

insisted on clinging to the values and goals of an earlier, corrupt epoch. The purpose of the anti-Semitic policies, as viewed by the Duce, was to retrain these elements, to Italianize and "fascistize" them, and finally to reintegrate them back into fascist society.⁴⁹ When this reintegration was achieved, the Italian "race" and the Fascist State would be co-extensive, both geographically and spiritually.

It is important to stress the differences between the Nazi and the fascist conception of human nature which are reflected in the different versions of racism in the two countries. In an article on race which Mussolini considered very important, Mario Missiroli argued that "... the highest spiritual values are a conquest of conscience, the consequence of effort and perpetual choice and, as such, are not determined by natural fact. . . ."⁵⁰ This is clearly a dynamic theory of human nature, quite different from the Nazi concept, which was ineluctably tied to a changeless racial principle. The fascists insisted upon their ability to change the human spirit.

Mussolini's own language leaves little doubt about the "spiritual" nature of his racist thinking. Above all, the dictator's hatred was aimed at those Italians who did not feel themselves as such, who did not sense their "race." The goal of his racial policies was the transformation of the Italian people from "a race of slaves" to "a race of masters."⁵¹ He even went so far at one point as to advocate his discriminatory policies on the grounds that they would intensify foreign antagonism toward Italy, and thus make all Italians aware of their uniqueness in the world.

In keeping with this spiritual concept of race, Italian anti-Semitic policy was aimed at the transformation of people rather than at their destruction. Mussolini himself termed this a policy of "discrimination," not "persecution."⁵² Indeed, from his own warped point of view, Mussolini saw himself embarking upon a program of disciplining Italians, not launching a mass persecu-

tion. He believed that he could "Italianize" the Jews in short order: "The patriotic Jew loses the polemic characteristics of the race . . . I have Aryanized these men of great spirit. . . . It will be a question of a generation. Mixed marriages are slowly eliminating the Jewish characteristics."⁵³

We can now appreciate the appeal of Italian racism to some of the more articulate and critical elements of Italian youth. In particular, the notion that the spiritual failings of the Italian people explained the failure of fascism to achieve a genuine revolution was one which many young fascist intellectuals had embraced, albeit without the "racist" framework. While the racist doctrines were anathema to many who viewed them as foreign to Italian tradition, to others Mussolini's racism offered an explanation for the prior failure of fascist culture and organization. For these, embracing racism reinforced what was, after all, already established within the framework of the doctrines of universal fascism: the belief that the successful development of the Fascist Revolution awaited the emergence of a new spiritual type. Furthermore, the racist "explanation" of fascist failures, namely, the existence of spiritually limited people rather than dynamic and creative fascists, fitted well with many of the criticisms which young fascists had directed at their elders. Many young fascists could view racism as an idea which only young people could embrace, an idea which did not find support in the ranks of the older generations because they were not ready for such a "revolutionary" step. This is the sort of rationale which De Felice has in mind when he speaks of racism as embodying a reaction to fascist culture in the name of "new values."

We can see the theme of "new values" and the "new man" at work in those areas of fascist culture produced by the supporters of racism. It is clearly elaborated in one of the last major journalistic attempts to promulgate the doctrine of universal

fascism, a special issue of *Universalia Fascista* brought out in October, 1937, which reprinted a series of speeches that had been delivered at the Foreign Student Center in Rome on the theme "The Universality of Fascism."

Anti-Semitism was not mentioned explicitly in any of the lectures, yet many of the speakers referred to it indirectly.⁵⁴ The year 1937 was, after all, that in which the regime had conducted the first major press campaign on behalf of the new policies. Further, a new and strident emphasis on anti-communism had entered the pages of *Universalia Fascista*. Whereas earlier in the thirties fascism had been contrasted with liberalism, communism, and National Socialism, the major contrast in 1937 was with communism. Indeed, in some articles anti-communism had become the "universal" content of fascism itself: "It is here that fascism assumes universal value, because it undertakes as its task the struggle to save the values of the spirit against the monstrosity of a system which makes man a piece of an enormous social machine..."⁵⁵

The conception which permeated all the speeches of 1937 was that of the new fascist man, a man who had "transcended" the old problems of liberal society. "When fascism speaks . . . of educating the race, of family, of health, of educating labor . . . it is not inspired by purely material interests. . . . but by a higher concept. . . ."⁵⁶

The main thrust of these arguments was aptly summarized by Fantini. He raised the question, if the essence of fascism had to be distilled into a single word, what word would it be? And his answer was "Heroism."⁵⁷ Charting, "Better to live one day as a lion than a hundred years as a sheep," Fantini turned to a lengthy discourse on the meaning of heroism:

Behold, here . . . the profound content of the Revolution, which is above all a new idea of life, a total and integral interpretation of the world. Man is no longer considered . . . as a creature

subject to nature; life is not viewed as a burden which is born resignedly; but he is . . . a fighter, a soldier, who every day must conquer glory. . . .

Fascist Italy today is itself the concrete embodiment of heroism. Instead of the hero-man our times see the hero-nation. And the new heroism projects itself no longer on the internal life of the nation, but on the life of all nations, as something higher, noble, sublime.

. . . The struggle which the Italian people, fascist people, fight is the revelation of a state of mind which transforms men, things, and the spirit into a splendid reality. . . .⁵⁸

This is a far cry from the earlier prophets of universal fascism, who had foreseen the creation of Dante's Empire on the basis of Italian civilization rather than on military virtues. Further, Fantini's definition of an Italian hero-nation which would embody the military virtues contains all the essential elements of Italian racism. All that is necessary to complete the doctrine is to cast the Jew as antithesis of the hero.

So we see that the "new man," who in the early thirties had been described as an iconoclast, an enemy of the fascist hierarchy, and an innovator on a worldwide scale, has been transformed into a soldier in the ranks. Further, while the appeal was still aimed at young people, much of the rhetoric associated with the cult of Youth had vanished from the *universal fascismo* propaganda.

So, many young fascist intellectuals were captured by the regime's anti-Semitic programs in the late thirties and forties. Indeed, one of the bitter ironies of the fascist period is the degree to which the youth finally found themselves isolated by the development of fascism, and the consequent turn by some to the racist "answer" offered by the regime.

To say this, however, is to identify one of the very few groups which supported fascist anti-Semitism; and even within the ranks of fascist youth, there were very many who could

not accept the foreign doctrine of racism, so that the passage of the laws of 1938 marked the end of their participation in the fascist enterprise. Many of the young intellectuals who had previously supported the regime turned to an active, anti-fascist opposition to Mussolini himself. Members of the "fascist generation" who had believed that fascism could become a truly viable means of social transformation were catalyzed into open revolt by the adoption of the racial measures. Deeply disturbed by fascism's failure to produce any meaningful changes in Italian society, by its inability to generate a culture worthy of Italian tradition, and by its increasing closeness to the Nazis, many young intellectuals joined with those who had already turned on Mussolini. They did so for a variety of reasons, but above all because the changes in fascism in this period had stripped from them the "conditional liberty" they had enjoyed earlier, and because they were forced to submit to a racist policy and a German alliance which they found odious.⁵⁹

This opposition took many forms in the late thirties and early forties, and an investigation of such activities would take us far afield. But it must be mentioned that the resistance to fascism on the part of youth took, generally speaking, two basic forms. The first was the path of clear and open revolt against the regime itself. This was the one taken by Ruggero Zangrandi and his companions in his "long journey across fascism."⁶⁰ The second was that taken by Gastone Silvano Spinetti, of remaining within fascist society while continuing to try to transform it, to make it into something worthwhile. These were the young people who continued to call themselves "fascists" even while they agitated against the regime and against its policies. Spinetti has described them thus:

[They were] young people who were not true anti-Fascists, because in order to profess their own ideas freely they called themselves "Mussolinians," but in reality they practiced a good

and beautiful anti-fascism, perhaps more productive in Italy than that practiced from outside by the *émigrés*, criticizing the hierarchs, the institutions, and even the principles proclaimed by the "fascist doctrine."⁶¹

These were among the young people who had agitated so forcefully for universal fascism, and who were, as Spinetti observes, *in nice* liberals, socialists, Catholics, and Communists, but who all called themselves "fascists."⁶² Having developed many critical ideas during the course of their lives in the *Ventennio*, they maintained their position of reformist agitation throughout the Axis period. When the war ended they returned to Italian politics as liberals, Christian Democrats, socialists, and Communists, and the change of political labels did not necessarily represent a profound change in attitude. The very failure of fascism genuinely to indoctrinate and integrate young intellectuals into the fabric of the regime produced a generation that possessed considerable independence, an independence they would demonstrate after the fall of fascism when many of them participated in the creation of the Italian Republic.