

## THE CONTRIBUTION OF ITALIAN JEWISH REFUGEES TO ANTI-FASCIST ACTIVITIES IN WARTIME AUSTRALIA: AN INTRODUCTION

*Marcello Montagnana*

**T**his essay does not and cannot present an exhaustive outline, complete with biographical and quantitative data, of the Italian Jewish refugees who came to Australia immediately before the outbreak of war with Italy: actually basic researches on this theme — such as a thorough survey of the immigration registers, of the classification of refugees, of their internment, *et cetera* — have not as yet been undertaken. Therefore a mere provisional sketch of the political activity in which some of the Italian Jewish refugees were engaged during wartime will be offered here, but without neglecting some of the problems all refugees had to face.

The work is based on a previous study, regarding the Australian-Italian Anti-Fascist Movement *Italia Libera*, to which new information gathered during a recent visit to Australia has been added. Another article, more or less regarding the same subject, has recently been written by Joseph Gentili, while general studies on the political activity of Italians in Australia — and therefore on some of the Jewish refugees coming from Italy — have been published in Australia and in Italy by Gianfranco Cresciani.<sup>1</sup>

Certain aspects clearly require further specification and more documentation. For instance: (1) we only know that, out of some 6,000 Jews who left Italy on account of the anti-Semitic laws of late 1938, the number of those who emigrated to Australia was approximately fifty, including women, children and some foreign Jews;<sup>2</sup> (2) we do not know whether this destination was freely chosen or — as Gentili puts it — was 'simply due to lucky events and coincidences'; (3) nor do we know how many out of that number had any anti-Fascist background or had been in contact with underground political groups opposed to Mussolini's regime.

On the other hand, some findings may be held to have been already established: (a) a significant number of Italian Jewish refugees became involved in political activities with the foundation of the anti-Fascist movement *Italia Libera* in Melbourne, in March 1943; (b) the number of Italian Jews interned in Australia after the outbreak of war with Italy (10 June 1940), compared with the total of Italian Jewish refugees (though still not exactly determined), amounts to the same proportion of Italians as a whole interned from 1940 to the Fall of 1943, i.e. about ten percent (five Jews interned out of about fifty); (c) Jewish refugees contributed decisively to the growth of the *Italia Libera* movement, in quality and in quantity; for example, in the first Committee, five of the fifteen members were Jewish refugees, and so were the first Secretary and Vice-Secretary, Massimo Montagnana and Fulvio Levi; altogether ten or so Jewish refugees became its most qualified promoters and emerged as the chief leaders of the anti-Fascist movement, just as had happened both in the Mazzini Society and in the Communist group acting in the United States, as well as in other anti-Fascist movements all over the world.<sup>3</sup>

As to the quality of their contribution, its value may be clearly estimated if the very dim picture of pre-war anti-Fascism in Australia is borne in mind. On this matter Cresciani correctly remarks that

an important obstacle met by the opposition to Fascism was the absence in its ranks — with the exception of Schiassi — of an educated elite, of an intellectual leadership. In Australia there were no *fuorusciti* as in France or the United States who could be at the fore of an articulated and informed opposition; instead, here, the character of Italian anti-Fascism was brisk, rough and sharp-tongued.<sup>4</sup>

A few years after the end of World War II the Italian historian Aldo Garosci wrote a short but fundamental essay, *Storia dei fuorusciti*, based on his own personal experience as a political refugee. In describing the anti-Fascists' activity, especially in the United States, he speaks at length of the Jewish refugees who had left Italy after the anti-Semitic laws of 1938, and he points out the importance of their contribution to the *fuorusciti's* work.<sup>5</sup> Though further studies on this matter have not in later years added many new facts to those given by Garosci,<sup>6</sup> it is widely acknowledged by Italian historians that the flow of Jews to Great Britain and to the American continent, which took place just before the outbreak of war, brought to the local anti-Fascist circles not only fresh and firsthand news about the situation in Italy during the 'thirties, but also a substantial help (in number and in quality) in the task of explaining to the Allies that not all Italians were Fascists, as Mussolini's propaganda had proclaimed, nor that the dictator's regime did really represent Italy.

However, in the case of Australia, the essay written a few years ago by Michael Blakeney on the Jewish refugees in Australia does not carry any information about the Italian Jews who took refuge in Australia (as if none of them had come here) and it states that the inflow of Jewish refugees ceased in September 1939.<sup>7</sup> As far as Italian Jews are concerned this is certainly not correct. In fact, some of them still landed in April and May 1940 from the last two Italian ships (*Romolo* and *Remo*) which reached Australia before Mussolini declared war, and though the number of Italian Jews is very small compared with those coming from Central Europe (according to Blakeney, some 6,500), nevertheless the political work done by a dozen of them in founding and developing the anti-Fascist movement *Italia Libera* is quite remarkable and should not be underestimated.

On the other hand, the activity of the anti-Fascist groups operating outside Italy during the war should not be over-emphasised, because the real struggle against the Nazi Fascists took place in Europe and in Italy. But it certainly should not be disregarded or altogether ignored, as two books on the Australian Italian community published in Australia on the occasion of the Bicentennial have done. Neither accepts that the *Italia Libera* played a positive role in defending the Italo-Australian community during wartime, and both overlook a key chapter of the political history of Italian immigrants, without a knowledge of which many events of those years become incomprehensible.<sup>8</sup>

When examining the events regarding Italian Jewish refugees some basic points should be borne in mind. Italian Jewry differed substantially from the pattern considered universal to the world's Jews. Italian Jews were less than fifty thousand when Mussolini imposed the anti-Semitic laws in 1938. After the ghettos had been abolished in 1848 by Carlo Alberto of Savoy, and Jews had been given the same civil rights as all other citizens, at first in Piedmont and then throughout the kingdom of Italy, the overwhelming majority tended to integrate completely into the newborn nation and took active part in the country's political life as Italians and not specifically as Jews.

The attitude of Italian Jews towards Mussolini's regime was thus determined by class and by political or ideological factors rather than by their Jewishness. In fact, amongst the founders of the Fascist Party and the first of Mussolini's supporters,

Jews were not at all absent, a significant number occupying high posts in the Army, the Fascist Party, the Government, and in the Judiciary. Suffice it to say that from November 1935 to February 1937 the Italian Consul General in Australia was Paolo Vita Finzi, who was of Jewish origin.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, many Italian political leaders opposed to Fascism were also of Jewish origin: the Communists Umberto Terracini, for instance, and Emilio Sereni, Mario and Rita Montagnana, the Socialists Claudio Treves, E. Modigliani, Musatti, Donati, and Della Seta, as well as the Rosselli brothers, Paolo Treves, and the Mondolfo brothers.

Italians of Jewish origin had become assimilated into the national community to such a degree that Mussolini had to invent *ex nihilo* some kind of definition that could enable the policemen and the registrars to understand upon whom the anti-Semitic laws were imposed.<sup>10</sup> For at least three generations, persons of Jewish origin had not been discriminated against; some of them even discovered that they were identified as Jews only when the first racial decrees were enacted in September 1938. Having always considered themselves simply as Italians, Italian Jews could not be transformed overnight by the anti-Semitic laws into anti-Fascists, nor did their persecution necessarily restore to a Jewish self-consciousness those refugees who eventually did work with the anti-Fascist movements. It must rather be noted that no Jewish anti-Fascist movement was founded anywhere by Italians and that the Italian Jewish refugees supported or founded anti-Fascist groups exclusively as 'Italians' and never as 'Jews'.

The reason why these persons were eventually brought together, therefore, lies only in the so-called 'racial laws'. No other affinity or link between them can be found, for Italians of Jewish origin did not form at all a highly distinct and homogeneous community; besides, the idea of fitting all persons of Jewish origin into a stereotyped pattern is imbued with exactly the same prejudice on which anti-Semitism is based — that Jews are different from all other citizens.

It should finally be stressed that, in keeping with all people living in Italy, the Italo-Australian community did not consist only of Fascists and anti-Fascists, but mainly of non-Fascists (in Italian, *afascisti*). Likewise, among the Italian Jews who came to Australia, there were Fascists, Communists, Liberals, non-Fascists and even close friends of the Mussolini family. Furthermore, the pluralist nature of the Italo-Australian anti-Fascist movement must be considered: indeed amongst the fifteen hundred or so members of the *Italia Libera* there were Socialists, Republicans, Anarchists, non-Fascists, and even some ex-Fascists, because the movement was open to all those who felt that good Italians should help the Allied cause and bring about the downfall of Mussolini's regime.

As for the situation in Australia it should be remembered that, not unlike Cabinet and political leaders in Great Britain, the Australian Prime Ministers Lyons and Menzies had also expressed sympathy and admiration for Mussolini and the Fascist regime right up to the outbreak of war with Italy;<sup>11</sup> that Fascist propaganda had therefore been allowed in Australia, and was spread through the Italian Consulates, through the Fascist Party's sections, and through the Catholic Church, whose powerful hierarchy contributed greatly to giving credit to Fascism among Italo-Australians and among Australian political and trade union circles; and the Australian Government's attitude towards Jewish refugee immigration had been negative as far back as 1921, when the British Secretary of State for the Colonies had asked in vain whether the Commonwealth could receive any of the Jews who had fled from Russia.

With respect to this last point, it must be noted that things did not change after Hitler's accession to power in 1933: 'it is not considered desirable that any special facilities should be given for Jews from Germany to migrate to Australia'.<sup>12</sup> This was still the Government's position when Hitler invaded Austria in March 1938. It is true that a few months later, in July 1938, Australia agreed to attend the Evian Conference on the migration of political refugees from Europe, promoted by the United States, but the Prime Minister stressed again that 'no special facilities can be granted for the admission of groups of Jewish migrants whether from Germany or Austria'.<sup>13</sup> When the report of the Australian delegation to Evian was presented to Parliament on 1 December 1938, the *Kristallnacht* (9 November) had completely changed the situation and compelled the Government to review its immigration policy. The High Commissioner in London had suggested that Australia should take 30,000 refugees over the next three years; but in Parliament the Minister of the Interior, J. McEwen, announced that 15,000 permits would be issued over that period, without saying how many would be given to Jews. The Cabinet later decided that four-fifths of the annual quota should consist of Jews. However, by the outbreak of war in September 1939 only 3,000 permits had actually been taken up by Jewish males, bringing the total figure (including their families) to an estimated 6,500–7,000.<sup>14</sup>

With regard to Mussolini's opponents in Australia the following points should also be taken into account: the considerable size of the organisation developed by the *Italia Libera* country-wide, compared with similar movements in the American continent and in Great Britain (the movement had a Central Committee, six State Committees and many sections all over Australia); the connection with the *Alleanza Internazionale Giuseppe Garibaldi*, founded in Mexico in November 1941 by Italian Socialists and Communists; the many distinguished Australian personalities who were patrons of the *Italia Libera*, first of all Sir Isaac Isaacs, former Governor-General of Australia, as well as Federal Ministers. On this point it is worth recording the following lines about the origin of the *Italia Libera*, written by its Honorary President, Professor A. R. Chisholm, in 1945:

It was launched openly, at a public meeting in Melbourne, while we were still at war with Italy. At the request of several of my Italian friends, all sincere anti-Fascists and many of them exiles from Mussolini's Italy, I accepted the office of Honorary President (the chairman was my old friend Dr. Omero Schiassi, who has eaten the bitter bread of exile for over 20 years). At the public meeting in question one of the speakers was an Australian Minister of the Crown. The purpose of the association was, from the beginning, to combat Fascism and to assist the Allies in their struggle against it. Realising that this was an Italian viewpoint that they could legitimately expose even in wartime, some very distinguished citizens consented to act as patrons. They include Sir Isaac Isaacs, Sir Harry Lawson, Profs. Boyce Gibson and Walter Murdoch, Judge Foster, Dr. John Dale, several well-known Australian writers and three Commonwealth Ministers.<sup>15</sup>

The resolutions passed by the Italian Cabinet during its meeting held at the beginning of September 1938, and enacted on 5 September, were the first official signs of the State's anti-Semitism. The decree ordered that all foreign Jews must leave the country within six months — some ten thousand had come to Italy, especially after 1933; it also excluded Italian Jewish children (over 5,000) and teachers (over 200) from school, as well as students (over 200) and professors (about 100) from universities. Two months later, on 17 November, the first anti-Semitic legislation was completed with the *Measures in Defence of the Italian Race*: Jews were dismissed from all State employments, and obviously from the Army; they could not own real estate or other property above a fixed amount, or be managers of firms with more than a hundred employees; they could not work as lawyers, physicians, engineers. In short, Jews were dispossessed of all civil rights.

Though these measures had been preceded shortly before by a *Manifesto of the Race* (published 14 July) and by a decree against foreign Jewish students (3 August), nevertheless they startled nearly all Jews and caused widespread surprise. Racism had never developed in Italy as anti-Semitism. Before 1938 Mussolini had even considered the racist theories as absurd: in 1932 the *Italian Encyclopaedia* gave this definition of 'race': 'Only the Italian people and the Nation of Italy exist, not the race. No Jewish race or Jewish nation exist, but only the Jewish people; nor (the biggest mistake of all) does an Aryan race exist, but an Aryan civilisation and language'. Mussolini used more or less the same terms when speaking to Emil Ludwig: 'Obviously a pure race doesn't exist any more, not even the Jewish one'. In the 1932 interview with Ludwig, Mussolini also stated that 'there is no anti-Semitism in Italy. Italian Jews have always been good citizens. They are in the top ranks of the universities, of the Army and of the banks'.<sup>16</sup>

In order to emphasise the Jews' loyalty to the Fascist regime, a monthly magazine had been founded in 1934 in Turin by a group of Jewish Fascists, *La Nostra Bandiera* (Our Flag). In 1935, the Chief Rabbi of Rome, Angelo Sacerdoti, explained to a French journalist why there wasn't any anti-Semitism in Italy: 'First of all many Jewish patriots joined the Fascist ranks right from the beginning. And secondly Mussolini has never had the slightest anti-Semitic thought in his mind'. Rabbi Sacerdoti also added: 'I don't know if Fascism in other countries will become a threat to Jews, but I do know that democracy is even a greater danger' (sic!). In 1936, the Foreign Minister and the Minister for Propaganda entrusted an Austrian Jew to write a pamphlet on Italian Jewry for Anglo-Saxon readers: it stressed the Jews' fortunate situation in Italy and praised the liberal attitude of Fascism towards them.<sup>17</sup>

The artificial and ambiguous characteristics of the law enacted in November 1938 appeared clearly in the rules regarding those Jews who could claim 'special Fascist or military merits' (which Mussolini could not or did not want to ignore), and against whom some of the law's obligations were not to be enforced. In fact thousands of applications were sent to the Authorities, which had already estimated that out of the 15,000 Italian Jewish families, some 3,500 were entitled to apply: 724 families had at least one member who had joined the Fascist Party before the 'March on Rome' or during the Matteotti crisis of 1924; 51 had a 'legionary of Fiume'; 3 had a 'Martyr of the Fascist Cause' and 20 a person disabled for the same cause; 406 had had someone killed during the first World War; 721 had a volunteer in the same war; and finally 1,597 had a member of the family decorated with a Military Cross.<sup>18</sup> No wonder so many Jews trusted that no real tragedy could befall them in Italy, and were ready to please the regime and obey the Authorities! Even during the war, in 1941, some ten Jews wrote to Mussolini begging to be enlisted in the Army as volunteers.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, it may be worth mentioning briefly the hostility of the Catholic Church of Melbourne (where the *Italia Libera* was founded) towards the Jewish refugees and their political activity. It has already been noted that the Catholic hierarchy approved of Mussolini's regime and often spoke in its favour. However, after the outbreak of war and in the wake of internment of some of the refugees and the difficult position of all 'enemy aliens' in Australia, some leading Catholic personalities, such as C. Venn Pilcher, Bishop Coadjutor of Sydney, sided with other Churches and with the Australian Jewish Welfare Society in the attempt to persuade the Government to be considerate in treating the refugees.<sup>20</sup> But it must also be underlined that the Archbishop of Melbourne, Dr. Daniel Mannix, his close



Jesuit collaborator Father Ugo Modotti, and other Catholic personalities such as the Federal Minister, A. A. Calwell, and the rich businessman Gualtiero Vaccari, mounted a disparaging campaign against the anti-Fascist movement as soon as it had begun gaining wide support within the Italo-Australian community. The unexpected growth of the *Italia Libera* and the new situation brought about by the downfall of Mussolini in July 1943 and the ensuing armistice on 8 September sorely disturbed Melbourne's Catholic hierarchy. A heavy offensive against the movement and its Jewish leaders was conducted on instruction of the Archbishop and by Father Modotti, mainly through the religious magazine *L'angelo della famiglia*; and even in public speeches these persons did not refrain from expressing both their admiration for Mussolini and their hostility towards the anti-Fascists.

On 12 September 1943, just four days after Italy had proclaimed it would fight alongside the Allies, the Archbishop of Melbourne invited all Italians to a meeting in the Cathedral Hall at Fitzroy. The speakers were Father Modotti, A. A. Calwell M.P., Gualtiero Vaccari and the Archbishop himself. The Secretary of the *Italia Libera*, Dr. Massimo Montagnana, attended the meeting and asked permission to speak too, but was not allowed. A three-page report on the meeting was written by an officer of the Security Service, part of which is worth quoting. With regard to the Archbishop's speech, the officer remarks:

He made the following statement: 'I have never been a supporter of Mussolini, but I think that history will have to confess that Mussolini will go down as one of the really big men of this world'. At this stage the applause was tremendous, consisting of clapping, cheering, stamping of feet, and whistling; and it was fully four minutes before Dr. Mannix was able to make himself heard. He later said that [...] the fact remains Mussolini had done a lot for Italy and was one of the greatest men of the world.<sup>21</sup>

During the meeting, Mr. Calwell said: 'I have been happy at all times to render any service that his Grace the Archbishop has asked of me', and concluded with a special advice to the politically-minded: 'I say to those who have been associated with *Italia Libera* that they are not rendering any service to the Italian community by maintaining that body in existence'. Addressing himself to all Italians Calwell said: 'I think you would be very wise to continue your work and say your prayers'.<sup>22</sup> Father Modotti, in turn, had begun his speech saying 'this is not a day for jubilation', and went on remarking that those persons who rejoiced for the armistice were 'criminals, inhumane and anti-Italian'.

The same officer made the following comment in his report: 'the most amazing thing during the afternoon was the applause given to Dr. Mannix's reference to Mussolini'; but he was also 'astounded to hear Mr. Calwell say, "I want you then to forget all about this *Italia-Libera* movement, because it would do no good"'. In reference to these same points, the official Organ of the Australian Protestant Federation, *The Vigilant*, published a note a few months later. If 'those who were committed to the *Italia Libera* movement' should not be considered self-respecting Italians — as Dr. Mannix had declared — 'surely this is coming very close to aiding and abetting our enemies, since he knows only too well that *Italia Libera* is anti-Fascist'. The note ends with the following words: 'We have seen that Archbishop Mannix and Father Modotti gave virtual instructions that all Italians must remain Fascist, since they told them that they must not join the anti-Fascists'.<sup>23</sup>

The leading Melbourne newspapers did not carry any news about the meeting and refused to print a letter sent by the Secretary of *Italia Libera*. Only the *Mid-day Times* agreed to publish it, but without mention of any of the speakers' names. With reference to Father Modotti's address, Dr. Montagnana wrote:

The reactionary elements here — both Italians and Australians — instead of drawing conclusions from the last events for a greater union and collaboration between the Italians and the Allied people, say that any Italian who rejoices at the armistice is a criminal, because Italy today is in the worst situation it ever was in, as there is a civil war in Italy. No, dear Italian reactionaries, your keen wish has not been fulfilled. There is no civil war in Italy. The Italians do not fight amongst themselves, but are all united to fight one enemy, the Nazis and the few battered Fascists.

As for the Archbishop's praise of Mussolini, the letter went on:

In answer to those other reactionaries who, openly or covertly, affirm that Mussolini is one of the greatest men of Europe, we say that the present situation [...] has been caused not by Liberals, Democratic Catholics, Socialists or Communists, who have for twenty years been barred from participation in the political life of the nation, but only by the series of enormous errors committed by Mussolini himself.

And with reference to Mr. Calwell's call 'to forget all about this *Italia Libera* movement', Dr. Montagnana concluded:

The activity of these reactionaries has only one aim, viz. to stir up hatred between Italians and Australians; somebody even went as far as suggesting that the *Italia Libera* movement . . . is in bad odour with Australians who do not like free movements here. These people lie with full knowledge of the facts, because, just recently, the Australian people have shown by their electoral figures that they support all those who have sympathised with all free democratic movements founded here since the outbreak of the war.<sup>24</sup>

At this meeting, Gualtiero Vaccari appeared to be just a secondary figure, but his role became clear three months later when Mannix called another meeting at the same Fitzroy Cathedral Hall (5 December). It was here announced that the Government had appointed Vaccari as liaison officer for the Italian community in Australia. The official letter, signed by the Minister for External Affairs Dr. Evatt, was presented in such a way to make believe that 'the Commonwealth Government had empowered Mr. G. Vaccari, an Australian citizen of Italian origin, to open an office for the purpose of looking after the interests of Italians in Australia'.

Besides, it appeared that 'Mr. Calwell, Minister for Information, expressed the hope that Mr. G. Vaccari would become the future Consul-General for Italy in Australia'.<sup>25</sup>

Actually, the Archbishop of Melbourne had written to the Prime Minister, John Curtin, (13 September) with reference to the new position of Italians in Australia. In connection with an enclosed report prepared by Father Modotti on this subject, the Archbishop suggested that 'pending the appointment of Consuls, the Government would appoint an Italian as an accredited liaison officer between the Government and the Italian community' concluding that he would be 'very happy to nominate an Italian who, I am confident, will give you complete satisfaction' i.e. Gualtiero Vaccari.<sup>26</sup> In fact, despite the Security Service's objections against the appointment of a liaison officer,<sup>27</sup> Mr. Calwell — who was always 'happy to render any service' to the Archbishop — had managed to persuade his colleagues that the designation of Vaccari was perfectly all right (but it was stressed that 'no Press discussion was desired upon the subject').<sup>28</sup>

Of course the leaders of *Italia Libera* in Melbourne were astonished by the news. But, on the advice of the movement's patrons, they made what proved to be a correct response to the clerical-Fascist attack. Instead of engaging in a public campaign against the Government (which would have proved advantageous to Mannix, who believed that *Italia Libera* would be thus outlawed), they carefully avoided any publicity on the incident. Schiassi and Montagnana simply sent a letter to the Prime Minister (8 December) in which they pointed out that Vaccari 'had always been and still is a Fascist',<sup>29</sup> and they referred to the speeches delivered at the meeting called by the Archbishop in September. All else was left to the political pressure exerted by the patrons of *Italia Libera* on the Government, also through a

question put in Parliament to Dr. Evatt. The Minister for External Affairs (who was a friend of the anti-Fascists) replied on 17 February 1944, saying 'there was no appointment' and declaring that 'when Mr. Vaccari was authorised to act, the Government had no knowledge of any alleged association by him with the Fascist party'.

The result was 'that the Government decided to withdraw the letter' sent by Evatt to Vaccari, and that instructions were issued to the effect 'that the authorisation of Mr. Vaccari . . . should be discontinued'.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, in the end, far from being a setback for the *Italia Libera*, the Vaccari question turned out to be a boomerang against the clerical-Fascists and proved that the anti-Fascist movement had the capacity to face even the powerful Catholic Church of Melbourne.

It might be mentioned that a few months later (on 7 August 1944) Vaccari tried once again 'to secure some form of recognition', this time by the Italian Prime Minister Bonomi, to whom he sent a seven page report on 'the composition and political attitude of the Italian community in Australia'; he did not succeed, the Security Service having easily foreseen this: 'Vaccari's hopes in this direction are not likely to be realised'.<sup>31</sup> Not knowing much about the political situation in Italy, Vaccari attacked the chairman of *Italia Libera*, Omero Schiassi (who knew Prime Minister Bonomi prior to Fascism), defamed the Jewish refugees and — needless to say — considered the Communists as enemies. Vaccari wrote:

Since the outbreak of war about one hundred Italians of Jewish descent have reached Australia. They were generally Fascists in Italy up to 1938–39 before the Racial laws; and here they have been rabid anti-Fascists. . . . At the beginning of 1944 notwithstanding the abrogation of the Racial laws in liberated Italy they have classified themselves as 'Refugees, Stateless' (Refugee Aliens). . . . The majority of this contingent of refugees exacerbated by comprehensible personal resentments against Fascism and dazzled by the Russian victories has made common cause with the Communist group and with the anti-Fascist concentration in Australia in the new association *Italia Libera*. . . . they continue to make almost exclusively political propaganda shouting against a non-existent Italian Fascism in Australia.

Any comment on Vaccari's report is unnecessary; but in regard to the last words mentioned above, it must be noted that he obviously had completely forgotten the 'tremendous applause' given to Archbishop Mannix when — not even a year before — he had stated that 'Mussolini will go down as one of the really big men of this world'.

The sharp reaction of the Catholic Church against the *Italia Libera* corroborates the fact that the movement had introduced something new into the anti-Fascists' action, establishing a regular contact with the immigrants scattered all over Australia, through its official organ *Il Risveglio*, as well as cultivating friendly relations with the Australian political, cultural and trade union circles. In fact, only the *Italia Libera* then defended in Australia the image of a motherland clearly distinct from Mussolini's regime, and promoted the ethical values of political and social solidarity on which the Liberation war based itself, and by which the principles of the Italian Constitution were later inspired.

#### NOTES

1. Marcello Montagnana, *I rifugiati ebrei italiani in Australia e il movimento antifascista 'Italia Libera'* (1942–1946), in 'Notiziario dell'Istituto storico della Resistenza di Cuneo de Provincia', n. 31, giugno 1987, pp. 5–114; Joseph Gentili, *Italian Jewish Refugees in Australia*, *AJHSJ* Vol. X Part 5, 1989, pp. 420–441; Gianfranco Cresciani, *The second awakening: the Italia Libera Movement*, in 'Labour History', Canberra, n. 30, May 1976; Id., *Italian anti-Fascism in Australia 1922–1945*, in 'Affari sociali internazionali', Franco Angeli, Milano 1978; Id., *Fascismo, antifascismo e gli italiani in Australia 1922–1945*, Bonacci, Roma 1979.



2. The foreign Jews in Italy were mainly Germans. Out of the 10,000 or so foreign Jews living in Italy in 1938, about half of them had recently fled from countries where the Nazis were in power, while the other half had already integrated themselves into the Italian Jewish community. The number of Jews who managed to leave Italy has been established by Renzo De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo*, Einaudi, Torino 1972 (see Footnote 3), p. 361. In order to fix the approximate if not the exact number of those who came to Australia, it would be necessary to examine all the Immigrants' records of 1938, 1939 and 1940 held in Melbourne and Sydney. As to Perth, the records have been examined by Gentilli who has estimated the same number of fifty refugees.
3. On the Mazzini Society see Antonio Varsori, *L'antifascismo e gli Alleati*, in 'Storia e Politica', a. XIX, fasc. III, settembre 1980; Id., *Gli alleati e l'emigrazione democratica antifascista 1940-1943*, Sansoni, Firenze 1982; Id., *Sforza, la Mazzini Society e gli Alleati 1940-1943*, in A. Varsori (ed.), *L'antifascismo italiano negli Stati Uniti durante la seconda guerra mondiale*, Proceedings of the Cesena Conference 4-6 November 1982, Archivio Trimestrale, Roma 1984; Aldo Garosci, *Storia dei fuorusciti*, Laterza, Bari 1953; Maddalena Tirabassi, *La Mazzini Society 1940-1946: un'associazione degli antifascisti italiani negli Stati Uniti*, in Spini-Migone-Teodori, *Italia e America dalla Grande guerra a oggi*, Marsilio, Roma 1976. For general information on the Communists in the United States see Paolo Spriano, *Storia del Partito comunista italiano*, Einaudi, Torino 1967, Vol. IV; Ambrogio Donini, *L'unità del popolo e Lo Stato Operaio*, in A. Varsori (ed.), *L'Antifascismo italiano negli Stati Uniti*... The Jews who worked with the Communist leaders Berti and Donini at New York were Duccio and Giuliana Tabet, Elsa Fubini, Bruno Pontecorvo, Salvatore Luria, Eugenio Falco, and Giuseppina Jona. It may also be remarked that the following Italian Jews were active in anti-Fascist movements: Giorgia Levi in Bolivia; Mario Montagnana in Mexico; Aldo Cassuto, Bruno Foa, Piero Treves and Uberto Limentani in Great Britain; Laura Levi and Enzo Sereni in Egypt. Besides Montagnana and Levi, the other Jewish refugee members of the first Italia Libera Committee were Franco Forti, Ernesto Monti and Rosa Narducci Montagnana. In the following months other Jewish refugees took up official posts in the movement or were engaged in its activity: Bruno Forti in Melbourne; Alberto Levi, Claudio and Orlando Piperno Alcorso, Paolo Sonnino, in Sydney; Adriano Muggia in Brisbane.
4. G. Cresciani, *Italian anti-Fascism*, p. 155. Only Omero Schiassi — a lawyer who was a member of the Socialist Party — had already been very active in politics before coming to Australia in 1924. In 1927 he was appointed 'Instructor in Italian' by the Melbourne University, where he later lectured also on Dante. In 1931 he was eventually granted naturalisation, which was an essential protection against deportation back to Italy. *Fuorusciti* means 'political refugees'.
5. A. Garosci, *Storia dei fuorusciti*, pp. 192-93.
6. Even R. De Felice, in his otherwise masterly survey *Storia degli ebrei italiani*, simply confirms at p. 423 what Garosci had written ten years before. See also Guido Valabrega, *Ebrei, fascismo, sionismo*, Argalia, Urbino 1974; Piero Treves, *Antifascisti ebrei o antifascismo ebraico?*, in 'La Rassegna mensile di Israel', a. XLVI, n. 1-2-3-, gennaio-giugno 1981.
7. Michael Blakeney, 'Australia and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe: Government Policy 1933-1939', in *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book XXIX*, London 1984.
8. Robert Pascoe, *Buongiorno Australia: Our Italian Heritage*, Greenhouse Publications, Richmond Vic. 1987; Nino Randazzo & Michael Cigler, *The Italians in Australia*, AE Press, Melbourne 1987. Unlike these two works, another publication — mainly with photographs and documents — ends significantly with three pictures regarding the Italia Libera movement: Ivano Ercole & Maria Tence, *Victoria's Italians 1900-45*, Co.As.It., Carlton Vic. 1986.
9. On Paolo Vita Finzi see 'Gli intellettuali e il fascismo', in *Nuova Antologia*, a. 123, Fasc. 2168, ottobre-dicembre 1988, pp. 253-306. Amongst Mussolini's first supporters, also financially speaking, were Elio Jona and Giuseppe Toeplitz. One of the five or so Jews who took part in founding the Fasci in Milan (23 March 1919), Cesare Goldmann, had procured the hall for the 119 persons who attended the meeting. A very close friend of Mussolini was E. Jarach, a lawyer, and his private secretary (and mistress) was Margherita Sarfatti, who wrote a biography of the dictator, worked for Mussolini's newspaper *Il Popolo d'Italia* and for the Fascist Party's monthly *Gerarchia*. When Mussolini came to power, Aldo Finzi, member of the Grand Fascist Council, was appointed junior minister for Internal Affairs, and Dante Almansì was confirmed as vice-head of the Police. In 1932 Mussolini appointed Guido Jung in his Cabinet as Financial Minister. Amongst the Fascist university professors we may mention Gino Arias, who studied for the regime a theory on industrial relations, and the Rome university Rector Giorgio del Vecchio. Coming to the Army, General Modena was in command in Sardegna; to Admiral Moroni Mussolini gave the command of the troops concentrated in Majorca; and even during the war (when all Jews had already been dismissed from the Army) Admiral Umberto Pugliese was recalled to service in November 1940 for a special operation in Taranto harbour. At the head of two major Insurance Companies in 1938 were Edgardo Morpurgo and Arnoldo Frigessi di Rattalma. Vice-Governor in Lybia and Governor of Somalia was Maurizio Rava. Renzo Ravenna was mayor of Ferrara for fifteen years.

- It is not beside the point to note that three Italian Jewish refugees in Australia — all interned until Mussolini's downfall — had positively been associated with the Fascist regime. Orlando Piperno Alcorso, schoolmate and close friend of Vittorio Mussolini, served as volunteer in the Fascist aviation in Spain and brought his military decorations to Australia (AA, NSW, CRS C 329, item 16). His elder brother, Claudio, also a fighter pilot, had been 'in the Fascist party since 1928 [...] and was an ex member of the Directorate of the Salario Regional Fascist Group'; at the end of the war he claimed all the Fascist books (speeches by Mussolini and other Fascist authors) which had been confiscated in 1940 on the occasion of his internment (respectively: AA, ACT CRS A 1533/XM, item 54/3092, pt. 2, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Consulate-General, Sydney, 24 August 1939; *ibid.* pt. 3, Alcorso to Director General of Security, 24 September 1945). Adriano Muggia, Superintendent to the Casale Hospital, praised Mussolini's regime in many articles and speeches from 1927 to 1938; on arrival in Australia he got in touch with Dr. Vattuone ('Vattuone was a rabid Fascist'); furthermore, 'when Muggia was interned, he had in his possession copy of a letter written in May 1939, addressed to the Countess Ciano Mussolini'; and later he admitted 'that the sentiments expressed in that letter are the sentiments of a convinced and active Fascist' (AA, ACT, CRS A 1533/XM, item 54/3092, pt. 3, Director General of Security to J. H. Scullin, 28 July 1945).
10. It might be mentioned that even the Nazis found some difficulty when it came to state who could be recognised as a Jew on a racial basis. In January 1942, at the Wannsee Conference which discussed the final solution plans, the number of Jews in each European country included 'only persons of Jewish faith, because the essential conditions on which a definition of Jews on a racial basis can be given are still lacking'. See the *Record of the Wannsee Conference*, document NG-2586 G, Evidence 1452, in *Trials of War Criminals before the Nuernberg Military Tribunals*, vol. XIII, United States Government Printing Office, Washington 1952, pp. 210–17, now in *La Conferenza di Wannsee*, Aned-Franco Angeli, Milano 1988, p. 70.
  11. As late as 28 September 1938, Mr. J. A. Lyons sent a cablegram to N. Chamberlain, U.K. Prime Minister, in which he wrote: 'At this late hour I venture to suggest that there may be some possibility of averting war by personal appeal to Signor Mussolini. I can think of no other individual who might be able to influence Herr Hitler towards peaceful solution'; and stressed that 'as Prime Minister of Australia [I] am on good personal terms with Signor Mussolini' (Department of Foreign Affairs, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 1937–1949*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra 1975, Vol. I 1937–1938; document 288, p. 469). As to Menzies, one of his 'eulogies of Nazi Germany' was interrupted in Perth during a speech of his in July 1939. At the same time the Minister for External Affairs, Sir Henry Gullett, spoke of Mussolini's 'genius, his patriotism . . . and almost superhuman capacity', and also stressed Hitler's 'shining record of service to his people' (Eric Montgomery Andrews, *Isolation and Appeasement in Australia, Reaction to the European Crises*, Australian National University Press, Canberra 1970, pp. 171–72). A few weeks before Mussolini declared war Menzies opened the short-wave radio transmissions Australia-Italy with a message to the Italian people which ended with these words: 'Your country is neutral while we are at war; but I am sure all the precious things we have in common are of such supreme importance that we will have your sympathy and understanding' (translation from the Italian text published in 'Il Giornale Italiano', 1 May 1940, now in 'Il Veltro', a. XVII, n. 2–3, aprile-giugno 1973, pp. 377–78).
  12. M. Blakeney, 'Australia and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe', p. 106.
  13. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
  14. *Ibid.*, pp. 130–33. Blakeney also mentions that the United States received 136,000 refugees between 1933 and the Fall of 1939; more than 55,000 entered Great Britain; 40,000 went to France; 25,000 to Belgium; 23,000 to Netherlands; 10,000 to Switzerland; 22,000 to Argentina, and 20,000 each to Brazil, Colombia and Mexico.
  15. A. R. Chisholm, 'Italia Libera Honorary President answers Modotti's Attack', in *Il Risveglio*, n. 21, 3 ottobre 1945, p. 6. Professor Chisholm was Dean of the Faculty of Arts of Melbourne University.
  16. Emil Ludwig, *Colloqui con Mussolini*, Mondadori, Milano 1970, p. 87.
  17. Giuseppe Gaddi, *Il razzismo in Italia*, Edizioni della Lega italiana contro il razzismo e l'antisemitismo, [Parigi] 1939, now in 'Qualestoria', Bollettino dell'Istituto regionale per la storia del movimento di liberazione nel Friuli-Venezia Giulia, n. 2, ottobre 1988, p. 17.
  18. R. De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani*, p. 75. Between 1928 and 1933 4,920 Jews joined the Fascist Party. After 1933 all State employees were compelled to be members of the PNF.
  19. Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Direzione Generale Demografia e Razza, Invent. 251, busta 6, fasc. 29, Segreteria Particolare del Duce to Ministero Interno, 23 Marzo 1941.
  20. AA, Vic., Department of the Army, MP508/1, General Correspondence, 115/703/264, box 174, Notes of a Deputation from Representatives of the Churches and Welfare Organisations which waited on the Minister for the Interior, 22 July 1940. Dr. Pilcher was later also a patron of the Italia Libera in N.S.W. See *Il Risveglio*, ottobre 1944, AA, ACT, CRS A446, item 57/67255.

21. AA, ACT, CRS A6126/XMO, item 58. The officer's report appears quite accurate if compared to the account (which can be regarded as official) of Mannix's and Calwell's speeches published in *The Advocate*, Melbourne 23 September 1943, 'Archbishop Addresses Italians'.
22. *Ibid.*
23. 'Dr. Mannix and the Fascists', in *The Vigilant*, Organ of the Australian Protestant Federation, 14 June 1944, from the copy in the Elda Vaccari Collection of Multicultural Studies, Footscray Institute of Technology, Vic., Department of Humanities, fasc. Gualtiero Vaccari.
24. Massimo Montagnana, 'Italian people rise against Fascism', in *Mid-day Times*, Melbourne, 2 October 1943. Movements in favour of Greece, France and other countries occupied by Hitler were very active at the time.
25. AA, ACT, CRS A6126/XMO, item 58, Italia Libera to Prime Minister, 8 December 1943.
26. *Ibid.*, Mannix to Curtin, 13 September 1943.
27. *Ibid.*, Melbourne Deputy Director of Security to Director General, 22 September 1943. This report informs that Vaccari had arrived in Australia in 1912; became naturalized only in July 1939, 'after which date he withdrew from active participation in the work of the local fascio'; had been given the title of Cavaliere in 1936 'on the recommendation of the Fiat Motor Co.'. See also the report sent by the Director General of Security to the Attorney-General, 24 September 1943.
28. *Ibid.*, memorandum on the 'meeting in the Attorney-General's room', held 23 November 1943; present: the Attorney-General, the Minister for Information, the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, and Mr. Vaccari.
29. *Ibid.*, Italia Libera to Prime Minister, 8 December 1943. As to Vaccari's connections with the Fascists in Australia it might be noted that he actually kept in contact with them even after his naturalisation (see footnote 27). In a file of the ACT Australian Archives there are several letters of his to the Fascist paper *L'Italiano* dated up to 16 May 1940. In one of these letters he praises the editor C. Albanese because his 'paper is not anti-Fascist — nor Judean' (11 April 1940). The day after he points out that the article he is sending had already been considered with favour by the local Secretary of the Fascio and 'should also be welcomed by the Consul-General A. Mammalella, as it cancels the fable that we are anti-Fascist' (AA, ACT, CRS A373, item 6230).
30. AA, ACT, CRS A6126/XMO, item 58, respectively: copy of Hansard, 17 February 1944; Director General of Security to Vaccari, 20 March 1944; Attorney-General to Brigadier Simpson, 21 March 1944. On Vaccari see G. Cresciani, *Fascismo, antifascismo e gli italiani in Australia*, pp. 81–83, 1933 and 186–91.
31. *Ibid.*, Melbourne Deputy Director of Security to Director General of Security, 17 August 1944; Vaccari to Italian Prime Minister, 7 August 1944. As to Vaccari's remark that Jews should not be regarded as 'Refugees Stateless', it must be remembered that, on the contrary, by the laws of Mussolini's *Repubblica Sociale Italiana* (set up shortly after 8 September 1943), Jews were not Italians any more but 'enemy aliens'. In fact, some seven thousand of them were captured by the Fascists, sent to the Italian concentration camps (such as Fossoli) and then to Germany. This is what happened to Fulvio Levi's parents and to the brother and father of his wife, Jucci Iona.