JEWS IN ITALY UNDER FASCIST AND NAZI RULE

*Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922–1945,* brings to light the Italian-Jewish experience from the start of Mussolini’s prime ministership through the end of the Second World War. Challenging the myth of Italian benevolence during the Fascist period, the authors investigate the treatment of Jews by Italians during the Holocaust and the native versus foreign roots of Italian Fascist anti-Semitism. Each essay in this volume illustrates a different aspect of Italian Jewry under Fascist and Nazi rule. Areas of inquiry include the role of the Catholic Church with special reference to Pope Pius XII, Mussolini’s attitude, and anti-Jewish persecution. Included also is an examination of cover images and articles from the Italian racist newspaper, *La Difesa della Razza,* intended to lay bare the influence of the Italian media on the general Italian public.

Joshua D. Zimmerman is an associate professor of history and the Eli and Diana Zborowski Professorial Chair in Interdisciplinary Holocaust Studies at Yeshiva University in New York City. He is the author of *Poles, Jews and the Politics of Nationality: The Bund and the Polish Socialist Party in Late Tsarist Russia, 1892–1914* (2004), and editor of *Contested Memories: Poles and Jews during the Holocaust and Its Aftermath* (2003).
Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922–1945

Edited by

Joshua D. Zimmerman
Yeshiva University
For Ruthi
CONTENTS

Acknowledgments xi
Abbreviations xiii
List of Contributors xiv
Map 1 The Jews of Italy, 1938 xx
Map 2 Principal Centers of Anti-Jewish Persecution, 1938–1943 xxi

Introduction 1
Joshua D. Zimmerman

PART ONE: ITALIAN JEWRY FROM LIBERALISM TO FASCISM

1 The Double Bind of Italian Jews: Acceptance and Assimilation 19
Alexander Stille

2 Italian Jewish Identity from the Risorgimento to Fascism, 1848–1938 35
Mario Toscano

3 Mussolini and the Jews on the Eve of the March on Rome 55
Giorgio Fabre

PART TWO: RISE OF RACIAL PERSECUTION

4 Characteristics and Objectives of the Anti-Jewish Racial Laws in Fascist Italy, 1938–1943 71
Michele Sarfatti

5 The Exclusion of Jews from Italian Academies 81
Annalisa Capristo

6 The Damage to Italian Culture: The Fate of Jewish University Professors in Fascist Italy and After, 1938–1946 96
Roberto Finzi
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The Impact of Anti-Jewish Legislation on Everyday Life and the Response of Italian Jews, 1938–1943</td>
<td>Iael Nidam-Orvieto</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The Children of Villa Emma at Nonantola</td>
<td>Klaus Voigt</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Anti-Jewish Persecution and Italian Society</td>
<td>Fabio Levi</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>PART THREE: CATASTROPHE – THE GERMAN OCCUPATION, 1943–1945</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The Shoah in Italy: Its History and Characteristics</td>
<td>LilianaPicciotto</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>The Persecution of Jews in Two Regions of German-Occupied Northern Italy, 1943–1945: Operationszone Alpenvorland and Operationszone Adriatisches Küstenland</td>
<td>Cinzia Villani</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Map 3 <em>Italy and the two German-controlled Operationszonen</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Map 4 <em>The two Operationszonen in detail with provincial capitals</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>PART FOUR: THE VATICAN AND THE HOLOCAUST IN ITALY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>The Papal Response to Nazi and Fascist Anti-Semitism: From Pius XI to Pius XII</td>
<td>Frank J. Coppa</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Pius XII and the Rescue of Jews in Italy: Evidence of a Papal Directive</td>
<td>Susan Zuccotti</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Contents

**PART FIVE: AFTERMATH: CONTEMPORARY ITALY AND HOLOCAUST MEMORY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>The Rescued and the Rescuers in Private and Public Memories</td>
<td>Anna Bravo</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Return of the Repressed: Italian Film and Holocaust Memory</td>
<td>Millicent Marcus</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>The Secret Histories of Roberto Benigni’s <em>Life Is Beautiful</em></td>
<td>Ruth Ben-Ghiat</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Index**  

351
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book was made possible by a generous grant from the Eli and Diana Zborowski Chair in Interdisciplinary Holocaust Studies at Yeshiva University. The majority of essays were first presented at the international Holocaust conference on Italian Jewry held at Yeshiva University in October 2002. My heartfelt thanks go to the participants, to the contributors to this volume, and to those who helped in organizing it, particularly my wife, Ruth Servi Zimmerman, who acted as conference secretary, as well as to professors Arthur Hyman and Jeffrey Gurock of Yeshiva University’s Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies.

For the preparation and selection of essays for this volume, I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Borden W. Painter, professor of history and director of Italian Programs at Trinity College, who generously gave of his time by agreeing to read and provide feedback on the entire manuscript. I am also grateful to the anonymous Cambridge outside readers who provided a valuable critique of the manuscript, as well as to Jonathan Steinberg, professor of history at the University of Pennsylvania, for his valuable comments and feedback. I would also like to thank, in particular, Sandro Servi, who gave freely and generously of his time in responding to questions on various aspects of Italian Jewish history and who provided valuable suggestions at the initial planning stages of the conference. In addition, Giorgio Fabre and Michele Sarfatti were extraordinarily helpful in their prompt and thorough replies to pointed questions on twentieth-century Italian history in general and on Italian Jewish history in particular.

Last but not least, I would like to acknowledge the exceptional work of Loredana M. Melissari, who translated chapters 3, 4, 9, 11, and 13 and a few passages from chapter 9, and of Antony Shugaar, who translated chapters 2 and 7, as well as the conclusion to chapter 13. Finally, Maurizio Molinari, Ruth Servi Zimmerman, and Cinzia Villani helped keep errors in the Italian to a minimum by kindly agreeing to proofread parts of the manuscript.
ABBREVIATIONS

CDEC  Center for Contemporary Jewish Documentation, Milan
Delasem  Delegation for the Assistance of Jewish Immigrants
PCI  Italian Communist Party
Questori  Provincial police chiefs
RSHA  Central Office for the Security of the German Reich
RSI  Italian Social Republic/Republic of Salò
LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Ruth Ben-Ghiat is associate professor in the Departments of Italian Studies and History at New York University. She is the author of Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922–45 (2001) and of many book chapters and articles on Italian Fascist culture and its memory. She is also coeditor, with Mia Fuller, of Italian Colonialism: A Reader (forthcoming, 2005). She is currently writing a book on Italian prisoners of war and the transition from dictatorship to be published by Princeton University Press.

Anna Bravo taught social history at Turin University and is currently an independent scholar living in Turin. Her research and writing deal with gender history, wartime armed and civil resistance, and deportation and genocide. She is co-author of In guerra senza armi. Storia di donne 1940–1945 (2000) [In the War without Arms: A History of Women, 1940–1945] and has written numerous distinguished articles and book chapters on Italy and modern memory of the Holocaust.

Annalisa Capristo graduated in philosophy at the University of Rome “La Sapienza” and specialized in library management at the School of the Vatican Library. She obtained an annual scholarship from the Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Storici, founded by Benedetto Croce in Naples, and a triennial scholarship from the Accademia nazionale dei Lincei in Rome. She is currently librarian at the Center for American Studies in Rome. Capristo is the author of L’espulsione degli ebrei dalle accademie italiane (2002) [The Expulsion of Jews from the Italian Academies] and has published in La Rassegna mensile di Israel.

Frank J. Coppa is professor of history at St. John’s University in New York, director of their University Symposium on Vatican Studies, and director of the university’s doctoral degree in modern world history. Coppa is the author of a series of biographies, including Pope Pius IX: Crusader in a Secular Age (1979) and Cardinal Giacomo Antonelli and Papal Politics in European Affairs (1990). More recently he published the fifth and final volume in the Longman History of the Papacy, titled The Modern Papacy (1998), and in 1999 he served as editor-in-chief and contributor to Encyclopedia of the Vatican and Papacy and Controversial
Concordats: The Vatican’s Relations with Napoleon, Mussolini, and Hitler. He has reviewed all the popes and anti-popes for the Encyclopedia Britannica’s online references to the papacy and all the popes from the Renaissance through Gregory XVI for the new edition of The Catholic Encyclopedia. He has also served as general editor and contributor to Great Popes Through History (2002) and published The Papacy Confronts the Modern World (2003) in the Avil series.

Giorgio Fabre received his PhD in Italian literature at the University of Rome. He is a journalist and since 1990 has worked for the Rome-based Panorama magazine. He has published several books and essays that have focused on Italian intellectuals, the Jews, censorship, and the police, especially in the Fascist period. His most recent books are L’elenco. Censura fascista, editoria e autori ebrei (1998) [The List: Fascist Censorship, Publishing and Jewish Authors] and Il contratto. Mussolini editore di Hitler (2004).

Roberto Finzi is professor of economic history at the University of Trieste. His research focuses on eighteenth-century economic thought, the history of agriculture and agronomy, the history of the climate, and the history of socialist movements and socialist thought. He is also interested in the Jewish problem under varied aspects and has published numerous essays, one of which was published in book form in English under the title Antisemitism: From Its European Roots to the Holocaust (1999). His book L’università italiana e le leggi antiebraiche (1997; 2nd ed., 2003) [The Italian University and the Anti-Jewish Laws] is the first comprehensive study of anti-Semitic persecution in the Italian universities. His works have been translated into French, English, Japanese, and Spanish.


Fabio Levi is professor of contemporary history at the University of Turin. His first studies were devoted to the industrial development of modern Italy. Since the 1980s, Levi has focused on the history of Jews in Italy. He has published six books, including L’ebreo in oggetto. L’applicazione della normativa antiebraica a Torino, 1938–1943 (1991) [The Implementation of Anti-Jewish Laws in Turin, 1938–1943], L’identità imposta. Un padre ebreo di fronte alle leggi razziali di Mussolini
xvi

List of Contributors


Millicent Marcus is Mariano DiVito Professor of Italian Studies and director of the Center of Italian Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. Her specializations include Italian cinema and medieval literature. She is the author of An Allegory of Form: Literary Self-Consciousness in the 'Decamerone' (1979), Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism (1986), Filmmaking by the Book: Italian Cinema and Literary Adaptation (1993), and After Fellini: National Cinema in the Postmodern Age (2002), as well as numerous articles on Italian literature and film. She is now conducting research on the recent surge of Italian films that deal with the subject of the Shoah and is working on a translation of the precursor text to Levi's Survival at Auschwitz.

Iael Nidam-Orvieto received her PhD in 2003 at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where she teaches Holocaust history at the Institute of Contemporary Jewry. She was a research fellow at the Yad Vashem International Research Institute in Jerusalem in 2004, and, in 2005, will be a research fellow at the University of Pisa and at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Nidam-Orvieto has published numerous articles on Italian Jews during the Fascist period and on the rescue of children during the Holocaust as well as edited several Italian Jewish diaries and memoirs. She is preparing two books for publication: “The Villa Emma Children – a Story of Rescue During the Holocaust,” and “Between Discrimination and Persecution: The Reaction of Italian Jewry to an Ever Increasing Crisis.”

Liliana Picciotto was born in Egypt in 1947. She studied in Milan, where she received her PhD in political science at the State University. Since 1969 she has worked at the Center for Contemporary Jewish Documentation in Milan, where she is director of Historical Archives, and as a researcher in contemporary Jewish history, Fascism, the period of the German Occupation, and the Shoah in Italy. She also serves on the editorial board of La Rassegna mensile di Israel, the journal for Jewish studies of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities. She is the author of, among others, L'occupazione tedesca e gli ebrei di Roma (1979) [The German Occupation and the Jews of Rome]; Il libro della memoria. Gli ebrei deportati dall'Italia 1943–1945 (1991; 3rd rev. ed., 2002) [The Book of Memory: The Jews Deported from Italy, 1943–1945], which was awarded the Acqui Storia prize and received special mention at the Premio Viareggio; Gli ebrei a Milano. Persecuzione e deportazione 1943–1945 (1992) [The Jews of Milan: Persecution and Deportation], and editor
List of Contributors


Sandro Servi graduated from the University of Florence in the Department of Philosophy, where he completed a thesis on “Psychological Contributions to the Study of Antisemitism in Fascist Italy.” Between the 1980s and 1995, he held annual seminars at the University of Florence on Judaism and anti-Semitism. Since 1995, Servi has been a Fellow of the Jerusalem Fellows Program (Mandel School of Jerusalem). In 1997, he founded Rimmonim: Jewish Publishing and Communications, dedicated to the dissemination of Jewish traditional texts and educational materials in the Italian language. He is recipient of two grants from the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture for his project to prepare an Italian edition of the Sefer ha-Aggadah by Bialyk and Rawitski and is editor and co-translator of the first Italian edition of Adin Steinsaltz’s introduction to Talmud, Cos’è il Talmud (2004). Servi is currently coordinator of educational projects for the Union of Italian Jewish Communities.

Alexander Stille is a distinguished author of three books. He graduated from Yale University in 1978 and received an MA from the Columbia School of Journalism in 1983. He was an assistant editor at Mondadori in Milan and, between 1990 and 1993, a freelance correspondent in Italy. He is the author of the prize-winning Benevolence and Betrayal: Five Italian Jewish Families under Fascism (1991), Excellent Cadavers: The Mafia and the Death of the First Italian Republic (1995), and, most recently, The Future of the Past (2002), a book about the ways in which technology both preserves and destroys the past.

Mario Toscano is associate professor of the history of political movements and parties at the University of Rome “La Sapienza.” He has written widely on Italian Jewry. He is the author of, among others, La Porta di Sion. L’Italia e
List of Contributors


Cinzia Villani was born in Bolzano, Italy. She received her degree from the University of Bologna, where she wrote a thesis on the history of the Jews in South Tyrol. Since 1988, Villani has been teaching at an Italian middle school in Bolzano. Her area of research includes racial persecution and the Final Solution in the provinces of Belluno, Bolzano, Trento, and Trieste as well as the history of the concentration camp of Bolzano. From September 1999 to January 2001, she worked for the Italian government’s Commission of Inquiry into the Confiscation of Jewish Property in Italy, 1938–1945. She is the author of Ebrei fra leggi razziste e deportazioni nelle province di Bolzano, Trento e Belluno (1996) [Jews between the Racial Laws and Deportation from the Provinces of Bolzano, Trento and Belluno], which appeared in German as Zwischen Rassengesetzen und Deportation. Juden in Südtirol, im Trentino und in der Provinz Belluno 1933–1945 (2003), and co-author of Anche a volerlo raccontare è impossibile. Scritti e testimonianze sul lager di Bolzano (1999) [It is Impossible Even If We Wanted to Tell it: Writings and Testimonies on the Concentration Camp of Bolzano].

Klaus Voigt is an independent scholar in Berlin. He received his PhD at the Free University in Berlin, where he wrote a thesis on Italian humanism. In the 1980s, Voigt headed a project on refugees in wartime Italy as a research fellow at the University of Berlin. He has taught at the University of Nancy in France, Paris University, the University of Bologna, and the European University in Florence. He is the author of, among others, Il rifugio precario. Gli esuli in Italia dal 1933 al 1945 [The Precarious Refuge: Exiles in Italy, 1933–1945] 2 vols. (1993–1996).

Joshua D. Zimmerman is an associate professor of history and the Eli and Diana Zborowski Professorial Chair in Interdisciplinary Holocaust Studies at Yeshiva
List of Contributors

University in New York City. He is the author of *Poles, Jews and the Politics of Nationality: The Bund and the Polish Socialist Party in Late Tsarist Russia, 1892–1914* (2004), and editor of *Contested Memories: Poles and Jews during the Holocaust and Its Aftermath* (2003).

MAP 1. The Jews of Italy, 1938.
The borders of Italy, 1938

Yugoslav territory annexed in 1941
Regions in which labor and internment camps were planned but never built due to the collapse of Italy in July 1943.

MAP 2. Principal Centers of Anti-Jewish Persecution, 1938–1943.