

THE

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ITALIC WAY

The Newsletter of the Italic Studies Institute, Inc.



The Jewish Ghetto
in Florence, 1882

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Letters

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

ENCOURAGEMENT

I sincerely want to thank the Italic Studies Institute for the wonderful work it is doing for the Italian American community.

Your articles in the Fall 1989 issue were outstanding and should help Italian Americans see solutions to the roots of conflict. Blacks helped ethnics to take greater pride in their heritage.

We look forward to your documentary *The Italians: The Untold Story*. It is a documentary we need. I hope it will encourage others to do the same for our cause.

Prof. Philip J. DiNovo
American Italian Heritage
Association, Utica, NY



**General Gullio Douhet, first
advocate of airpower.**

each year. They are presented every year in both the United States, usually in May, and in Italy, usually in October. Douhet was not a contemporary of Mitchell; his efforts preceded Mitchell by a decade. In addition to the strategic use of airpower, Douhet prophesied and advocated the peaceful use of aircraft.

In closing let me congratulate you on the formidable effort that you are expending by projecting the positive image of *The Italic Way* on behalf of the Italian American community.

Peter R. Zuzolo,
National First Vice President
Order Sons of Italy in America

KILL AN ITALIAN

You and your Board are to be commended for your forthrightness in printing an ad in the December 1989 edition of *Variety* entitled "Help Us Kill an Italian". It took a great deal of courageous honesty to go public against that criminal element in our ethnic group that disparages us all. You made the right decision to put things in proper perspective and to fight back with the right story.

We wish you well as you embark on the worthy task of producing a documentary that will illustrate the positive

accomplishments of the Italian people and their continuing contributions to civilization.

William Denis Fugazy, President
Coalition of Italian American
Associations, Inc., Whitestone, NY

AIR POWER TROPHY

I would like to thank you for the article in your second issue about the Order's Douhet-Mitchell International Airpower Trophy Award. It is very much appreciated that you took the time to include this information in your magazine.

There were, however, a few errors in the article. The awards are not alternated



The Institute's ad in *Variety* has caused a stir but Francis Ford Coppola was unmoved.



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The Italic Way



POSTSCRIPTS

(Ed. In our last issue we summarized an item about PENTHOUSE Magazine publisher Bob Guccione's problems in obtaining a gambling license in Atlantic City. As luck would have it we rubbed a member of Mr. Guccione's staff the wrong way. The following letter was sent to us in reaction to the piece)



term you did. Who's trying to enlighten who here?

Your second sentence is equally damning by association. Not only did you throw in the reference to

Abscam, but your phrasing clearly leads the reader to believe Mr. Guccione actually did end up bribing the New Jersey officials.

Buried in the third sentence is the meat of the piece; *that Mr. Guccione never took any bait. There's* a positive, affirming action that shatters the stereotypical image of Italian descent Americans. But why you chose to bury it after 50 words of implication and association re Mr. Guccione's character and person is beyond me.

You fed right into the very public perception I was under the illusion your organization is attempting to combat. You jumped right for the "scandalous" and "racy" aspects of an Italian-American's life, rather than highlighting some of the more positive aspects.

Perhaps your publication would enjoy more information about Mr. Guccione and his ground-breaking work with both

OMNI and LONGEVITY as well as his generous donations of time, resources and money to help feed the elderly and protect both the first amendment and the environment. This information would provide your readers with a positive portrait of an Italian-American who has clearly succeeded despite the often negative portrayals, unfounded rumors and damaging stereotypes that exist.

Sincerely,

Dane Hall
Manager, Public Relations
General Media International
Penthouse International, Ltd.

(Ed. Obviously, Mr. Hall is looking to get better press for his boss. While he is correct in saying that Mr. Guccione has interests outside of sex magazines we stand by our description of him as a sex-ploiter. Perhaps Mr. Hall has forgotten the raunchy movie "Caligula" which Mr. Guccione produced. Not only is it obscene but it did to ancient Italians what Mr. Coppola did to modern ones — destroy their image.

While we welcome the opportunity to interview Mr. Guccione we would also like to see if he is interested in rectifying the image of the Italian past.)

FUTURE ISSUES OF THE ITALIC WAY

- ADVERTISING - Who's behind those ads?
- SICILY - Italic from the start
- ITALIAN-AMERICANS - What's wrong?
- MAFIA - Strangers among us
- ITALIAN DEBT - What Italy owes Italian-Americans



All'Italiana

WHEN PUZO COMES TO SHOVE

Pity poor Mario Puzo. After racking up megabuck sales with his *Godfather* book and movie deals, America's pioneer purveyor of Mafia prose has been given the cold shoulder by his own literary agent Candida Donadio. Puzo's latest book, *The Fourth K*, a novel about malfeasance in Washington and international circles, has failed to take the publishing world by storm. Random House, which reportedly paid Puzo \$4 million sight unseen for hardcover rights, now apparently does not believe that the tome was worth it. Maybe the story didn't fly because Mario's new villains dropped their vowels. Like filmmaker Francis Coppola, Puzo is finding that life is tough when you can't bash your own kind for fun and profit.

GIANCARLO THE FIFTH

The man whom comedian Billy Crystal disparaged with a tasteless barb at the Academy Awards ceremony ("*Instead of roaring the MGM lion will take the fifth*") is, admittedly, an enigma. Giancarlo Parretti is an entrepreneur of unusual dimensions. A former headwaiter from Sicily, Parretti has managed to trade *melanzane* (eggplant) for media. Over the span of twenty years, this Sicilian wheeler-dealer went from waiting tables to owning hotels and banks, eventually investing in French and American entertainment companies. His latest would-be conquest is the great MGM, for which he is prepared to pay \$1.2 billion.

Crystal's one-liner was made in reference to Parretti's problems with the Italian legal system. Found guilty of bankruptcy laws in a Naples' court, Parretti has been sentenced to nearly four years in prison. He denies the charge and is appealing the conviction.

And, of course, there have been the standard rumors of Mafia financing that dog most successful Italic people. Shady or not, the American giant Time-Warner Communications is backing Parretti in his quest for MGM. Whatever the truth may be, Parretti is a shrewd Italian Horatio Alger with multi-faceted interests. The next time you watch *West Side Story* or any of the 3,000 films owned by MGM, consider how many tables Giancarlo had to wait on to own them.



Giancarlo Parretti: waiter extraordinaire

THE FINE ITALIAN HAND

• Five months after adjusting Dickson Njogu's lens-clouded right eye, Dr. Anthony Piscano of the New York Eye Surgery Center performed another ocular miracle on the five year old Kenyan's left one. This time, the skilled Italic surgeon engaged in a rare and delicate juvenile-cataracts operation. Both efforts proved successful; young Mr. Njogu's eyesight was restored. And, thanks to a gifted physician, an 8,000 mile journey led to a miracle of modern medicine.

• When Police Officer Harry Ortiz arrived at King's County Medical Center in Brooklyn, he was not breathing. Shot in the neck while on duty, Ortiz's life depended on the skills of trauma surgeons Thomas Scalea and Salvatore Sclafani.

Fortunately, Dr. Sclafani is a pioneer of trans-catheter arterial embolization. After 20 pints of blood and the arduous task of guiding a wiry instrument through Ortiz's veins and aorta, Sclafani accomplished the near-impossible by cauterizing a ruptured artery *from inside*. Though left in extremely critical condition, Ortiz was going to survive.

ITALIAN GRIPES

• Crime is on the upswing in Italy. There were more than 2 million crimes reported in 1989, including 1,000 murders. Although Italian observers lament the "bloodbath" they may get small comfort from a comparison with New York City. With about 15% of the Italy's population, New York easily matches the Italian murders in half a year. Like New Yorkers, the Italians put much of the blame on an inadequate justice system.

• Italian cancer researchers report that 80% of all cancers are environmentally produced. This figure resulted from comparison surveys of emigrants around the world with their non-emigrating cousins. Most discouraging is that many victims create their own dangerous environment. Observes one scientist, the Italian government spends some \$80 million per year on cancer research while the Italian population puffs away at \$8 billion of cigarettes annually.

SOUTHERN FRIGHTS

As Italian citizens went to the polls in local administrative elections, portions of the Mezzogiorno once again felt the sting of organized criminal clans. In spasmodic but savage displays of violence, these cowardly marauders triggered a new wave of terror across southern Italy. Since February, they have killed 10 officials and candidates. Desperate to control public-works contracts run by municipal governments, the vari-



All'Italiana

ous factions hope to cower the local populace into submission. The central government has been urged to play a more active role in combatting this insidious menace. A new law passed by the Italian parliament gives carabinieri and magistrates greater powers to probe the finances and property of suspected mafiosi and to seize any profits derived from criminal activities. Former Prime Minister Bettino Craxi maintains that the Italian State can still stem the tide of criminal terrorism in the south. He believes these ragtag, drug-trafficking bands can be broken, provided Rome mounts a true offensive. And not a moment too soon. As a result of the election upheavals in the south, regional hate groups such as the Lombard League are gaining adherents in the north. Should they gain full-fledged respectability, Italy would be fractured at a time when the rest of Europe is embracing stability.

HEROES FOR ALL SEASONS

Even if they fail to earn an Emmy award for their efforts on *Voyage of Terror: The Achille Lauro Affair*, Sergio Donati and Alberto Negrin have achieved a television first. By eschewing cardboard caricatures, these enterprising screenwriters portray the Italian participants in this drama as people of courage, convictions and principles. From Prime Minister Craxi to Captain De Rosa to Colonel Annichiarico, the Italians come across, in the words of *New York Times* television critic John J. O'Connor, as "the quietly reasonable heroes of the story." Signor Negrin, who doubled as director, demonstrates great sensitivity in depicting the tragedy of the Klinghoffers (expertly played by Burt Lancaster and Eva Marie Saint). In addition to an

international cast, this T.V. movie boasts first rate production values, crisp dialogue and an air of authenticity. (The film was actually shot aboard the Achille Lauro with the assistance of Captain Gerardo De Rosa.) Above all, the story has the added virtue of being true. Italo-philes will delight in the tense standoff scene in Sigonella, Sicily, between pistol packing General Davies (Robert Culp) and the coolly confident Colonel Annichiarico (Gabriele Ferzetti). In this eyeball to eyeball confrontation, the U.S. side blinked.

DROPOUT COINCIDENCE

A recent study by the City University of New York has revealed that 20% of Italian-American youth fail to finish high school. They are only exceeded by Hispanics (31%) and Blacks (24%). The overall white dropout rate is 18%.

Coincidentally, the Italian government has found that the average dropout rate in southern Italy is between 22% to 25%. While the Italians blame poor teaching and facilities for their children's failing, some Italian-American educators blame bad media role models for New York City's woes. A daylong conference on the subject at City University suggested the cause may be more a matter of peer pressure, family apathy, and a priority of work over education.

If the transatlantic figures are no mere

coincidence the problem of dropouts in Italy and the United States may stem from the same problem — the family.

FIATSKY

It seems like the USSR can't get enough Italian automobiles. In a recent agreement signed by President Mikhail Gorbachev, the Russians have committed to the design and production of 900,000 cars per year utilizing Fiat's expertise. Plans call for a mix of small and mid-size models to slake the Soviet's thirst for cars *all'italiana*.

Fiat will invest from one-half to one billion dollars (not lire!) in the venture. It is clear that the Russians hold Italian engineering in high esteem since this is the second major automobile investment by Fiat in the USSR. During the early 1970's, Fiat created the Lada automobile, which became the standard vehicle of the Soviet empire. The Lada factory outside of Moscow still produces 721,000 cars per year.

LONG TIME NO SEE

All Rome was agog as Emperor Marcus Aurelius made a triumphant return to his post at Rome's city hall. Crowds of cheering Romans hailed the conqueror of the Marcomanni (an ancient German tribe) and author of the now-famous *Meditations*.

The bronze statue of M. Aurelius had been removed for body and fender work a few years back. Now completely restored, the emperor is slated to spend his remaining days indoors at Capitoline Hill. The modern Romans may be forgiven their nostalgic enthusiasm for Italy's last "philosopher king."



Hail the conquering hero!



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.]

WORK MAKES FATIGUE

They find it difficult to put in an 8-hour day. Lunch means the tavern and home for a nap. Absenteeism is rampant and goes mostly unpunished. And some of their own kind call them lazy and unmotivated. Stereotypical?

Hardly. We're talking Germans here. East Germans to be more precise.

The truth is German reunification is going to create major culture shock when East meets West. Capitalist Germans are finding out the real tragedy of 45 years of Communist rule across the border. Beside the bankrupt state of the East German economy and the lack of democratic experience, their cousins in the East have discovered the good life at an early age. Not to worry says one of the *volk*, "... we are Germans, and by nature we are diligent, hard-working people." Nevertheless, West Germans would like nature to take its course before reunification.

FOR WHOM THE POLL TAXES

The common folk of Great Britain have had about enough of Thatcher-nomics. The iron lady touched off a street riot in London when she insisted on lowering property taxes and upping the head (poll) tax. Not only is the new tax regressive (the same dollar amount regardless of income) but the reduced property tax has eliminated many well-to-do personages including members of the Royal family from the tax roll. Let them eat Yorkshire pudding?

With a homeless population of one million, the Brits are literally up in arms. Of that number there are estimated to be 150,000 youngsters under the age of 25 living on the streets. Ironically, the

problem of the young homeless is a white anomaly. (Black youngsters, on the other hand, have evolved their own social network to deal with the economic crisis.) Rioting seems to have become a white English past-time that can be found at soccer matches or any gathering of disgruntled youth. English governments seem to have a knack for provoking violence through taxes. Tea party anyone?

IKE OR EICHMANN?

With the exception of the My Lai Massacre in Vietnam and the Andersonville Trial during the Civil War, wartime atrocities are very rarely attributed to the American fighting man. And they are almost never levelled against a major U.S. military figure. Canadian author James Bacque begs to differ. In a controversial new book called *Other Losses*,

the author, by changing the prisoners' designation from POW to DEF (Disarmed Enemy Forces). This allegedly enabled him to cut the Germans' rations to starvation levels. Some, according to the tale, died of dehydration, others were brutally beaten. The Army supposedly listed the deaths as "Other Losses".

More shocking than this Canadian revelation is the fact that arch American conservative Patrick Buchanan has been airing the accusation in the media. There has been no substantiation of the charge even from German veterans.

FLORIDA CONNECTION

In a microcosm of the United States trade imbalance, Florida's Dept. of Commerce reports that Italy is the state's 9th largest trading partner. Unfortunately, imports exceed exports by \$250 million.

\$75,000 GRAND TOUR

There's no place like home. But there are cities around the world where the cost of living makes you feel right at home.

According to Runzheimer International, a Rochester, Wisconsin, management consulting firm, Moscow is the international capital which most closely approximates U.S. cost of living for a family of four with an annual income of \$75,000. That is,

it would cost \$74,200 to maintain such a family's creature comforts. Coming in a close second is Rome with a cost of \$73,600. The Eternal City is a bargain in comparison to Stockholm which requires an annual income of \$83,800. Tokyo costs a towering \$207,200.

The Runzheimer study covered costs for housing, transportation, and



Japanese workers: pushing for a two-day weekend.

published in Canada and West Germany, Mr. Bacque points an accusatory finger at the heretofore saintly Supreme Allied Commander, Dwight D. Eisenhower. Mr. Bacque charges that General Eisenhower knowingly neglected and mistreated one million German POWs, allowing them to starve to death. Ike circumvented the Geneva conventions, says

World Notes



food and clothing.

MRS. EINSTEIN

Wouldn't you just know it. The recent release of some juicy love letters sent from scientific genius Albert Einstein to his first love Miss Mileva Maric has sent shockwaves through the male chavinist ranks. According to interpreters of the letters, young Albert shares credit for the now famous Theory of Relativity with his Serbian wife-to-be. An egghead in her own right, Mrs. Einstein forsook her career in physics to perform housewifely functions for her theorizing husband. The marriage culminated in the birth of two male children but ended in divorce. In 1901 Einstein wrote to Mileva: "*How happy and proud I will be when the two of us together will have brought our work on the relative motion (Relativity) to a victorious conclusion!*" Behind every man



Ike as the original Rambo. Is someone doing a hatchet job on him?

WORLD CUP SOCCER

June 8th marks the opening of the World Cup competition in Italy. From Udine in Northern Italy to Palermo in Sicily the Italians are pulling out all the stops in welcoming the world to the Latin homeland. At a cost of \$1.5 billion Italy has built new stadiums, improved roads, and increased public transportation for the every-four-year event. And why not? Italy is one of the odds-on favorites along with Brazil (whose team is coached by an Italo-Brazilian.)

Were the Italians to win this year they would hold the record of the century (three international victories.) Still, there is another event to behold this year. The United States will field a team for a rare try at the cup. *Forza, America!* (Go for it, America!)

DEATH BY OVERWORK

The Japanese have a word for all of life's processes. Why should working oneself to death be an exception? The word in Nippon is *karoshi*. It has become a major concern in a nation that has executives playing chicken to see who leaves the office before 9:00 PM. Japanese businessmen work hard, study hard

Americans. Perhaps not surprisingly, the Japanese nation spends more on business entertainment than on national defense!

Karoshi appears to be is contagious. One doctor who heads up a clinic for overworked executives sees up to 30 patients on some days, causing him to complain about his workload!

EMPTY-HEADED PROFESSOR

"A black is likely enough to be a criminal that blackness is a sign of danger." Thus spoke Professor Michael Levin of City College whose published papers claim that African Americans are less intelligent than Caucasians. In addition, he firmly believes that the average woman is not as intelligent as the average man. These odious views caused a furor recently as the professor kvetched at a Long Island University conference. An otherwise well-educated man, Professor Levin must be the product of one of New York's more insular and closed-minded communities. Unfortunately, his views are gaining credence among likeminded fellows. Witness the words of Nobel Prize-winning author Saul Bellow: "Who is the Tolstoy of the Zulus? The Proust of the Papuans? I'll gladly read them."



The world champion Italians 1982. Can they be champs of the century?



Editorial

THE MAFIA MUST BE DESTROYED

The Italian nation is under seige by the oldest and most relentless terrorist organizations in existence. Under the names of Camorra, Ndrangheta, and Mafia these criminal cells have drained the lifeblood out of southern Italy for at least a thousand years. By most expert accounts the ancestors of these terrorists were of non Italic stock, the flotsam of slave and Berber inhabitants. Whatever their origin they have through assimilation become Italians feeding off their own industrious neighbors.

With the advent of a borderless Europe, Italy is being torn apart psychologically by this terrorist control of much of the economy and politics of southern Italy. Some Northerners have been quite vocal in their quest to deny the South financial aid and investment from the North. Moreover, Italy's neighbors in Europe fear the consequences of opening borders and investment markets to infiltration by Italian terrorists.

Only extreme measures can defeat terrorism. The Red Brigades of the 1970's met their end at the hands of an aroused Italian nation. Mussolini, whatever his faults, demonstrated that the Mafia could be decimated overnight. The Italians must coldly decide the cost/benefit of the destruction of this age-old menace and act immediately.

BLOWING ONE'S OWN HORN

Why do Italians and Italian-Americans refuse to come to grips with reality? The reality of remaking their public image, that is. It's not that they lack spirit or creativity, for when it comes to media they are far and away some of the greatest ad men and promoters in the world. What they refuse to do is spend the time and money to promote themselves.

The recent aerospace exhibit held during the month of April at the Intrepid floating museum off Manhattan was a case in point. Italy's foremost aerospace companies spent some petty cash in displaying photos and models of their products to the moms and pops of America who made the trek over to 12th Avenue and 46th Street. What exactly the Italians hoped to gain in the way of new sales and p.r. isn't clear to us.

While German carmakers talk up "German engineering" and the Japanese impress the hell out of us on national American television, the Italians push wine and prosciutto. Any wonder most Americans see the Italians as only vintners and purveyors of food? Does the American public know that Italy manufactures many of our banking computers or vital components for our commercial air fleet? "Italian precision" sounds like a contradiction in terms to most Americans only because Italian industry thinks it can buy image on the cheap.

The fifth industrial power of the world needs to come out of the closet.

The Italic Way™

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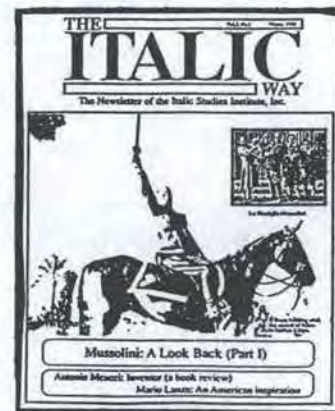
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The Italic Way
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Forum of the People



A Letter of Indignation

Gentlemen:

I have read with great interest and satisfaction your many accounts of Italian contributions to civilization in general and to our country in particular.

Your last issue (**Mussolini: A Look Back**), however, contains statements which I find very offensive:

On p. 13: "The Papacy, the bane of Italian secular life for over four centuries. . ."

On p. 26: "The monarchy and the Papacy. . . also acquiesced in Il Duce's more nefarious decisions."

A brief look at history easily refutes these charges.

1) The Papacy has always stood for the best in all cultures including that of Italy. Recent centuries span the generous papal patronage of the arts during the Renaissance to the substantial aid given by Pius XII to Italian Jews during World War II. This help so impressed Dr. Israel Zolli, then Chief Rabbi of Rome, that he and twenty-four leading Jewish families of Rome converted to Catholicism.

2) In 1931 Pius XI reaffirmed the rights of working people against rampant economic abuses, rights which had been strongly defended by Leo XIII against similar abuses, in his letter of 1891, *Rerum Novarum*. In the 1930's Pius XI also decried the evils of fascism in his encyclical letter, *Non Abbiamo Bisogno*. How could he or Pius then "acquiesce in the more nefarious decisions of Il Duce"?

"... I deplore the anti-Catholic tone of your magazine..."

In our times the popes have constantly worked for peace and have defended the rights of the helpless and the innocent. Unfortunately the papal pleas for peace on the eve of World War I and more recently for the release of the kidnapped Aldo Moro fell on deaf ears because their hearers shared what appears to be your assessment of the Papacy. In short, the charges that papal influence has impacted negatively on Italian life and that the popes compromised with fascism are utterly baseless. They appear to be merely holdovers from the old 19th century anti-clericalism.

The popes and all true Christians uphold the necessary spiritual basis for civilization by opposing the degrading aberrations of modern secularism. Many of the latter are not new but existed in ancient Rome. Just as Christianity transformed the mighty Roman Empire, so will it conquer the nascent paganism and the militant atheism of the 20th century. Forty-five years ago Joseph Stalin, head of the communist empire, sneered at the pope. Today his successor, Mikhail Gorbachev, seeing the general collapse of communism, respectfully visits the pope and calls him "the highest spiritual authority in the world." This is only the beginning!

I am very proud of my Christian and Italian heritage, and as a professional musician (and frequent traveler to many parts of Italy during the past twenty years) I am especially aware of Italy's priceless contribution to the world of music and to the arts in general, most of which comes from the spiritual values that are centered in Rome and the Vatican.

I applaud your efforts to publicize the best of this great heritage, but I deplore the anti-Catholic tone of your magazine. I will not support any organization that has this attitude, and I must regretfully cancel my membership.

Louis V. Pisciotta, Ph.D.

(Ed. The Pope is both a head of state (Vatican City) and a spiritual leader. Assessing his role in history as a head of state, good or bad, should not be considered pro- or anti-Catholic. It is tantamount to calling critics of the Israeli government anti-Semites.)



REVIEW

Octopus: The Long Reach of the International Sicilian Mafia

by Claire Sterling

Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of Sicilians? Claire Sterling knows.

Now that Winston Churchill's Iron Curtain is no more and the Red menace has receded, a new international bogeyman is needed. But who's left? The Medellin drug cartel is just so much Hispanic machismo. Abu Nidal, the PLO and Yasser Arafat are old hat. And the Yakuza lacks a certain yin and yang. After all, everyone knows the Japanese are a studious, non-violent people. Thankfully, investigative reporter Claire Sterling has written a book that puts it all in perspective. Yes, Virginia, there are still villains, and they are all Sicilian.

In ponderous *Reader's Digest* prose, Ms. Sterling warns us that *Sicilia delenda est* (Sicily must be destroyed). According to the author, this large Italian island is the locus of all evil on the planet Earth. The land that spawned Cannizzaro, the father of chemistry, and Capra, the classic American filmmaker, has mutated into a gargantuan octopus with a worldwide criminal reach. According to Claire Sterling, Sicily is the linchpin in the global dissemination of heroin and cocaine. Indeed, the nefarious Sicilians are now encroaching on the pristine Western Hemisphere. Since the 1960's, a veritable army of surreptitious Sicilians, at the express order of Palermo's high command has infiltrated Montreal, Caracas, Sao Paulo, Mexico City, New York and Chicago. For the conspiracy prone Sterling, Sicilian crime is a many tentacled thing. (Sterling's last book tried to prove that the assassination attempt on Pope John

Paul II was orchestrated by the KGB.

That the Italians are waging an all out war against crime in recent years is well documented. Even Ms. Sterling commends Italy's judicial system for its successes in prosecuting the denizens of the underworld. The Italian carabinieri are also lauded for their valiant efforts in this cause. However, the author paints an



Sicilian "supermen" such as Michele ("the Pope") Greco (seen here in his cage) control Asian, European, North & South American, and probably Antarctic drug supplies, according to author Sterling.

otherwise bleak portrait of Italy's anti-crime campaign in toto. She mocks the 1986 Palermo trial as ineffectual. Despite the fact that the jury had convicted 342 of the 474 defendants, only 60 were still in custody by 1989. In addition, a spate of new killings occurred in Palermo in the aftermath of the trial. What's more, an appellate court dismissed a lower court's findings that the mythical Mafia had a "unitary and vertical structure."

By engaging in Hollywood-style hyperbole (Ms. Sterling often refers to criminal ring leaders as godfathers and their clan as the LCN *La Cosa Nostra*), the author adopts that curiously patronizing tone that characterizes weaker-minded American expatriates in Italy.

She fails to recognize that the Italian state is engaged in a monumental struggle against its most insidious terrorist group. And just as in the case of the Red Brigades, there have been setbacks. Grave setbacks. But to imply that Italians, in general, and Sicilians, in particular, are the sole source of evil in the world smacks of latent Italophobia, if not outright bigotry. Not to mention absurdity.

When the head of the West German Central Bank — and a leading proponent of European integration — was

literally blown up in broad daylight by the Bader-Meinhoff gang, no one called the Germans barbarians. When the Socialist Party candidate for the Chancellorship of the Federal Republic was stabbed in the neck by a fellow countryman, *New York Times* reporter Serge Schmemmann concurred with the Germans that "it was the sort of isolated attack by a deranged person." What, no Nazi conspiracy? When Margaret Thatcher's England is beset by riots and hooliganism, no one suggests that England is a savage no-man's land. But here is courageous Claire Sterling writing about

Sicily as if it were the nerve center of a new evil empire, replete with weaponry that would make Darth Vader proud. Gee, and all along, Sicily purported to be nothing more than an arid island populated by illiterate shepherds.

Not long ago, Wilfrid Sheed, an essayist of the first rank, recounted an incident originally reported by Nicholas Gage. It concerned a group of "suspicious" Italian carpenters who were detained by the bobbies at London's Heathrow Airport while mobster Meir Lansky slipped into the Sceptered Isle to set up a huge gambling empire. Claire Sterling's magnum opus is simply the unabridged version of that sad tale of misplaced priorities. - RAI



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Focus

Italian Jews: Ancient Compatriots

What do Camillo Olivetti, the founder of a global telecommunications giant, abstract painter Amedeo Modigliani, Levi-Montalcini, the Noble prize winning economist, Emilio Segrè the atomic scientist, and author Primo Levi have in common? They are but a few of the geniuses that call themselves Jews as well as Italians. Numbering only in the tens of thousands, the Jews of Italy have labored alongside other Italians since the days of the Caesars.

Unlike most nations, Italy has been a haven for the sons and daughters of David. Though retaining its religious distinctiveness, the entire Jewish population has fully assimilated into the dominant culture of the peninsula. Maybe that is why the notion of an "Italian Jew" seems so oxymoronic to many, including Italian-Americans and even some Jews. In dress, in name, in daily routine, the Jews of Italy have followed the *shevil ha-zahav* or the golden path (the path of moderation) in their lives among the Christians of Italy. There exists in both peoples a commonality in temperament and tolerance, not to mention physical attributes. And, although there have been times of conflict, the Jews have had a deep sense of belonging in this Christian homeland. This may be so because few places in the world have protected and nurtured a Jewish community as has Italy. Having survived Mussolini's policies of the late 1930's and rebounded after the German holocaust, today's Italian Jews remain steadfastly true to the tricolor, contributing to the economic, literary, artistic, and scientific boom that is modern Italy.

Much like Italic people in America, the Jews of Italy have existed in a dual state of assimilation and ethnic enclaves. Our word *ghetto* is actually derived from the description of an island of Venice. The word *getto*, meaning "foundry", referred to an island used for ironwork and populated by Jews in medieval times. Today, Jewish "ghettos" can still be found in Ferrara, Turin, Padua, Florence, Venice, Bologna, and of course the oldest settlement, Rome. In recent years, archaeologists have uncovered the site of an even older Jewish com-

munity at Bovalino in the region of Calabria. Within the shadow of Christendom's ancient throne, Vatican City, the Jewish ghetto of Rome has been in continuous existence for over 2,000 years. In perhaps one of the most overdue events in history, Paul John Paul II only recently paid the first official visit by a Pope to the synagogue of Rome. It was an act that finally dispelled the presumed antipathy between two of the world's great religions.

Despite appearances, Italo-Jewish relations have not been wholly amicable. It was Roman Italy, after all, that decreed the *diaspora*, the great dispersion of the Jews from Judea. It was Italian legionnaires under the Emperors Vespasian and Hadrian who razed the great temple at Jerusalem. Today, the Arch of Titus (Vespasian's son) stands before the Roman Forum with pictorial proof of the sack of Herod's great temple in the year 79 A.D. Carved within its stone arch is a vivid representation of Roman soldiery carrying the great candelabra in triumph through the streets of ancient Rome.

Despite the hatred many Jewish Zealots felt toward the ancient Italians as defilers of their religion and occupiers of their homeland, moderate Jews in communities around the Mediterranean and in Italy



The legions of Italy parade the spoils of Herod's Temple through the streets of Rome 79 A.D. The Diaspora begins.

learned to coexist in the Roman world. Julius Caesar and Augustus both counted the Jews as allies and supporters. St. Paul of Tarsus, a prime mover in the establishment of Christianity was born Saul, a Jew but also a Roman citizen. It was this latter privilege that allowed him to freely travel the Roman Empire proselytizing the new church. Like other ethnic groups, Jews could achieve Roman citizenship, with all its legal rights, but unlike others in the Empire religious Jews were exempt from military service in deference to their sabbath requirements. Often, Jews looked to Rome to defend them from the Greek communities of the eastern Mediterranean. One such case occurred in Alexandria, Egypt, during the reign of Claudius (41 - 54 A.D.) when troops had to be sent in to protect Jews and their property from the wrath of their Greek neighbors.

The fall of Rome and the Islamic conquests of North Africa

Focus



gave Jews the opportunity to act as intermediaries between a benighted Europe and the flowering Arab world. As translators, scholars, and merchants, Jews played a role in reintroducing lost Greco-Roman knowledge by way of Arab literature to Italy and Spain. Jewish physicians worked with Italians and Arabs at the first medical school in Europe, at Salerno, in the 9th Century. Jewish weavers immigrated to Sicily during these middle years to help establish Italy's budding silk industry. In later centuries, they, like their co-religionists on the Iberian peninsula, were to be expelled by the Spanish conquerors to the more hospitable climes of Northern Italy. One theory holds that Christopher Columbus was descended from such a displaced family. (See our sidebar article.)

Perhaps because of the influx of foreign Jews and their increasing economic power, a distinct turn for the worse took place in the Catholic city-states of Italy. At the time, Christians were prohibited from engaging in usury, i.e., charging interest. The Jews had no such restrictions. Under Pope Paul IV (1476 - 1559) ghetto-ization began in earnest. Still, despite the enmity of the Church fathers, Jews accepted the secular culture of the Renaissance. At times, even putting aside their orthodox prohibition against graven images Italian Jews too became masters of various artforms including illuminated manuscripts, bronze coinage, silver and bronze casting, and violin making. Hebrew printing in Italy was begun in 1470 shortly after the Gutenberg press was developed. In fact, it was Italian Jews who first carried Hebrew printing into Northern Europe in 1512.



The early leaders of the Israeli Navy were trained in Fascist Italy

Politically, it took the invasion of Napoleon Bonaparte (himself Italic) and the ideals of the French revolution in the 18th Century to open the ghettos and give a measure of power to Italian Jews. Thereafter, the *Risorgimento* reintegrated Jews into the Italian mainstream. The reunification of Italy in 1870 was the catalyst for further assimilation. Some of Garibaldi's troops were Jews, as was the secretary to Count Camillo Cavour, strategist of the reunification.

The Twentieth Century was marked by great upward mobility of Italian Jews. At approximately the same time that France disgraced itself in the Dreyfuss Affair (a Jewish army captain was framed for treason as a result of anti-semitism) General Giuseppe Ottolenghi, a Jew, was appointed Minister of War (1902) in Italy. In 1910, another Jew, Luigi Luzzatti, became Italy's Prime Minister. Even during the early

years of the Fascist regime, a number of Jews reached positions of prominence. Aldo Finzi was a member of the party and became Undersecretary of the Interior Ministry. In 1932 Carlo Jung was named to the Ministry of Finance.

A little-known fact is that many of the Italian Jewish naval officers trained during the Mussolini era went on to be the nucleus of the Israeli Navy. This is indeed ironic since the long-range Fascist goals for the Middle East were to drive out the British using Arab nationalism. Little did anyone guess that Italian Jews would add a surprising twist to the future of the Holy Land.

It is unclear what caused Mussolini to reverse his tolerant feelings toward the Jews of Italy. Perhaps it was at the urging of Hitler or perhaps as an expanded response to the fear of

(Continued on p. 25)



Vito D'Ancona *Nudo* (1873): A passionate Jew with a Latin style



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REVIEW



Intrepid Museum New York City

The Italian Aerospace Exhibit

On the flight deck of the World War II-vintage aircraft carrier Intrepid the visitor finds a Macchi (*mah-key*) jet trainer used by the world famous *Frecce Tricolori* (Tricolor Arrows) the Italian Air Force's daring acrobatic team. Below decks the visitor enters into a world he is unaccustomed to seeing -- the world of Italian science and technology.

Although a fairly dry exhibit containing mostly models and posters, for 45 minutes I was transported from the media-hyped world ashore that portrays an Italy of Mafia, siestas, pizza, and love to one of impressive technological sophistication. One wonders how many others present that day realized that the Italian nation is the fifth-ranked industrial power in the world, exceeding even Britain. Today's Italy is a far cry from the media representations.

The Italian aerospace industry is a \$5 billion business having joint ventures with the United States, Great Britain, France, China, West Germany, Holland, Spain and Brazil. It represents space exploration, jet fighters, corporate jets, and commercial aircraft.

And lest we imagine that all this takes place in the North of Italy, we found that Aeritalia, the major force in Italian aviation, is headquartered in Naples. That city is also the site for the space research arm of Aeritalia.

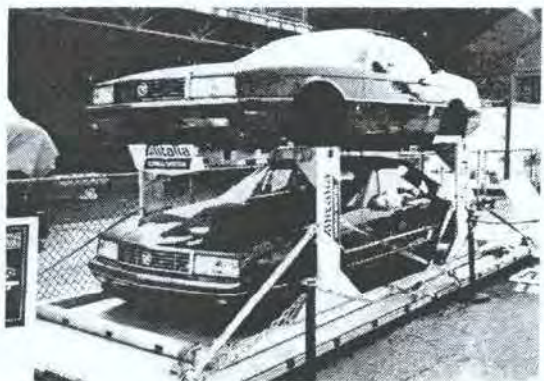
Not surprisingly, a major gap existed in the historical portion of the exhibit. Although it began with Leonardo da Vinci and passed through the 20th Century, World War II Italian aviation was curiously missing. It was understandable in light of the fact that the exhibit was held on a Second World War carrier and Italy, after all, was an enemy at the time. (See our Summer, 1989 issue for coverage of that era.)

How effective the month-long exhibit was in reaching potential customers is anyone's guess. Practically speaking, unless corporate America frequents museums it is doubtful that the show will produce any significant marketing benefits. However, at least someone in Italy is thinking about positive image.

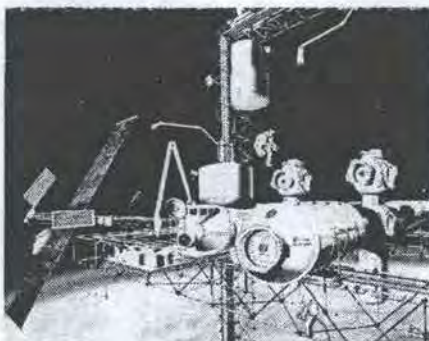
-J. Mancini



Model of the Italian aircraft carrier G. Garibaldi



Alitalia's method of flying Cadillac Allante auto bodies to GM's Detroit factory. 55 cars per load.



Rendering of the Columbus Space Lab. European space program.



Italy's F-104, one of the world's fastest fighter planes



Perspectives

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

Mussolini: A Look Back

Part II by John Mancini and Rosario A. Iaconis

The year 1935 was a pivotal one in the life of Benito Mussolini and Italy. In the eleven years of his limited dictatorship the journalist-turned-Fascist had resolved many a perplexing problem. Vatican City was founded in 1929 as a direct result of his resolution of the church vs. state question. The Sicilian Mafia was nearly annihilated. Land reclamation and public works projects brought to impoverished areas of the south new jobs and homes. Illiteracy was dropping and Italians of every region were learning to speak and act as one nation. Moreover, the Fascist dictatorship marshalled Italy's scarce resources through national holding companies and introduced a new concept of centralized labor relations called the corporate state. A program of industrialization and im-

age-building both at home and abroad had transformed Italy into a major force among the world powers.

The rise of Hitler in the early 1930's alerted Mussolini to the need for European collective security. However, events in 1934 and 1935 demonstrated to *Il Duce* that England and France were more afraid of Italy than Germany. British duplicity in signing a separate naval treaty with Nazi Germany and the Allies' failure to join Italy in stopping Hitler's attempted takeover of Austria had a profound effect on Mussolini's view of the democracies and the concept of collective security.



Il Duce at the front in Africa 1942

Empire Building

In 1935, Mussolini turned from domestic to foreign affairs. His dream of reestablishing the ancient



Mussolini rides thru the streets of Berlin before the war.

Italo-Roman Empire was soon to be his undoing. It was in the name of empire and to avenge an Italian colonial defeat 40 years earlier that the dictator launched his attack on Abyssinia (Ethiopia.)

In nine months that primitive African nation capitulated to Italian tanks, planes and poison gas. However, during the uneven war France and Britain, brutal imperialists themselves, further soured their relations with Italy by par-

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ticipating in economic sanctions against their old ally. Hitler took note of the split among his enemies and cultivated a new friendship with the Italian leader.

Common Cause

The new friendship was deepened with the coming of the Spanish Civil War in 1936. Here, in a prelude to the Second World War, the German and Italian military fought on the side of General Franco's Falangist troops against the combined forces of the Spanish Republicans aided by Soviet Russia and Western volunteers. Although Franco was victorious after three years, the Italians never fully recovered from their participation. Mussolini should have read the warning signs. During that war, in 1937 at the Battle of Guadalajara, Italian troops were defeated by Republican forces. The Italian "volunteers" were demoralized by anti-fascist Italians among the Republi-

can troops. Mussolini's soldiers were not well motivated and their anti-fascist brethren knew how to exploit that weakness. But later victories put the memory of Guadalajara aside. Il Duce thought his Italy invincible.



Young Fascists manning a gun at El Gubi, North Africa. Despite mass surrenders early in the war Italians made up the bulk of the Axis forces under Rommel through 1943.

Plans for War

There was no question in Mussolini's mind that there was going to be another

European war. The democracies were rotting from within and lacked the will and power to fend off the new order (Fascism.) With various forms of fascist governments in Germany, Italy, Spain, and Portugal, as well as fascist movements in France and Britain, Il Duce did not see much of a future for the old regimes. The USSR, of course, was the arch-enemy but Italy embarked on a curious policy later adopted by the great powers after World War II: peaceful coexistence. Against the wishes of Great Britain, Italy had agreed to allow the Soviets into the League of Nations, a body that predated the United Nations. Mussolini wanted his enemies where he could see them, including the Communists.

All indicators pointed to the year 1942 as the earliest start date for the
(Continued on p. 18)



Perspectives

Mussolini (continued from p. 17)

European war, according to Italian estimates. By that time, the democracies would be thoroughly infiltrated and his own war machine would be modernized and ready to roll. However, not everyone was on *Il Duce's* timetable.

Although the Spanish Civil War and a series of treaties had created the Axis (Italy, Germany and Japan) Mussolini's obligations to *der Fuehrer* were purely defensive. When in 1938 Hitler brought Europe to the brink of war in Czechoslovakia, it was Mussolini who pulled all the strings to set up the Munich Conference — the sell-out of the Czechs by the Allies. Then again in 1939 when Hitler crossed the Polish border and initiated the Second World War Fascist Italy was not ready or willing to go to war. Surprisingly, while all Europe marched to the sound of the guns it was bellicose Italy and its jittery leader that remained sane and neutral.

The Road to War

Why did Mussolini take the final plunge that sealed his doom? In truth, the Fascist dictator was an intuitive man. The facts told him that Italy was totally unprepared for war. Her industry lacked even the most rudimentary raw materials: iron, coal, gas, oil. His military still needed two years to achieve any kind of strength and to recover from his imperialist adventures. His people disdained Germany and



Elements of the Italian 8th Army in winter retreat, Russia, 1943

could not rationalize a war against old allies and even fellow Latins (France). But one must recreate the harrowing days of *blitzkrieg* (lightning war.) In the space of four weeks Germany had wiped out Poland and signed a non-aggression pact with their political nemesis, the Soviets. Over the next nine months German troops had overrun Belgium, Holland, and Denmark, defeated the British and French in Norway, and finally, brought the largest army in Europe, the French, to its knees, chasing the British off the continent. In this unparalleled environment Mussolini felt he was merely witnessing history instead of making it. The thought of jumping in at a time when German victory was clearly in sight proved too much for *Il Duce* as well as his military and King Victor Emanuele. No amount of whitewashing will exonerate the military and the House of Savoy from sharing the responsibility for Italy's entry into World War II on the side of Nazi Germany. Everyone wanted a quick and easy piece of the action. The only fear that pervaded the seats of

power was that the war would be over before Italy could fight a battle. It was to be a groundless fear.

What Went Wrong?

June 10th. On the ancient Roman calendar it was an evil day, one in which no business was to be transacted or actions taken. In 1940 it was the day Italy declared war on Britain and France. Still two years away from adequate preparation Italy threw its fortunes on the side of a traditional enemy — Germany. After all, it had been Germanic tribes that broke down the Roman Empire. It had been the German Martin Luther who opened the floodgates of the Roman Church. It was Germanic Austria that destroyed 600,000 Italian lives in the First World War. Nevertheless, the brutal friendship between dictators and the greed of empire willed that Italy should take such an action.

The test of battle found Italy wanting. Notwithstanding British wartime propaganda that painted Mussolini's armed forces as waiters and opera singers parading as soldiers, the Italian military miraculously lasted three

(Continued on p.23)



Duce and Fuehrer confer, 1940

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Il Ristorante Lattanzi
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Owner Vittorio (left) and editor Rosario discussing the finer points of Jerusalem artichokes

Among the lands in which Jews settled during ancient times Italy was a favored place. And of all places in Italy Rome, *caput mundi* ("head of the world"), was the main attraction. For two thousand years a Jewish community has existed in Rome. So continuous has been their stay that

today's traditional Roman cuisine is partly attributable to them. Imagine. Julius Caesar, Cicero, and all the great leaders of Rome may have partook of Jewish delights *alla Romana*. With such visions did the staff of *The Italic Way* find itself in *il Ristorante Lattanzi*, one of a select few eateries in America that cultivate Jewish-Italian cuisine. (Special thanks go to Mr. Harold Feld of our Plenary Council for researching and locating Lattanzi.)

What was originally planned as a mild mid-day meal became a veritable culinary feast. From the friendly ministrations of Marlene, who greeted us at the door, to the ebullience of Alessandro, our waiter, the service was exemplary. After a brief but instructive perusal of the menu with the ever-attentive Alessandro, we chose from the Italo-Hebraic selections. Before the first course could be served, however, the staff succumbed to Lattanzi's garlic and olive oil matzos. The first course, an intoxicating antipasto of *Carciofi alla Judea* soon followed, featuring two whole baby artichokes that had been sauteed to perfection in abundant olive oil and garlic. (These ingredients are as prominent in the Italo-Hebraic kitchen as they are in the *Mezzogiorno* and Rome.) Totally edible, these vegetables of Middle Eastern origin were good to the last

... today's traditional Roman cuisine is partly attributable to the Jews of Rome.

leaf. Next came the exquisitely prepared *Zuppa di Broccoli*. Chicken soup was never like this. A combination of short spaghetti and broccoli flowerettes in a hearty stock speckled with tomato chunks was a meal in itself. By the time the *Agnellotti con Rosmarino* arrived, our palates had attained a state of gustatory Nirvana. Each juicy lamb chop was adorned with rosemary sprigs that added a distinctive herbal accent to the tender-as-butter baby chops. Sliced potato and slivered vegetables complimented the meat.

As we savored these delectable morsels, Vittorio Lattanzi, the impresario of the impeccable bistro, joined us.

A mechanical engineer by profession, Signor Lattanzi hails from the Eternal City. Unlike the run-of-the-mill restaurateur, he is both genial and cosmopolitan. Our discussions ranged from the recent Italian administrative elections to the fragrant aromas emanating from his grandmother's *cucina*. Somewhat shocking, the urbane Mr. Lattanzi is not Jewish. If that weren't enough, there are five Lattanzi-owned Jewish-Italian restaurants just in Manhattan. Each restaurant is owned by a different member of the Lattanzi family. One brother was even inspired to make his *glatt kosher!*

It turns out that many of the dishes of Mr. Lattanzi's youth were staples of both the Roman and Jewish kitchens, so close are the two cultures. Both cuisines stress vegetables and olive oil and have a predilection for *casalinga*, or homestyle, cooking. Under the supervision of Mr. Lattanzi's mother the menus of all the Lattanzi restaurants have been refined to present the best of this ancient cuisine. "Try it, you'll like it," as we say in New York. Other appealing items on Lattanzi's menu were: *Orata con uvetta* (red snapper with raisins) and *Sogliola con indiva* (Sole with endive).

After our triumphant repast, we bid our host *Shalom* and vowed to return again. We never did have room for dessert.

- Rosario A. Iaconis



Media Madness

[In which we present media material with commentary]

Wicked ITALIAN
FOR THE TRAVELER

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- The Taxi Driver: How to Plead, How to Threaten..... p. 10
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- Cursing a Person's Family for Generations to Come... p. 24
- Meaningful Things to Say About Olive Oil..... p. 36

(CONTINUED ON BACK COVER)



BY HOWARD TOMB

"Il sole siciliano le ha cotto il cervello."
The Sicilian sun has cooked your brain.



"The stupidity of carabinieri, the Italian military police, is so legendary that a garden slug would be embarrassed to join their ranks."

"No one knows how the military finds replacement for the hundreds of officers who annually shoot themselves with pistols they thought weren't loaded, set their pants on fire, and drive off cliffs in broad daylight."

Wicked Italian For the Traveler, by Howard Tomb (A humor book published by Workman Publishing Company)

Comment: It's reassuring to find that American humor is still alive and well. This jokester's tome will go alongside other lighthearted guidebooks such as *How to be Italian: It's all in the Hands*, and *Italian War Heroes: The Thinnest Book in the World*. Mr. Tomb (is that a cryptic nom de plume?) was assisted by an Italian-American family, of course, one of whom lent her name to an ode to Saint Ilaria, the "only virgin of Naples." Hey, it's free enterprise!

"But these and other recent films — . . . *I Love You to Death* (in which Kevin Kline hilariously satirizes the machismo of a lady-killing Italian husband) — manage to use ethnic and racial stereotypes in ways that are genuinely useful." (our italics)

Janet Maslin in *The New York Times Arts & Leisure Section*, May 6, 1990

Comment: Useful? Ethnic slurs can come true. They can happen to you, if you're smug at heart. For as sick as you are, it's much better by far to be smug at heart. And if you should survive and possibly thrive, look at all you derive out of sidestepping your pride. And here is the best swipe. You've revived a stereotype. If you are among the very smug at heart.

(Sung to the tune of *Young At Heart*)



"I didn't think Italians were any different than anyone else, I thought everybody had purple furniture." "When I was born, they named an island after me ... New Guinea."

"Comedian" Dick Capri in a performance at Ford's Theater in Washington, D.C. President George Bush was in attendance.

Comment: Another assassination at Ford's Theater! Italian-American pride runs deep especially if there's a dollar in it. President Bush obviously enjoyed the routine or else fell asleep during it. No presidential objections were noted. The show will be broadcast on TBS July 4th so the rest of America can share the gaiety.



Mussolini (continued from p.18)

years in this struggle of titans. Fielding armies in Africa, Greece, the Balkans, France, and Russia the Italians suffered from low morale, antiquated equipment, German treachery, and every element of nature. The Fascist government had spent most of its military budget on the navy and air force. Consequently, these two branches were the most effective during the war. Although lacking radar and suffering from poor coordination with air coverage, the Italian Navy gave the Royal Navy as good as it got. At one point, with the sinking of a British battleship group in Alexandria Harbor in Egypt in 1941, the Italians gained naval superiority in the Mediterranean for a short while.

In the air, the Italian Air Force was plagued by limited factory production yet it managed to send aloft some of the finest aircraft of the war, including the Macchi 202.

It was the army that lacked the wherewithal to sustain combat. Artillery was of First World War vintage, mainly captured from the Austrians. Tanks were small and too lightly armored. Transport, especially trucks and half-tracks for desert war, were in miserably short supply. Many of the thousands of Italian troops who surrendered in the desert war were forced to because they had no means of retreat. The Army general staff under Marshal Pietro Badoglio was as antiquated as the equipment. Mussolini's Fascists had very little say in the King's army. Inadequate staff planning, little imagination, and generally poor leadership left the soldier in the field with little hope of winning any victories. Yet, these soldiers were sent to do battle with the well-equipped British and Commonwealth troops in Africa, to the mountains of Greece without adequate numerical superiority, and to the frozen wastes of Russia where they witnessed first-hand the brutality of their German allies. For three years they fought and died, nearly 200,000 of them, for Fascist Italy.



The bitter end Milan, April 29, 1945.
(l. to r.) Starace, Mussolini,
Petacci (Duce's mistress)

Downfall

By 1943 Mussolini's gamble had failed. Italy had been bombed, starved, and broken by a pointless war. The invasion of Sicily was the final straw. Mussolini's fall came not from a popular uprising or from a military coup, not even from a reassertive king. Rather, it was the Fascist Grand Council led, in part, by his own son-in-law that voted *Il Duce* out of office. The Council members were never



Marshal Pietro Badoglio. Former Army chief of staff and successor to Mussolini. His part in Italy's tragedy may someday dwarf Mussolini's.

unanimously in favor of the Axis alliance or Italy's entry into the war. Mussolini's overthrow by the Fascists was followed by his arrest by the king's officers. Fascist Italy was no more.

With *Il Duce* out of the picture, Italy was at Germany's mercy. Only Mussolini had stood between an independent Italy and a German occupation. With his downfall, King Victor Emanuele and Marshal Badoglio scrapped the German alliance and made Italy join the Allies as a co-belligent. This act brought down 18 German divisions to occupy the prostrate Italy. Badoglio's old incompetence continued to plague Italy when he failed to give clear orders to the Italian armed forces. Worse, he failed to fortify the Alpine Pass, Italy's traditional defense against Teutonic invaders. Without clear leadership the military literally melted away. There were mass desertions and in some cases Nazi troops wreaked vengeance on the "traitorous" Italian soldiers. Why Badoglio was never made responsible for the rape of Italy that followed is a question for future historians.

Mussolini, at first imprisoned then rescued at Hitler's order, set up a new regime in northern Italy called the Republic of Salo'. Mainly concerned with fending off partisans and trying to prevent a Nazi claim to Italy's partly German-speaking northern region of *Alto Adige*, the new government collapsed with the Allied advances up the Italian boot.

Mussolini's end came just two days before that of Adolph Hitler. Unlike Hitler, Mussolini was meted out the judgement of his own people. Trying to escape in disguise to Switzerland the Fascist dictator was arrested by Communist partisans and shot along with his mistress. (Hitler committed suicide two days later.) The bodies were dumped in a piazza in Milan and abused by a war-weary mob. Strung up by his ankles for all the world to see, Benito Mussolini was called to account by his own

(Continued on p. 28)



News of the Institute

Plenary Council

Election Results

Re-elected:

John Mancini - President
George Ricci - Treasurer
Robert De Siena - Financial Secretary

Newly Elected:

Albert Crecca - Vice President
Carl Borsari - Secretary

Executive Council (Albert Crecca, Vice President)

- The Plenary Council directory has been printed and sent out. Plans are to revise the directory semi-annually.
- The **Kill an Italian** campaign had generated an interview with New York City's Channel 5 News reporter Steve Powers. However, the broadcast of the interview with President John Mancini was cancelled at the last minute by the station because it did not fit Mr. Powers "new" reporting format. A letter was sent to the station protesting the cancellation in light of the fact that Channel 5 had recently spent an inordinate amount of time covering the John Gotti, Jr. wedding and thereby continues to perpetuate the negative Italian stereotype. A copy of the protest letter was sent to the FCC (Federal Communication Commission)
- A letter from William Fugazy (Coalition of Italian-American Associations) congratulating the Institute on the **Kill an Italian** ad in *Variety* was read to the Council. (A reprint can be found in the **Letters** section.)
- Plans were announced to explore the possibility of establishing Plenary Councils in other American cities. *The Italic Way* will be sent to various business leaders in major cities with a cover letter.
- A list of corporate leaders of Italian descent in the Metro area will be mailed to all Council members to determine if contacts are available for Project Italia fundraising.
- At the recommendation of the Board of Governors the Plenary Council discussed an increase in the membership fees. A mail-out ballot will request increases in general membership to \$15 and Plenary Council dues to \$75.

Please note that all Plenary Council meetings will be held on the first Thursday of every month at Two Penn Plaza, 27th Floor, 5 P.M., unless otherwise noted.

Thursday, May 3, 1990	Thursday, October 4, 1990
Thursday, June 7, 1990	Thursday, November 1, 1990
July/August - Summer Break	Thursday, December 6, 1990
Thursday, September 6, 1990	Thursday, January 3, 1991

Dinner Dance (Carl Borsari, Chairman)

- Income from Journal sales is double that of last year. This is attributable to a price increase as well as an increase in Plenary Council membership.
- The raffle fund was successfully raised by Vincent Pizzulli in record time. This fund provides the door prizes at the dinner. Included this year are a trip to Italy, a cruise, and a "night on the town."

Institute Programs

Aurora Youth (John Mancini)

- The winter class at Cellini Lodge (Sons of Italy) on Long Island was completed in March. The next class will be formed in October. The 1990-91 budget will provide for mass production of the Aurora teaching materials and training tools for teachers. Discussions with various groups such as the Sons of Italy will be undertaken to expand the program in the Metro area.

Project Italia (Frank Vitale)

- We have postponed until September the application to the National Endowment for the documentary film. We are currently forming a select committee of scholars to add the necessary credentials to the application.

(Continued, bottom of next page)



The Jews of Italy (Continued from p. 13)



The cover of *The Defense of the Race*. This Fascist racist magazine pinpointed Jews and Blacks as enemies of Italian civilization.

race-mixing in newly conquered Ethiopia. In any event, the Fascist racial laws were promulgated in 1937-38. While by no means the equal of those in Germany and Austria, they nevertheless separated Jews from Gentiles in civil rights and proclaimed the racial inferiority of Italian Jews. Jews were forbidden to teach, hold public office or intermarry with Aryans (i.e. Italian gentiles). Italy's 47,000 Jews suddenly found themselves official outcasts. It should be noted that little if any objection came from the Vatican, the king or the cultural community. Fortunately, the general population ignored the new laws and Italian Jews were spared the fate of their cousins across the Alps. Nevertheless, the trauma was enough to cause 6,000 Jews to flee the country. Nuclear physicist Enrico Fermi, who was a Roman Catholic, abandoned his homeland with his Jewish wife. Only with the advent of the German occupation of Italy in 1943 were Italian Jews to be subjected to exportation to death camps. Even then, Italian gentiles were able to hinder the German machine and save 85% of the Jews. Four-fifths survived. This was the highest survival rate of any country in Europe except Denmark.

Also during the war years, 1940-1943, Italian occupation

forces in south France, Greece, and Yugoslavia displayed exemplary humanitarianism in saving Jews of those nations from local and German anti-semites. While the collaborationist French betrayed their Jewish brethren to the Teutonic horde, the Italian occupiers stood firm against the Germans. Although ostensibly allies of the barbaric Germans, members of the Italian armed forces, diplomatic corps, and even some Fascists resisted Nazi pressures to turn over Jews for extermination. Tens of thousands of non-Italian Jews were rescued by these Italians. This human decency by an entire bureaucracy (even with Mussolini's blessing in one case) has been generally overlooked by the world.

Today, the Jewish community of Italy retains the dark memories of the Fascist past. Yet, as before, they remain very much a part of the lifeforce of Italy.

Columbus: Was He Jewish?



Christopher Columbus is known the world over as the quintessential Italian. But that hasn't prevented others from taking credit. Greeks claim he hailed originally from the island of Chios. In truth, the only truths about Cristoforo Colombo are that he came from Genoa and that he was very closely associ-

(Continued on p. 27)

Institute (continued)

- The official fundraising campaign for the film will be launched right after the dinner dance and with the adoption of the 1990-1991 budget.

Ara Pacis (Altar of Peace)

- Background: The Ara Pacis is a monument in Rome that was excavated in 1938. The Altar was consecrated in 13 BC (July 4th) by the Emperor Augustus and the Roman Senate to celebrate the beginning of the Pax Romana. Although we have done little with the Altar except to present a bronze plaque in 1987 on its 2,000th anniversary, the Institute's long range plans include a short documentary on the altar and a campaign to name it an international symbol of the Italic heritage. A bas relief of the Altar's most famous sculpture was commissioned by the Council as an award item and educational product. The relief has already been featured on the Institute's first commemorative coin (1987-88).



PROFILES



Lorenzo Da Ponte, born an Italian Jew.
(Portrait by Samuel F. Morse, inventor
of the telegraph.)

Lorenzo Da Ponte:

A Librettist for All Seasons

by Elio Zappulla

He was the first professor of Italian Literature in the U.S. A contemporary of Mozart, he wrote the librettos for the Austrian composer's most famous operas: *Don Giovanni*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, and *Così Fan Tutte*. Yet few opera aficionados remember Lorenzo Da Ponte.

Da Ponte was born Emanuele Conegliano, the son of Jewish parents, in 1749 in Ceneda (now Vittorio Veneto) near Venice. His mother died when he was two. Nine years later, his father, wishing to marry a Catholic girl, converted to Catholicism at the behest of the Bishop of Ceneda, whose name was Lorenzo Da Ponte. His father not only changed his faith, but also changed his surname and that of his offspring to Da Ponte. Young Emanuele took the Bishop's Christian name as well. Henceforth, Emanuele Conegliano would be known as Lorenzo Da Ponte.

With the aid and blessing of the Bishop, Lorenzo entered the seminary at Ceneda and began studying for the priesthood. Eventually he was appointed to the chair of rhetoric at the seminary and gave every promise of becoming a stalwart defender of the Faith. However, amorous adventures in Venice, combined with envy on the part of others at the seminary who resented young

Da Ponte's rapid rise, ended his stay at Ceneda. Consequently, he moved on to the seminary at Treviso, where he became professor of rhetoric.

Having discovered a talent for poetry, he wrote a series of poems in Latin and Italian that were recited at the school on a commemorative occasion. But these were replete with freethinking ideas and prompted Da Ponte's dismissal from his position in, ironically enough, 1776; he was henceforth forbidden to teach anywhere in Venetian territory. His religious career came to an abrupt end.

Nevertheless, Da Ponte's fame grew. He met Casanova and began corresponding with men of letters, refining his considerable talent for poetry and discovering as well a skill for satire. But he appears to have led a rather dissolute life in the next few years, and his vitriolic pen got him exiled from Venice in 1780. Then while in Gorizia, Da Ponte developed a flair for writing opera librettos. Unfortunately, his outrageous sexual exploits, coupled with a lack of financial success, prompted a hasty departure for Vienna.

There he met the famous Antonio Salieri, and the equally renowned Martini, for both of whom he wrote librettos. Soon he would meet Mozart. In 1786, their famous, if short lived, collaboration began with *Le Nozze di Figaro*. However, though warmly received, the opera brought in little money. Next, at the suggestion of Da Ponte, the two men collaborated on *Don Giovanni*. First performed in Prague in 1787, the opera was enthusiastically received.

Mozart and Da Ponte were to collaborate on one more opera, *Così Fan Tutte*, but this also met with little success. Cutbacks in state funding for Italian opera in Vienna depressed Da Ponte, and while he was pondering a departure from Vienna to find greener pastures, others decided the issue for him — he was expelled from the city after a series of financial improprieties and predictable amorous intrigues.

Moving to Trieste, the librettist met and married an English woman. Eventually he and his wife made their way to London where he was employed for several years at the famous Drury Lane Theater and continued his involvement with Italian opera.

Overwhelming financial problems, disputes with singers, managers and impresarios, and the threat of prison for debt convinced De Ponte to set sail for the New World.

(continued on following page)



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Da Ponte (Continued from previous page)

After an unsuccessful stint as a grocery store owner, Da Ponte cast about for a new way to earn a living. He began giving private lessons in Italian. One day, in a New York bookstore, he met Clement Moore, the future author of *The Night before Christmas*. This was a fortuitous meeting, for Moore's father was President of Columbia College. It was not long before Da Ponte was giving Italian lessons to students at the President's home. Eventually, this would lead to Da Ponte's appointment as the first Professor of Italian Literature at Columbia, and, indeed, in the United States.

Financial problems remained, for the professorship carried no salary, although he enjoyed teaching and threw himself enthusiastically into his work. In 1839, at age 89, poor and embittered, Lorenzo Da Ponte died. He was buried in New York, but no one has since been able to locate Da Ponte's grave. By an ironic twist of fate, his remains have suffered the same fate as those of the illustrious Mozart, with whose name Lorenzo Da Ponte's will be forever linked.

(Elio Zappulla teaches at Dowling College, Oakdale, Long Island. He is also a member of the Italic Studies Institute)

Columbus (Continued from p. 25)

ated with the Italian business community in Spain. However, oddities abound.

For example, Columbus rarely used his Italian name preferring instead a hispanic corruption of it (*Colon*). Surprisingly, he never wrote anything in the Italian language or Genoese dialect. Yet, his log books and letters contain Spanish, Portuguese, Latin, and even Hebrew notes. One contention is that his family was of Spanish-Jewish origin settled in Genoa. Were that true, however, then his family had assimilated quite well. His father, a weaver by trade, was named Domenico; and his mother's name was Suzanna Fontanarossa. What is more, over one-half of the money for his first voyage came from fellow Italians in Spain which indicated some sort of fraternal Italic bond. Moreover, if he did not write Italian it was clear that he read it avidly. Among his favored books were Marco Polo's *Journal* and the famed Florentine geographer Toscanelli's theories of global travel. These tomes greatly influenced the young Cristoforo, inspiring him to venture into the unknown.

Even Columbus' use of occasional Hebrew notations was not unusual. Renaissance curiosity demanded the reading of great works in their original languages. Columbus was a devout Catholic, and Hebrew, as well as Latin and Greek, were the means of getting to the heart of the great truths. The greatest truth, however, was that his voyage of discovery forever changed the shape of our world. ****



Mussolini (continued from p. 23)

people, a fate not shared by any other war criminal of that time.

The Legacy

The Italy we see today was unquestionably shaped by the man who ruled it for 20 years and brought it to ruin. Just as Rome created ancient Italy, Mussolini defined what it is today. Many of his laws are still on the books. The after-effects of his cultural and political acts still mold Italian thought today. The proliferation of political parties, the autonomy of some regions and the resurgence of criminal organizations are the direct results of the fear many Italians have toward dictatorship. Moreover, there is good argument that the roots of today's industrial Italy lie in the Fascist period.

Italy, of course, suffered because of *Il Duce*. The war cost lives and reduced Italy's borders. But would Italy have been able to stay neutral or avoid devastation in the Second World War? Had Mussolini refused the gamble and stayed out of the war might he have paralleled the life of his fellow dictator, Franco of Spain? Who can say?

It may be significant to point out that another Italian, Napoleon Bonaparte, brought his adopted country to ruin but still managed to become a national hero. Benito Mussolini must await the verdict of history.



10, Downing Street,
Winston Churchill.

London, 31st March, 1945

Your Excellency,

I have only recently returned to Britain.

I am happy to state on behalf of His Majesty's Government that your suggestions are accepted in their entirety.

Your wishes therefore will be carried out on the understanding that my requests are accorded as outlined in my letters, particularly in my ultimo, the latter contents, however, must be fully adhered to.

I feel sure that my personal admiration for you warrants an affirmative and urgent reply.

Let me reassure Your Excellency that I have taken all the necessary steps concerning your security and safe conduct.

Your appeal safeguarding the interests of your family and relatives is being dealt with by Head Quarters.

Yours

Winston Churchill

His Excellency Signor Benito Mussolini,
Chief of the Italian Social Republic,

Milan.

A recently discovered letter from Winston Churchill to Mussolini dated March 31, 1945. The Prime Minister's admiration is clearly evident.

Yes! I want to support Italic Studies.



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