

however, it turns out that the view on which the majority of experts ultimately agreed, was not so very far from the truth.

This "hit-and-miss" method, this lively, contradictory, and entirely uninhibited discussion, is something unknown in Communist countries. No Soviet manager would dare to open a brown button factory unless it was provided for in "The Plan." Similarly no Soviet ideologist will pronounce upon a question known to be thorny until the Party has laid down the line or opened the matter

for discussion—within limits. This takes time, however.

Soviet scholasticism finds it very difficult to integrate unforeseen developments into its system. For any journalist to try to do this ahead of time, and on his own initiative, would be presumptuous and dangerous. Nevertheless, sometimes more is forthcoming than one would have expected, not in the shape of fresh ideas but at least in so far as information is concerned. This is certainly so in the case of the "New Left."

Beyond the Finzi-Contini Garden

Mussolini's "Fascist Racism" — By M. VAN CREVELD

VITTORIO DE SICA'S FILM OF *The Garden of the Finzi-Contini*, based on the novel by Giorgio Bassani has recently been commanding public attention, and deservedly so. It offered deep insights into the essence of a world doomed to disappear yet refusing to believe in its own imminent destruction. It was a masterly achievement.

Yet penetrating as the film was, it had nothing to say about the origins and nature of Fascist racism. Here it was in crowded company, for in spite of the many books and countless articles that have been written around this subject the question as to why Mussolini suddenly decided to adopt a racist policy which was, *prima facie*, totally out of step with Italian history and Italian traditions, remains fundamentally open. Most of the answers given revolve either about Musso-

lini's alliance with Hitler or about his conquest of Abyssinia. It has been claimed that, when he was slowly being drawn into the *Fuehrer's* orbit, the Italian dictator felt the need to "emulate his Nazi colleague."¹ Yet there is no doubt but that Hitler never pressed Mussolini into an anti-Semitic policy of any kind. In all the conversations between Italian and German officials during the years 1936-37 it was the Italians who first brought up the subject.² And in any case, why should Mussolini want to "emulate" precisely that Nazi theory which, for so many years (and as recently as 1934), he had denounced as senseless stupidity?³ Why did he give up his opinion, which he frankly expressed both to Hitler and to other foreign statesmen, that Nazi anti-Semitism had already brought down numerous unnecessary enemies upon Germany?⁴ To say that Mussolini wanted to "emulate" Hitler is, in any case, no answer at all. For the question immediately rises *why* he wanted to do so—why in 1938 and not, for instance, in the summer of 1922, when he returned from a visit to Berlin with extremely bad impressions about the anti-Semitism of the German Right?⁵

The other explanation attempts to forge a link between Fascist racism and the Abyssinian campaign, and it is not really more convincing. It is claimed that Mussolini first became "race conscious" after his victory there. This was a reaction to the phenomenon of "*madamismo*", the concubinage of Abyssinian women with Italian troops. This fact, it is claimed, led Mussolini to seriously consider, for the first time, the whole problem of Race and Racism; and in 1937 he therefore enacted the first laws that were designated to prevent inter-

¹ The most eminent writer of this school explains Mussolini's anti-Semitism mainly on the basis of the desire "to strengthen the Italo-German alliance" by eliminating "any sharp contrasts between the two régimes." R. de Felice, *Storia degli Ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo* (Rome, 1962), p. 286.

² E.g. the meetings between Mussolini and Hans Frank (April 1936), Anfuso and Hitler (April 1936) or Edda Ciano and Schmidt (June 1936). Cf. H. Frank, *Im Angesicht des Galgens* (Neuhaus-bei-Schliersee, 1955), p. 22; M. Magistrati, *L'Italia a Berlino* (Milan, 1950), p. 602; F. Anfuso, *Da Palazzo Venezia al Lago Garda* (Rome, 1948), pp. 18-21; Paul Schmidt, *Statist auf Diplomatischer Bühne* (Bonn, 1953), p. 579.

³ See his article in *Popolo d'Italia* of 6 and 8 September 1934, entitled "Fallacia ariana e razze e razzismo."

⁴ R. von Starhemberg, *Between Hitler and Mussolini* (London, 1942), p. 170.

⁵ *Popolo d'Italia*, 25 June 1922; also *Documenti Diplomatici Italiani*, vii serie (Rome, 1955) vol. ii, p. 318.

course between “nazionali” and “indigeni.”⁶ But the years 1935–37 were in some ways the best Italian Jews had had under Fascism.⁷ This theory also leaves open the question as to why Mussolini waited from March 1936—the end of the Abyssinian campaign—to July 1938 before promulgating a full anti-Semitic doctrine. In any case it is remarkable that neither Abyssinia nor the Abyssinians are so much as mentioned in the “Racial Manifesto” published in that month.⁸ If there is any specific problem that can raise eyebrows for *not* being mentioned in that document it is certainly the Abyssinian one.

IN MY OWN VIEW, the clue to Mussolini’s sudden decision to adopt a racial policy is to be sought not in any external event such as the alliance with Germany or the Abyssinian campaign but in the “Racial Manifesto” itself. This is a curious pseudo-scientific document. It was signed by ten “eminent professors” (investigations reveal that some of the “professors” were just teaching assistants); but, as we know from the diary of Mussolini’s son-in-law Ciano, was drawn up by the *Duce* himself.⁹ It consists of ten points which may be divided up as follows. Articles 1–3 offer a “scientific” exposition of the racial doctrine. Articles 4–8 are concerned with the definition of the “Italian” race. Article 9 concerns the Jews; and Article 10 refers to intermarriage. Taken as an anti-Semitic document, the structure of the Manifesto is remarkable in the sense that the Jewish problem, far from forming its core and most important subject, is mentioned only in one article and even then in conjunction with other “Semites” and “Arabs.” Indeed, to judge by the space allotted to each of the topics, it is mainly concerned with the definition of the “Italian” race and with the establishment of the Italian nation’s “title of nobility.” In comparison to this, the entire Jewish question appears as a rather secondary appendix.

Any attempt to understand Mussolini’s racism

as an emulation of the doctrines adhered to in Germany should really be ruled out by the statement, in Article 7, that the Italians’ proclamation of themselves as racists “does not mean the introduction into Italy of the German racial theories as they are.” In issuing his “Racial Manifesto” Mussolini was *not* adopting the German concepts. On the contrary, he was setting up a new and equally confused theory of his own that stood in direct and deliberate contradiction to everything the Germans taught. It is true, of course, that Mussolini insisted on the originality of Fascism every time he adopted this or that German gimmick; and this fact is itself a highly significant one in any attempt to understand the psychology of the man and the movement he created. The so-called *Passo Romano* (clearly shown in the same film to be a rather unsuccessful imitation of the German goose-step but which Mussolini stubbornly defended as a *Ur-Italian* invention¹⁰) is a case in point. It is not surprising that Mussolini decided to adopt the goose-step—force, precision, regularity, and discipline formed an essential, if never attained, goal of Fascism from its inception. But the same cannot be said of racism. There was very little racism in Italy prior to 1937; and even after that year it never really stuck—like the goose-step, it formed the topic of endless sour jokes.

MUSSOLINI’S REAL PROBLEM in issuing his “Racial Manifesto” was not so much how to defile the Jews as how to defend the Italians’ pride in their own nationality *against* the German concepts. For these concepts, whatever their precise significance, did not reckon the Italians among the “master” Nordic race. Although “Aryan” the Italians were not “Germanic” but “Mediterranean” or “Latin”, and therefore inferior. As long as Mussolini and Hitler did not see eye to eye the *Duce* could dismiss the whole of the Fuehrer’s doctrines as idiotic claptrap, which was precisely what he did.¹¹ But when the German-Italian rapprochement began in earnest the *Duce* found himself facing a difficult dilemma. On one hand, he could not continue to dismiss the German theories as stupid and dangerous nonsense, since experience had shown that Hitler was very touchy on this point which he regarded as central to his whole ideology.¹² On the other hand, he could not simply adopt the concept of the Master-Race *in toto*, without relegating the Italians to an inferior position. The result was an attempt to formulate an independent Italian racial doctrine which, unlike the *Passo Romano*, did in fact differ considerably from its German counterpart.

This, then, was the real purpose behind the Racial Manifesto. It appropriately opened with

⁶ For this view see in particular L. Pretti, *I mitti dell’Impero e della razza nell’Italia degli anni ’30* (Rome, 1965).

⁷ De Felice, *Storia degli Ebrei*, pp. 221–7.

⁸ Printed in Pretti, *I mitti dell’Impero*, pp. 113–15.

⁹ G. Ciano, *Diario 1937–38* (Milan, 1948), p. 209, entry for 14 July 1938. For the Manifesto’s “secret history”, see also de Felice, *Storia*, pp. 325–26.

¹⁰ Mussolini’s speech of 25 October 1938, printed in Pretti, *I mitti dell’Impero*, pp. 122–28.

¹¹ In 1932 he referred to them as “absurd.” E. Ludwig, *Colloqui con Mussolini* (Milan, 1950) p. 73.

¹² On 31 March 1934 Mussolini had sent his Ambassador in Berlin, Cerruti, to Hitler with a letter advising the German dictator to renounce his anti-Semitic policy. In response Hitler had said that the *Duce* “did not know what he was talking about. . . .” De Felice, *Storia degli Ebrei*, pp. 148–50.

the words: "To say that there exist different human races does not mean to say, *a priori*, that some of these races are superior to others." Having made it quite clear that Germans were not superior to Italians the *Duce* came to his second dilemma, *i.e.* to define races in such a way that they should not coincide with nations.

Whereas the Germans claimed to possess a racial affinity with at least some of their neighbours (*viz* the Dutch, Scandinavians, and English), Mussolini was precluded from doing the same. The German claim that everything that was best in Europe's peoples was due to the "Germanic blood" in them prevented him from

—Letter from New York:—

THE DIMINUTION OF VIOLENCE on American campuses has given rise to a surge of hope that a healthier climate of opinion will soon prevail in the academy. At least students in larger measure are prepared to resist interference with their right to learn, by small fanatical groups who hurl ultimata at faculties and administrators, threatening to close down the university if something they object to is done or something they demand is not done. Are recent developments evidence that we will soon reach the shores of academic comity that once prevailed?

Would that it were so! Unhappily, signs are multiplying that if direct threats to academic freedom from radical students are dwindling, they are gathering force once again from certain groups among faculties. Under the pretext of shielding the individual subjects of experimental research from abuse and exploitation, guidelines are being drawn to forbid or censor inquiry into social themes if the upshot of the research "may place the reputation or status of a social group or an institution in jeopardy." These words are drawn from the policy statement of Chancellor Albert H. Bowker of the University of California at Berkeley.¹ Bowker's guidelines are currently being implemented by a faculty committee whose task is to screen all faculty research projects.

THIS ATTEMPT to protect groups and institutions from the risks of social research, regardless of the scientific validity of the methods followed and results won, is presently inspired by the attempts to choke off any research designed to test the weight of genetic factors in behavioural differences among races, the sexes, and other groups. It is also related to the efforts of a small militant group at M.I.T. to bar any defence-oriented work on American campuses in full knowledge that the nuclear power of Soviet Russia and China is growing ever greater.

To scholars and researchers such pressures are no news. Everyone learned about Galileo who was forced to recant his heliocentric teachings because they were subversive in the eyes of the 16th-century church. The novelty is only in the fact that contrary to past experience, when threats and censorship originated outside the academy, the present inquisitors sit within its very walls.

¹ Bowker was formerly Chancellor of the City University of New York which he deserted after introducing the open admissions policy that resulted in the scholarly collapse of the once prestigious City College.

THE SERIOUS THREAT to academic freedom in this current attempt to subject the quest for truth to the public good, as some selected or elected committee sees that good, is obvious on its very face. The language in which the policy is drawn is startling in its intellectual crudity, and in its insensitivity to the long history of scientific persecutions undertaken to safeguard the salvation of the Soul or the foundations of Law-and-Order or the progress of the Revolution. The policy statement declares:

"Procedures designed to measure the characteristics of easily defined sub-groups of a culture may entail risk if the qualities measured are ones which have positive or negative value in the eyes of the group."

What this means is that if any sub-group within a culture feels threatened by the possible outcome of an inquiry, regardless of the scientific integrity of the researcher (or even because of it), they have not merely a right to protest under the Bill of Rights but a legitimate claim to stop or abort the research. The degree to which the subjective sensibilities of those affected by research is to be taken into account is spelled out in detail:

"Likewise, an institution, such as a church, a university, or a prison, must be guarded against derogation, for many people may be affiliated with or employed by the institution, and pejorative information about it would injure their reputations and self-esteem."

But the truth may be pejorative! And legitimately so if it uncovers a forgery, a conspiracy against the public interest, a padded payroll, a diploma mill, or a fraud which promises individuals real estate in heaven on condition they surrender all their real estate on earth to some cosmic confidence man.

LET ME EXAMINE some hypothetical cases of genuine research which would certainly be tabooed by Chancellor Bowker's guidelines.

The role of Jews in the rise of capitalism is an interesting and highly disputed topic ever since Marx's unfair essay "Zur Judenfrage" written in violation of the very principles of historical materialism he subsequently developed. Sombart and other writers developed aspects of this theme. Today, capitalism in many circles, including some universities, has become not a descriptive epithet but one of abuse; and the memories of Hitler's identifications of "international Jewry", and "international plutocratic capitalism" are still raw among