Mussolini believed that in numbers lay the key to national, economic, political and military strength. Between 1925 and 1943 the Italian Fascist regime sought to translate that belief into policy, and embarked upon a ‘demographic battle’ to increase the Italian population. Using a combination of propaganda, incentives and penalties, the Fascists waged campaigns to increase the birth rate and decrease infant mortality, to establish demographic colonies in Italy, Libya, and Ethiopia, and to prevent emigration and urbanization. Ultimately they became concerned about demographic ‘quality’ and introduced laws against miscegenation with Africans and marriage with Jews.

Dictating demography is a detailed examination of that policy. Based on archival, legislative and journalistic sources, it also shows how the Fascists used statistics to mould public opinion and to form policy, and demonstrates the ways in which population theory at the time both reflected and informed official positions. Carl Ipsen argues that Mussolini’s demographic policy can tell us something about the contradictory nature of Fascism itself – at once modern and anti-modern, revolutionary and reactionary – and describes the Fascist efforts to mould the Italian population as a telling example of the failed attempt to create a totalitarian Fascist utopia.
Dictating demography
Recent work in social, economic and demographic history has revealed much
that was previously obscure about societal stability and change in the past. It
has also suggested that crossing the conventional boundaries between these
branches of history can be very rewarding.

This series exemplifies the value of interdisciplinary work of this kind, and
includes books on topics such as family, kinship and neighbourhood; welfare
 provision and social control; work and leisure; migration; urban growth; and
legal structures and procedures, as well as more familiar matters. It demon-
strates that, for example, anthropology and economics have become as close
intellectual neighbours to history as have political philosophy or biography.

For a full list of titles in the series, please see end of book
Dictating Demography

The problem of population in Fascist Italy

CARL IPSEN

Indiana University
Contents

List of figures  page ix
List of tables  x
Acknowledgments  xii
Table for lira conversion to 1990 $US  xiv
List of abbreviations  xvi

Introduction  1

1 The background: Fascism, European population policy, European demography, and the problem of population in Liberal Italy  5
  Fascism  5
  Population, policy, and statistics in late modern Europe  12
  The problem of population in Liberal Italy  33

2 The organization of totalitarian demography  50
  Migration  51
  The demographic battle  65
  Statistics  78

3 The realization of totalitarian demography I: Spatial population management  90
  Emigration  91
  Internal migration  94
  Anti-urbanism  117
  Colonization in Africa  119
  Emigration and repatriation in Imperial Italy  135

4 The realization of totalitarian demography II: Quantitative and qualitative population management  145
  The protection of motherhood and infancy  147
## Contents

- Pronatalism  
  Demography and race  
  173  
  184  

5 The measurement of totalitarian demography  
  Population statistics  
  Population theory  
  195  
  195  
  216  

Conclusion  
  253  

Bibliography  
  256  

Index  
  276
Figures

1.1 Population of major European countries (except Russia) at censuses, 1800–1950  
   page 14
1.2 Population of Europe (including Russia) and European Russia, 1800–1950  
   15
1.3 Crude death rates for major European countries,  
   c. 1855–1940  
   16
1.4 Infant mortality rates in major European countries,  
   c. 1850–1935  
   17
1.5 Italian demographic transition  
   19
1.6 Crude birth rates for major European countries, 1850–1940  
   20
1.7 “Old” emigration  
   22
1.8 “New” emigration  
   23
1.9 Italian emigration and repatriation, 1876–1942  
   24
1.10 Population of major European cities, c. 1800–1940  
    25
4.1a Italian IMR (north)  
    167
4.1b Italian IMR (center)  
    168
4.1c Italian IMR (south and islands)  
    169
Tables

2.1 Total (gross) Italian immigration to the US, 1900–1930  page 55
2.2 Italian infant mortality 69
3.1 Internal migration 101
3.2 Migration for internal colonization 101
3.3 Primary regions of inter-regional temporary emigration as a percentage (>10) of total inter-regional migration 102
3.4 Primary regions of inter-regional temporary emigration as a percentage (>10) of total inter-regional migration 103
3.5 Net internal migration based on population registers 104
3.6 Primary regions of inter-regional emigration for internal colonization as a per cent of total 106
3.7 Primary regions of inter-regional immigration for internal colonization as a per cent of total 106
3.8 Mussolini 108
3.9 Agro Pontino 112
3.10 Population figures, 1981 116
3.11 Families relocated in Tripolitania – annual totals 126
3.12 Population of Italian Africa 127
3.13 Colonial families present in Libya as reported in parliamentary reports on the Ministry of Colonies budget and Segré 1978 128
3.14 Migration of workers to Italian East Africa 130
3.15 Families transferred to Italian East Africa 133
3.16 Industrial and agricultural workers migrating to Germany for temporary work as a result of special agreements 138
4.1 ONMI budget 147
4.2 Regional frequency of ONMI institutions on 31 December 1939 156
4.3 Total stillbirths and in relation to live births 170
4.4 Maternal mortality 172
List of tables

4.5 Gran Consiglio del Fascismo fertility, 1937 179
4.6 Crude marital and birth rates 183
5.1 ISTAT budget (total expenses) 197
5.2 Female fertility, 1931 202
5.3 Total fertility rate and average number of children per marriage 202
Acknowledgments

The present work was researched and written during a period of several years most of which I spent in Rome. I have a number of organizations to thank for this opportunity. As a doctoral candidate at the University of California at Berkeley I received the University of California at Berkeley Italian–American Award, a Fulbright grant, a National Institute of Health Traineeship (thanks to the then called Graduate Group in Demography), the Allan Sharlin Memorial Award (Institute of International Studies), the Berkeley Science Historians Award and a Humanities Graduate Research Grant. Recalling that period I would also like to thank my doctoral committee: Jan de Vries, Richard A. Webster, Ronald Lee and John Lesch. I completed the rewriting of the book while a guest, as visiting professor, of the National Institute of Population Research in Rome (Italian National Research Council) and its director Antonio Golini. Final revisions were made as an assistant professor at Indiana University. Thanks to all of them.

Any errors of fact or interpretation are of course mine, but I would like to thank especially those friends and colleagues who devoted time and concentration to any of various drafts and who gave me valuable advice. First I would like to thank those who read and commented on the entire text in one form or several: Massimo Livi Bacci at Florence (who also shared with me his personal library and recollections of his father), Victoria De Grazia at Columbia, Jay Winter at Cambridge, an anonymous reader at Cambridge University Press, Alexander Nützenadel (then at the German Historical Institute in Rome), Alexander De Grand (North Carolina State), and my father David C. Ipsen. Others who have read various sections and made useful observations include: Jeff Bale (fellow, Columbia), Ruth Ben Ghiat (Fordham), Mario Biagioli (Harvard), Bernardo Colombo (Padua), Carlo Corsini (Florence), Nora Federici (Rome), Luigi Goglia (Padua), Maria Guercio...
Acknowledgments

(Ministry of Cultural Affairs), Annunziata Nobile (Naples) and Claudio Pogliano (Trieste). Some final touches were achieved thanks to the discussions I had with graduate students in my Fascist Italy seminar at Indiana University.

I would also like to thank the directors and employees of the various institutes where I conducted my research and the offices that gave me technical (and in some cases financial) assistance. The first category includes the Central State Archive (Rome), the Historical Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Rome), the Central Archive of the Central Statistics Institute (Rome), the Allessandrina Library (Rome), the Library of the Chamber of Deputies (Rome), the library of the business faculty (economia e commercio, Florence), the Library of Modern and Contemporary History (Rome), and the National Central Libraries of Florence and Rome. The second category instead includes the Commission for Cultural Exchange between Italy and the US in Rome (Fulbright Commission, director Carlo Chiarrenza), the Office for the History of Science and Technology at Berkeley (director then John Heilbron), the National Institute for Population Research (Rome), and the Department of West European Studies at Indiana University (director Peter Bondanella). Finally I thank Cynthia De Nardi who came along for the ride and to whom I dedicate this book.
Table for lira conversion to 1990

US dollars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>10 lire</th>
<th>1,000 lire</th>
<th>1,000,000 lire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1861–70</td>
<td>42.16</td>
<td>4,216</td>
<td>4,216,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>39.09</td>
<td>3,909</td>
<td>3,909,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1872–4</td>
<td>33.03</td>
<td>3,303</td>
<td>3,303,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875–81</td>
<td>35.38</td>
<td>3,538</td>
<td>3,538,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>37.54</td>
<td>3,754</td>
<td>3,754,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883–1906</td>
<td>38.18</td>
<td>3,818</td>
<td>3,818,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907–14</td>
<td>34.67</td>
<td>3,467</td>
<td>3,467,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>31.71</td>
<td>3,171</td>
<td>3,171,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>25.34</td>
<td>2,534</td>
<td>2,534,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>17.91</td>
<td>1,791</td>
<td>1,791,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918–19</td>
<td>12.75</td>
<td>1,275</td>
<td>1,275,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>9.63</td>
<td>963</td>
<td>963,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921–4</td>
<td>8.13</td>
<td>813</td>
<td>813,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925–7</td>
<td>6.94</td>
<td>694</td>
<td>694,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928–30</td>
<td>7.75</td>
<td>775</td>
<td>775,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931–3</td>
<td>9.07</td>
<td>907</td>
<td>906,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934–6</td>
<td>9.71</td>
<td>971</td>
<td>970,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937–8</td>
<td>8.11</td>
<td>811</td>
<td>810,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>7.48</td>
<td>748</td>
<td>747,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>640,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>5.53</td>
<td>553</td>
<td>553,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>479,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>285,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
This table is constructed using the “coefficients by which to multiply lira values for the years (1861–1990) in order to translate them into 1990 lire” as based on the cost of living (ISTAT, Annuario statistico 1991, p. 543) and
the 1990 period average of 1,198 lire per US$ (IMF 1992, p. 290). The periods were chosen so that within each the smallest of the abovementioned annual coefficients was no less less than 90% of the largest.
Abbreviations

AOI Africa orientale italiana (Italian East Africa = Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia)
ATI Azienda tabacchi italiana (Italian Tobacco Company)
CGE Commissariato generale dell’emigrazione (General Emigration Commission)
CISP Comitato italiano per lo studio dei problemi della popolazione (Italian Committee for the Study of Population Problems)
CORI Commissione permanente per il rimpatrio degli italiani all’estero (Permanent Commission for the Repatriation of Italians Abroad)
CMC Commissariato per le migrazioni e la colonizzazione (Commission for Migration and Colonization)
CPMI Comitato permanente per le migrazioni interne (Permanent Committee on Internal Migration)
CSS Consiglio superiore di statistica (Statistics Council)
Demorazza Direzione generale della demografia e della razza (General Directory of Demography and Race)
DGIE Direzione generale degli italiani all’estero (General Directorship of Italians Abroad)
DIRSTAT Direzione generale della statistica (General Directorship of Statistics)
ECC Ente per la colonizzazione della Cirenaica (Organization for the Colonization of Cyrenaica)
ECIE Ente per la colonizzazione per gli italiani all’estero (Organization for the Colonization of Italians Repatriating from Abroad)
ECL Ente per la colonizzazione della Libia (Organization for the Colonization of Libya)
List of abbreviations

EFC  Ente ferrarese di colonizzazione (Colonization Association of Ferrara)
FNFL  Fondazione nazionale figli del littorio (National Children of the Lictor Foundation)
INFPS  Istituto nazionale fascista per la previdenza sociale (National Fascist Social Security Institute)
INS  Istituto nazionale di statistica (National Statistics Institute)
ISTAT  Istituto centrale di statistica del Regno d’Italia (Central Statistics Institute of the Kingdom of Italy)
MAE  Ministero degli affari esteri (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
MEN  Ministero per l’economia nazionale (Ministry of National Economy)
MVSN  Milizia volontaria per la sicurezza nazionale (Fascist militia)
ONC  Opera nazionale combattenti (National Veterans Organization)
ONMI  Opera nazionale per la protezione della maternità e dell’infanzia (National Organization for the Protection of Motherhood and Infancy)
PCM  Presidenza del consiglio dei ministri (Office of the Prime Minister)
PNF  Partito nazionale fascista (National Fascist Party)
RSL  Repubblica sociale italiana (Italian Social Republic)
SBS  Società anonima bonifiche sarde (Sardinian Land Reclamation Co.)
UCD  Ufficio centrale demografico (Central Demographic Office)
UFFN  Unione fascista per le famiglie numerose (Fascist Union of Large Families)