

# THE Italicway

XXI 1994

The newsletter of the Italic Studies Institute

**Italy's Sports  
Triumphs:  
How Do They  
Do It?**

**Deborah Campagnoni**  
on her way to victory in  
the Winter Olympics



**In This Issue:**

**Reviews:** *War in Italy*, and *Angie Il Topolino: The First Successful Subcompact*  
**Italy Update:** Our Firsthand Report    **1943:** Liberation or Revolution?



# The Italic Way

XXI, 1994

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## Letters

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

### VARIETY AD LAUDED

Enclosed please find my payment for a subscription to *The Italic Way*. I recently read with great interest your ad in *Variety* referencing an upcoming movie entitled *Casino*. I sympathize with your endeavors.

Philip T. Varricchio,  
Las Vegas, NV

Bravo! Your advertisements in *Variety* are a style we like. We feel confident at this time your treatment is the best approach to halt further damage.

Here is an idea that you might try. It would be an award called "THE ITALIAN BOOT AWARD." The Italian Boot Award would be given to the person, persons, advertisement, movie, whatever or whoever has denigrated the Italian-American in a manner beyond the bounds of common decency.

We have enclosed a donation to be used in any manner or direction.

B.T. and Louise J. Giminiani,  
Albany, NY

As an Italian-American, I agree with your Feb. 28th ad in *Variety*: "WHEN WILL YOU STOP?" I showed *The Godfather* at the local library. When I looked around for an antidote, the best I could come up with was a Swedish film, *Sacco and Vanzetti*. I also show films

from Italy at my theatre sometimes but Italian-Americans don't buy tickets. I asked a few of our compatriots and the reply was, "We don't go to the movies — we go to Florida."

Frank J. Leahy (Draghi),  
E. Lansing, MI

I'd like to compliment you for your very informative newsletter. I tend to agree with your view that much of [the prejudice and stereotyping with regard to Italians and Italian-Americans] has been caused by none other than our own, especially those film directors who have speculated on the hunger for violence in movies by the American public. Your publication is a rare find when it comes to setting the records straight.

Tommaso Calautti,  
North Bergen, NJ

### ANTI-SICILIANS

We should also combat bigotry within the Italian-American community. People whose ancestry are from the north of Italy despise people from the south of Italy and all mainland people of Italy look down on all Sicilians.

Upon arrival at a local restaurant, we started to socialize with fellow Sons of



An excerpt of our Feb. 28th Variety ad

Italy members and others. While talking, the topic of Sicily came up and I stated I was of Sicilian ancestry. The unbelievable response from one of the lodge members was "Sicilians are not Italians," to which her husband added that "Dark Sicilians are descendants of Turkish prisoners of war."

O.J. Barbaro,  
Concord, MA

(Ed: Refer those ignorant among us to our Fall, '92 issue.)

### APATHY IS THE PROBLEM

It's commendable that *The Italic Way* is shooting for 20,000 - 50,000 members. But what good would these numbers be if they stand behind the



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DESMOND J. BURKE



skirts of the organization with the so common attitude of "Lascia che lo fa Giorgio" — "Let George do it."

The walls of stereotyping and bigotry would come tumbling down rapidly with lesser numbers providing they be "doers" and not "watchers" as I experienced in my union years.

Walter Santi,  
Bloomingdale, IL

## PACA CLARIFIED

Your last issue was just received on February 1, 1994. As usual, I read it from cover to cover.

It is well-documented that William Paca was at least seven-eighths English because his female ancestors were all English. Thus, William can be no more than only one-eighth Italian. The article contains a serious error: William Paca did not name his son Aquila after his father, who was named John. However, his older brother and grandfather were named Aquila.

Joseph Scafetta, Jr.  
OSIA State Pres.,  
Falls Church, VA

## WRONG-HEADED EDITORS

I want to point out some factual errors in the last issue I received: Vol. 6, No. 1, 1993. On Page 8, in the Editorial "The Devil at Bay", you say "Such behavior [Italy's NY Consul General welcoming the 'foul leghisti'] shows little regard for the central and southern heritage of metropolitan area Italian-Americans." I don't get it. Aren't we Italian-Americans first of all Americans? Why should the Italian Government favor Italian-Americans whose origins were in one part of Italy rather than another?

As for the reviews of *A Bronx Tale*, Bob Masullo doesn't like the work of some of America's greatest directors: Coppola, Scorsese, and now one of our greatest actors as a director, DeNiro. This attitude is curious. What is the solution? There is none in this article, but Mr. Mancini's solution, on page 27, is that "Hollywood studios and publish-

# LETTERS

ers must be persuaded to find new interests, perhaps something closer to reality." That sounds ominous.

Edmund J. Cantilli,  
West Hempstead, NY

(Ed: In both instances you cite, our objective is something called "respect.")

## BARBARIANS STILL!

After I saw the Northern League's barbarian symbol for a new Italy, it left me no choice but to quote Tacitus from his 98 A.D. essay, titled *Origins and Geography of the Langobardi*. He writes, "We found them living in manure covered huts, with no sanitation, dressed in animal skins and eating partially cooked meat. Their characteristic weaknesses are exposed — their indolence, their quarrelsomeness, their drunkenness, and their silly passion for war. When not engaged in warfare, much of their time is spent in idleness, thinking of nothing else but eating and sleeping."

Tacitus was correct, for after the fall of Rome at the hands of the barbarians in the 5th Century A.D., Europe experi-

enced nearly 1,000 years of ignorance, superstition, misery, disease, chaos and retrogression. In history, it is known as the Dark Ages.

Dorothea Abbate,  
Burlington, WI

(Ed: We can also note that the Abbey at Montecassino was first destroyed by the Langobards in the 9th Century. It was a repository of our classical heritage. See our Editorial.)

## VICTORY IN UNITY

First allow me to congratulate you and all the members of your organization on the unquestionable victory at CUNY (City University of New York) for our community. An agreement with CUNY ended our Federal Court lawsuit alleging discrimination and retaliation. The Calandra Institute is now a full member and an equal participant in the academic world and as a result of all our efforts is in a better position to serve our students, faculty as well as the community at large.

Joseph V. Scelsa, Ed.D.,  
New York, NY



The Italian-American Institute's victory at City University of New York has been equated to *Brown v. Board of Education* which inaugurated the black civil rights movement in the 1950's. (See our editorial page.)

### Corrections

- In our last issue we identified our Midwest Council vice president, Allan Adducci, incorrectly. The photo was of Membership Chairman Mario Scozia (l) and Financial Secretary John Locallo (c).
- We labelled our 7th Annual Dinner our 6th by mistake.
- In our article on the Mafia we wrote about only "Arab" invaders. Historians generally use the word "Muslims" since this word covers Arabs, Moors (Berbers), Turks, and Saracens (Kurds) all of whom invaded Italy after the fall of the Empire.
- One typo that offended a reader was the reversal of "u" and "i" in the name Del Giudice. We incorrectly spelled it Del Giudice. The difference in pronunciation is Guido vs. Giuseppe.



# All'Italiana

## SYMBOL OF RENEWAL

Amid the political travails now metamorphosing the Italian First Republic, Italy's ex-prime minister, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, paused to acknowledge the 50th anniversary of the destruction of the ancient abbey at Montecassino. The abbey was reduced to rubble in 1944 by the invading Allies who mistakenly assumed that it was a German stronghold. Despite the wretched state of Italy immediately after the war, a national effort was mounted to totally restore the abbey. Today it stands magnificently as a symbol of Italian endurance. For Ciampi and most Italians Montecassino is a living monument assuring the nation that even through war, social and political turmoil, the Italian nation can renew itself.

"Fifty years after its destruction, Montecassino reflects as always through the centuries the same image of our fatherland," observed the ex-prime minister.

## DONKEY DUNG

In 1992, the Italian city of Todi (Region of Umbria) was selected as the most livable city in the world by the University of Kentucky. So you can imagine how irate the city fathers were when Visa Gold recently aired a commercial portraying a couple of Todi youngsters swapping a worthless donkey for the camera of some American tourists. The boys knew they had pulled a fast one on the naive Yanks. Todi officials protested the image of Todi as hardscrabble (there is not a donkey to be had within city limits). Moreover, Todians have just as many scruples as tourists.

In protest, the Todi Chamber of Commerce refused to accept Visa credit cards from Americans. Unfazed, Visa continued to run the ad. Maybe the commercial would have been pulled if the Italians based their objection on ani-



The Abbey at Montecassino:  
Immortal Italy

mal rights.

## ITALIAN FACTS

Italy, according to the World Health Organization, reached zero population growth in 1987 and is currently on par with Spain for the lowest birthrate in Western Europe. The population of 57 million is declining by 1% each year. That's half a million less Italians per annum.

Ten percent of Italians live in poverty, the same proportion as Americans. However, 95% of Italians are literate as opposed to 74% of Americans.

Voluntary homicide for all of Italy was less than 2,000 victims in 1992. This equates to one year's worth in New York City alone.

Other interesting statistics: The tourist industry brings 20 million visitors to Italy every year. And despite the economic naysayers, Italy has a favorable balance of trade, i.e., no deficit, with the USA, Germany, France, and the UK. Even their much bemoaned national debt is overwhelmingly owed to their own citizens and not to foreign lenders.

Italy's economic strength is ulti-

mately based on its culture: solid family values, frugality, industriousness, and resilience. Few other rich nations have those strengths to fall back on.

## PRIME MINISTER'S MEDIA

Imagine a U.S. president who owned half of the television networks, half a dozen newspapers, assorted national magazines and the second largest corporation in North America. Do you think Whitewater would be a prime time concern?

Well, Italy's new Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi just happens to be rich and powerful, not to mention popular. Entering Italian politics only a few months ago to thwart a potential neo-communist victory in the April elections, Berlusconi was easily able to mobilize his vast media empire and become a viable candidate from Trento to Palermo. His brand new party, *Forza Italia* (Go, Italy!) included an unlikely coalition of nationalists and separatists.



Italy's new Prime Minister  
Silvio Berlusconi: media rich.

Italian voters abandoned their traditional middle-of-the-road parties in response to revelations of graft and corruption in the years since World War II. In effect, Italy turned right instead of left and Berlusconi now has the task of keeping his patched-up coalition in one piece and Italians happy.

Of course, it doesn't hurt to control much of the nation's media.

## CONGRESSIONAL VIGILANTE

Is there a doctor in the House? If physician-turned-politician Kevin Vigilante wins the Republican nomination for a congressional seat in Rhode

# All'Italiana



Island, he will be the third medico to turn in his stethoscope for a gavel. Dr. Vigilante is an Ivy League graduate who originally hails from Long Island. After graduating medical school, he toiled in inner-city emergency rooms and worked with women inmates following their release from prison. Unlike most lawmakers, he has walked on the seamy side of the street. And, unlike his fellow Republicans, who are usually associated with country clubs, Dr. Vigilante espouses a return to the "social justice" of Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt. Dr. Vigilante's Italic roots have no doubt played a part in the 39-year old physician's commitment to bettering the lot of his fellow man. Should he win the Republican nomination, the good doctor's Democratic opponent will be Patrick Kennedy, a charismatic and well-heeled son of the old political sod.

## MARKET MUSCLE

Despite an overblown corruption scandal, political realignment and worldwide disdain, Italy has once again demonstrated why it is a nation without equal. Defying all economic odds in the first quarter of 1994, the Italian stock market was one of just two global markets to register gains. The other belonged to that Pacific Rim powerhouse, Japan. (The Japanese, however, are still resisting political reform that will throw out one-party rule.) The stock markets of U.S., Germany, France and England



The Visa card and the ass

floundered. According to the *Financial Times* index of world markets, the Italian *borsa* soared 27.1% (measured in dollar terms) in the first quarter. The victory of Silvio Berlusconi's *Forza Italia* and the political housecleaning that preceded it buoyed Italian and worldwide investors and reinvigorated Italy's economy.



Italian economy: a favorable balance of trade with every major country and 20 million visitors bringing in cash each year.

## SLURRED COMMENT

An April segment of PBS's *Charlie Rose*, normally an incisive and intellectually well-grounded talk show, featured the most loathsome brand of bigotry this side of Louis Farrakhan. Jack Newfield, a columnist for *The New York Post*, perhaps titillated by the presence of alleged authors Frank Ragano and Selwyn Raab, let fly with a vile anti-Italian slur on national television. Ragano is the reputed *Mob Lawyer* in the book of the same name; the supercilious Selwyn Raab is his co-author. Throughout the show, host Charlie Rose repeatedly expressed skepticism about Ragano's claim that the mafia i.e., Messrs. Marcello and Trafficante, bumped off John F. Kennedy and Jimmy Hoffa. Hoping to get off a howler, the rotund Newfield cracked that one of the mobsters suffered from "Italian Alzheimer's—He only remembers his vendettas." Rose grinned sheepishly.

## HATEFUL IS THE HUNTER

Evan Hunter is at it again. The prolific mystery writer has churned out his latest book, *Criminal Conversation*, and, sure enough, it features that most American of fictional characters, an

Italian *mafioso*. This time around Mr. Hunter gussies up a swarthier-than-thou slimeball. The young *capo*, Andrew Farrell (a.k.a. Andrew Faviola) is a charismatic crook who has an affair with the wife of his arch enemy, the prosecutor. Word has it that Tom Cruise is slated to play Faviola. His production company has reportedly bought the rights to *Criminal Conversation*.

What makes this all so loathsome is that Evan Hunter is a pseudonym for Salvatore Lombino. He has also penned novels under another *nom de plume*, Ed McBain. The author abandoned his Italian name many years ago when he decided that no one could believe a writer with the moniker of Sal. In Hunter's book, literature is not the province of Italians. (That never stopped Dante, Manzoni or Don DeLillo.) But then Hunter once expressed astonishment that a governor named Mario could be so erudite and eloquent a writer and speaker.



# World Notes

## WOODY LIVES ON

Animator/producer Walter Lantz passed away last March at the age of 93. Best known as the creator of the cartoon character Woody Woodpecker, Mr. Lantz was a pioneer of film animation as well as the combined live action/animation technique. This latter technique, a forerunner of *Roger Rabbit*, premiered in the 1930 feature film *The King of Jazz*. The first Technicolor sound cartoon, *The King of Jazz* starred band-leader Paul Whiteman and debuted a crooner named Bing Crosby along with another of Lantz's creations, Oswald the Lucky Rabbit.

Mr. Lantz was born in New Rochelle, NY, to immigrant parents. The family name was originally Lanza but was changed to Lantz by an immigration official.

Among his lifetime honors, Mr. Lantz received an Oscar for animation in 1979.

## IN GALILEO'S FOOTSTEPS

Perhaps we are not alone after all. Centuries of scientific and popular speculation ended recently when another solar system was discovered 7,000 trillion miles from *Terra Firma*. Using the giant radio telescope at Arecibo, Puerto Rico, astronomer Alexander Wolszczan discovered a neutron star (or collapsed sun) called a pulsar in the Virgo Constellation in 1991. Together with fellow astronomer Dale Frail, he announced the probability of planets orbiting around the pulsar. But it was not until astrophysicist Fred Stasio of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, N.J., following in the footsteps of Galileo, provided the final proof that made the findings "incontrovertible." Stasio postulated that the orbits of these planets could be discerned by the turbulence as the planets passed each other. After three years of study, Stasio's sci-



A Lanza original

entific reasoning enabled the others to announce that three planets, two earth-shaped and one lunar-sized, were found orbiting a star 1,500 light years from Earth. This amazing find lends more credence to the possibility of life arising on far-flung worlds.

## CHAMELEON AIRPLANE

When Alitalia and Continental Airlines link up to corner the Rome-Newark (NJ) market there may be a doubletake in the tower. Is that an Alitalia jet taking off or a Continental? It will depend on which way the plane is facing.

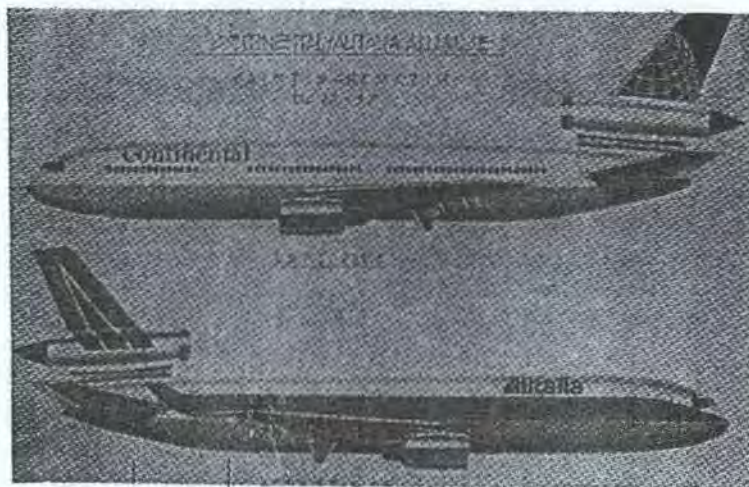
In order to reassure passengers who think they are booked on Alitalia or Continental to Rome, the jets may have the Alitalia name and colors on the starboard (right) side and the Continental name and logo on the port (left) side. So if the

observer is standing on the equator the jet heading to Italy will be naturally be an Alitalia. But the same jet on the way back to Newark will be a good ole USA Continental. Get it? We'll have to wait until July to see if the plan is implemented.

## A TRAITOR, NOT

A new book by a former Soviet spy/murderer and a couple of would-be American gumshoes has posthumously accused nuclear physicist Enrico Fermi of being a Soviet spy. The absurd tale in Pavel Sudoplatov's memoir, *Special Tasks*, co-authored by Jerrold and Leona Schecter, smears Fermi and three other atomic scientists.

Enrico Fermi fled Fascist Italy when it promulgated anti-Semitic laws (Fermi's wife was Jewish). Although another Italian physicist, Bruno Pontecorvo, worked for the Soviets in Russia, Fermi was not sympathetic to totalitarian regimes. In fact, even the anecdotal evidence vilifying Fermi cannot stand up to history. One such story is that Fermi's secret 1942 nuclear chain reaction in Chicago was known by the Soviets. In truth, even seven months after the event the Soviets did not know Fermi had succeeded. Not much of a reporting system. Not much of a book.



If we're heading to Rome this must be Alitalia.



# World Notes



Enrico Fermi: Guide to the Atomic Age

## MARCO REMEMBERED

Although the proud Chinese refuse to allow Italians credit for inventing *lo mein* (aka spaghetti) they have gotten around to commemorating the 13th Century Venetian traveler who partook of his first pasta experience in the Middle Kingdom. We are, of course, speaking about the universal hero Marco Polo, whose written exploits ultimately led to the opening of the Americas and Asia to European trade.

The Chinese government has erected the first statue, nearly fifty feet high, to Polo in the southern province of Fukien, a point of departure for the early silk industry.

Compared to later Europeans who exploited China, Italians like Marco Polo and later missionary Matteo Ricci made a lasting positive impression on the Chinese.

## THE POLISH QUESTION

Italy's giant auto maker Fiat was one of the first to pierce the Iron Curtain back in the early 1970's when it built a Russian car named the Lada at a plant in the USSR. Since then Fiat and other Italian firms have seized the opportunities in all the former Communist states of Eastern Europe. Taking advantage of the relatively low labor rates in Poland, Fiat retooled and modernized Polish factories to churn out its revered Cinquecento (500) subcompact. The autos were tar-

geted mainly to Italian customers and the Polish factories were humming along until a 1992 downturn in the Italian economy. Now the Poles have been asked to cut production and lay off workers. In short, Western capitalism, once the hope of Eastern Europe's forward momentum, is applying the brakes. Polish workers are now questioning whether it's the Italian economy or just lousy Fiat marketing that is costing them their jobs.

The real lesson to be learned is that the new market economy has now linked the Italian and Polish economies for better or worse. (See Perspectives for an article on the Fiat 500.)

## PRESIDENT NIXON AND MR. HYDE

Even Richard Milhaus Nixon could not survive his final crisis. On April 22, 1994, the 37th president of the United States passed away. For those of us who came of political age during his remarkable career, it marked the end of an era. Nixon dominated his time as few others have. His accomplishments—both foreign and domestic—were significant. Although many Italian-Americans admired Nixon for his *realpolitik* and no-nonsense approach to law and order, he did not always hold the scions of Italy in high esteem. Their political persuasion mattered little, if at all. Richard Nixon tangled with leftist Vito Marcantonio in the 1940s



Do Italians smell different?

and Republicans John Sirica and Peter Rodino in the 1970s. On one occasion, he was heard to remark that Italians "smell different." Sadly, this anti-Italian animus was confirmed in the secret White House tapes. Indeed, it was sick-

ening to hear the commander-in-chief refer to Judge Sirica as that "little wop." In the 1980s, however, Nixon developed a rapport with New York's first Italian-American governor, Mario Cuomo, urging him to run for the presidency time and again. Clearly, he admired and respected Cuomo's eloquence and intellect.

## ITALIAN SLAVES

Former Austrian President Kurt Waldheim was in the news again with the release of additional information on his alleged activities during the Second World War. Besides evidence that Lt. Waldheim participated in the round-up of Balkan Jews, it has now come to light that he may also have deported non-belligerent Italian soldiers to slave labor camps in Germany.



Waldheim: courteous or cruel?

In 1943, elements of the Italian government and military declared an armistice with the Allies. Unfortunately, the confused state of affairs left many Italian Army units without clear instructions and most surrendered their arms to nearby German troops thinking their war was over. Some 600,000 of these Italian soldiers were packed off to Germany to be used as forced labor for the Nazi war machine. Lt. Waldheim allegedly conducted a portion of this process which saw unspeakable atrocities perpetrated on the Italians at their stations in both the Balkans and in Germany. Waldheim now claims that he actually assisted many Italian soldiers in returning to Italy, as an act of "military chivalry." (See Perspectives and Review for stories on this sad episode.)





## Editorial

### PRESIDENT'S FIRST MESSAGE

It was in 1989 that I became aware of the Institute. In that year I assisted Michael Downey, now one of our governors, in putting together the Second Annual Dinner Dance. It was an enlightening experience to meet people of different ethnic backgrounds who came together to promote Italic Studies (I guess we all had to learn what "Italic" is!). In any event, it was a delight to learn so many things about the Italian heritage. And as we all know, the Italian heritage is so extensive that the learning process is a lifetime effort.

What strikes me about our Institute is its openness. I am, for example, the first woman president, one of many more to come, I hope. But we are open in other ways. Open to any ethnic group. I am only part Italian (part Hungarian), Mike Downey is of Irish lineage, and our dinner chairman this year, Jack Conroy, is also an Irish-American. Beyond that, the Institute is open to differing opinions. Our newsletter is free to examine all aspects of our heritage — the good and the bad. What other organizations will go that far?

My fervent wish is to guarantee a deeper appreciation of Italian heritage in our children and our grandchildren. For that to happen we need to continue fundraising and to expand our organization around the country.

Let us continue to share the same goals and to continue to realize them.  
-Mary Ann Minucci, President

### THE SPIRIT OF MONTECASSINO

China has its Great Wall, Israel its Western (Wailing) Wall, and Greece its Acropolis. These are man-made monuments that define the national spirit, transcending the ages to link ancestors to descendants. Italy, of course, possesses more than its share of spiritual architecture.

Nevertheless, the year 1994 marks the 50th anniversary of the Allied bombing of the abbey at Montecassino in central Italy. The abbey was founded by St. Benedict in 529 AD as a refuge from the barbarian invasions and chaos. It was Europe's first monastery and became the repository of Roman Italy's literature, history, and technical knowledge, in effect, the spirit of Italy. And each time it was destroyed by foreign hordes Italians rebuilt it. So too did war-ravaged Italy find the money and skilled craftsmen to restore the abbey after the Allied and German invasions of the Second World War. It had to be a first priority because it represented spiritual survival.

Former Prime Minister Ciampi drew a comparison between the political turmoil his country is now undergoing and Montecassino's agony fifty years ago. His message is one of hope: just as the abbey was restored so too is the nation. -JLM

### EXPLOIT THE VICTORY

A funny thing happened this past winter. The Italian-American community made it to the endangered species list, in a manner of speaking. More to the point, the saving of the John Calandra Institute at the City University of NY (CUNY) underscored "national origin" as an affirmative action defense, and retained Italian-Americans as an affirmative action group\*. This may seem shameful to some folks who consider Italian-Americans beyond the reach of discrimination. In truth, Italians have been lynched like blacks, interned like the Japanese, and murdered by the state after mock trials, all in the last 100 years. Silent agonies. Italian-Americans just don't dwell on past injustices.

If this landmark agreement, coming directly on the heels of a lawsuit, gives us the leverage to, say, obtain government funds to produce television documentaries on our past struggles, then we need to exploit it. -JLM

\* The case highlighted a pattern of discrimination by CUNY in the promotion and hiring of Italian-American teaching staff.

### The Italic Way™

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# Forum of the People



The following is an excerpt reprinted from "KidsDay", a special Sunday feature of *Newsday*, the Long Island daily, and our response to the author. Our readers may be interested in understanding how assimilation is rapidly changing, by varying degrees, the ethnic identities within our nation.

## My Story by Timothy Morbelli



My dad is Italian and my mom is Irish and German. My mom's great-grandparents were born in the United States, so I am fifth-generation American on my mom's side. My dad's parents were born in Italy. They met in the United States. Nonna worked as a seamstress in a sweat shop. She worked hard and didn't make a lot of money, but it was more than she could make in Italy. Poppy worked as a waiter; soon after Dad was born, they bought a house in Woodside. Soon Poppy was able to open his own Italian restaurant.

My dad was the first in his family to go to college. He studied advertising; Nonna and Poppy were unhappy because they wanted him in their restaurant business. My family is really American now. Nobody speaks Italian, not even dad. If you ask me what I am I say, "Made in the U.S. of A."



Dear Timothy,

I read with a great deal of interest the story of your heritage. I have an eight year old daughter who is also part Irish and part Jewish.

Even though we are all proud of being Americans many of us carry our heritage outwardly. It may be in the color of our skin or the shape of our eyes, or in your case, a last name. I noticed that classmates like Michelle Levi wrote movingly of the Holocaust that destroyed many of her people and even passed on a recipe for Israeli potatoes. The same with Ravneet Kaur who proudly passed on an Indian recipe. Many Americans of Italian descent know very little of what being Italic is all about. And because of that we accept only what movies and television tell us about our heritage.

I remember when I was your age my Italian father spoke English with a very strong accent. Sometimes I used to make fun of it with my friends. One day the principal of my school asked me to recite a poem about George Washington in front of an assembly. He picked me because the poem was written in broken English, the same way my father talked. Well, I practiced for days and read the poem to all my schoolmates making believe I was my father. Everybody laughed so hard and the principal was very pleased. Many years later I felt ashamed of what I had done. I had made fun of my father in front of hundreds of people. No other "Americans" made fun of their fathers or grandfathers in front of assemblies. So, I decided to learn more about my ancestors and Italy. In 1987 I helped establish the Italic Studies Institute to keep the Italian heritage alive.

To help you and your class understand what Italians did for the world I've enclosed some placemats and cartoons. There is also a copy of a magazine that your father or grandparents may be interested in. By the way, we have a Saturday morning program in Floral Park at the end of October to introduce 5th and 6th graders to Italian culture. It is free to everyone. If you or your friends are interested please contact my office.

John L. Mancini  
Co-Founder, Italic Studies Institute

Dear Mr. Mancini,

Thank you very much for your nice letter and the cartoons and magazine. I was so excited when I got your package. My Mom and Dad said that you have permission to reprint my story if you promise to send me a copy of the magazine. Thank you for your interest and please let me know when your magazine comes out.

Sincerely,  
Timothy Morbelli



# PERSPECTIVE

## 1943: Liberation or Revolution?

by Alfred Cardone

The popular view of the Second World War in Italy portrays the sweeping events that occurred from 1943-1945 as the "liberation of Italy" from the Germans and Fascists by the Allied armies.

While it is true that Italy was occupied by German troops, their presence was the result of an Italian political vacuum. Few realize that the "Italy" which surrendered to the Allies on September 8, 1943 and later joined in the alliance against Germany was in rebellion to the constituted government of Benito Mussolini. In effect, the so-called liberation was in fact a civil war led by the King of Italy. It may sound like a contradiction but the evidence is quite substantial.

Let us first consider how Benito Mussolini and the Fascist Party came to rule Italy twenty-one years before.

In 1922, after months of civil unrest and the fear of a communist take over (the Russian Revolution had just taken place in 1917), Italians viewed the new Fascist Party as a viable alternative to the strikes and disorder rampant in the country. Under Italy's parliamentary system the Fascists had earned the electoral right to be included in the government. King Victor Emmanuel III asked Mussolini to form a cabinet and become Italy's Prime Minister.

During the subsequent decade, Mussolini quite legally obtained dictatorial powers. Notwithstanding some political opposition, the House of Savoy and the overwhelming majority of Italians confirmed his constitutional changes including the elevation of the Fascist Grand Council to the highest "legislative" organ of the state (1928). However, in matters between the Council and the Duce, the Council was only advisory.

Italy's entry into WWII as an Axis ally had the backing of the King. However, as the conflict wore on, draining Italian blood and treasure, plots and conspiracies began brewing against the Fascist regime in certain high circles of the military and the House of Savoy. The most sinister figure in this intrigue was Marshal Badoglio, who had benefitted immensely during the glory days of Fascism. Badoglio's intrigues began in the spring of 1941, after he had been relieved as Chief of Staff, and by November 1942, he was in touch with the Allies and committing outright treason. He was assisted in his efforts by General Ambrosio, new Chief of the General Staff, and Admiral Maugeri, Chief of Naval Intelligence. In order to bring about the fall of Mussolini and to seize power for themselves these conspirators were quite willing to endanger the lives of their fellow countrymen by sabotaging Italy's war effort and even to betray to the Allies the battle plans of all three services of Italy's armed forces.

Crown Prince Umberto had joined the conspiracy early on, and as the tide of war turned against Italy, King Victor Em-



The perception that Italy surrendered in 1943 is not accurate. Mussolini's Republican Army, under Marshal Graziani, left, fought with the Germans right to the end in 1945.

manuel III decided to do likewise. Certain high ranking Fascists, most notably Count Galeazzo Ciano (Mussolini's son-in-law) and Dino Grandi, also decided to oust Mussolini as part of a separate plot. To spur the conspirators on, the Allies increased the tempo of their aerial bombardment of Italian cities. Particularly disastrous was the bombing of Rome which took place on July 19, 1943, claiming the lives of over 15,000 civilians. This brutal message convinced the plotters that they must act immediately.

During the battle of Sicily (July, 1943), Mussolini held a meeting of the Fascist Grand Council. The conspirators chose that occasion to strike. Dino Grandi would propose a resolution restoring pre-Fascist state functions and command of the armed forces back to the Crown. This would give the king the opportunity to relieve Mussolini. Unbeknownst to Ciano and Grandi, the King intended to replace him with Badoglio.

The Grand Council convened on the evening of July 24th, and after a long and exhausting meeting, Grandi's resolution was passed. During Mussolini's weekly audience with the King on the afternoon of July 25th, Victor Emmanuel abruptly dismissed him as Prime Minister and informed him that he was being replaced by Marshal Badoglio. As the Duce departed the Royal villa, he was arrested by carabinieri.

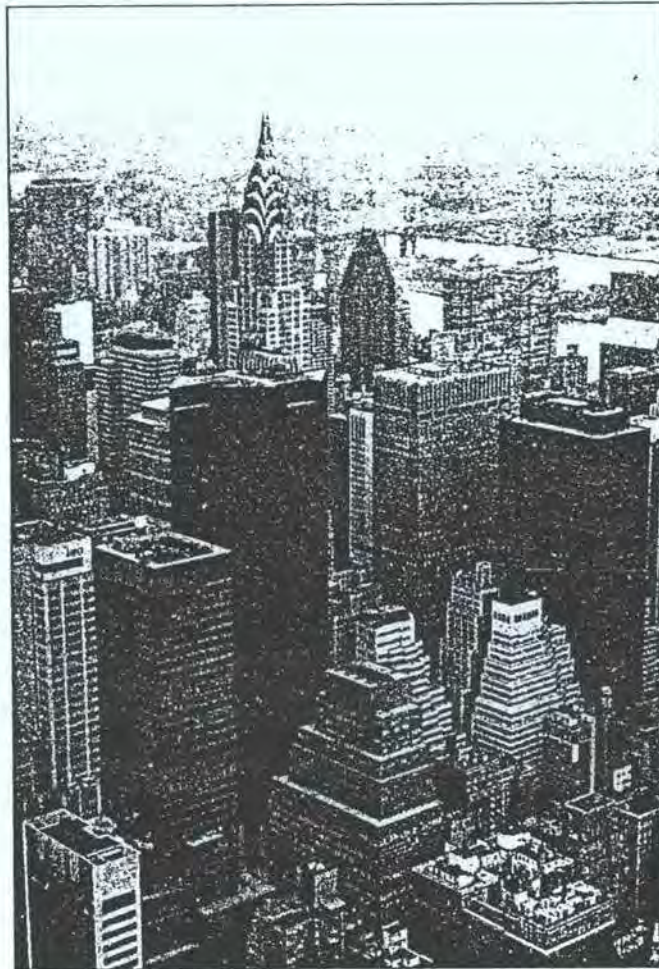
The King's actions were unconstitutional for several reasons. The powers of the Grand Council were only advisory. It would have required a hostile vote in Parliament (now all Fascist) or in a general election to lawfully remove Mussolini as Prime Minister. Furthermore, the King had no right or authority to unilaterally confer full powers on Badoglio, since this was the prerogative of the Grand Council and Parliament. In the final analysis, Mussolini was the victim of a coup d'etat launched with the sanction of a king whose intentions were no doubt patriotic.

These actions were taken without regard for the safety of the approximately 600,000 Italian troops still serving alongside the Germans, primarily in the Balkans. After Italy's surrender, the majority of these were taken prisoner and shipped to Germany to labor under terrible conditions. Thousands who

(continued on p.27)

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## Focus

# ITALY'S SPORTS TRIUMPHS:

by Don Fiore & John Mancini

The World Cup soccer competition is coming to the United States in June. Among the select few who have earned a right to play the field is Italy, a nation brimming with athletic talent. The year 1994 could be Italy's chance to achieve an unprecedented 4th world championship, having earned the title in '34, '38, and '82. For a country beset with political upheaval, peaceful though it may be, a victorious squad would undoubtedly rekindle the national pride. Not for nothing did entrepreneur Silvio Berlusconi name his conservative political movement *Forza Italia*, a sports cheer meaning "Go Italy!" To the fiercely competitive Italians this war cry can awaken a sodden spirit to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.

### WORLD CLASS ATHLETES

As a nation Italians take sports, especially international sports, very seriously. Who has ever stopped to wonder, for example, how sunny Italy, land of beaches and palm trees, manages to successfully challenge nations like the United States, Austria, Switzerland, Sweden, and Finland in the winter Olympics? Of course, Italy has the Alps to develop its snow sports but so does France which finished with only five medals to Italy's twenty. The Italians placed 4th at these recent games surpassed only by Norway, Germany, and Russia, all nations of northern latitudes and colder climes where proficiency on the ice should be a matter of course. It was no fluke, either, for at Albertville in 1992, Italy ranked 5th, again topped only by competitors from the North.

Mind you, we are not only talking about men. Manuela Di Centa and Deborah Campagnoni, two of the heroines of Italy's winter Olympic team at Lillehammer, demonstrated that the competitive spirit, stamina, and agility also come naturally to the female of the species.

It seems that no sport is foreign to these Italians. As recently as 1992 the late agri-business tycoon Raul Gardini vied for the



Beside great racing machines such as Ferrari and Maserati, Italian names like Monza and GT (Gran Turismo) are now universal vocabulary.



World-class equestrian Piero d'Inzeo confirmed Italy's primacy in the sport.

America's Cup with the racing yacht *Il Moro di Venezia* outsailing defending champ Australia but losing first place to the USA. Yachting, fencing, equestrian events, boxing, motor racing and any number of other sporting competitions usually find an Italian team in the running.

Speaking of running, our Latin brothers are also fleet of foot. Pietro Nenna's record 19.72 seconds in the 200 meter dash has yet to be bettered after 13 years. An even more

The Roman Empire attracted athletic talent from around the known world. The Italian gene pool probably benefitted from it.



prestigious victory was seized by Italy in 1990, when Gelindo Bordin took first place at the Boston Marathon with one of the best performances in that event's 97 year history by completing the 26-mile trek in 2 hours, 8 minutes and 19 seconds.

The lure of attaining high speeds, whether the driving force be muscular, mechanical, or a combination thereof, tugs persistently at the Italic soul. Names like Ferrari and Maserati speak for themselves in epic terms on the world's speedways, and brandname Bianchi scarcely says less in the language of cycling. Of course, Italians not only build first-rate bicycles, they know darn well how to use them. Their outstanding adeptness at pushing pedals has placed eight Tour de France trophies, twenty-eight Olympic gold medals and numerous world championship titles in their national trophy cabinet.

In competition motorcycling, Italy's Giacomo Agostini is in a class by himself, with no other human being even remotely



## How Do They Do It?

approaching his 122 multi-category Grand Prix conquests and 15 world championships. Similar glories are achieved even in the most unexpected arenas. All the records for every category of both men and women's high speed roller skating, for example, are held by Italians. Trade wheels and rollers for runners and the pace hardly slackens, as Eugenio Monti and his Italian bobsledding team demonstrated so stunningly at Grenoble in 1968. With 11



The 'Ambling Alp' Primo Carnera held the heavy-weight title in 1933-34.

world championships and six Olympic gold medals to his credit, Monti went down in history as the most decorated practitioner of his sport.

No other event showcases as broad an array of international athletic prowess as the Olympics, of course, and comparative medal tallies can serve as a fairly accurate gauge of the sports-mindedness and particular talents of any individual nation. Here, Italy has measured up well, failing only three times to list among the critical top ten performers in both summer and winter editions of the games.

And if that weren't enough, the strongest man in the world is a Genovese named Bruno Danovaro, 25. Danovaro can press 1,112 lbs and has held the title for five years. His training table includes 13 pounds of spaghetti daily.



Motorcyclist G. Agostini won 15 major titles in the sport.

Still, mere statistics do little to explain the reasons why Italians take to sports more successfully than other nations. Obviously, there must be an accountable physical factor, but cultural environment and even political elements certainly have played their part.

### A SPORTING PAST

Since Roman times, when the legions of Italy made the peninsula the center of the Western world, historians have marveled at the vigor of the Italic people. The Greek chronicler Polybius credited the quality and quantity of ancient Italian food for the Roman ardor (and this was before pasta!). American popular historian, Will Durant, was positively em-

barrassing in his 1944 observation of Italians:  
*"Nearly all the men are virile and handsome, nearly all the women beautiful, strong, and brave..."* (*The Story of Civilization*, vol. III, p. 3)

Only modesty prevents us from finishing Durant's quote. It is all the more flattering since it comes from an American of French descent. But the point is that the "young Italic body and mind" appear to be conducive to athletics — a generality, of course, but it may also apply to other racial and ethnic groups in varying degrees. This may be partly explained by the Roman Empire. During the 500 and more years that Italy ruled the Western World a long parade of athletes, gladiators, and hardy servants (to use the biblical euphemism) visited, lived and bred on the peninsula. The Italic stock was no doubt enriched with these physical specimens. Add in a warm and pleasant climate that lends itself to outdoor activity, and high

### Italy has failed only three times to list among the critical top ten performers in both summer and winter Olympics.

performance results are not really so surprising. Moreover, because of Italian geography, both winter and summer sports can be practiced from North to South. There are even ski resorts in Sicily and Calabria.

*"In this country there is great virtue in the limbs,"* wrote Macchiavelli, noting the *"superior strength, dexterity and wit"* routinely demonstrated by his countrymen when matched against foreign competitors on playing, even jousting, fields. The 16th Century political philosopher had more than enough first-hand observations from which to draw his conclusions, since sports were prominent in Renaissance life. According to his contemporary Baldasare Castiglione and other definers of well-bred society, fitness of body was as essential as sharpness of mind, good manners and a thorough education for the true Renaissance gentleman. Participation in sports, the more



strenuous the better, was the prescribed means to reach that desired state, and this advice was not lost on Italy's inhabitants. Boxing, wrestling and horseback riding were actively pursued. (Siena's famous *Palio* horse

Luigi Amadeo, the Duke of Abruzzi, scaled peaks on three continents at the turn of the century.

### The Italic Way

## Other Italian-Americans We Must Not Forget

For more than five centuries, from Christopher Columbus to Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, the contributions of Italian-Americans to what is best and most lasting in our society has been immeasurable.

But while the explorers, entertainers, artists, scientists, athletes, jurists, and scholars are known and revered by us all, there are other Italian-Americans who may never get the chance to fulfill *their* destiny . . . make *their* contribution.

They are the men, women and children with Cooley's anemia, a disease that kills most of its victims — 85% of whom are of Italian descent — usually before the age of 40.

Following are questions and answers regarding Cooley's anemia:

**Q:** What exactly is Cooley's anemia?

**A:** Cooley's anemia, also called *thalassemia*, is an inherited fatal genetic blood disorder. Unless treated, children born with the illness will not survive their *third* birthday.

**Q:** How is it inherited?

**A:** If both parents have the trait for Cooley's anemia, there is a 25% chance, with each pregnancy, that it will be passed on to the child.

**Q:** How extensive is it?

**A:** The World Health Organization has called Cooley's anemia "the most prevalent inherited gene disorder," with more than two million carriers in the United States alone.

**Q:** What is the treatment?

**A:** Current treatment consists of blood transfusions every two weeks, and a painful nightly infusion of a life-sustaining drug, Desferal. The drug is injected into the body via a thumb-tack-sized needle attached to a battery-operated pump over a period of 8 to 12 hours. This process rids the body of iron deposits left by the blood transfusions. Iron deposits can damage vital organs and lead to an early death.

**Q:** Has there been progress?

**A:** Years ago, despite the best medical treatment, most children with Cooley's anemia did not survive their tenth birthday. Today, the life expectancy of a baby born with Cooley's Anemia has been dramatically increased. Some patients are now living beyond their 40th birthday.

**Q:** What's being done to find a cure?

**A:** The Cooley's Anemia Foundation and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) are sponsoring extensive, ongoing research into a cure. Some researchers believe gene therapy, and/or bone marrow transplantation, will be successful. The use of an oral drug to replace the painful infusion pump described above is also under investigation.

**Q:** What additional benefits could result from a cure?

**A:** Scientists say discovering a cure for Cooley's anemia could lead to important clues regarding the nature of such other diseases as Cystic Fibrosis, Diabetes, Sickle Cell Anemia and Tay-Sachs.

For forty years, the Cooley's Anemia Foundation has been sponsoring such activities as:

**Research & Fellowship Grants** - such as the "Seed Grant and Fellowship Program," now in its third decade and one of the oldest research programs in the country supported solely by member contributions. Every year, our Medical Advisory Board, comprised of the most prestigious hematologists, selects those research grant proposals most likely to move us closer to our goals. To date, the Cooley's Anemia Foundation has awarded more than \$7 million for research into both state-of-the-art treatments and a final cure.

**Patient Services** - including infusion pumps, the life-sustaining drug Desferal, pump batteries, and other supplies often not covered by insurance. The Foundation also sponsors the Thalassemia Action Group (TAG), a self-help, mutual support network for all Cooley's anemia patients.

**Scholarship Grants** - to help patients attend institutions of higher learning and fulfill career goals. Despite the severity of their condition and the demands of their treatment, many patients refuse to put their careers . . . and their lives . . . on hold.

**Public Awareness & Education Programs** - managed through a national chapter network dedicated to providing information on genetic testing, and on reducing the impact of the disease on patients and families in communities across the nation. Sixteen chapters conduct blood drives, awareness programs, and community fundraisers.

The Cooley's Anemia Foundation has reduced its administrative expenses from 27% to 17.3%. As a result, additional funds will now be available for research into more effective treatment and an eventual cure. But much more remains to be done so that children like Michelle can have the opportunity to live normal, productive lives.

For additional information on the Cooley's Anemia Foundation, call: 212-598-9911.



Michelle Chieco holds the battery-operated pump that infuses the life-sustaining drug Desferal into her body each night for 8 to 12 hours. To begin the process, her father inserts a hypodermic needle attached to the pump into her abdomen. To date, she has had more than 1,000 bi-weekly blood transfusions and more than 1,500 nightly pump infusions treatments.



Despite his middle-age paunch, *Il Duce* was probably the most physically fit of world statesmen.

race still bears witness to this.) Castiglione himself recommended swimming, javelin throwing, running, jumping and frequent playing of *giuoco della palla*, an early form of tennis.

Besides the physical and mental benefits of vigorous exercise and the sheer enjoyment of playing, a pervasive desire among Italians of that age to emulate their much-revered Roman ancestors gave them further cause to join in the games. The revelation that Caesar or Horatius were accomplished swimmers was considered reason enough to perfect the breast stroke. And if Italians would not listen to Castiglione, they would surely respect the authority of satirist Juvenal and his famous dictum, *Mens sana in corpore sano* (a sound mind in a healthy body).

To Roman men and women alike, mind and body were served with regular visits to the public baths where facilities for weight lifting, calisthenics and swimming were available

### It was an ancient Italian who said, "A sound mind in a healthy body."

alongside libraries and lecture halls. These original health clubs cost citizens only a few pennies to enter and each sex had its own time slot.

Those Italians of military age developed coordination skills in the Roman Army where keeping fit was a survival prerequisite. Many historians credit the Roman legions with the invention of soccer, a game which descendants of those legions still master.

Nineteenth Century Italy had its sports buffs. The robust Victor Emmanuele II, Italy's first king, was an avid sportsman, retreating into the forests for days at a time to ride, hunt and fish. King Umberto I, a formidable athlete throughout his youth, carried his predilection for sports literally to the moment of his death. His assassination by an anarchist in 1900

occurred just minutes after he had handed out trophies at an inter-regional gymnastics competition in Monza. Another member of royalty, the Duke of Abruzzi, was a world-class mountain climber scaling peaks in Alaska, Africa and the Himalayas before the First World War.

But the man who really regimented Italians into sports was *il Duce*, Benito Mussolini, no mean athlete himself. It was under Fascism that sports became an obsession. The results of Mussolini's determination to tone up the Kingdom were seen when Italy



scored second at the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles, its highest ranking ever. *Il Duce* himself practiced what he preached. In his prime he was undoubtedly the most physically fit of the world's statesmen. Swimming, riding, fencing (he fought duels in his early days), running, tennis, and skiing were his personal preferences, and he insisted that his subordinates follow suit — which accounts for all those old photos of middle-aged Fascists leaping through fiery hoops on the athletic field.

Besides his personal inspiration, *il Duce* also promulgated a Fascist regulation in 1927 that organized all sports clubs into thirty-two federations, some more obscure than others: *Federazione Italiana Atletica Pesante* (literally: heavy athletics such as wrestling, judo, hammer) or *Federazione Italiana Pallavolo* (volleyball), and so on. This system remains intact today and through it national teams are formed for international competitions.

#### A COMPETITIVE LOT

As you can see, sports and Italians have a very long and celebrated connection. Accounting for Italy's consistently outstanding performance in nearly every international competition must include genetic talent, political organization, cultural emphasis, and a tradition that extends back uninterrupted through two millenia. But in the final analysis one must conclude that Italians are a competitive lot. And just as in art, music and a score of other disciplines, competition and personal achievement have brought out Italy's best.



Siena's famous horse race, *il Palio*, dates from at least the Renaissance.

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# Perspectives

## ITALY TODAY: THE PEOPLE SPEAK

by Robert A. Masullo

The talk we overheard on the Alitalia flight from Los Angeles to Milan, even the newsreel shown in flight, was largely about the national elections and the impending changes in Italy's government. Billed as a new beginning, some called it the start of Italy's second republic.

My wife and I were met at Milano's *Malpensa* airport by two young men, Mario and Alessandro, and their father, Pietro. (We knew Mario from his stay at our Sacramento home the year before.)

Mario had voted earlier that day, as did his father, brother and mother. He was clearly excited about the election but noncommittal about his vote. This was strange because we had come to know Mario as a charmingly opinionated college student who expressed his views on any and all subjects without hesitation.

Pietro, his father, was clearly fed up with the way things were going in his country. He was angered by "high" taxes and "excessive" regulations on his business (a small metal treatment plant). He complained about the way Rome treated people like him. Consequently, he had voted for change.

"When (Umberto) Bossi (leader of

the Northern League) gets in, he'll clean up the mess," said Pietro, making a gesture of a throat being slit.

His views sounded like those of many American Democrats who in 1980 voted Republican. Bossi, because of his dislike for the national government, appealed to him.

However, there was no sign that this family was suffering. In fact, they seemed to be living better than most Americans I know, including my wife and I. They informed us they had just

National Alliance and *Forza Italia*, he was talking about a "federal system" modeled on the United States.

The perception held in much of the north is that the south (by which they mean both the geographical south and *Roma*, that is, politicians) is an economic cesspool that swallows up northern taxes.

As the elections ended, computer projections revealed that the right coalition had won. Pietro was happy. His man Bossi, however, was not. At least



Berlusconi



Bossi



Fini

bought a larger house and were in the process of remodeling it.

The appeal of the Northern League (*Lega Nord*) to them was "freedom," mainly from taxation. Freedom, however, means different things to different people. At one point Bossi was advocating the separation of the north from the rest of Italy. But by election day, with his party in a right-wing coalition with the

not openly on TV. A scowling man with a screechy voice, I wondered how he could lead any movement or, more precisely, how anyone could follow him. Even though the rightist coalition he was part of had won, he was ticked off because the Northern League had not done as well as predicted in Milan, which he referred to as "my city" (despite the fact that more than half of Milan's residents

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now trace their roots to Italy's south).

The second stop on our visit was Parma, still "north" but due to its war-time memories, far more leftist than Brescia or Milan.

We soon learned in Parma why Mario did not reveal his vote in front of his parents: he had voted for the left. This was confided to us by his girlfriend, Serena, who lives in Parma. (She also spent time with us in California last year.) She and her mother, Mariella, were "Communists." The reason they were had more to do with family history than ideology. Mariella's brother had been killed by Fascists during World War II. Ever since, the family has been voting "Communist."

Mariella and Serena were afraid Berlusconi would increase University tuition and make it impossible for Serena and her three younger brothers to get degrees. They also feared he would dismantle Italy's national health care system.

Commenting on how hard President Clinton was working to get national health care in America, I asked why any politician would try to do away with an existing system. Serena noted with disgust, "Well, he (Berlusconi) owns a few insurance companies."

Our next stop was Perugia. There we met with an old friend, Annie, who had been as middle of the road as one could be. A devout Catholic, she had always voted for the Christian Democrats. With their scandalous demise, she was at a loss for a political home. She was not pleased with Berlusconi either.

In what seemed the most cogent analysis I heard from any Italian, she likened Berlusconi to Reagan. The often heard comparison of Berlusconi to Ross Perot was superficial, based only on the fact that both were billionaires, she said. Berlusconi, however, was making the familiar Reaganesque pitch: lower taxes on the rich and all will be right with the world.

"Why do we have to copy the United States in everything?" she asked rhetorically. Then, almost as if to check herself, she noted that almost everyone who has worked for Berlusconi has had good things to say about him. "He can't be all bad, can he?," she said, almost arguing with herself.

Edi, a woman we had known in Sacramento who moved to Perugia 10 years ago, said she was frustrated by Italian politics, much as she had been by American politics. She said Italians, whatever their ideological beliefs, are political

cynics.

"They talk politics, root for their favorites, cheer their side when it wins, but they never believe anything will change." She voted for the Green (environmentalist) party as a protest. "That's my way of participating but yet removing myself from the 'game' of Italian politics."

Her boyfriend, Cesare, said he had voted for Gianfranco Fini, the leader of the National Alliance and was not impressed with the allegations of fascism attributed to Fini or the party. Fini, he said, had offered "a little hope, even though I don't believe everything he says. In Italy the Fascists are not fascists, the Communists are not communists, even the center (the remains of the Christian Democrats) are not in the center. We are, all of us, largely burnt out on politicians — but we still love politics."

Italians may be disgusted and, yes, even cynical about government, but they are also guardedly optimistic.

"I think Berlusconi will be better for Italy than Reagan was for America," said Edi. "He may be better. He may be worse. Who knows? But right now I'm hopeful. I'll give him the benefit of the doubt."

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# Perspectives

Fiat's "Mickey Mouse" of 1934 could get as much as 78 miles to the gallon.

## Fiat 500 "Topolino"

by Don Fiore

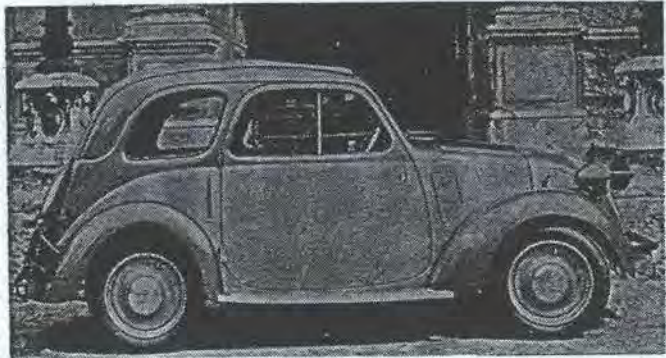
To millions of Americans, the familiar Volkswagen "beetle" stood as the very definition of economical motoring during the post World War II decades. With little to offer in looks and even less in leg room, it none the less held its own in a market where big, chrome-laden cars were the rule. A modest price tag, low maintenance costs and a legendary generosity in mpg's made the homely little German import the vehicle of choice for the cash-strapped. And while its compactness contradicted the tastes of the times, plenty of city dwellers were tempted to trade comfort for the car's winning edge in the battle for parking space.

The Beetle's many virtues allowed motorists to overlook its politically tainted past. The vehicle, as everyone knows, was a product of the Third Reich, created on direct orders from Adolf Hitler. But though the shadow of Schicklgruber lurked behind its logo, most people will agree that the concept of an inexpensive, reliable and exceptionally fuel-efficient "people's car" was one of the few good ideas the Fuhrer ever had. Even today, the devil is still grudgingly given his due through the popular belief that the VW was the first of the economy car breed.

Sorry, but it just isn't true. The

world's first commercially successful economy car, it turns out, made its appearance south of the Alps several years before the vaunted VW made its showroom debut. No dictator had to command this clean, little Italian original into existence, either. Its birth, instead, came about purely through the ingenuity and foresight of private enterprise.

Italy's automakers, like virtually every sector of the industrialized world, were left reeling from the global fallout of the Great Depression. The 1930's brought nothing but bad news to the boardrooms of *Itala*, *Lancia*, *Isotta Fraschini* and other big name builders who had just enjoyed a prosperous decade of exporting plush, high-priced luxury cars to anyone who could afford them. Now, they watched sales plummet as *nouveau riche* fortunes of the Roaring Twenties evaporated as swiftly as they'd been made. Even mighty Fiat, which accounted for the lion's share of the Kingdom's automotive output, suffered a staggering 62% drop in new car orders between 1929 and 1931. Growth in motor registrations was severely hindered, too, by consistently exorbitant



fuel prices.

But by 1932, Fiat had already developed a new strategy, as evidenced by the introduction of its fabled T.508 "*Bal-lila*", which offered both good mileage and graceful styling. Priced at around \$600, however, it was still an upper middle class proposition. More had to be even less, but the development of the definitive "economy car" had at last been set in motion.

Meanwhile, the concept was taking root in Germany, too, though the situation there was hardly as severe. When Hitler took charge of the country, German car ownership was nearly five times that in Italy. Yet, in the Fuhrer's estimation the figures were still too low, and in 1934, at his behest, a government commission was organized to oversee the design and production of a suitable car for the masses. Progress stalled,

(continued on p.28)

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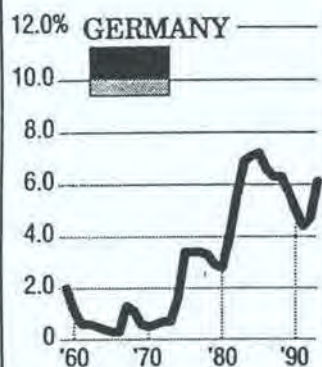




# Media Madness

**ITEM:** *The Far Side* cartoon, 3/16/94: "The Sandwich Mafia sends Luigi to sleep with the fourth-graders."

**COMMENT:** We were sort of getting used to the explanation that the word "mafia" is now a generic word just like "fascist" which now applies to any dictatorship. So why use Luigi instead of, say, Pedro or Shlomo? You can't have it both ways unless, of course, there really aren't any rules.



**ITEM:** Germany's unemployment rate is only 6%, according to the German Government.

**COMMENT:** Germany must be Germany. Italy, Britain, and France can go through recessions with 10% and 11% unemployment. But the Germans must be the engine of Europe. The truth is, Germany's unemployment rate is closer to 12%. It seems that the German statisticians do not blend in their hardscrabble eastern compatriots (the former East Germany). For if they did they would have to average 6% with 30% and that *ist verboten*. After all, total economic reintegration of the east into the fatherland is only a few minutes off schedule.

**ITEM:** *Good Morning America* host Charlie Gibson, during an interview with actress Geena Davis, is surprised that she was able to play a blue collar Arkansas woman in *Thelma & Louise*. After all, she is a quintessential WASP from Massachusetts.

**COMMENT:** Aren't most blue collar types in Arkansas WASPS? The media seem to think all Italian-Americans are Cousin Vinny types yet fail to realize that the Brahmins of Boston and the Beverly Hillbillies share the same genetics. Ms. Davis also amazed Mr. Gibson by her Angie interpretation in the bomb of the same name. He suggested that her "successful" ethnic interpretations are easy because she is "a blank slate".



**ITEM:** The Commission for Social Justice (Order, Sons of Italy) set a new precedent in short-circuiting stereotypes. CSJ officials filed an objection for a new trademark in the U.S. Patent Office for a beer label called DON VITO. The label was to appear with a distinctive Italian-American character with violin case and the motto "A Concerto for the Senses."

**COMMENT:** Joseph Scafetta, a CSJ chairman, (who is also a member of the Italic Studies Institute) is an attorney registered to practice before the U.S. Patent Office. In 1992, Scafetta noticed the application for the DON VITO label and filed an objection on behalf of the Sons of Italy that the proposed label would adversely affect members of that group. The brewers had 40 days to answer the objection but failed to do so. A judgement was rendered in favor of the CSJ.

*Bravi!* Nipping these gratuitous defamations in the bud is the best strategy. Apathy only compounds our work.

# Media Madness



**ITEM:** Filmmaker Frankie Coppola is asked why he doesn't increase sales of his vineyard wines by using his name. Frankie told the interviewer he felt uncomfortable using his movie fame to market his wine.

**COMMENT:** Frankie, Frankie. You didn't feel uncomfortable defaming 110 million Italic people around the world with three Mafia movies. Your corks aren't the only things that you have screwed.

**ITEM:** British rock singer George Michael tries to break his recording contract with SONY Records by claiming SONY's president has Mafia ties.

**COMMENT:** It was actually Michael's manager, Rob Kahane, who defamed SONY's president Tommy Mottola under oath in a London court. Said Kahane, "We've all seen *The Godfather*...I was afraid of [Mottola's] reputation, and a lot of his friends had vowels. You know, their last names end in a vowel."

Mr. Mottola, a musician himself, is a well-respected man within the music industry. One of his charitable positions is on the board of the New York City Police Athletic League.

This is another example of how "harmless" mafia movies affect the lives of Italic people



**ITEM:** A new play off-Broadway entitled *Avenue X*.

**COMMENT:** In our last issue we mentioned the play *The Avenue U Boys*, a wretched anti-Italic piece of trash masquerading as art. *Avenue X* is another experience in Guido-atics. Hopefully, these one-note playwrights are now reaching the end of Brooklyn's lettered streets.

**ITEM:** A Long Island school cancels a student play as insulting to Indians.

**COMMENT:** The play in question was *Peter Pan*. The feelings of Native Americans are being progressively assuaged. It will probably not be long before the Washington Redskins undergo a name change.

A while back, African-Americans were able to kill the *Amos 'n Andy Show* and Disney's *Song of the South* as demeaning to black culture.

Would Italians dare to object to Chico Marx, Mario & Luigi, and Tony's (*I breaka you face!*) Restaurant in *Lady and the Tramp*? Next time you visit the Magic Kingdom read the menu at Tony's — it is broken English at its best.

Hey, we all have to laugh at ourselves. Right?







# News of the Institute

## UNIVERSITY DONATION

Institute President Mary Ann Minucci announced that \$17,000 of a \$25,000 commitment toward a Chair in Italian Studies has been raised. The balance of the pledge will be raised with a cocktail party in Manhattan.

Louis Brevetti, the driving force behind this Italian Studies program, wishes to convey his thanks to the many Institute members who sent in donations. Though only a small part of the \$1.3 million necessary for a fully endowed Chair, this seed money will demonstrate to the State University of New York (SUNY) that the Italian-American community is committed to establishing a chair at the Purchase campus in Westchester County.

Contributions are still welcome. Call Lou at (516) 488-7400 or mail your check to ISI, PO Box 818, Floral Park, NY 11001 (specify "SUNY").

## 7th ANNUAL DINNER DANCE HELD

As usual, our annual fundraising dinner was held at the Waldorf=Astoria on Manhattan's ritzy Park Avenue.

This Saturday evening blacktie affair is the primary source of funds for the Institute. It enables ISI to subsidize its newsletter, carry on the Aurora Youth Program, and make videos about the Italian heritage.

As we went to press ticket sales had reached 600. A full report will appear in the next issue.

## ELECTION RESULTS

The annual Institute elections were held in February. All offices except the New York Financial Secretary went unopposed.

President: **Mary Ann Minucci** (1st time position)

Vice President: **Michael Romano\*** (1st time position)

Treasurer: **George Ricci** (incumbent)

Secretary of Programs & Administration: **John Mancini** (incumbent)

Financial Secretary: **Robert DeSiena** (incumbent)

\*Appointed to office replacing Michael Carbone

The Midwest pro-tem officers were officially elected for one year.

Vice President: **Allan Adducci**

Treasurer: **Anthony Farace**

Financial Secretary: **John Locallo**

Deputy Secretary of Programs: **Donald Fiore**



Mary Ann Minucci



Michael Romano

## OUR NEW PRESIDENT

Mary Ann Minucci is a trailblazer, the first woman officer of the Italic Studies Institute. Hard work is not foreign to Mary Ann, and she has been rewarded both in private industry where she is a senior vice president of a property maintenance firm and in the Institute where she has achieved the highest executive position. Her introduction to Italic Studies took place when she assisted now-governor Michael Downey in organizing one of the early dinner dances. Since then, Mary Ann has worked on nearly every Plenary Council activity learning firsthand about our organization and its goals. Her commitment to the Institute stems, in part, from a desire to pass that special pride to her sons and now her grandchildren. Being a young grandmom will give the Institute and her grandchildren that much more pleasure in her future accomplishments.

## CARBONE RESIGNS, ROMANO APPOINTED

Sometimes our day jobs interfere with our voluntary Institute chores. Such was the case when Plenary Council member Pat Grecco resigned his position as Social Chairman. Pat put in two years of hard work in making the Plenary Council a cohesive and friendly group.

Michael Carbone, the incumbent Vice President, had just been reelected when the Social Chairman position became available. Opting to allow new blood into the officer ranks, Mike stepped down to assume the Social Chair. That left the Institute with no V.P. However, the constitution allows the President to appoint a Vice President and that is what newly-elected President Mary Ann Minucci did. With the Council of Governors' consent she appointed Membership Chairman Michael Romano to the Veep spot. The system works!



## NEW GOVERNORS

Former President Albert Crecca and Plenary Council member Vincent Pizzulli were unanimously elected Governors by the Council of Governors. Al achieved the honor through his service as Vice President and President over the preceding four years. Vince was recognized for his tireless fundraising efforts since year one of the Institute's existence. Both men will serve two-year terms.

Governor Edward Riguardi completed a double term at the end of 1993 and was appointed to the Advisory Council.



Albert Crecca



Vincent Pizzulli

## MIDWEST ACTIVITIES

Council members Don Fiore and Bill Dal Cerro appeared on the *Hayner & MacNamee* radio show (WLS) in Chicago on March 12th. The two fielded audience questions and comments concerning Italian-American media image. This was Don's second talk show experience. He soloed on the *Roe Conn Show* last October. WLS broadcasts to five states and claims the largest share of the Midwest talk radio market.

The Institute and the *Chicago Sun-Times* have agreed to celebrate Italian-American Heritage Month this October with ten feature articles highlighting Italian achievements. This will probably be a first for the Italian-American community. The features will be printed in a supplement which will be made available to Chicago area schools. Don Fiore's persistence is making this possible.

## IN QUEST OF PROJECT ITALIA GRANTS

Our long-awaited promotional video on Italian immigration finally made it through editing. Running a taut 13 minutes, *Italian-American Visions* was written, directed, and produced by the most excellent filmmaker Tony De Nonno. Showing this untold tale to the membership and to the general public is now a priority. In that regard, we are pursuing possible PBS broadcasts (in conjunction with other DeNonno videos) and cable television viewing. Either way, or both, October is the target month.

With the video now a reality, the Institute needs to do some serious grant-writing. Foundations and government endowments provide funds to just such projects as ours. With outside funds we can expand *Italian-American Visions* into a full one-hour or more saga.

If you are or know professional grant writers, please let us know: (516) 488-7400.

## AN INSTITUTE BUILDING IN MANHATTAN?

The Council of Governors has agreed to explore the purchase of a mid-Manhattan brownstone. As currently envisioned, the property would be purchased by a new corporation in which the Institute would be the managing agent. Funds are to be raised through shares sold to investors. Anyone interested in receiving information when the plans are finalized should contact our Floral Park office: (516) 488-7400. Governors Michael Downey and Albert Crecca are chairman and vice chairman of the *Project Domus* ("home" in Latin), as it is called.

## YOUTH PROGRAM COMPLETED

The Level II Aurora class ended this past March at our classroom in Floral Park. Fourteen youngsters (5th & 6th graders) completed the six session course and received certificates. The hope is now that they will select Italian as their language in junior high school. Some kids enjoy the Saturday routine so much that our staff has been asked if a Level III is available (no). However, if we can convince other organizations to co-sponsor Aurora in their localities we might consider a summer camp program.

Organizations who are interested in using our unique program should call Janice Ricci at (516) 488-7400.



Some of the graduates of Level II. President Angelo Ferrara of Cellini Lodge (Sons of Italy), our co-sponsor, was in attendance (rear center).



# REVIEW

## War in Italy: 1943 - 1945

By Richard Lamb, (John Murray Pub., London)

General Sherman must have been an Italian.

For the twentieth century Italian fighting man, war has been a physical, psychological and spiritual hell. In addition to the horrors of combat, the descendants of the Caesars have had to contend with the condescension and contempt of enemy and ally alike.

In 1963, nearly two decades after World War Two, American naval historian Samuel Elliot Morrison joyfully referred to Italy's warships as that "dago navy." Despite capturing over 450,000 Austrian troops at the pivotal battle of Vittorio Veneto in World War I, the Italians are today best remembered for the retreat of Caporetto.

Surprisingly, Richard Lamb is not a member of the dagger and duplicity school of Italian war journalism. He takes great pains to avoid the usual profiles in cowardice served up by most British and American authors. German cruelty toward her erstwhile ally is amply documented. American ambivalence to the Italians is duly noted. And, in a first for a son of the Sceptered Isle, British hooliganism in occupied southern Italy is freely acknowledged. Unlike Denis Mack Smith and his ilk, Lamb writes an evenhanded account of Italy "in her saddest hour." His portraits of partisan leaders and lapsed fascists are illuminating in their candor. Lamb does not flinch from portraying the Badoglio and the Pertinis (Sandro Pertini, former partisan and later president of Italy) in all their stupidity and brutality.

The author's familiarity with Italy, her language and history undoubtedly played a part in shaping his refreshingly open attitude. For example, although he considers Benito Mussolini more of a mountebank than a tyrant, Lamb readily admits that "neither Mussolini nor his Salo' ministers were anti-Semitic." Lamb states what is too often ignored in American history books and World War II melodramas, i.e. the unvarnished

**"Had it not been for Mussolini's puppet government at Salo', Italy would have been treated worse even than Poland."**

truth: "Many Fascist officials, and the Italian people generally, protected the Jews from what would otherwise have been wholesale slaughter. Indeed, Mussolini, his Minister for Home Affairs, Buffarini Guidi, and many of the Fascist administration tried to halt the deportations."

In stark contrast to this open display of humanity, however strange its source, is the horror of the Ardeatine Caves. Lamb writes a moving account of the sickening retribution exacted by Hitler, Himmler, Kesselring and Kappler (head of the Gestapo in Rome) for the Italian bomb attack on the infamous

3rd battalion SS Police Regiment. Initially, *der Fuhrer* ordered that fifty Italians be butchered for every German killed. After a strenuous argument, the ratio was reduced to a more manageable ten to one. The author recounts how the brave Teutonic knights shot their bound and kneeling Italian victims through the neck. Bodies were heaped on bodies as the drunken German soldiers, oblivious to the shrieks of the dying,



**Il Duce among his new Republican troops.  
The alternative would have been worse Nazi terror.**

savagely shredded human flesh with pinpoint precision.

These and other atrocities anguished Mussolini. His protests to Hitler reached fever pitch at one point. However, the Duce's power was negligible and he did not want to overplay his hand lest it result in further bloodshed. For Mussolini knew of the enormous German capacity for revenge. How ironic that the fallen Fascist dictator should seek to stay the coolly efficient German juggernaut from carrying out a worldwide vendetta against the very Italians who now opposed his puppet state.

Lamb makes no excuses for Marshall Badoglio and his band of bunglers. He wonders why the darling of the House of Savoy fiddled while Rome burned, and the Germans unleashed their wrath on the hapless Italian populace. And why did the Italian Army disintegrate all at once? The ineffective leadership of Badoglio and his King after the 1943 Armistice sealed Italy's fate. Inaction and vacillation earned the undying enmity of the German barbarians and the disrespect of Italy's new "allies."

The author notes that unlike Hitler, "who was willing to allow Germany to be destroyed," Mussolini "searched desperately to find a way out for Italy (and Europe)." Perhaps if the Fascist Grand Council had not undermined their leader and set the stage for his downfall, Mussolini might have been able to negotiate a separate peace or found a more palatable means of snatching a stalemate from the jaws of defeat.

It is an intriguing subject for future research. -RAI



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### Liberation (from p. 10)

resisted were shot. Meanwhile, on September 12, 1943, Mussolini was rescued by German commandos. He was flown to Munich and later East Prussia, where he met with Hitler and pledged to return to Italy to reorganize the Fascist Party, raise a new Italian army and continue the war at Germany's side. On September 23rd, Mussolini returned to Italy and soon formed the Republic of Salo'. Most of central Italy was now under German occupation as a result of Badoglio's lack of planning.

Mussolini no doubt realized that the war was lost. Yet he felt it was his duty to return to Italy in order to protect the Italian people from Hitler's vengeance. Although his government was clearly a satellite of Germany, his regime was able to maintain some semblance of autonomy for Italy, sparing it the worst privations of Nazi occupation. He was able to arrange for the return of nearly all Italian prisoners of war from forced labor in Germany. He succeeded in restoring order and in raising an effective and loyal fighting force of several hundred thousand men, commanded by Marshal Graziani. A shortage of supplies and a lingering German distrust prevented the forces of the Salo' Republic from reaching their full potential. Nonetheless, they were instrumental in defending, for a time,



Tito's communists conspired with Italian communists to "liberate" parts of northeastern Italy for annexation to Yugoslavia.

Italy's northeastern border from Tito's Communist forces and holding the line against a French intrusion, while combating the internal partisan threat.

Overwhelming numerical and material superiority made an Allied victory inevitable. Mussolini was ultimately captured by Italian Communist partisans and murdered. In retrospect, the "liberation" of Italy by the Allies must be regarded as the vocabulary of wartime propaganda. It was,

quite bluntly, an invasion aided and abetted by internal revolt.

If there is further need to demonstrate the true meaning of this "liberation" let us remember that the Allied Powers also liberated Italy from all of its African colonies (Libya, Abyssinia, Eritrea, and Somalia), the Dodencanese Islands of the eastern Mediterranean, and the Istrian peninsula (now Slovenia and Croatia) which had been Italic since Roman times. It was a liberation that unleashed the terrorist forces of Communism and the Mafia on a defeated Axis power. In fact, the Badoglio Government achieved little if anything positive in its revolt and change of alliance. Such was the treatment of "liberated" Italy that even leaders of the Italian-American community fought against the ratification of the harsh peace treaty in the U.S. Senate. \*\*\*\*



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Ed Bonardi, President

## Fiat 500 (from p. 18)

though, when embarrassed Nazi officials discovered that Josef Ganz, the project's esteemed and capable technical chief, was actually a Jew. Everything was put on hold until a properly Aryan replacement could be found. The position eventually went to Dr. Ferdinand Porsche, but it wasn't until 1936 that the first Volkswagen prototypes were delivered for field testing.

That same year, Fiat engineers Dante Giacosa and Franco Fessia unveiled their own masterpiece in miniature — a lightweight, four cylinder subcompact that revolutionized the automotive industry. Even the car's name broke old patterns. Where earlier offerings from the Fiat line were tagged with such aggressively Fascist labels as "Ardita" and "Ballila", this new machine was wryly called "Topolino" (Mickey Mouse). Size alone didn't account for such a singular christening, for the *tipo 500*, as the car was technically identified, also proved to be as quick-spirited and popular as its carefree little namesake.

Just under 11' in length, the *Topolino's* miniscule dimensions were deceiving. For one thing, its roll-top design, running boards and broad front grille created a convincing impression of full-sized elegance that was not totally illusory. A judiciously arranged interior allowed 6-footers to slip behind the wheel with astonishing ease. In fact, big car amenities in an incredibly trim

package helped make the Mouse a best seller both in and out of Italy. But while its hydraulic brakes, sliding windows, mechanical turn signals and recessed door handles were attractive selling points, the 500's real lures were price and performance. Italians could drive the basic model home for a mere \$250, a steal by any standard (in 1937, the Reich was charging Germans \$400 in advance for their yet unbuilt Volkswagens).

Horsepower was admittedly modest, but the 45 mph top speed could be reached and held at length without the slightest trace of stress or strain. For tight maneuvers, the spry *Topolino* was a natural, needing no more than 28' to do a full 360 degrees. And fuel savings were absolutely glorious. 40 mpg was routine even under brutal conditions, but frugal driving practices easily upped that figure to the mid-50's mark. One officially monitored test run showed that an utterly phenomenal 78 mpg was not impossible to attain!

An instant winner at home, the standard 500 and its subsequent variants went on to take the world by storm. By 1937, the French Post Office was ordering whole fleets of *Topolini* for its mail carriers, and an average of sixty per week were selling in England at an amply profitable \$550 apiece. Within three years the Mouse was the best selling import in the United States. Foreign imitations were suddenly springing up everywhere, with every major car-building nation in Europe introducing its own version of the pint-sized, gas-sparing runabout.

Even racing enthusiasts quickly took to the novel mini-car as a delightful toy with which to experiment, and souped-up 500's were soon competing at Le Mans, Monte Carlo, the Mille Miglia and Brooklands, where British fans rooted for the Mouse by waving pieces of cheese.

On the eve of the Second World



By 1940, the Mouse was the best selling import in the United States.

War, more than 83,000 *Topolini* were swarming across the planet. Production naturally toned down to more moderate levels upon Italy's entry into the conflict, and dropped steadily as the war progressed. Yet, despite labor strikes, material shortages, Italy's military collapse, and the political and economic chaos of the immediate post-war years, Fiat managed to churn out an additional 38,000 *Topolini* between 1940 and 1948. From that point, the Mouse bred like a rabbit. Total production figures approached half a million when the durable 500 was finally retired from the company catalog to make room for a new generation of economy cars in 1955.

\*\*\*\*

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