

THE

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Winter, 1990

# ITALIC WAY

The Newsletter of the Italic Studies Institute, Inc.



La Famiglia Mussolini



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Il Duce holding aloft  
the sword of Islam  
in Italian Libya.

Mussolini: A Look Back (Part I)

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Vol. 3 No. 1

# The Italic Way

Winter, 1990

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## Letters

Address all letters to: LETTERS, The Italic Way, PO Box 818, Floral Park, NY 11001

### Who Says There's a Conflict?

The Commission for Social Justice wonders why *The Italic Way* highlighted an alleged Black-Italian conflict (Fall '89). Though some problems do exist, and despite Bensonhurst, a number of leaders of the Black community with whom we met during Bensonhurst were emphatic in stating that Americans of Italian descent were not viewed any more or less positively or negatively than other whites by the majority of African Americans. Both groups should learn from the past not emphasize it.

I believe our basic task is to help heal wounds and bring about a positive relationship in the future between African Americans and Italian Americans.

**Vincent S. Romano**  
Chairman, CSJ

Order, Sons of Italy in America  
Bellmore, NY

*(Ed. We are certain you would agree that the article, nay, the whole issue was upbeat on Italic-African relations. As for the "conflict", we were prompted to write the article in response to what appeared to be confrontations in the streets and in the media.)*

### Finally Some Depth!

By accident I came across your newsletter *The Italic Way* and was left exhilarated by each and every article contained in this issue "Italian vs Black: The Roots of Conflict." If your previous issues are as insightful as this issue was regarding depth of content, historical context and clear articulation of facts then I have found for the first time a publication which seriously attempts to deal with the past, present and future of "anything with Italian roots" as your

motto so aptly states.

For once a publication is available which is not a travelogue, recipe book or music and art compilation and nothing more. Your newsletter may not meet every Italian-American's vision for the ideal in reading but if your future issues' headlines are as well developed as this past issue you will be providing a truly important contribution to society in helping Italian-Americans know more about themselves and maybe, more importantly, educating non-Italians to understand, appreciate and accept the uniqueness of Italian-Americans.

**Joe Cicciu**  
Executive Dir.,  
Belmont Arthur Ave.  
Development Corp.  
Bronx, NY

*The New York Times*  
**Bensonhurst: A Tough Code  
In Defense of a Closed World**



**Suspect Surrenders**

Joseph Fama, suspected of shooting a black teenager in Bensonhurst, surrendered in Orono, N.Y. A protest of the youth's killing led to a violent

BY JOHN KIENER

Walls and lights of pink, white, and green — the colors of the Italian flag — hang along 100th Ave. in Bensonhurst, the Bronx. For the Police of Santa Rosalia, New York, the last year has been a year of the most serious violence since the murder of Daniel R. Hawkins, a black youth who had ventured into the neighborhood to look at a used car and was strangled by a crowd of white youths and gunned down.

This is a closed, insular world, this enclave in Brooklyn where Italian is likely to be spoken as English, a world of tight-knit families and fear and hostility toward the outside. It is a world too, where the young men who gather each night to a specific street corner in handy store to hang out with their friends greet up with a watchful eye.

In interviews with dozens of Bensonhurst residents over the past few days, anger was expressed, usually freely, over the death of the 16-year-old youth, and details that the neighborhood was as tense people put it, "racial" but there were blunt expressions of ra-

### Proud

Your magazine makes me feel even more proud to be Italian because your writers bring out the facts about how great our 2,500 year old culture really is. Every young student of Italian heritage should read *The Italic Way* and be *orgoglioso* of himself.

Buona Fortuna - Sempre Avanti -  
Buon Anno 1990.

**Dino Rosi**  
Jackson Heights, NY

NY Times page one  
Sept. 1, 1989  
Who initiated the conflict?



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# POST SCRIPTS



## Evil Days Continued

As a follow-up to our *Perspectives* article about the Roman Evil Days ( Spring 1989), reader Edward Lafiteau researched the subject to find more tragedies that occurred on the days the Romans feared most. (There are two days in each month for a total of 24.) Here are a few more ignoble incidents that confirmed the ancient fear:



**April 10, 1970** - The Beatles break up.

**February 4, 1783** - Earthquake ravages wide area in southern Italy and Sicily, including city of Messina. 60,000 to 100,000 dead.

**November 3, 1966** - Venice & Florence are hardest hit in the worst flood in Italy's history; at least 112 die and many more are injured; many famous works of art and millions of rare books are damaged or destroyed.

**January 25, 1971** - Maj. Gen. Idi Amin comes to power in Uganda.

**November 28, 1942** - The Coconut Grove fire; 450 people die at Boston night club.

**April 10, 1963** - Nuclear submarine U.S.S. Thresher sinks.

## Vidal Continues Rewriting U.S. History

Advisor and Plenary Council member Gore Vidal has just published his sixth book in a series aimed at telling the real story of the United States. Vidal, whose other works include *Burr*, *Lincoln*, and *Empire* considers American history as mostly sanitized and idealized. A Roman realist by heritage and disposition, Vidal's latest work *Hollywood: A novel of the American 1920's* links Washington politics to the fantasy of moviemaking. (Random House, 437 pages, \$19.95)



## Plenary Council Member Charles Gabriele Gets International Award

PERUGIA, ITALY - American composer Charles Gabriele of the United States of America has been presented the international band music award for his composition "Retaggio" (Heritage) by the Honorable Pittagolo Pagana of the Republic of Italy (at left).

Gabriele, the composer of "Christopher Columbus Suite", resides in Palm Coast, Florida, U.S.A.

## FUTURE ISSUES OF THE ITALIC WAY

- SICILY - Italic from the start
- MAFIA - Strangers among us
- BENITO MUSSOLINI - Part II
- THE JEWS OF ITALY - Ancient compatriots
- ITALIAN DEBT - What Italy Owes Italian-Americans





# All'Italiana

## REACH OUT AND TEACH SOMEONE

And a teacher shall lead them. Rather than wring his hands in despair at the deplorable state of American education, John Mangini, a biology teacher in Waterbury, Connecticut's Kennedy High School, decided that it was better to use them. Literally. By taking a leaf from his Roman forebears and encouraging practical problem solving, Mr. Mangini gave his students an opportunity to devise real world solutions based on scientific principles. One particular challenge involved finding the best salt-water solution for transporting brine shrimp by mail to another state. Though startling to the hide-bound, Mr. Mangini's approach at the high school level represents a sea change in educational outlook and a motivational tool for learning.

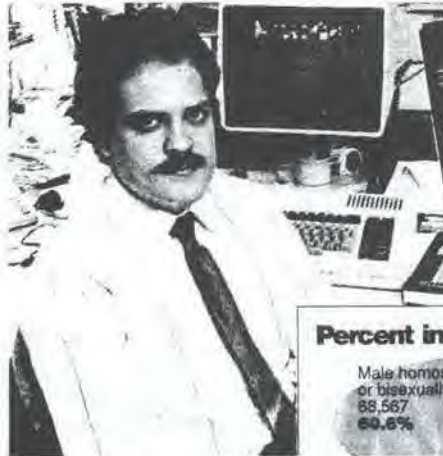
## MUCH ADO ABOUT AIDS

When it comes to AIDS, conventional wisdom is a hit or myth proposition. So says author Michael Fumento in his controversial book, *The Myth of Heterosexual AIDS*. A former AIDS analyst at the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, the Denver-based journalist contends that the risk of contracting heterosexually-transmitted AIDS is no more than 5 percent. Those infected via straight sex have habitually consorted with intravenous drug users, transfusion recipients and hemophiliacs. Bisexuals are rarely culprits. And the likelihood of a woman passing on the virus to a man is small, because women pass on "less potentially infected fluid." Fumento's findings have fomented a firestorm in the gay community. Gay activists call his work "homophobic and sexist." Others decry the author's lack of compassion. For his part, Fumento believes

that the government is spending too much on AIDS.

## CLASH OF THE MEDIA TITANS

A battle for the heart and soul of Italy's publishing world is being waged



Michael Fumento downgrades AIDS

by media billionaire Silvio Berlusconi and Olivetti's Carlo de Benedetti. Both men have been working feverishly to gain control of publishing giant Arnoldo Mondadori Editore S.p.A. However, in January 1990, Berlusconi was named chairman of Mondadori. The resourceful de Benedetti fought back by calling for an extraordinary shareholders meeting to increase the publishing company's capital. If this vote is approved, de Benedetti will emerge victorious. The larger issue concerns takeovers of Italy's press by industrialists such as Giovanni Agnelli, Raul Gardini and the like. Can the press be truly free when run by economic giants? Looks like Rupert Murdoch isn't the only bloke who can play this game.

## HAMMER AND SICKLE ANEMIA

The ghosts of Gramsci, Togliatti and Berlinguer must be turning in their graves at the news that Italy's Communist Party (PCI) may soon change its

name and, effectively, cease to exist. Faced with the reality of Communism's collapse in Easter Europe — and the depredations of Ceausescu and Honecker — Achille Occhetto, the Italian Communist party leader, has no recourse but to be swept up in the tide of history. Though it broke with Moscow

in the 1970s, the PCI has been losing ground of late to the Socialist and environmental parties. This latest blow signals the death knell of Italian Communism. Surprisingly, the big red cheese himself, Mikhail Gorbachev, has given his okay.

## SPORTS VICTORS

This has been a banner year thus far for Italic athletes. Football's Superbowl earned yet another victory for quarterback **Joe Montana** of the San Francisco 49'ers. Joe made team owner Ed DeBartolo Jr. very happy, not to mention the fans, with a 55-10 trouncing of the Denver Broncos. Montana has four Superbowls to his credit with a passing accuracy of 68%.

•Getting into deep water, Italy's **Angela Bandini**, 28, set a new record when she dove 107 meters (351 feet) into the Mediterranean without oxygen. Signorina Bandini held her breath 97 seconds for the plunge.

•At 15 years old, Long Island's **Christie Como** is the 4th rank fencing star in the nation (under-16 category). Last year Ms. Como won the U.S. Junior Olympics in fencing (under-15 category). She is also a leading scorer in girl's soccer in Brentwood, Long Island. Great wrists and ankles!

•Did you know that the manager of Brazil's national soccer team, a front runner in the 1990 World Cup, is Italic? **Sebastiao Lazaroni's** team has allowed only two goals against it in 15 games. When the Cup matches are held in Rome later this year we may well be witnessing a clash of Italic titans.





# All'Italiana

## WOMEN'S INEBRIATION

If a recent study conducted by Italian and American researchers is to be believed, women who have one for the road may well find themselves driving off the road before the trip is over. Apparently, there is more than a grain of truth to the notion that alcohol affects women much more intensely than it does men. The research reveals that women's stomachs are less effective in neutralizing alcohol than their male anatomical counterparts. As a result, a great deal more demon rum enters the bloodstream through the stomach wall and ultimately goes to the brain — approximately 30 percent more (for a male of similar weight). That means that one drink for a woman is equivalent to two for a man.

## STEALING ITALY

When the borders of Europe are opened in 1992 Italians will fear not what might come in but what will definitely go out - Italy's art. With two-thirds of the world's art patrimony within her borders it will not be an easy thing to catch smugglers. Already some 200,000 items have disappeared from museums, archeological sites, and churches in the last twenty years. One Italian expert predicts wholesale plundering after 1992.

Helped by Italian *tombaroli* (grave robbers), unscrupulous art collectors the world over have made Italy a self-service emporium. Britain and Switzerland are the usual destinations for stolen treasures with transshipment to the USA, Japan, and Australia. Roman busts, Etruscan jewelry, and Greco-Sicilian statuary are the standard objects of theft fetching, in one instance, \$20 million for a statute of Aphrodite.

Art, unlike junk bonds and real estate, has kept its value consistently over the course of time. *Art for the sake of money.*

## TECHNOLOGY AND LA TEMPESTA

In the last several years, with the restoration of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel, the world has gained greater appreciation for the art of Italian technology. Indeed, Italy has become the center of computerized art restoration. A mind-



Montana the Victorious

boggling computer link-up of gamma-ray detectors, infrared cameras and thermographic sensors is sweeping the Italian peninsula. From the ancient ruins of Pompeii to the medieval crevices of Venice, the new technology is accomplishing heretofore unimaginable feats of restoration. And experts from the Louvre, the Getty Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art are flocking to Italy to learn from the masters, just as in olden times.

## FROM ROME WITH LOVE

Mikhail Gorbachev lives *la dolce vita*. But not for the reasons some might expect. Eschewing the goods of Benetton, Gucci and Armani for the wares of Agnelli, De Benedetti and Berlusconi, the Soviet Premier has come to rely on the exemplary quality of Italian high-tech products. In fact, the USSR has named Italy as its preferred European supplier of

technology and machinery. And, to date, Italian industrialists have closed \$5 billion worth of business deals with the USSR. Fiat is slated to build a sprawling automobile plant in the Soviet Union. Other European automakers are jittery. Fiat plans to produce and market the Oka, a low-cost medium-sized car, in the USSR and throughout the continent.

## ITALIAN TIDBITS

- The Tower of Pisa will be closed indefinitely while work is being performed to keep it from leaning too much. The tower has been leaning since the year 1173.

- Four masked bandits robbed hundreds of pieces of priceless jewelry from the ancient Italian city of Herculaneum outside of Naples. The eruption of Mt. Vesuvius buried the town in 79 A.D.

- Italian researchers report that snoring among children is affected by parents who smoke. A survey of 1,615 children aged 6-13 indicates that snoring increases in children whose parents smoke. Lest the reader trivialize the study, researchers note that snoring has been associated with hypertension, heart disease and stroke.

## RENDER UNTO PETER

This year marks a revision in the 1929 Lateran Pact which established Benito Mussolini as a first-rate diplomat and granted the Catholic Church the independent status of Vatican City. According to the old pact, Italian taxpayers subsidized the Vatican budget to the tune of \$300,000 annually. As revised in 1984, Italian taxpayers now have a choice — render some to Peter or all to Caesar. Despite the fact that 99% of all Italians are Catholic, the Vatican is afraid that the old saying about Italian catholicism may force them to tighten their belts: *catolico ma non fanatico!*

\*\*\*\*





# World Notes

[We present this section to inform our readers of events and trends that may be of interest with regard to ethnic opinions or cultural values.]

## PIN IT ON D'AMATO

When New York's junior senator Alfonse D'Amato quipped that ex-Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega had a well-pinned voodoo likeness of him he fooled some folks. Not surprisingly, one was a member of the Washington press corps. The unnamed wire service put out a flash that Noriega did indeed have a doll with the senator's name on it. D'Amato, America's own Cato the Elder (*Noriega delenda est!*), had been one of Noriega's more vocal enemies.

With such a lousy sense of humor, how can anyone take the press seriously?

## NAKED AND CONNECTED?

Sex-ploiter Bob Guccione, publisher of *Penthouse* magazine, learned recently how easy it is to connect any Italian name to crime and get away with it. Back during the heyday of Abscam, Guccione was lured into an FBI setup to bribe New Jersey officials for a casino license in Atlantic City. Of course, Guccione never took the bait but one of the FBI participants nevertheless spread the rumor that the mag publisher was in the rackets. Guccione was never able to get financing for the casino and subsequently sued the U.S. Government. Having fought his way up to the Supreme Court, Guccione was told that his \$400 million suit was for nought — the government refuses to allow a lawsuit against itself. Who's better connected?

## OCCIDENTAL TOURIST

The beleaguered Islamic Republic of Iran is looking for tourists. But who in his right mind would want to visit a country that takes hostages, turns women into black-shrouded automata, and is still technically at war with its neighbor Iraq? Who else but 33 Italians! Shelling out \$2,000 each for the "grand" tour, the Italians reflected on their 9-day vacation as a "fascinating

leap back into medieval Islam."

## A VICTIM'S CHARITY

Remember Carol Stuart, the young Boston mother-to-be who was apparently murdered by her own husband who in turn blamed the deed on an African-American? Boston's African-American



Johannes Kepler: The Fudge Factor

community was outraged by the subsequent police harassment it suffered as a result of the malicious allegation. Carol's family (her maiden name was DiMaiti) has funded a scholarship for inner city youths in Carol's name. The DiMaiti family doesn't want Stuart's sins to stain their daughter's memory. The DiMaiti's donated \$10,000 to the fund.

## NOTHING TO COUGH AT

For those who have suffered the agony of pertussis (Latin for whooping cough), help is on the way — courtesy of a group of Italian, American and Japanese scientists. Using genetic engineering techniques, they have developed a non-toxic version of the chemical poison that causes this malady. This non-toxic toxin is injected into the bloodstream, tricking the body into creating antibodies to fight the pertussis bacteria. These ex-

periments were conducted at the Sclavo Research Center in Siena, Italy, the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee and the National Institute of Health in Tokyo. Italian genius working hand in glove with Yankee ingenuity and Nipponese know-how to bring you good health.

## MAMMA-SAN

We owe the Japanese a debt for footing the bill to restore Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel. We can repay them by patronizing Mamma Leone's Restaurant in New York City. What, you say? Tokyo-based Kyotaru Co. is acquiring an 85% stake in the American company that owns the Italian eatery. Wasn't Rockefeller Center enough?

## INDIAN LOVECALL

American Indian opera singer White Eagle owes a debt to the late Italian-American vocalist/movie star Mario Lanza. The Sioux Indian remembers the day an old Lanza film inspired him to the vocal arts. White Eagle, who hails from Mission, South Dakota, recalls receiving his inspiration at the age of five. In homage to his "master", White Eagle performed the *Ave Maria* at a memorial mass for Lanza in Philadelphia.

## CASHING IN ON ITALIANS

Filmmaker Francis Ford Coppola has filed for bankruptcy under Chapter 11 in California. Meanwhile, to pull himself out of this financial hole he is making *Godfather III* at the expense of the Italic image. When *The Italic Way* caught up with Coppola in Rome to show him what the *Godfather* series has done to the Italic image (we gave him an excerpt of the book *The Story of English* which lumps all criminal jargon on the Italians) Coppola shrugged it off as "interesting." He now plans a *Godfather IV*.

This is the same superstar who says



# World Notes



full-blood Italic ladies have no class. We wonder if that applies to his sister, Talia Shire.

## U.S. PRAISES CRISTIANI

Despite recent acts of butchery on the part of renegade Salvadoran rightists, President George Bush has the highest praise for Italian-Salvadoran leader Alfredo Cristiani. Cristiani's government is in the midst of a civil war. Although he represents the Right he is considered a moderate by many. Along with these words, Bush is delivering over \$200 million in aid to Cristiani's war-torn nation.

## STAR TRICK

Say it ain't so, Johannes. While much of the world exults as the Berlin Wall crumbles, scientists are cringing as another German icon topples. According to science historian Dr. William A. Donahue, the venerable 17th Century scientist Johannes Kepler engaged in some creative calculations to support his theory that planets move in elliptical rather than circular orbits. It now appears that Herr Kepler lied about using independent figures to corroborate his argument. The supporting calculations were, in fact, "fudged" by the German astronomer. After 400 years, this astronomical falsehood comes full circle.

## GOTTI GETS OFF

On John Gotti's block, joy was unrestrained the night he returned home in triumph. Having beat yet another rap, his third or fourth, the man the media calls the alleged head of the Gambino crime family received a fireworks reception from a few enthusiastic Howard Beach neighbors.

The nattily dressed Gotti is the idol of some Italian-Americans. No doubt his success in the plumbing and heating supply business is the envy of the upwardly mobile. And despite his membership in



Over \$70 million of ancient Roman silver service recovered in Lebanon to be sold at auction

the "exclusive" Bergin Hunt and Fish Club Mr Gotti is a convicted thief.

Perhaps if we all hold our breath Mr Gotti and Mr. Coppola will join forces to document the Trial of the Gottifather. In the meantime look for the FBI under special agent Jules Bonavolonta to wage a new war against the plumbing contractor. The FBI has yet to participate in Gotti's other legal tangles and Bonavolonta promises that when the FBI (founded by the way by another Italic lawman Charles Bonaparte) jumps in "...he's [Gotti] going to jail."

## HIGH OLD SILVER!

This dinnerware is definitely not for the dishwasher. Beside being pure silver it is also 1,400 years old.

Discovered in an old copper kettle buried in Lebanon, the combination silverplate and serving vessels were once the property of a Roman soldier of Celtic or Germanic ancestry. This ancient internationalism is further evidenced by the fact that 29 countries have been con-

tacted to see if the collection is part of their national treasure. That is the number of countries that was once governed by ancient Italy. If no one claims the goods, they will be sold for \$70 million plus at Sotheby's in Londinium (i.e., London)

## READ MY BOOKS

Random House, the nation's largest publisher of general-interest books, has appointed Albert Vitale as its new Chairman. Vitale comes with great credentials. He was formerly the CEO of Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group.

Incidentally, Random is the publisher of Italian-American author Gore Vidal, who happens also to be a member of the Italic Studies Institute.

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## Editorial

### Why Mussolini?

Italians have always been of two minds when it comes to *Il Duce*. Officially, the founder of Fascism was a brutal dictator who deceived his own people and dragged them unwillingly to war and disaster. Unofficially, especially among Italy's less affluent, Mussolini was good for Italy but made only one mistake — siding with the Germans. Like most extreme positions, the truth lies somewhere in the middle.

Americans, including those of Italian descent, see the newsreel Duce — a jut-jawed buffoon smugly standing akimbo on his balcony. It is a very shallow portrait indeed and belies the real admiration Americans had for Fascism in general and Mussolini in particular during the 1920's and 30's. The flip side of that admiration was a total disdain for the Italian people. For, in truth, Americans thought the dictator a genius in being able to control and discipline the chaotic Italian populace.

What sort of man was Benito Mussolini? Complex. He was Hitler's ally yet was possibly the only man in Europe who could have prevented World War II. He was a dictator whose power was limited by a King and a Pope. He was a devoted family man who was forced to execute his own son-in-law. He was simply not the man everyone thinks he was.

Beside our *Focus* article, we have included a *Forum* piece by Canadian author Gwynne Dyer. We shall not comment on Mr. Dyer's assessment except to note that his comparison of Mussolini's "hollowness" to Hitler's "horrible grandeur" may give rational people some pause. While popular history may forever paint *Il Duce* as the "sawdust Caesar", there appears to be a tendency to glorify Hitler and the Nazis under the guise of *evil genius*. It is not our intent to glorify Mussolini under any circumstances but rather to explain the full context of his regime.

JLM

### Reunified Germany

Something Teutonic this way comes. A new Germany is aborning — and the rest of Europe is trembling. The eventual reunification of West and East Germany will present new problems and rekindle old animosities on the continent. Though they know how to get the job done, the Germans also have a knack for overdoing it. Two catastrophic world wars and one holocaust are not easily forgotten.

Future stability in Europe demands a politically and economically strong Italy. Neither France nor Britain can be depended on to effect a balance, having failed in the past to do so. Nor will a united Europe divert the Germans from dominating Europe economically. Italy, with its links to Eastern Europe and membership in NATO and the European Community, has the means of competing with a resurgent Deutschland. All it lacks, for the moment, is a strong executive government. The Italians must come to grips with the new realities of German reunification and put their fears of Fascist centralism behind them.

RAI

### The Italic Way™

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# Forum of the People



A 1983 Newsday article reprinted and distributed by the Italic Studies Institute.

## Mussolini Was Hollow at the Core

by Gwynne Dyer

*I can tell you that everything will be over by September, and that I only need a few thousand dead so that I can sit at the peace conference.* So wrote Benito Mussolini to his army chief of staff in 1940, taking the decision to bring Italy into World War II at Germany's side.

Just under five years later, Italy lay in ruins, and Mussolini was riddled with bullets and strung up by the heels, having been caught by Italian partisans as he tried to sneak out of Italy disguised as a retreating German soldier. On the 100th anniversary of his birth today (1983), Mussolini is universally seen as a bombastic and pathetic failure.

Yet he practically invented fascism single-handedly, and for the first 20 years of his rule, he was probably the most popular leader Italy had ever had. He based his power on ringing appeals to his countrymen's pride in being Italian, but he was privately contemptuous of their ability to cooperate in great projects. He once remarked: "It is not so much impossible to govern Italy, as pointless."

"Il Duce" (the leader) was probably the most complete egotist to control a major country between Napoleon and the present; even Hitler and Stalin had some commitment to an ideology, however deformed, that extended beyond their personal vanity. But Mussolini's whole political technique consisted of cynically telling the Italian people the same flattering lies about their heroism, their special worthiness and their high destiny, that he actually believed when applied to himself.

Like many people who became Fascists, Mussolini began as a Socialist — indeed, he was named after the Mexican

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"There is a certain horrible grandeur about the end of the Nazi regime beneath the ruins of Berlin in 1945 — even evil men can be strong in their convictions — but Mussolini had no convictions, and his end was mere squalor and ignominy."

---

revolutionary Benito Juarez. He was born into a poor family in the village of Predappio in central Italy on July 29, 1883, the first child of the local blacksmith, who was also a part-time Socialist journalist.

Benito Mussolini was a violent youth, expelled twice from school for attacking classmates with knives, and upon graduation, he threw himself into revolutionary agitation on behalf of the coming Socialist Millennium. During the next decade, he was in and out of jail five times, and at the outbreak of World War I, he was editor of the official Socialist newspaper *Avanti*.

But believing Marx's dictum that social revolution usually follows war, he founded his own paper to agitate for Italy's entry into the struggle: "From today onwards we are all Italians and nothing but Italians," he wrote. "Now that steel has met steel, one single cry comes from our hearts — Viva l'Italia!"

And pretty soon he was believing his own propaganda. Italy entered the war in 1915, and Mussolini, expelled from the Socialist Party for his support of the war, went off to fight in it.

He was wounded but survived, and by the end of the war, Italy was indeed ripe for social revolution: its war dead totaled almost a million, and its gains were scarcely worth talking about. But the revolution that Mussolini now began to organize was no longer Socialist. It was pure ultranationalism, decked out with some spurious chatter about the corporate state and a very explicit commitment to the principle of an all-wise, all-powerful leader (i.e. him), and given the name of fascism.

In 1922, his bully-boy Blackshirts marched on Rome, and the constitutional government caved in without a fight. Mussolini held power for the next two decades. But for all his rhetoric about Italy's "8 million bayonets" and his talk of

(continued on p. 27)





## REVIEW

# Antonio Meucci

by Marco Nese & Francesco Nicotra  
Italy Italy Magazine, 1989, 173 pages, \$25

Recently, in the course of a goodwill mission to the United States, Bettino Craxi threw diplomacy to the wind. While addressing a bevy of foreign journalists, Italy's once and future Prime Minister spoke emphatically about a cause close to his historian's heart: Antonio Meucci. According to the irrepressible Italian politico, Meucci was the sole inventor of the telephone. The Associated Press, unaccustomed to such boldness, walked out of the press conference. But Craxi's claim, however stated, did have the ring of truth.

Unfortunately, most Americans believe a Scotsman, Alexander Graham Bell, to be the man responsible for the device that revolutionized mass communications. Questioning this article of faith is tantamount to tarnishing Mom, apple pie and the American flag. Nevertheless, Messrs. Nese and Nicotra have assembled a cogent treatise in defense of Meucci's claim. And they have done so with a minimum of hyper-



A replica of Meucci's *teletrofono*

bole, histrionics or revisionism. The authors, to their credit, never allow emotion to overrule fact. For, the facts in the matter Meucci are quite telling.

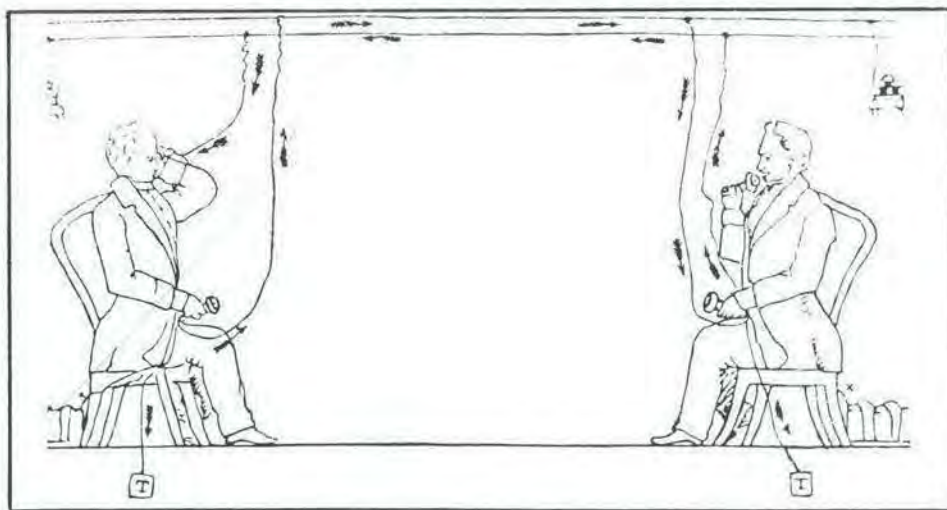
Antonio Meucci's first attempt to create a "speaking telegraph" occurred in 1852: "In the basement of the house, I placed the battery with several Bunsen cells, and from the battery to the first

floor of the house I strung the conductor of electricity. I took the instrument that I brought from Havana and to it I fixed the conductor. Repeating the same operation I made in Havana, speaking with my wife, I received the transmission of the spoken word." This crude prototype would be refined in later years.

By the late 1850's, Meucci had developed a model that had all the features of a "good electric telephone." Voices were transmitted with the utmost clarity, and words could be understood distinctly. The exuberant Italian inventor had set up three instruments throughout his home in Staten Island, New York: one in his basement laboratory, another in the room Giuseppe Garibaldi had called his own, and a third by his ailing wife's bedside. Friends and neighbors were enthralled. And a Frenchman named Matthias Egloff used Meucci's mechanical marvel to sing the Marseillaise. But history's recognition would never be his.

A series of business reversals and an almost childlike naivete plagued Meucci throughout his life and may have helped to bring about his travail.

(continued on p. 25)



A redrawn sample of Meucci's original papers indicating that his telephone was electro-mechanical



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## Focus

# MUSSOLINI: A New Assessment

Part I by R. Iaconis & J. Mancini



Il Duce in one of his less bombastic moments

On October 12, 1937, at the invitation of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Vittorio Mussolini, son of the Fascist dictator, came to Washington. The Commander-in-chief and Mrs. Roosevelt shared coffee and conversation with the young Italian, who had travelled to the United States for the first time. Honored to be in the company of the charismatic American leader, Signor Mussolini listened with rapt attention as FDR spoke of his desire for a historic encounter with Il Duce:

*"Now, I ask you, dear Vittorio, to act as go-between with your father concerning a most profound desire of mine: to study the possibility of a joint meeting.... Our discussions with Russia and Germany are over, However, I have faith in the fairness and experience of your father, dear Vittorio. He is the one man around whom all European nations seeking peace can rally. Tell him of my sentiments."*

Roosevelt's meeting with Mussolini never materialized. But why would FDR even contemplate such an encounter? Wasn't this Mussolini the same strutting buffoon popularized in propaganda newsreels and stentorian documentaries? Clearly, there remains a gap between what we think we know about the man who ruled Italy for nearly a quarter of a century and what thumbnail histories have taught us. More

than fifty years after his fall there remains a mystery about the true legacy of his turbulent regime.

### La Forza Di Benito

Born the son of a blacksmith in the Emilia Romagna region of Italy, Benito was an aggressive child and an even more pugnacious adult. At first a socialist, Mussolini soon embraced nationalism, forcefully agitating for Italy's entry into the First World War at the side of France and England. When war finally came to Italy in 1915, he was able to give full vent to his nationalist passions. As a corporal he saw combat in the Alps along the Austrian border. Severely wounded by an exploding mortar shell, Mussolini survived the war to witness the Italian victory in 1918.

Unlike Adolf Hitler who dabbled in the fields of architecture and painting, Mussolini was a writer/journalist. It was through this talent that he expressed his visions. As editor of the post-war daily *Il Popolo d'Italia*, he railed against the social and economic chaos of Italy as well as the degrading treatment of his country by its allies France, Britain, and the United States. The point of conflict revolved around the secret treaty of London (1915) which had brought Italy into the war with the promise of territory in Europe and Africa. Despite Italy's 600,000 war dead and her part in bringing Germany to its knees by knocking out the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the



Journalist turned politician, 1922



# Focus



**Mussolini's crowning achievement: the creation of Vatican City (1929). The solution to the Church vs.State problem.**

Allies had reconsidered their original offer to Italy when the pressures of war ceased. (The Italian victory at Vittorio Veneto in which 500,000 Austro-Hungarian and German troops surrendered was the last straw in Germany's faltering war effort. Seven days later the German government requested an armistice on the Western Front.)

On March 23, 1919 Benito Mussolini founded the *Fasci di Combattimento*. Fascism was born. Its purpose was to discipline Italy and restore national pride. With blackjacks and castor oil (a little dose kept Fascism's enemies indoors), the Fascist formations battled communists and socialists in pitched street battles. Eventually, the fear of communism and the support of the wealthy gave Fascism the air of respectability and parliamentary election victories followed.

On October 30, 1922, Mussolini's Blackshirts seized the moment and marched on Rome itself. An exasperated King ordered the army to stand aside and Benito Mussolini was appointed Prime Minister of Italy. The land of the Caesars and birthplace of the Renaissance was his to govern. And for better or for worse, he came to dominate Italian political, social and economic life as no one has before or since.

## A Nation in Chaos

At the beginning of his two-decade rule, Mussolini found a nation that had not fully coalesced since its reunification in 1871. Largely agrarian — particularly in the South — and regional in outlook, Italy had failed to live up to the expectations of Garibaldi, Cavour and Mazzini. Strikes, inflation and political instability contributed to a chaotic national life. Despite the legacy of the 19th century *Risorgimento* ("resurgence") Northerners still ignored their Southern kin, to the detriment of Italian unity. The Papacy, the bane of Italian secular life for over four centuries, continued to exert

a powerful influence on the populace. Militarily, Italy had emerged victorious in the war to end all wars, but could not capitalize on its triumph at Vittorio Veneto.

## Italy Revived

Nothing short of a miracle could revive Italy. And indeed, Fascism succeeded in eliminating political instability and mobilizing the resources of the nation. From the mid-1920s through the 1930s, there occurred a major expansion of Italian industry, agriculture and overall economic growth. According to a number of historians, the Italy of 1936 was second only to the Soviet Union in growth. Italian pride, however, was second to none. As early as the 1920's Mussolini's no-nonsense foreign policy gave Italy a presence in the Mediterranean. In technology, the Fascist government subsidized wireless inventor Guglielmo Marconi and spent considerable funds in aviation. By the 1930's Italians were world leaders in many categories of aviation including mass formation flying and altitude and speed records. By 1939, three Italian airlines served 71 national and international air routes.

Elsewhere, industrial giants such as Olivetti, Pirelli and Agip (the oil monopoly) were beginning to flex their muscles. An Italian school of architecture, Futurism, was all the rage. And the world marvelled at the science of Italian nuclear physics with Enrico Fermi and Ettore Majorano. (Fermi achieved fission in 1934 and later went on to conduct the first atomic chain reaction in Chicago in 1942). The Fascist period also introduced the state holding companies that were to form the underpinnings, ironically enough, of Italy's post World War II recovery: IRI (Institute for Industrial Reconstruction)



**The Ballila, Fascist Youth on parade. "Books & Muskets, Perfect Fascists"**





# The New York Times

LATE CITY EDITION  
Published by The New York Times Company  
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"All the News That's Fit to Print."

NEW YORK, THURSDAY, JULY 24, 1942

TWO CENTS

## DEATHS FROM HEAT INCREASE TO 1,213 IN THE COUNTRY

Temperature Gauges in Six States 100 Degrees in Western Cities

## MISSOURI SUFFERS MOST

Records Show 312 Deaths in State—Deaths Droughted Being Held in Many Areas

## WILLAGE IN PESHAWAR

His Boys Enlisted Will Be Very Small Units Being Formed in Two Weeks

## The Daily Hunt Resumed

Police are hunting for the man who is believed to be the author of the "Daily Hunt" column in the New York Times

## What and How

What and how the man who is believed to be the author of the "Daily Hunt" column in the New York Times

## Another Talk Court the Best

Dr. Martin, of Radio Company, Brings Grand Jury—New Jersey Pleads New Laws

## 2 ARE HELD AS WITNESSES

Dr. Martin, of Radio Company, Brings Grand Jury—New Jersey Pleads New Laws

## French Forest Fires Menace Thousands;

Whole Mediterranean Fleet Standing By

## Germany Recalls Embassy

For Action in Vienna

## Intervention is Hinted

Rome Reports Appeal to Powers by Austria to Guard Independence

## 78,000 TROOPS AT BORDER

Italian Forces With Equipment Into Order and War Plan in Steaming Northward

## VIENNA CONFERENCE TODAY

Representatives of Italy, France, Britain and the U. S. Expected to Attend

## BERLIN DECLARES HANDS-OFF POLICY

Resists Austrian Move to a Purly Internal Affair and in Consent of Nazis

## PARIS AND LONDON GRAY

Local Vienna 1942

## ALL OF REBELS PRISONERS

Passage to Germany, Arranged by German Minister, Revoked

## VIENNA IS QUIET AGAIN

But Armed Guards Patrol the Streets—Reports of Fighting in Myths, Nazi Stronghold

## KENNEDY PLEDGES SECURITIES ACT TO BUILD BUSINESS

Chairman Says Commission Will Encourage Optimal Use of Securities

## PROMISES NEW STANDARDS

Speaking of London, Mr. Kennedy Said He Would Like to See a New Standard of Living

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# AUSTRIAN NAZIS KILL DOLLFUSS, REVOLT FAILS; 147 PLOTTERS HELD; MARTIAL LAW IN EFFECT; ITALIAN ARMY, NAVY, PLANES READY TO ACT

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## KILLED IN VIENNA REVOLT.



Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss.

## Eight Nazis Hold Off 1,000 Men For Hours at Vienna Radio Plant

Correspondent of the New York Times

Retained Talk—Held Off 1,000 Men For Hours at Vienna Radio Plant

By G. R. S. DUFFY

BRITISH LONDON, July 24.—Eight Nazis held off 1,000 men for hours at the Vienna radio plant today, a dramatic episode in the struggle for control of the city.

The struggle was a desperate one, and the Nazis were held off for hours by the radio plant guards.

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The front page July 26, 1942. Fascist Italy checked Hitler's advance on Austria. When asked to help, France and Great Britain declined. It was the beginning of the end of the old Western Alliance. However, Hitler backed down. Austria was later annexed in 1938 with Hitler's permission. The Anglo-French policy of appeasement can be dated from this occurrence.

The Italic Way





## Mussolini (continued from p 13)



One of the new towns built on reclaimed marshland. More acreage for agriculture and surplus population.

and IMI (Italian Institute of Real Estate). Together with a burgeoning automotive industry — FIAT and Alfa Romeo — they energized a quasi-moribund nation. (As its last gift to posterity, Fascist Italy also left newly discovered gasfields in the Po River valley. It was this energy that fueled the post-

of which Italians later claimed the American president had adopted.

Indicative of this admiration for the Fascist dictator was the odd but telling tale of “Mussolini’s brain.” After his fall from power and death at the hands of communist partisans, bits of *Il Duce’s* brain were captured by the Allies for examination. It was thought that the genius of the 1920’s and early 1930’s had succumbed to syphilis which explained his tailspin into the Axis. Although no trace of the disease was found and the brain bits were returned to Signora Mussolini it was clear that even his wartime enemies were disturbed by his downfall.

### A New Discipline

That the trains ran on time is the phrase most closely associated with Benito Mussolini. But as any commuter this side of Penn Station knows, this is no mean feat. In addition to alacritous locomotives, *Il Duce* expanded the nation’s infrastructure and helped to enrich the South. Hydroelectric plants were fully developed along with serviceable roads and modern port facilities. (However, Fascism was unable to fully transform Sicily from its underdeveloped state although *Il Duce* was inspired to do so just before the war.) By 1933, after  
(continued on p. 26)

## From Mulberry Street in New York to 10 Downing Street in Londontown, *Il Duce* was lauded as the savior of his nation.

World War II economic boom.)

Although Italy was unquestionably on the move the price of this national pride and economic advancement was the destruction of individual freedom and the militarization of the Italian populace. Both of these changes were to be the undoing of the nation.

### *Il Duce’s* Brain

Noted historian Ivon Kirkpatrick writes: “Mussolini did, however, in a very short time improve the international standing of his country, an achievement which won him the grateful respect of Italians all over the world.” From Mulberry Street in New York to 10 Downing Street in Londontown, *Il Duce* was lauded as the savior of his nation. One early admirer, Winston Churchill, hailed Mussolini as the lawgiver who had saved Italy from the clutches of communism. The wily Joseph Stalin viewed Mussolini as his implacable ideological foe. Franklin Delano Roosevelt held him in high esteem for his public works programs, some



The Dictator’s other side.  
*War is to man what maternity is to woman*





# Perspectives

[Highlights of historical records that shed light on modern times]

A 1989 Newsday article reprinted and distributed by the Italic Studies Institute.

## A Requiem for Mario Lanza

by Florence King

Certain days sear themselves on our minds and leave total recall in their wake. On December 7, 1941, I was crayoning a Wizard of Oz coloring book. When Franklin D. Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945, I was listening to "Tom Mix" on the radio. And on Oct. 7, 1959, I was waiting for a streetcar and wearing a clinging sheath dress that would not now fit around my upper arm when I saw the newspaper headline: "Mario Lanza Dies in Rome."

I was 23. My first crush, the man who had aroused my sexual and musical passions and wove them together so tightly that I could not tell one from the other, was dead at 38.

The young will ask: Who was Mario Lanza? The biographical answer is simple. He was born Alfredo Coccozza in Philadelphia in 1921. Blessed with a powerful tenor voice and extraordinary good looks, he brought opera to the moviegoing masses when he starred in "The Great Caruso" in 1951.

The larger answer is more complicated because Lanza has never received the credit he deserves for the unique contribution he made during his brief lifetime. It was a contribution that began in the hearts of teenage girls and went straight to the heart of

something much deeper. Thanks to his performance in "The Great Caruso," anyone who was in high school in the early '50s stands an excellent chance of being an opera lover regardless of background or education. As a music critic of the time put it: "Mario Lanza is the symbol of America's cultural democracy."

My own story is typical. I was born into the social class that no one admits to being from: the lower middle. People brag about growing up poor but nobody brags about growing up with six plaster ducks flying across the wall in graduated sizes, or punching two holes in a can of Carnation evaporated milk and calling it "coffee cream."

My family's musical tastes were what might be expected, except that they were worse. My father's favorite song, which he performed publicly when he played the banjo in speakeasies, was

"You Can Bring Rose With the Turned-Up Nose but Don't Bring Lulu." My mother, who grew up during World War I, sang "We Don't Want the Bacon, We Just Want a Piece of the Rhine," and my grandmother, whose heyday was the Gay Nineties, liked morbid ballads about fallen women in which a brothel was called a "mansion of aching hearts." The closest we came to good music was listening to Irish tenor Morton Downey (father of the Big Mouth) on the radio.

To my family and millions of others like us, opera was music for rich people, music to make jokes about, the subject of countless cartoons showing fat ladies wearing horns. Hollywood producers took the hint: a few movies had an operatic background but the music was always downplayed in favor of the stories. Like baseball before "Pride of the Yankees," opera was considered box-office poison.

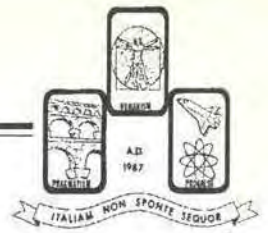
Mario Lanza had made two earlier movies with Kathryn Grayson — "That Midnight Kiss" and "The Toast of New Orleans" — in which they sang some opera, but "The Great Caruso" laid it on with a trowel. The film was saturated with most of the major tenor arias in the Italian repertoire, plus the sextet from *Lucia di Lammermoor*, the quartet from *Rigoletto*, and part of the final duet from "Aida."

Lanza became a fire in my blood. Captive of  
(continued on p. 18)



Alfredo Coccozza





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# Perspectives

## Mario Lanza

(continued from p. 16)

erotic frenzy, I kept going to see the movie, following it all over town until I knew it by heart and could spell the Italian lyrics in phonetic English. The aria from *Rigoletto* sounded to me like "the doughnut is moppylay." I yearned to know what it meant but there was no one to ask, so I checked out a book of opera synopses from the public library and found the right name: *La Donna e Mobile*.

In this way I found the name of every aria in the movie, as well as many that were not, and learned the plots. Now my worn Lanza records (the first ones sold were the last of the old 78 rpms) were not enough. I wanted to hear whole operas. I couldn't afford to buy them, but thanks to the opera craze Lanza had started and the recent invention of unbreakable LP records, public libraries soon had the complete versions for rent. I didn't have a long-playing phonograph so I used the library's, sitting for hours in the stuffy little room

with the librettos spread out before me. By this time I was in fourth-year French, so the Italian made a good deal of sense. I learned how to pronounce it, and acquired a fair vocabulary.

This sounds like weird-kid behavior, a specialty of mine, but for once I was a member of the crowd. All the other girls had crushes on Lanza too, so everybody took up opera. We sang *M'appari* from *Marta* in the gym locker room and even tried the *Lucia* sextet, substituting heartfelt cries of *morte!* and *lagrima!* for the words we did not know.

We did not realize it at the time, but a liberating change had begun in our provincial southern lives. We had never known anyone whose name ended in a vowel, but into our tight little world of names that ended in "ham" and "ton" and "ing" came Mario Lanza. What began as a passionate attraction to a handsome matinee idol with deep dimples and burning black eyes became an expansion of cultural vistas and outlook that we would not otherwise have had.

Our voluntary quest for operatic

knowledge was the old idea of "self-improvement," a phrase that predates the vaguer and more grandiose "American Dream." The opportunity to better oneself on which our nation is built does not mean buying a house or a yacht or a BMW, but exercising the freedom to absorb beauty and excellence. Thanks to Mario Lanza, we got it right.

The great conductor Arturo Toscanini called Lanza's "the greatest voice of the 20th Century," but the intellectual snobs among us have never forgiven Mario Lanza for popularizing opera. Before they succeed in burying his memory, we should award him a posthumous Medal of Freedom. It is the least we can do for the only person in the history of the world to change teenage musical tastes for the better.

(Ms. King is the author of "Confessions of a Failed Southern Lady." Her sixth book, published earlier this year, is "Reflections in a Jaundiced Eye.")

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# Project Italia

A film production to commemorate 2,500 years of Italic civilization and migrations.



Frank Vitale, Filmmaker  
Newly-appointed Project Director  
of Project Italia

## How to Raise \$1,000,000

That's what it will cost to produce a first-class story for television. That's what **Project Italia** is all about.

If ambition is what it takes to produce a documentary about the Italic people (natives and descendants of Italy, ancient and modern) then we've got plenty of it. But just think for a moment. Why hasn't anyone else done it? The Order Sons of Italy, around since 1905 and with 100,000 members across America and Canada, doesn't think it's worth the time and resources, especially since they once invested a sizeable chunk of money in a Robert Alda (deceased father of Alan Alda) film concept called *Italia Gloriosa*. The Hollywood moguls gave the Order very little in return and the entire episode left it with a bad taste for media projects.

NIAF (National Italian-American Foundation) headquartered in Washington, D.C., and founded by multi-millionaire Jeno Paulucci is more concerned with political action than camera action. Surprisingly, a deft moneymaker like Paulucci should realize the power of media image — Chung King and Jeno's Pizza commercials made him rich.

Then there are the myriad other Italian-American organizations that claim millions of members and upwardly-mobile executives. Most, if not all, are concerned with power politics, statues of Columbus, membership drives and just keeping their names in the news. However, the Columbus Citizens Foundation which not only carries on the Columbus Day Parade (a veritable media event) but has also produced a two-part video on the Italian-American contributions to America, a small-scale production.

So what makes the Italic Studies Institute think it can do something the giants have not? Moreover, can Italian-Americans expect a joint effort by their representative organizations to produce the story of their heritage?

We have already devoted \$35,000 to **Project Italia**. That commitment has produced a fundraising film starring actor Tony LoBianco and a film script written by Julian Krainin, veteran filmmaker and producer (*Civilization & the Jews*). These are the tools we shall use to lead our drive. An application for major funds is being made to the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), a federal agency that has given grants and matching funds to hundreds of television documentaries. To our knowledge, no Italian-American group has ever asked the NEH for money towards such a documentary. Ironically, other ethnic groups have requested and received funding, including the creators of *Civilization and the Jews*.

Beside the NEH grant, the Institute will be targeting American and Italian corporations for grants. Of course we hope to attract some of the above-mentioned organizations for this much needed educational project. Whether we can convince them that this film is in their best interests remains to be seen. We'll let you know.





# Media Madness

[In which we present media material with commentary]

## A Nation Engag



**Murray  
Kempton**

San Salvador — Every memory of a misfortunate capital will be lastingly engraved and protractedly haunted by the images of three citadels, the rubble wars in the suburb of Soyapango where FMLN detachment barracked awf. day, the national palace where Presido. Alfredo Cristiani takes his uncease and the great wall of the embassy of the United States.

The fortresses of the FMLN guer itinerant and formidable for their cohesion and their contempt for the government, foot soldiers whose first rule of engagement

“Cristiani [the President of El Salvador] is the latest of that so often ill-starred line. His parents came here [El Salvador] from Italy in 1946, and he has some of the softness without the pomposity that distinguishes Italian public men.”

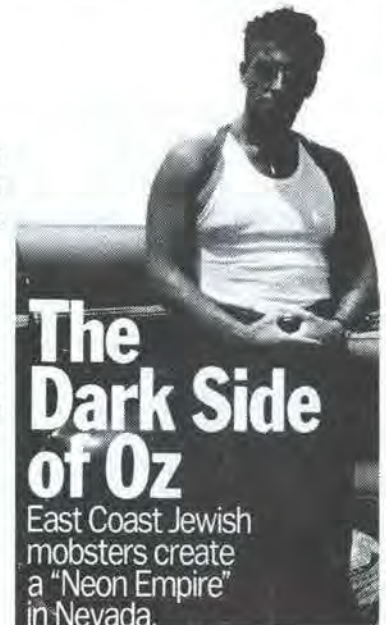
Murray Kempton, *Newsday*, December 6, 1989

**Comment:** There is nothing more pompous than a verbose bigot in print. We may conclude that Kempton’s blanket bigotry extends to all Italians outside of Italy including Italian American politicians. And you thought Mario Cuomo was a statesman!

“The [Hamill] script also touches on the fact that there were [Jewish] quotas in colleges. A lot of the intelligent Jewish guys couldn’t get into schools. This was an opportunity to make money very quickly . . . use their brains, their muscles . . . and the link between the Italian mobs and Jewish mobs is explained.”

Actor Martin Landau on “Neon Empire”, a T.V. movie about the Jewish Mob.

**Comment:** What is Landau saying, that Meyer Lansky, Bugsy Siegel, Longie Zwillman and Lepke Buchalter were not criminals but freedom fighters struggling against an oppressive socio-economic regime? Yes, and there is no mafia!



**Ponte's** [17] [14] [1] 39 Desbrosses St. (just off West Side Hwy.), 226-462. M — “The Pillsbury Dough Boy” would love this “country-style Upper West Side cafe, popular for, natur. “good popovers” plus great strawberry butter and nature sandwiches; except for occasional “long lines” and ser “slow as molasses”, Sunday brunch, light meals desserts are all fine.

**Popover Cafe /S** [17] [13] [14] [5] 551 Amsterdam Ave. (87th St.), 595-8555 M — “The Pillsbury Dough Boy” would love this “country-style Upper West Side cafe, popular for, natur. “good popovers” plus great strawberry butter and nature sandwiches; except for occasional “long lines” and ser “slow as molasses”, Sunday brunch, light meals desserts are all fine.

**Postano /L** [17] [18] [15] [5] 250 Park Ave. So. (20th St.), 777-6211 U — This stylish, all-white Italian cafe has “settled out r its trendiness into being a decent restaurant”; though r of “the beautiful people” have moved to newer near hot spots, a sprinkling of celebrities remain and with les pressure the kitchen seems to perform better.

A restaurant review: “Despite being an easy target for ribbing (‘every time the door opens I duck’, ‘when they say it’s mobbed they mean it’, ‘you feel like an extra in *The Godfather*’), this Southern Italian standby has ‘very good’ food, fair prices and a warm, if tacky atmosphere that most like; it has valet parking and is an easy drive.”

Zagat’s 1989 New York City Restaurant Survey

**Comment:** Why not extend this “humor” to all restaurant reviews, for example: “Say what you will, but New York’s most colorful bistro is a Japanese favorite called Yakuza. In addition to mouthwatering sushi, the bill of fare includes Black Rain soup and, should the service be less than perfect, Samurai steak knives. But exercise the utmost caution, as all waiters look alike. And, though you may feel like an extra in *The Bridge Over the River Kwai*, don’t worry. Complimentary buck teeth and myopic lenses come with every meal.”









# News of the Institute

## Plenary Council

(Meeting of 1 February 1990)

### Executive Council (Albert Crecca, Vice President):

- Nominations for all offices of the Institute are open as of February 1st. Nominations will be closed on February 15th. After that date ballots will be mailed to all Plenary Council Members. Voting will be closed by February 28th and the new officers will start their term on March 2nd.



January 18th Business Card Exchange

### Social Committee (Monica Polizzi):

- Carl Borsari has accepted chairmanship of the 1990 Dinner Dance. This subcommittee will meet for breakfast on February 14th. Reservations have been confirmed for the Waldorf on June 2nd. The Lester Lanin Band has been retained. The Council voted to keep ticket prices at \$250 each but to raise the journal ads by 25%.
- Dennis Mancini reported on the proposed group tour to Italy. A subcommittee will be formed to outline a 1990 10-day tour.
- Theater Trip: We have committed to 75 seats for the Broadway show Gypsy on February 24th. The package includes restaurant, parking, and shuttle bus.

### Business & Career Committee (Albert Crecca)

- The Plenary Council Directory is nearing completion and will be mailed out in March.
- The Business Card Exchange was held on January 18th and over 125 people attended from the Institute and the Italy-America Chamber of Commerce. Actor Tony LoBianco was also a guest and the Project Italia promotional film was shown.

## Institute Programs

### Aurora Youth (John Mancini, President):

- Development of the program will be completed this year when lesson plans, teacher's guide, and teaching aids are finalized. Funding will be needed in 1991 to expand the program to new locations and to monitor teaching standards.
- Plans are currently being drafted for ILLSA (Italian & Latin Language Students Association) which will reach out to high school and college students. Subsidies and activity guidelines will be developed.



Aurora fieldtrip to the Meucci Museum where students met former Italian Prime Minister Bettino Craxi. Craxi later presented them with special Garibaldi medallions

### Project Italia (Frank Vitale):

- The script (actually a 90-page treatment) has been completed and professional fundraisers are formulating strategy.
- Preparations are being made for a grant request to the National Endowment for the Humanities.
- The "Kill an Italian" ad in Variety is still receiving attention and discussions with Channel 13 have taken place. The ad has also elicited volunteers from the media including HBO. The Sons of Italy has refused to run the ad in their national newsletter.





# REVIEW

## Meucci (continued from p. 10)

The authors go to great lengths to depict the swindles of Jim Mason and the perfidies of others such as Samanos, Rider and Jane. These dubious associates nearly brought Meucci to ruin — and no doubt contributed to the ennui that pervaded his life. Furthermore, despite his gifts as an inventor, Meucci displayed an unwillingness to learn English, a failing which may have doomed his chances at achieving legal, if not historical, redress. This, however, does not excuse the duplicity with which the American District Telegraph Company treated Meucci. Nor should it condone the cavalier behavior of that firm's George Durant, who considered the bearded Italian inventor nothing more than a "crank."



Meucci house and statue in Rosebank, Staten Island, NY

**When Bettino Craxi, the former Prime Minister of Italy, claimed that Meucci invented the telephone the Associated Press, unaccustomed to such boldness, walked out of the press conference.**

Ultimately, Meucci's life can be called a tragedy. Laced with bitter irony, it is a study in injustice. Although the German Phillip Reis, in 1861, invented a device that transmitted the sounds of musical notes, Meucci's Telettrofono antedated this rudimentary mechanism. And in a chapter titled "The Papers Disappear", the authors show conclusively that Meucci's invention and his supporting notes antedated one Alexander Graham Bell. According to Nese and Nicotra, Bell, Elisha Gray and Western Union used Meucci's papers to further their research on a device that bore a remarkable resemblance to the *Telettrofono*. Once Bell achieved fame with this device at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, Meucci became a broken man. Thanks to this fascinating book, though, he will never be a forgotten man.

- R.A. Iaconis



Antonio Meucci, inventor





## Mussolini (continued from p. 15)



Young Benito with his classmates.  
A disciplinary problem

Mussolini's Battle for Wheat, Italy was self-sufficient in grain (something that she no longer is). Over 3 million acres of marsh were drained and put into use for Italy's expanding population and agriculture. (It has been little noted that the United States' anti-Italian immigration laws of the 1920's forced Italy to find outlets for half a million would-be immigrants. She did this in Africa and on reclaimed lands.) Mussolini also brought North and South together by placing a strict emphasis on the Italian language. Dialects, though colorful after a fashion, were not to be taught as separate but equal languages. Even film stars had their provincial inflections dubbed over. This worked toward limiting regional emphasis.

One particularly noteworthy accomplishment was the decimation of criminal elements. These *mafiosi* were captured, herded into cages and paraded through the streets of Palermo. Fascist bosses from Rome now ruled, and Sicily experienced a respite from its ancient plague. It took the U.S. Army to reestablish the old *mafia* once Fascism was defeated.

### Totalitarian or Authoritarian?

One question that few historians have dealt with is: how did Mussolini change the face of Italy with so little bloodshed? Aside from the sensational murder of opposition parliamentarian Giacomo Matteotti in 1924, which appears to have been the work of renegade Fascists, Mussolini's form of dictatorship was relatively benevolent.

By most anti-Fascist accounts only 25 individuals were executed for crimes against the state during the Fascist Era 1922 - 1943. Such a number was nearer to the execution rate for treason in democracies at the time rather than totalitarian regimes. *Il Duce's* usual punishment for his enemies was the

ancient Roman form of banishment or exile. For example, Italian Jewish dissident Carlo Levi found himself forcefully providing medical services in the mountain town of Eboli for a number of years. That punishment resulted in his classic book of rural Italy, *Christ Stopped at Eboli*.

Perhaps Mussolini was a kinder and gentler dictator than most, but it must also be remembered that he was constrained by King Victor Emmanuel and, by virtue of his spiritual hold on the Italian people, the Pope. Although they may have had a stabilizing effect, the King nevertheless saw fit to accept the title of Emperor after Italy's conquest of Ethiopia. Without a doubt, the monarchy and papacy each played a part in Italy's foreign and domestic policy during Mussolini's regime. They also acquiesced in *Il Duce's* more nefarious decisions. The fact that the Italian monarchy was cast out by the Italian electorate in 1946 demonstrated its belief that the King was an accomplice in Italy's destruction.

### Duce vs Fuehrer

Adolf Hitler began his political career as an ardent admirer of Benito Mussolini. Indeed, he once wrote the Duce requesting an autographed photo. Mussolini unceremoniously refused. In fact, after their first official encounter in Venice, Hitler reminded Mussolini of nothing so much as a Chaplinesque clown.

So what brought these dissimilar dictators together? To

(continued on p. 28)



His roots were in the working class. His father was a blacksmith.





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## Forum (continued from p.9)

the entire Mediterranean as "Mare Nostrum" (Latin for "our sea"), he concentrated mainly on the Italian economy for more than a dozen years. "He made the trains run on time," was how many Italians characterized him.

Even his early imperial adventures were cautious attacks against almost helpless targets: the invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, the conquest of Albania in 1939. But his decision to join in Hitler's war in 1940 sealed his fate. His troops' most noteworthy military accomplishment proved to be the art of mass surrender, and when the Allies invaded Sicily in 1943 he was removed from power by his own colleagues, who sought a separate peace.

Mussolini was rescued from his mountaintop prison by German commandos in a daring glider-borne operation, and spent the last year of his life leading a puppet government in German-occupied northern Italy. There is a certain horrible grandeur about the end of the Nazi regime beneath the ruins of Berlin in 1945 — even evil men can be strong in their convictions — but Mussolini had no convictions, and his end was mere squalor and ignominy.

The Fascist regime in Italy was based on force and the glorification of power, and it did kill people who opposed it openly. Nevertheless, by comparison with at least a dozen quite unremarkable right-wing dictatorships in the world today — not to mention an equal number of left-wing regimes — it was not even particularly ruthless towards its own citizens.

It was hardly any danger at all to the rest of the world. Italian soldiers can fight as well as anybody else, but they were not willing to die for Mussolini's preposterous dreams of glory. He spent his last days "thinking only of history and how he would appear in it," according to one of his ministers, but his place in history is secure. He was the greatest fraud of the 20th Century.

*(Mr. Dyer is a London-based journalist and a member of the International Institute for Strategic Studies.)*

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## Mussolini (continued from p. 26)

understand the genesis of the Pact of Steel, it is necessary to recreate the Europe of the 1930's. In truth, the seeds of the Second World War were to take root when France and Britain failed to back Italy's (indeed their own) policy of containing German expansion. Three little-remembered incidents marked the failure of the Western Allies to follow Mussolini's lead and set the stage for disaster:

1. **Austria** (July, 1934): Nazis assassinated the Austrian Chancellor Dollfuss as a first step in Hitler's plan to annex Austria. Mussolini rushed Italian troops to the Austrian border and issued a warning to Germany: *L'Austria non si tocca!* [Hands off Austria!] He then awaited Britain's and France's reaction. To his dismay, the democracies did nothing. But Hitler's bluff had been called and he quickly backed off. Mussolini's bold action had prevented Germany's first act of aggression. In fact, the confrontation with Italy had so shaken Hitler that he later asked Mussolini's permission in 1938 when he tried again. By that time the dictators were comrades-in-arms.

2. **Treaty of Stresa** (April, 1935): At Italy's behest, France, Britain, and Italy guaranteed the independence of Austria and agreed not to let Germany "overbalance" (i.e. rearm) the stability of Europe. Not only did the British not

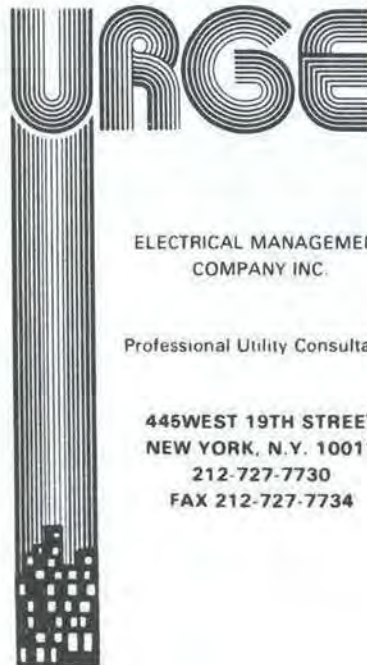
intend to carry out the treaty but they had already opened private discussions with Hitler about rearmament. The British led by Anthony Eden grimaced at the thought of Italians leading Europe. In a display of perverse logic, Hitler's Germans were to be a counterweight.

3. **Anglo-German Naval Treaty** (June, 1935): Once again, behind the backs of its friends and allies, the British unilaterally permitted the naval rearmament of Germany. This conveniently oft-forgot betrayal of the Western Powers for the sake of insuring their own naval status was the final signal to Mussolini that France and Britain had neither the will nor desire to prevent a resurgent Germany.

The opportunity to stand beside a resolute Italy had been missed by the democracies. From 1935 on Mussolini's destiny was aligned with Germany. What might have been a bulwark against Nazism and Communism had been broken apart by a pusillanimous France and conniving Britain. And of course America remained introspective. Mussolini's chilling prediction in 1934 came home to haunt the lax Allies:

*"It would mean the end of European civilization if this country of murderers and pederasts were to overrun Europe . . . Hitler is the murderer of Dollfuss . . . A horrible sexual degenerate, a dangerous fool . . ."*

End of Part I. Part II: The Brutal Friendship and Defeat



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