeans were generous in their acclaim of the Italian dictator. In May, 1935, for example, Mussolini received the directors of the International Confederation of Students, among whom were the president of the "Pax Romana" (worldwide organization of Catholic students) and the president of the Federation of Jewish Students. These young men declared their admiration for Mussolini's achievements, saying that they recognized the Duce as "the spiritual head of youth."<sup>69</sup> Mussolini could have asked for no greater adulation.

Yet it is important that demonstrations of this sort were increasingly under Party control, rather than being left to the inspiration of youth itself.

For its part, the regime had evidently become convinced that fascist expansion was not a task to be entrusted to amateurs, and that such funds as were dispersed to foreign fascisms ought to be supervised by more responsible elements than the entrepreneurs of the CAUR and other such organizations. Thus, Mussolini was extremely active in financing various European fascist groups, and especially the Austrian *Heimwehr*. Further, the funds distributed seemed, by and large, to be aimed at the containment of Nazi Germany.<sup>70</sup>

We have seen repeated evidence of the hostility of the regime toward the Nazis, and yet we know that by 1936 Mussolini was beginning to work towards a *rapprochement* with the German *Reich*.<sup>71</sup> Such a turnaround in fascist foreign policy could not help but have profound effects upon the political and cultural scene in Italy. As we have suggested earlier, there was always an intimate connection between domestic and foreign policy under Mussolini, and the fundamental change in Italy's relationship with Hitler entailed changes within Italy. The development of the Axis between Hitler and Mussolini made the continued existence of a movement for the creation of a Fascist International highly problematic, especially since the International had been conceived as a movement outside the control of any great national power. A great many other developments jeopardized the International, but the increasing warmth between the two dictators was of paramount importance.

In addition to these changes in foreign policy, there was a "cultural shock" associated with the formation of the Axis. One can readily imagine the effect this new alliance had on young fascists who had passionately defended the originality and uniqueness of Italian fascism *vis-à-vis* the "barbaric" and "Cel-

tic" doctrines from beyond the Alps. Further, the impending alliance with Germany meant a drastic reappraisal of the entire notion of racism, and indeed ultimately entailed the adoption of anti-Semitic legislation in Italy itself.

Thus, within five years the advocates of universal fascism had gone from the creation of the CAUR to the rejection not only of their institutions, but indeed of the very essence of their world-view. How did they react to this defeat? For this bizarre story it is necessary to step back for a moment from the detailed investigation of the doctrine of universal fascism, and consider one of its central problems: the "Jewish question."

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Beyond the International*

**M.** The effort to construct a Fascist International on the basis of an ideology of Corporatism and the cult of Youth failed in the middle thirties. The greatest single reason for its failure was the new direction of fascist foreign policy, and we shall deal with that change and its implications shortly. But there were many other contributing factors to the collapse of the movement. The Lozzi report demonstrated the incompetence of the leadership from Italy promoting the International, as well as the flimsiness of the foreign organizations and movements which were to have provided its backbone. Furthermore, the dispute over the "Jewish question" at Montreux shows that there were serious doctrinal differences which made any durable union of national fascisms highly tenuous. This was to be demonstrated more concretely later on by the Axis alliance, a union which was a highly personal one between the two dictators, and which was never based on any solid unity of vision between Nazi Germany and fascist Italy.<sup>1</sup>

The fundamental reason for the collapse of the movement for a Fascist International remains the change in Italian foreign policy in the thirties. Mussolini's increasingly active involvement abroad, first in Ethiopia, then in Spain, meant that propaganda activities had to be coordinated with Italian foreign adventures rather than moving freely in the recruitment of declarations of support from other fascisms. And the necessity of training