

The "New Man" in Radical Right
Ideology and Practice, 1919–45

Edited by
Jorge Dagnino, Matthew Feldman,
and Paul Stocker

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Building Illiberal Subjects

*The New Man in the Radical Right Universe, 1919–45**

Jorge Dagnino, Matthew Feldman, and Paul Stocker

This is the first in-depth, comparative Anglophone volume dedicated to radical right conceptions of a New Man between 1919 and 1945 in Europe and beyond. Building upon several valuable non-English volumes as well as a plethora of academic chapters and articles, the present collection approaches this vital area from a plurality of perspectives.¹ In doing so, it eschews the temptation of dealing with the topic solely from the lens of masculinity studies, which, although genuinely valuable, cannot account for the complexity of the New Man in radical right thinking. It has become commonplace to view attempts to create “New Men” as a spasm of virility, in order to compensate for fin de siècle male anxieties—provoked by the processes of modernization that challenged traditional structures of patriarchal society from the end of the nineteenth century. Some scholars, such as Barbara Spackman, have identified virility as an essential feature of fascist ideology.² Others, like Christopher E. Forth and George L. Mosse, while acknowledging the importance of the subject and emphasizing some of its most visible aspects, such as the glorification of the Great War and the cult of youth and action, nevertheless conclude that fascism largely replicated, albeit in extreme forms, the normative ideals of masculinity of modern Western civilization.³

In a 2016 volume, David D. Roberts invited a loosening of these teleological mental structures so as to better probe the universe of radical right politics and the place of fascist ideology within it. Similarly, Aristotle Kallis has urged a reconsideration of the fluidity, hybridization, and cross-fertilization of highly volatile ideological-political processes in the process of “fascitization” before 1945, which underscores the contribution of Fascist Italy and, later, Nazi Germany to a myriad of radical right and authoritarian departures—which were not necessarily fascist revolutionaries so much as fellow travelers or copycats—alongside the open-endedness and the destructive dynamic that ensued.⁴ It is in this spirit that the country-focused chapters in this volume address the complex history of the New Man in radical right thinking and action.

Totalitarian Pedagogy and the Italian Youth

Luca La Rovere

The “new fascist man”: Introduction to a never-ending debate

Long considered a propaganda device, the “new man” myth availed of the illusion of man’s rebirth to conceal the reactionary nature of fascist movements and regimes and their inability to transform political and social relations in any meaningful way. Although research into fascism contained references to the fascist idea of man, reports did not acknowledge its impact on guiding regime policies and choices.

Only in the last decades have scholars begun to seriously examine the “new man” myth. Roger Griffin recognized the “palingenesis” myth, that is, renewal of society and regeneration of man, was one of the defining elements of fascism.¹ Around the same time, German–American historian George L. Mosse investigated the “new man” myth as a vehicle for transmitting values such as respectability, honesty, and industriousness, which were the cornerstones of fascism’s “anti-bourgeois revolution of the bourgeoisie.”² Even though usefully emphasizing the importance of myths in fascist regimes,³ such studies did not go beyond the culture of the “new man” and/or the aesthetic of fascist manliness.

Emilio Gentile’s research led to a new approach. From his earliest studies on the origins of fascist ideology and the party, Gentile had identified the myth of man’s regeneration through politics as a decisive feature of fascism’s totalitarian nature.⁴ In his later work, he elucidated the links between myths, ideology, politics, and organization of the masses.⁵ In 2002, Gentile wrote that the “new man” myth was not simply one of many myths that were used to mobilize the masses, but was rather the totalitarian regime’s main objective as it was essential to its great project of creating a “new fascist civilization.”⁶ His essay established some key ideas, which, I believe, are worth further examination:

1. Fascism—unlike Nazism—did not have one single “new man” model. Perfect fascist prototypes were the soldier in the Great War, the fascist action squad member, and later the citizen–soldier, citizen–producer, colonizer, and so forth. They all served to meet the needs of diverse categories of citizens, changing with internal and international politics in different phases of the regime.
2. The modernity of the “new man.” The “new man” myth aimed at creating an alternative road to modernity that was coherent with the fascist vision of society.

Even when referring to the past—for instance, through the myths of the Roman legionnaire or a peasant society—the prototype did not aim at restoring an ideal model of the past.

3. The “new Italian’s” collective nature. Deriving from fascism’s militarization of politics, this feature emerged from the regime’s determination to project the individual’s existence into the public domain and make him an “organized collective man,” who was imbued with militaristic, bellicose moral principles.
4. The “anthropological revolution” experiment was extremely pervasive. It involved both the party and the state apparatus and attempted to penetrate every area of individual and collective life, so as to reshape the Italian people’s customs, mentality, and moral principles.⁷

Recognized as fundamental to totalitarian ideologies, the “new man” myth was held in common by the fascist movements and regimes that arose in Europe between the two World Wars.⁸

Despite this, attitudes to Italian fascism’s “anthropological revolution” experiment are still often influenced by the debate on its “imperfect totalitarianism,” which was ascribed to Benito Mussolini’s regime.⁹ According to some historians, the goal of “remaking the Italian people” was shared by the most radical fascists and by Mussolini himself. Like building a real totalitarian system, it was, however, destined to remain purely Utopian. It was an ideal that might have been attained but which, in fact, was not. The plan for “totalitarian regeneration” remained unfinished, first, because alternative, competing institutions like the monarchy, the Catholic Church, the armed forces, the school, and the family survived and, second, because society as a whole was reluctant to embrace fascism’s myths and values.¹⁰

Attempts by the fascist regime to “regenerate” Italians, particularly young people, are generally considered bankrupt policies. Several hypotheses were put forward to account for their failure. “Regeneration” was carried out “Italian style,” that is, superficially, with no real planning, focusing almost exclusively on outward appearances, with little concern for the real educational outcome.¹¹ According to this view, obsession with “fascist style” and the bureaucratic decline of the Partito nazionale fascista (PNF; National Fascist Party) under the leadership of Achille Starace (1931–38) were the main causes of failure. The “new men” never appeared because local party branches functioned poorly as they were unable to apply guidance from the center. The widespread corruption of the party’s ruling class caused the “collapse of the popular identification with fascism as early as the mid-thirties.”¹² Even the “national character” was held responsible for subverting fascist aims. Centuries of history resulted in an individualistic, cynical, lazy citizenry that was indifferent to politics and to the interests of the larger community and was suspicious of any form of power. Italians, unlike Germans, were anthropologically incapable of conforming to the model of the “new man.”¹³

Gentile clearly had no doubts that the “anthropological revolution experiment failed, was overwhelmed by the catastrophe of war and ended up under the ruins of the totalitarian state.” He admitted that, despite its failure, it “was, in fact, initiated and involved millions of Italians of both sexes and several generations for two decades.”¹⁴ It is true that fascism’s ambitious project to form new Italians was interrupted by the

Second World War, which ended in defeat, but this does not answer questions about the effects it had on molding the Italian people’s character.

Fascism did not invent the “new Italian” myth. The idea of regenerating the Italians was widespread in Italian culture in the aftermath of Italian *Risorgimento* (unification) and had become very popular in the years before the First World War. In the changing conditions of postwar politics, fascism reappropriated and reshaped it.¹⁵ The fascist “new man” was not a new model of masculinity, given its traditional image of man and the relationships between men and women.¹⁶ Fascism promoted instead a new type of citizen, who completely identified with fascist values and was keen to subordinate his individuality to collective interests and the nation’s political–military goals.¹⁷

Far more interesting than the cultural background to the “new man” myth, is the study of how the regime transformed the idea of “regenerating” the Italians from a niche view held by a minority of intellectuals into a myth for the masses. Although some historiographical trends have limited the creation of a “new man” to within the bounds of a utopian experiment, it seems important to try and determine whether—and to what extent—the myth became reality.

Assessing the effects of the fascist regime’s totalitarian pedagogy is no easy task. Regeneration of the Italian people was conducted at all levels of society. Since state, the fascist party, labor unions, mass organizations, and cultural institutions were all mobilized to this end, conclusive results can only be obtained through coordinated research into each sector.¹⁸ Determining the effects on organizing the mass of Italians is even more arduous, because of difficulties in locating sources for reconstructing the influence of totalitarian pedagogy on the inclinations and thoughts of individuals who were different in age, social, and cultural level. Faced with this, I have here singled out how the new generations were trained as the preferential terrain for analyzing the relationship between the “anthropological revolution” myth and the functioning of the totalitarian organizational machine.

Monopolizing education: Fascism in schools

In the second half of the 1920s, fascism started the most important experiment in mass political pedagogy that has ever been attempted in Italian national history. Millions of young people were subjected to an incessant pedagogic barrage that aimed at inculcating fascist myths and values. They included males and females from every social class and from every corner of the land, with ages ranging from infancy to twenty-one years, whereupon they became party members. Youth was given a central role in the project to create a “new man” because fascists were convinced the great mass of adults had been hopelessly corrupted by their liberal utilitarian and individualistic upbringing. The regime also felt an urgent need to shape Italian youth into its own ideal of the virile warrior or the fascist woman, born to be a wife and mother, whose duty was to raise healthy citizens to improve the nation’s military prowess.¹⁹ In conducting its biopolitical project,²⁰ the party-state took charge of the bodies of millions of young Italians, to free them of the defects and physical weaknesses that still afflicted older generations. The fascists maintained that only intellectual and physical education from the earliest

age could create a truly renewed type of human being. School and youth organizations were the educational tools that fascism employed to carry out this ambitious project.²¹

Fascist conquest of the school system was the logical working out of the task to create new Italians. The 1923 Giovanni Gentile School Reform, with its hallmark of education for an elite class, soon showed it was unsuited to the task of spreading the fascist ideology among the mass of Italian youth.²² Many modifications to the reform aimed at binding teachers ever more closely to fascism and at integrating fascist ideology into the school curriculum and life. The former objective was achieved through the carrot-and-stick approach of coercion and incentives. After Gentile's purge of administrative and teaching staff in 1923–24, the selection of teachers in the following years was based only on the political criterion of fidelity to fascism.²³ In 1926, preexisting professional associations were absorbed into the Associazione nazionale insegnanti fascisti (National Association of Fascist Teachers), which became in 1931 the Associazione fascista della scuola (Fascist School Association). By 1939, respectively, 99.6 percent and 53.5 percent of primary and middle school teachers belonged to the Fascist School Association.²⁴

At the same time school curriculums were revised in accordance with the criterion of growing political input into schools. Fascism found its way into subjects like Italian language and literature, history, geography, and even science in some cases.²⁵ In 1929, the study of "fascist culture" was introduced into vocational schools, and "corporate order" was made a compulsory subject in high schools and teacher training schools. History focused on the *Risorgimento*, the First World War, and fascism. In 1935, "military culture" became part of the national curriculum in secondary schools and universities. From 1937 onward Mussolini's *Dottrina del fascismo* (*Doctrine of Fascism*), the official compendium of fascist ideology, was studied in high school philosophy courses.²⁶ Several committees that were set up to purge texts of any and all "anti-Italian" content, ended up by ordering primary schools to adopt a state-sponsored textbook to promote a "purely fascist culture and education" in the school year 1930–31.²⁷

School textbooks exalting the virtues of a good Italian and a perfect fascist were the main vehicle for imparting the fascist vision to the youth of Italy.²⁸ The main characters in children's reading books were intrepid patriots, *Balilla*,²⁹ who were driven by camaraderie, a marked sense of duty, and unquestioning allegiance to the motherland and its leader.³⁰ Reading, dictation, and even art classes served to spread and glorify the fascist regime's achievements and the genius of Mussolini. Fascism also imposed its vision on the school system through widespread use of its symbols on books, copybooks, report cards, and diplomas. Classrooms were decorated with pictures of regime propaganda.³¹

Fascism truly colonized the school system. The traditional view of a superficially fascist school was overturned once an exclusively institutional perspective was discarded.³² This judgment had been based on the opinion that education was in itself incompatible with fascism.³³ New research into the school system under fascism, using a "microhistory" approach, led to investigations into schools in individual areas and, when pushed to its limit, into single institutions. By appreciating apparently "minor" sources, such as school registries, records of headmasters' meetings, teachers' reports, and children's copybooks, recent studies have reconstructed a picture of daily practices in education and revealed teachers' real leanings. Such documents depict, much better than Ministry of Education curricula, daily life in a school system where teaching

appeared to revolve around recurring fascist anniversaries, celebrations, and propaganda campaigns. In January 1936, a teacher in the primary four girls' section of the Melendugno (Bari) primary school wrote in the class magazine "I got the class to talk about a special event: the conquest of Neghelli by our troops under the command of General Rodolfo Graziani and I read out our Leader's telegram. . . . The girls displayed keen interest and their little hearts were throbbing with joy."³⁴ As a Communist Party informant wrote in the early 1930s, the only issue at the time in the Italian Ministry of Education was how to "make the schools fascist": key words were "model, shape, forge." Thus, Gentile's ideal concept of education was sacrificed to the imperative of the school system becoming "a tool for political domination."³⁵

The fascist takeover of the school system was neither obstacle free nor the same throughout the nation. The difficulties that fascism had in penetrating the margins of society were encountered in schools. A 1923 inquiry into primary school education showed that only 60 percent of children attended school, with large differences emerging between the north and the south of the country and between urban and rural areas. For example, school attendance rates were 95 percent in Piedmont and 57 percent in Calabria.³⁶ Underlying teachers' biggest headaches of truancy and/or irregular attendance, particularly in rural areas, were widespread child labor, parental reluctance to send girls to school, poor health, the cold, distance to school, and parents not even knowing that school attendance was compulsory. Schools were often badly organized with overcrowded classes, unequal teacher distribution throughout the country, lack of school buildings, and so forth. The Gentile Reform had attempted to address the dysfunctions in school organization. It raised the school leaving age to fourteen years, set up school authorities in each major town, increased state subsidies for primary schools, opened teacher training colleges, and instituted regular state examinations for access to posts as teachers.³⁷

Many peasant families thought the costs of books and report cards were exorbitant.³⁸ Teachers found cost was also why families strongly resisted paying for children to join youth organizations: "Five lire buys us bread for two days to stop us from starving" was how one mother answered the Melendugno primary school teacher's request for the Opera Nazionale Balilla (ONB) enrollment fee.³⁹ Given this background, the teacher's tenacity in insisting that pupils in this little town in Apulia pay the enrollment fee is surprising. She emphasized the advantages of membership-linked welfare benefits and even promoted fund-raising to pay for the poorest families.⁴⁰

By the mid-1930s fascism had completely taken over the school system. It had gradually extended its culture and youth organizations into schools where regime celebrations had become widespread. Since teachers often held positions in the fascist party's political organizations (e.g., ONB instructor, party branch secretary, or leader of the local ladies' fascist group), they became for all intents and purposes the interface between family and regime. The teacher was "the person who set in motion the fascist process and its strategies of propaganda and communication."⁴¹ Far from being a place apart with its own times and rhythms, the school became more and more politicized and inserted into the political life of the nation. The desired outcome (which was partially achieved) was to link reading, writing, and child socialization to fascist myths and rites. Thus schools, particularly primary schools, became the first and most

efficacious means of imparting fascist ideals and moral principles to Italian youth. The school became the place where they first encountered the fascist regime.

Forging the "new man": Youth organizations

The school was not enough in itself to guarantee full fascist socialization of the new generations of Italians. The ONB was set up in 1926 under the auspices of the prime minister, Mussolini, and was headed by squad leader Renato Ricci. Its aims were to forge boys in *Balilla* from the ages of eight to fourteen and in *Avanguardisti* (avant-garde companies) when aged fourteen to eighteen.⁴² In 1930, the *Giovani fascisti* (young fascists) were started under party control to organize young people aged eighteen to twenty-one. Since 1921, university students had been able to avail of *Gruppi universitari fascisti* (GUF; university fascist groups).⁴³

The technical and disciplinary regulations of the ONB, which were promulgated in January 1927, outlined a wide-ranging youth program aimed at "modelling the conscience and thoughts of tomorrow's fascists."⁴⁴ As the first tool for dominating, organizing, and monopolizing Italian youth, the ONB developed in basically two directions. On the one hand, it prohibited or limited the activities of non fascist associations. Scouts were suppressed; there were clashes with *Azione Cattolica* (Catholic Action), and the ONB gradually absorbed preexisting cultural, sporting, and recreational youth associations.⁴⁵ On the other hand, the ONB made its presence felt throughout the country and gradually engaged in new tasks by extending its influence in schools.

The ONB entered the school system in 1927 by taking over physical education classes.⁴⁶ Once within state schools, it then worked to build an alternative school system that was directly under party control. It took over management of about 9,000 rural schools whose ONB teachers were in charge of primary school education for over 265,000 pupils. The *Gioventù Italiana del Littorio* (GIL; Italian Youth of the Lictor) was formed in 1937 by uniting the ONB and the *Giovani fascisti*, and was headed by the party secretary. In 1938, the GIL undertook the job of a school welfare board.⁴⁷ From 1939 onward, primary schools were opened in fascist party and GIL offices under the pretext of remedying the chronic lack of classrooms, and by 1940 party offices housed 2,475 schools with about 125,000 pupils.⁴⁸ With the institution of the Ente nazionale per l'insegnamento medio (National Board for Middle School Teaching) the party was able to extend its influence into private schools.⁴⁹

The prize targets in the party's ambition to control the Italian educational, political, and military training systems were the GIL boarding schools and academies where over 2,200 young people studied every year. Originally founded to provide high-level party leaders, they included physical education colleges in Rome and Orvieto,⁵⁰ navy colleges in Brindisi and Venice, the Air Force College in Forlì, the School for Seamen in Sabaudia, the teacher training college in Udine, GIL women's leader and commander schools in Florence and Vittorio Veneto, and choir-master schools in Bergamo and Vicenza.⁵¹ During the war years these boarding schools, which were party-dominated, military-type institutions that were immune to external influences, spearheaded the experiment to make young people into a super fascist élite. According to Julius

Evola, they were modeled on Nazi Germany's *National politische Erziehungsanstalten* (Napolas; National-Political Education Institutes) and the Castles of the Teutonic Order.⁵² After passing aptitude tests, eight-year-olds entered the schools to start studying, as in state schools, the national curriculum. It was, however, "fully illuminated by the light of fascist ideals."⁵³ Fascist boarding schools aimed at creating citizens for a new type of society that had definitively overcome the conflict between individual and collective needs, with the latter prevailing over the former.⁵⁴

The *Centri di preparazione al lavoro* (vocational training centers) had the same function. Founded in 1942 to integrate education and work, a principle sanctioned by the 1939 "School Charter," the vocational training centers served to prolong youth education beyond the school-leaving age. They were divided according to age group: the *Centri di addestramento al lavoro* (work training centers) catered for pupils aged eight to fourteen, while the *Centri di lavoro* (work centers) were for young people aged fourteen to eighteen. In these centers, education, military training and trade apprenticeships aimed at providing fully integrated education of "citizen-producers."⁵⁵ Within a few months 218 vocational training centers had been opened in sixty-two provinces.⁵⁶ Their objective was to orient pupils in their choice of trade, not in accordance with pupil or family's "egotistical desires" but with national production needs.⁵⁷

By means of its youth organizations the fascist regime attempted to achieve its ambition of regenerating Italian bodies.⁵⁸ All members of the organizations had regular medical checkups, which were carried out by a battalion of 20,000 doctors who followed up every stage of the young people's physical development.⁵⁹ Sport, mountain, and seaside holiday camps; sunlight exposure as treatment for diseases; prophylaxis for tuberculosis and malaria; campaigns to promote body care and personal hygiene; GIL-managed school canteens, all contributed to the fundamental policy of improving the "race."⁶⁰ Very little separated physical exaltation of the race and racism.⁶¹

Since sport had the task of inculcating young people with the moral and psychological qualities of the "fascist new man," training sessions were inextricably linked with military training for the future "citizen-soldier." From as early as 1933 the ONB focused on spreading the popularity of "combat sports," especially shooting, boxing, and mountain climbing.⁶² Sport was not just a means of physical exercise but also of stimulating in the individual the habit of feeling part of the mass.⁶³ In the great sports gatherings, which were made famous in the *Istituto Luce* propaganda films,⁶⁴ athletes synchronized their movements under the command of the party secretary, acting out fascism's ideals of a hierarchical, organized community. Individuals became a mass of people all behaving in the same way, and all used to obeying orders from their leader.⁶⁵

"Mussolini's Italian" was supposed to be permanently in uniform and ready to take up arms to defend the "revolution." Consequently, from 1934 onward, the ONB was entrusted with children's premilitary training. Familiarity with weapons started in the eight-to-fourteen age group (*Balilla*) who practiced on miniature rifles, continued in the avant-garde fourteen-to-eighteen-year-old age group who carried out real military exercises, and ended when the young fascists were licensed in one of several weapon specialties. The aim of the two-year young fascist arms training course was to create contingents of technicians for compulsory military service in the army, navy, and

air force.⁶⁶ In 1942, approximately 1.4 million young people attended fifteen thousand GIL-organized premilitary training courses, which were held all over the country.⁶⁷

Every year military training culminated in *Campi estivi* (summer camps), called *Campi Dux*, in every province, which were started by Ricci in 1929. Provincial camps were then followed by a camp in Rome for representatives from each province. For about three weeks young people lived the life of a fascist community, studying fascist doctrine and military regulations, concentrating on the use of weapons and tactical maneuvers, focusing on physical exercise and choir singing. In May 1938, during Adolf Hitler's visit to Rome, Mussolini was able to show off the powerful GIL organization of Italian youth to him.⁶⁸

Younger children experienced fascist community life in GIL-organized *Colonie estive* (summer camps), which, in 1942, were attended by over one million children and youths.⁶⁹ The camps introduced a holiday into their lives, something that had hitherto been reserved for small minority of people, but were planned to further purely political and ideological aims. A typical day was organized along military lines. Flag raising was followed by marching, singing patriotic songs, and talking about war "martyrs" and the "revolution." The political-ideological education program also included courses for GIL instructors and noncommissioned officers, which were designed to get young people used to commanding and working as leaders of the organization.⁷⁰

Overall, the GIL's pedagogical activities availed of a wide range of activities that tended to encompass the entire spectrum of youth interests: *Ludi juveniles* (young people's games) about culture and art, chats about fascist culture, youth press, cinema, theater, choir singing, music, radio programs, trips around Italy and abroad, and so on. In 1938, the GIL started using *Il primo libro del fascista* (The fascist's first book), which was a sort of fascist catechism that every young person had to learn by heart, and in 1939 it introduced *Il secondo libro del fascista* (The fascist's second book) to strengthen "racial awareness" and antisemitism among its "organized members."⁷¹

Widespread offers of play, recreation, and welfare activities was what most probably induced parents to enroll their children in the ONB and then the GIL. Since fascists considered material well-being as a tool for forging the new citizen, it would, therefore, be a mistake to consider the task of developing youth organizations as a national, authoritarian variation of the welfare state.⁷² As a matter of fact, one must not forget that once children were entrusted to fascist organizations, parents ended up losing control of their education.

Indeed, fascist "integral pedagogy" was based on the idea of encompassing every part of the individual's life, managing all sectors of the young person's activities (study, leisure time, sport, work); steering preferences, behavior, and choices; and eliminating all external influences, even the family's, because the educational process had to be the party's exclusive prerogative. In other words, the young person's life had to march to the rhythm of the organization's beat.⁷³ Starace was really obsessed with ensuring every free moment in the day was filled up with all kinds of initiatives and activities. Starting *Sabato fascista* (Fascist Saturday) in 1935 was just another of the many ways seized by fascism to insinuate itself into the lives of the young and the not so young. By the end of the 1930s the National Fascist Party had created, besides the organizations that have been already mentioned, a network of associations that were designed to reach out to educate and control young people living in the remotest parts of the country as well as

those whose social exclusion precluded school attendance. These included after-school activities for primary school children, youth clubs, and welcome centers for orphans and children from poor families or from socially precarious family backgrounds.⁷⁴

For all intents and purposes the integral education experiment culminated by the end of the 1930s in an attempt to guide, if not shrink, the role of the family in their children's education.⁷⁵ GIL educators firmly believed that creating the "new man" imposed a "necessary, urgent re-education of bourgeois families." Since families continued to transmit individual and private moral principles they were the greatest obstacle to fascism's community principles.⁷⁶ This idea did not just circulate among a small circle of "second revolutionary wave" fanatics. It was expressed by the fascist regime's top leaders and educationists.⁷⁷

Special "sections for GIL-family relations" were opened in 1941 to "flank" the work of family education, declaring their objective was to make the presence of GIL felt within the family's sphere of activities.⁷⁸ During the war, boarding schools for war orphans were obviously needed, and they provided fascists with the opportunity to experiment with a new type of education that was finally free of all family interference.⁷⁹ Fascist inroads into the family sphere were legalized in 1942. Article 147 of the new civil law code, under the threat of losing parental authority, compelled parents to educate their offspring in conformity with "national Fascism's moral principles and sentiments."⁸⁰

With the coming of war, the party relinquished management of some its organizations, like, for example, the Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro (Workers Leisure Time) to focus on youth education.⁸¹ In February 1940, the new party secretary, Ettore Muti, announced in a meeting of all federal secretaries that the decision was dictated by the "will to vigorously accentuate the political profile in youth organization," as it was considered an essential tool for "reinforcing the moral and political unity of the Italian people."⁸² The party line in strengthening the GIL translated into increased funding as the organization received 1.3 billion lire in 1942-43.⁸³

Conclusion: Such feverish organization for nothing?

When the fascist regime collapsed, about nine million young Italians aged from six to twenty-eight years old were members of its youth organizations, and in the preceding years millions more had been forged in the ONB/GIL and young fascist groups. Adherence was greatest in the large cities of northern and central Italy where the GIL had recruited 50 percent to 60 percent of young people, with peaks of 70 percent in some cities in Lombardy and Piedmont. The recruitment rate was around 30 percent in the south of the country.⁸⁴ There were marked differences in membership rates in large towns and rural areas, north and south. For example, in the southern city of Catanzaro GIL issued membership cards for 70 percent of schoolchildren in 1941.⁸⁵ Membership numbers tended to drop with age as peak enrollment occurred among primary and middle schoolchildren, falling after fourteen years of age. Due to cultural reasons, female members were always fewer in number, particularly in the south of Italy.⁸⁶

These data, rather than indicating the failure of the totalitarian fascist education program for Italian youth, showed that Italy was, particularly in some areas, still very underdeveloped, socially, culturally, and economically. As has already been stated, school attendance was far from being maximal. Few pupils continued their education

after primary or middle school, and very few indeed attended university. Since ONB/GIL membership was linked to schools, leaving school weakened the connection with the fascist youth organizations. Furthermore, starting work changed the young person's priorities and worries, as it propelled them into the world of adult responsibilities at a very early age. Students who stayed on at school, continuing their activities in fascist organizations, belonged principally to the urban middle and upper-middle classes who could afford to pay for further education and viewed fascism as a fundamental stepping-stone in upward social mobility.⁸⁷ Consequently, the likelihood of totalitarian pedagogy being successful clearly rose with the length of time the young people were educated within party structures. University students provided the proof of this rather banal observation. They became the custodians of the fascist regime's revolutionary moral principles and totalitarian projects.⁸⁸

One must also add that fascism's populist, revolutionary ideology attracted many of the young urban proletariat and peasantry.⁸⁹ Even remote local communities that were culturally very distant from the beating heart of national politics felt fascism's obstinate will to conquer the youth. Parents who refused ONB/GIL membership cards for their children were subjected to all kinds of pressure by school authorities and local politicians. Thus, the image of a sleepy society, that continued life in its usual manner, in indifference or hostility to the fascist regime, does not really hold true. Indeed, even where the effects of the totalitarian project appeared most limited, conflicting ideas interacted in the local community, and its response to fascism's social, political, modernizing project was usually to compromise with, if not openly support it, even though minority forms of resistance and refusal did take place.⁹⁰

Faced with this indisputable reality, some points are worth bearing in mind to avoid the short-cut temptation of concluding once again that fascism's youth projects simply failed. The lengths the party went to extend its capacities to forge the youth of the country should not be underestimated. The fascist party used every means possible to increase its chances of reaching out to every single child so as to educate them in fascist principles, the proof being its frenetic, dynamic organizations and the enormous sums of money it spent on funding them. Nor should the progress that was made in achieving its objectives in a bare fifteen years be underestimated. Membership of fascist youth organizations rose from 480,000 in 1926 to 9,000,000 in 1942–43. As has been noted, the GIL had more members than its brother organization, the Nazi *Hitler-Jugend* (Hitler Youth). In Germany, moreover, some forms of juvenile anticonformism and rebellion did occur against the harsh Nazi discipline, but in Italy families and young people looked favorably on membership of fascist youth organizations.⁹¹ As Palmiro Togliatti has already noted in his famous *Lezioni sul fascismo* (Lessons on fascism), which were delivered in Moscow in 1932, the ONB was one of the key organization of the fascist regime's "popular politics," crucial for gathering masses in its organizations. Thus, as a result of the party's strict control on young generations, the ONB members were the most active among the fascists.⁹² In short, fascism undoubtedly managed to mobilize youth on a scale that had never been seen during the liberal era and that the great popular parties of the Italian Republic never even came close to.⁹³

What were the effects of such committed organization? By means of the school system, aided by ever-present propaganda and the current political climate, GIL managed

to inculcate the so-called fascist culture from the bottom up. Historical investigations into daily life under fascism showed that even in small provincial towns young people socialized exclusively within fascist organizations so that fascism became routine and was the natural background and framework of their lives. This "normality" was not without its effects. In the 1930s the identity of young men and women was constructed by constant comparison with fascist "new man" and "new woman" models.⁹⁴

The objective of totalitarian pedagogy was to create a new generation of Italians who were able to adapt and conform to the reality of the fascist regime. Essential features of the "new man" were supposed to be obedience and faith. As Ettore Muti stated, fascist education was designed to "form excellent soldiers who, like Roman legionnaires, were strong and resilient, intrepid and disciplined, ready to kill and to lay down their lives should their Leader command it."⁹⁵ A small kernel of individuals was destined to be separated out from the mass of members and given the privilege of becoming the future party ruling class. Obedience was the supreme virtue even for these fascist managers as they were expected to transmit orders from leadership to members without questioning anything.

Assessing the effects of totalitarian pedagogy on children and adolescents, whose personalities and characters were still developing, is arduous because of the scarcity of primary sources and/or their inaccuracies. Youth press was edited mainly by educators, and the few articles by young people were conventional and rhetorical. School essays demonstrated that fascist propaganda topics, moral principles, and key code words and expressions had been fully internalized, but, since they had appeared in essay plans, students may have been induced to satisfy the teachers' expectations. Some later memoirs described membership of fascist youth organizations as either compulsory, that is, an obligation that could not be avoided, or as an opportunity to escape from a narrow family circle but which had no impact on political or ideological mind-set. Given the pervading antifascist atmosphere in Italy in the years following the war, these memoirs may have been strongly influenced by the need to justify certain behaviors. Faced with these obstacles, the only other sources are to look at the "GIL-generation's" deeds and choices and at contemporary observers' views on the effects of fascist education.

The first significant piece of information lies with the war volunteers. University students and young fascists enthusiastically took part in all the wars of the regime—from the Ethiopian campaign to the Second World War.⁹⁶ When Italy declared it was at war on June 10, 1940, the GIL immediately launched a drive for voluntary enlistment by young people who had been born in 1922, and set up twenty battalions, with a total of twenty-four thousand young fascists, under the command of 500 officers.⁹⁷ They took part in the "Youth March," whose objective was to show off to the Italian people the fascist regime's achievements in creating the "new Italian" and the "citizen-soldier." On their "Youth March" young fascists set out from diverse towns in the center-north of Italy on August 26 and marched for about 350 km, reaching Padova. On October 10, they paraded in front of their leader, Mussolini, and authorities of the regime and their foreign guests.⁹⁸ One participant recalled the general elation: "as young students we were expecting the call to arms! . . . We were ready, more than ready, and keen to answer that call. . . . And even before the official call for enlistment was announced, we had, us 18-year-olds—the class of 1922—we had already given our solemn commitment."⁹⁹ The

young men's support of fascist wars cannot be interpreted only as patriotism because fascism was closely identified with the nation, and the objectives of national strength were linked to the triumph of fascism worldwide. Another participant remembers,

Well, yes, we have to admit it. We loved Mussolini. We were mad about him just like the vast majority of Italians We didn't even feel the need to ask what Fascism was. We just accepted it as an obvious way of life. . . . We weren't troubled by any doubts or problems because they only arise from a legitimate and free exchange of ideas. For us Liberty meant the right to navigate our sea (*mare nostrum*—the Mediterranean) and Justice meant conquering living space where we could try and find the solution to our social and economic difficulties Ultimately we were the children of our times and we meant to take part in the appalling tragedy that was inevitably destined to change the face of the world.¹⁰⁰

Demobilization of the battalions that had taken part in the "Youth March" elicited disappointment and protests among the young men who had thus manifested their desire to fight.¹⁰¹ Although about 15,000 young fascists volunteered to enlist, army chiefs' distrust of volunteer units meant that only 3,000 actually joined up.¹⁰² During the Libyan desert war, the deeds of the Young Fascist Battalion, who halted an Indian brigade at Bir el Gobi, bolstered the myth of warrior youth.¹⁰³ Indeed, despite the general tendency to uphold the view that Italian soldiers fought for fascism without much conviction, recent studies have emphasized that Italian soldiers, especially the younger ones, hoped for victory and fought wholeheartedly to achieve it.¹⁰⁴

Young people were convinced that fascism was the most advanced solution to the crisis of modern man. They believed it was a genuine revolutionary movement that was dedicated to creating a "new civilization." Many of them continued to believe in Mussolini even after the fall of fascism on July 25, 1943, and the Italian Social Republic, the new fascist state founded by Mussolini under the aegis of the Nazis, was known to be overwhelmingly supported by the youth of the country.¹⁰⁵ Less attention has been paid to the episode of "fascist resistance" in the south of Italy after the armistice was signed on September 8.¹⁰⁶ Once again, the main protagonists were men of the "old guard" and members of the youth organizations, proving that the fascist regime had successfully passed on its moral principles and political projects from one generation to the next.

An important testimonial about the effects of fascist pedagogy emerged from postwar reflections on the fascist legacy. After the fall of fascism, the question of miseducation of Italian youth was a major worry for the antifascist political and cultural forces. The issue and "reeducation" modalities were long debated from 1943 to 1948.¹⁰⁷ Alcide De Gasperi, Christian Democrat leader and future prime minister, was hardly exaggerating or expressing a superficial knowledge of the matter when he privately wrote in 1943 that fascism was "a congenital mindset in the younger generation."¹⁰⁸

What clearly emerged from postwar testimonials was that the fascist regime had ruptured parent-child culture and that the break had made it impossible to shield young people from its influence. Fascism had even lured in the children of families that opposed it. A long-time socialist remembered with sadness and shame that he had been unable to prevent his children from taking part in GIL-organized activities. Their

initial desire to enjoy the benefits of membership was transformed, as they grew from children, into adolescents, and then into adults, into convinced adherence to the fascist regime's moral principles and myths.¹⁰⁹

Young people who had grown up under fascism had a long and difficult road to travel to fit into the postwar political climate. In some cases distaste for antifascism, democracy, and a plurality of ideas mixed in with an erroneous idea of patriotism led them into neofascism. It was hardly surprising that university and high school students were mainly involved in national unrest over Trieste.¹¹⁰ As boys they had worn the GIL uniform. As youths they had fought in the fascist wars or for the Italian Social Republic. Certainly they were a minority, but like others, they provided another sign of the effects of that long period of fascist education, illustrating how deeply it had colonized the minds of its recipients.

Notes

- 1 Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 32–3.
- 2 George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).
- 3 Karel Plessini, *The Perils of Normalcy: George L. Mosse and the Remaking of Cultural History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014), 60.
- 4 Emilio Gentile, *Storia del partito fascista, 1919–1922: Movimento e milizia* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1989), 524.
- 5 See: Emilio Gentile, *La via italiana al totalitarismo: Il partito e lo stato nel regime fascista* (1995; Rome: Carocci, 2008).
- 6 Emilio Gentile, "L'uomo nuovo' del fascismo: Riflessioni su un esperimento totalitario di rivoluzione antropologica," in Emilio Gentile, *Fascismo: Storia e interpretazione* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2002), 235.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 237–41.
- 8 Luca La Rovere, "Rifare gli italiani': l'esperimento di creazione dell'uomo nuovo' nel regime fascista," *Annali di Storia dell'educazione e delle istituzioni scolastiche* 9 (2002), 51–77; Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci and Pierre Milza, eds., *L'homme nouveau dans l'Europe fasciste (1922–1945)* (Paris: Fayard, 2004); Luca La Rovere, "Miti e politica per la gioventù fascista," in *Dalla trincea alla piazza: L'irruzione dei giovani nel Novecento*, ed. Marco De Nicolò (Rome: Viella, 2011), 205–20; Alessio Ponzio, *Shaping the New Man: Youth Training Regimes in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015); Jorge Dagnino, "The Myth of the New Man in Italian Fascist Ideology," *Fascism: Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies*, no. 5 (2016): 130–148.
- 9 For a discussion of this point, see Emilio Gentile, *Fascismo: Storia e interpretazione* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2002), 63–71.
- 10 As is well known, this hypothesis was expressed in one of the first studies on Italian fascism: Alberto Aquarone, *La costruzione dello stato totalitario* (Turin: Einaudi, 1965). For more recent examples, see: Alberto De Bernardi, *Una dittatura moderna* (Milan: B. Mondadori, 2001); Paul Corner, *The Fascist Party and Popular Opinion in Mussolini's Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Paul Ginsborg, *Family Politics: Domestic Life, Devastation and Survival, 1900–1959* (London: Yale University Press, 2014).
- 11 Carmen Betti, *L'Opera nazionale balilla e l'educazione della gioventù* (Florence: la Nuova Italia, 1984), 177.

- 12 Corner, *The Fascist Party and Popular Opinion*, 19 and 23–4.
- 13 Gigliola Gori, “Model of Masculinity: Mussolini, the ‘New Italian’ of the Fascist Era,” *International Journal of History of Sport* 16, no. 4 (1999): 55.
- 14 Gentile, “L’uomo nuovo’ del fascismo”, 235.
- 15 Luciano Pazzaglia, “La formazione dell’uomo nuovo nella strategia pedagogica del fascismo,” *Annali di Storia dell’educazione e delle istituzioni scolastiche* 10 (2003): 105–6.
- 16 See: Mosse, *The Image of Man*; Sandro Bellasai, *La mascolinità contemporanea* (Rome: Carocci, 2004); Raewyn W. Connell, *Masculinities* (1995; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).
- 17 Luca La Rovere, “‘Rifare gli italiani’”, 61–5.
- 18 Marco Palla, “Le Parti national fasciste et les organisation de masse » and Didier Musiedlak, “Stratégies institutionnelles et création de l’homme nouveau dans l’état fasciste” in *L’homme nouveau dans l’Europe fasciste*, 173–88 and 189–208.
- 19 See: Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).
- 20 The reference is to Michel Foucault, *Naissance de la biopolitique: Cours au Collège de France (1978–1979)*, ed. Michel Senellart (Paris: Gallimard, 2004); translated in English as *Society Must Be Defended*, ed. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana (New York: Picador, 2003).
- 21 The connection between the myth of the “new man” and education in twenty century totalitarian regimes is highlighted in the monographic issue “Il mito dell’uomo nuovo nel Novecento: l’uso politico dell’educazione.” *Annali di Storia dell’educazione e delle istituzioni scolastiche* 9 (2002).
- 22 Jürgen Charnitzky, *Die Schulpolitik des Faschistischen Regimes in Italien* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1994), 130. For fascist criticism of the Gentile Reform, see: Alessandra Tarquini, *Il Gentile dei fascisti: Gentiliani e antigentiliani nel regime fascista* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009), 44–69.
- 23 Charnitzky, *Die Schulpolitik*, 127–8.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 108 and 127.
- 25 Monica Galfré, *Il regime e gli editori: Libri, scuola e fascismo* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2005), 94–5.
- 26 Benito Mussolini, *La dottrina del fascismo* (1932); Roma: Istituto dell’Enciclopedia Italiana, 1932/1936).
- 27 Galfré, *Il regime e gli editori*, 14 and 25–6 and Francesca dello Preite, “Per una prima educazione attraverso il testo unico di Stato,” in *La formazione della gioventù italiana durante il ventennio fascista*, ed. Hervé A. Cavallera (Lecce: Pensa Multimedia, 2006), 1:141–3.
- 28 See: Adolfo Scotti di Luzio, *L’appropriazione imperfetta: Editori, biblioteche e libri per ragazzi durante il fascismo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996) and Davide Montino, *Le parole educate: Libri e quaderni tra fascismo e Repubblica* (Milan: Selene, 2005).
- 29 Balilla was Gian Battista Perasso’s nickname. According to legend, as a young man in 1746 his stone throwing triggered an insurrection against the Austrian occupiers in Genoa. He became a symbol of patriotism. “Balilla” was the name fascists gave to members of their youth movement, which was in fact called Opera Nazionale Balilla (ONB; National Balilla Organization).
- 30 Antonio Gibelli, *Il popolo bambino: Infanzia e nazione dalla grande guerra a Salò* (Turin: Einaudi, 2005), 265–76.
- 31 See: Luigi Marrella, *I quaderni del duce: Tra immagine e parola* (Manduria: Barbieri, 1995) and Gianluca Gabrielli and Davide Montino, eds., *La scuola fascista: Istituzioni, parole d’ordine e luoghi dell’immaginario* (Verona: Ombre corte, 2009).

- 32 Gianluca Gabrielli and Davide Montino, “Scuola e fascismo: Una storia ancora da scrivere?”, *Zapruder* 20, no. 5 (2009): 136–9.
- 33 As an example of such a trend, see Giovanni Genovesi, “Scuola e fascismo nel pistoiese: Il problema della fascistizzazione attraverso i diari di classe (1928–1929),” in *Il quaderno umile segno di scuola*, ed. Giovanni Genovesi (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2008), 10 and 34–5.
- 34 Quoted in Anna Maria Colaci, “Analisi della prassi educativa del fascismo: Una rilettura dei registri scolastici della scuola di Melendugno,” in *La formazione*, ed. Cavallera, 2:125.
- 35 Quoted in Pazzaglia, “La formazione dell’uomo nuovo,” 117.
- 36 Patrizia Dogliani, *Il fascismo degli italiani: Una storia sociale* (Turin: Utet, 2008), 187.
- 37 *Ibid.*, 188.
- 38 Galfré, *Il regime*, 51.
- 39 Colaci, “Analisi della prassi educativa del fascismo,” 42.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 36. See also Mirella Chiaranda, “Analisi comparata di alcune esperienze scolastiche nel Veneto durante il fascismo,” in *Storia comparata dell’educazione: Problemi ed esperienze tra Ottocento e Novecento*, ed. Mirella Chiaranda (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2010); Francesca Dello Preite, *Il fascismo e l’educazione primaria: L’esempio di Campi Salentina* (Lecce: Pensa multimedia, 2006).
- 41 Giancarlo Costabile, “Processi educativi e scolastici nella Calabria fascista: appunti per una storia della scuola calabrese,” in *La formazione*, ed. Cavallera, 2:348.
- 42 Niccolò Zapponi, “Il partito della gioventù: Le organizzazioni giovanili del fascismo 1926–1943,” *Storia contemporanea* 13, no. 4–5 (1982): 569–633; See also: Betti, *L’Opera nazionale balilla*; Tracy H. Koon, *Believe, Obey, Fight: Political Socialization of Youth in Fascist Italy, 1922–1943* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Luca La Rovere, *Giovinetza in Marcia: Le organizzazioni giovanili del regime fascista* (Novara: Editoriale Nuova, 2004).
- 43 Luca La Rovere, *Storia dei Guf: Organizzazione, politica e miti della gioventù universitaria fascista, 1919–1943* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2003), 45.
- 44 Ministero dell’Interno, *Opera nazionale Balilla per l’assistenza e l’educazione fisica e morale della gioventù: Norme legislative e regolamentari* (Rome: Provveditorato generale dello Stato, 1927), 39 and 45. See also: Ornella Stellavato, “La nascita dell’Opera nazionale Balilla,” *Mondo contemporaneo*, no. 2 (2009): 5–81.
- 45 Zapponi, “Il partito,” 613. See also Richard J. Wolff, *Between Pope and Duce: Catholic Students in Fascist Italy* (New York: Lang, 1990), 75.
- 46 Regio Decreto Legge (R. D. L.), November 20, 1927, n. 2341.
- 47 Cfr. Ester De Fort, *La scuola elementare dall’Unità alla caduta del fascismo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996), 442–3 and Zapponi, “Il partito,” 600.
- 48 *Foglio di disposizioni del Pnf*, December 5, 1939 and January 17, 1939.
- 49 R. D. L. June 3, 1938, n. 928.
- 50 See: Lucia Motti and Marilena Rossi, eds., *Accademiste ad Orvieto: Donne ed educazione fisica nell’Italia fascista 1932–1943* (Perugia: Quattroemme, 1996); Alessio Ponzio, *La palestra del littorio: L’Accademia della Farnesina: un esperimento di pedagogia totalitaria nell’Italia fascista* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2009).
- 51 Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, 1940–43, b. 2667, f. 1.1.15/3.500, s. f. 13, doc. ‘2.200 posti nelle Accademie e nei Collegi della Gil’.
- 52 Julius Evola, “L’esperimento dei castelli dell’Ordine” and “Iniziativa di educazione ‘qualitativa’ in Germania: le Napolas,” *Insegnare*, March, 15, 1940 and September 1–15, 1940 and Evola, “Le Napolas,” *Regime fascista*, May 27, 1941. See: Helen Roche, *Sparta’s German Children: The Ideal of Ancient Sparta in the Royal Prussian Cadet*

- Corps, 1818–1920, and in National Socialist Elite Schools (the Napolas), 1933–1945* (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2013) and Roche, *The Third Reich's Elite Schools: A History of the Napolas* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press), forthcoming.
- 53 M. Giovannucci, "Funzione politica e culturale dei collegi della Gil," *Gioventù del littorio*, March 1, 1942.
- 54 Vittorio Zincone, "Spirito dei collegi della Gil," *Il lavoro fascista*, December 6, 1940.
- 55 "Le istituzioni del lavoro nella Gil," *Gioventù del littorio*, April 15, 1942.
- 56 A. Merola, "Formare i quadri delle maestranze di domani," *ibid.*, May 1, 1942.
- 57 G. Ajello, "Compiti sanitari dei centri di lavoro della Gil," *ibid.*, March 15, 1942.
- 58 See: James A. Mangan, ed., *Shaping the Superman: Fascist Body as Political Icon* (London: Routledge, 2000); Georges Bensoussan, ed., *Sport, corps et société de masse: Le projet d'un homme nouveau* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2012).
- 59 M. Pignatari, "La Gil per la salute della razza," *Gioventù del littorio*, April 15, 1941.
- 60 See: Claudia Mantovani, *Rigenerare la società: Leugenetica in Italia dalle origini ottocentesche agli anni trenta* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2004); Francesco Cassata, *Building the New Man: Eugenics, Racial Science and Genetics in Twentieth-Century Italy* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011).
- 61 Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci, "Profil racial de l'homme nouveau sous le fascisme italien," in *L'homme nouveau dans l'Europe fasciste*, 152.
- 62 *Atti del Partito nazionale fascista* (Rome: Flli Palombi, 1933), 485.
- 63 Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 169.
- 64 See: Ernesto G. Laura, *Le stagioni dell'aquila: Storia dell'Istituto Luce* (Rome: Istituto Luce, 2001).
- 65 Achille Starace, *Gioventù italiana del Littorio* (Milan: Mondadori, 1939), 51.
- 66 M. Pignatari, "La formazione del cittadino soldato," *Gioventù del littorio*, March 15, 1941.
- 67 *Ibid.*, January 1, 1943.
- 68 "I due condottieri al III Campo Roma," *Libro e moschetto*, May 15, 1938.
- 69 *Gioventù del littorio*, January 1, 1943.
- 70 E. Natoli, "I graduati e gli aspiranti della Gil," *ibid.*, November 15, 1941.
- 71 Both are reproduced in Carlo Galeotti, *Credere, obbedire, combattere: I catechismi del fascismo* (Viterbo: Stampa alternativa, 1996).
- 72 See: Dogliani, *Il fascismo*, 179.
- 73 See the calendar of the GIL's activities for 1939 in *Bollettino del Comando Generale*, November 15, 1938.
- 74 La Rovere, "Rifare gli italiani," 69.
- 75 *Ibid.*, 70–2.
- 76 "Educazione nuova," *Problemi della gioventù*, October 29–November 15, 1941.
- 77 See, for example, Camillo Pellizzi, "Educazione fascista e classe dirigente," *Critica fascista*, June 15, 1937, and Luigi Volpicelli, "Scuola e famiglia," *Tempo di scuola*, April 15, 1941.
- 78 M. Bovini, "Gil e famiglia," *Problemi della gioventù*, September 15, 1941.
- 79 La Rovere, "Rifare gli italiani," 74.
- 80 Comando generale della Gil and Ufficio studi e legislazione del Pnf, ed., *La gioventù fascista nella legislazione* (Rome, 1942): 16 and 19.
- 81 About *Opera nazionale dopolavoro*, see: Victoria de Grazia, *The Culture of Consent: Mass Organization in Fascist Italy* (1981; Cambridge; London: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
- 82 *Foglio di disposizioni del Pnf*, February 9, 1940.

- 83 Zapponi, "Il partito della gioventù," 572. Corresponding to 394,551,916 euros of 2008. See: http://www3.istat.it/dati/catalogo/20100728_00/valore_moneta_1861_2008.pdf.
- 84 Koon, *Believe*, 179 and 182. The author refers to the figures of an inquiry carried out in May 1939.
- 85 Costabile, "Processi educativi," 356.
- 86 Koon, *Believe*, 172–3. See Andrea Rapini, "I giovani nella crisi di regime del fascismo," in *Estados Autoritários e Totalitários e suas rapresentações*, ed. Luís R. Torgal and Heloísa Paulo (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, 2008), 333–45.
- 87 Koon, *Believe*, 172.
- 88 See: La Rovere, *Storia dei Guf*, 387–98.
- 89 Paolo Spriano, *Storia del Partito comunista italiano*, vol. 2, *Gli anni della clandestinità* (1969; Turin: Einaudi, 1976), 343–4.
- 90 Tommaso Baris, "Il mito della giovinezza tra realtà e retorica nel regime fascista," in *Dalla trincea alla piazza*, 204.
- 91 Dogliani, *Il fascismo degli italiani*, 178–9.
- 92 Palmiro Togliatti, *Corso sugli avversari: Le lezioni sul fascismo*, ed. Francesco M. Biscione (Turin: Einaudi, 2010), 35 and 63.
- 93 See: Angelo Ventrone, *La cittadinanza repubblicana: Forma-partito e identità nazionale alle origini della democrazia italiana, 1943–1948* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996).
- 94 See Roberto Volpe, *Lettere dagli anni difficili: Dal fascismo alla guerra, 1937–1944*, ed. Maria Teresa Volpe (Salerno: Edizioni Marte, 2007) and Patrizia Salvetti, *L'amore al tempo del fascio: Un carteggio, 1932–1939* (Cava de' Tirreni: Marlin, 2014).
- 95 *Foglio di disposizioni del Pnf*, February 9, 1940.
- 96 See La Rovere, *Storia dei Guf*, passim.
- 97 *Bollettino del Comando generale della Gil*, August 15, 1940.
- 98 *Ibid.*, September 1, 1940.
- 99 Francesco Musio, *La marcia della giovinezza: I ragazzi di Mussolini* (Taranto: Talmus-Art, 2011), 10–11.
- 100 Alberto Pagin, *I ragazzi di Mussolini: La battaglia di Bir-el-Gobi, 2–7 dicembre 1941* (Milan: Mursia, 2001), 20–1.
- 101 *Ibid.*, 28–31 and Musio, *La marcia della giovinezza*, 66.
- 102 Edoardo Scala, *Storia delle fanterie italiane*, vol. 9, *I volontari di guerra* (Rome: Stato maggiore dell'Esercito, Ispettorato di Fanteria, 1955), 665.
- 103 See the 1942 propaganda poster by Gino Boccasile, <http://www.wolfsonian.org/explore/collections/giovani-fascisti-eroi-di-bir-el-gobi-young-fascists-heroes-bir-el-gobi#> (accessed: September 5, 2016). See also: Giuseppe Mugnone, *I ragazzi di Bir el Gobi* (Padova: Stediv-Aquila, 1968).
- 104 See: Mario Avagliano and Marco Palmieri, *Vincere e vinceremo! Gli italiani al fronte, 1940–1943* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2014).
- 105 See Carlo Mazzantini, *I balilla andarono a Salò: L'armata degli adolescenti che pagò il conto con la storia* (Venice: Marsilio, 1995).
- 106 Giuseppe Parlato, *Fascisti senza Mussolini: Le origini del neofascismo in Italia, 1943–1948* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2006), 37.
- 107 See Luca La Rovere, *L'eredità del fascismo: Gli intellettuali, i giovani e la transizione al postfascismo, 1943–1948* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2008).
- 108 Maria Romana Catti De Gasperi, ed., *De Gasperi scrive: Corrispondenza con capi di Stato cardinali uomini politici giornalisti diplomatici* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1974), vol. 1, 341–2.
- 109 "Un compito: i giovani," *Avanti!*, February 26, 1944 (Bologna).
- 110 See: Antonio Carioti, *Gli orfani di Salò: Il sessantotto neo dei giovani neofascisti nel dopoguerra, 1945–1951* (Milan: Mursia, 2008).

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Biotypology and Eugenics in Fascist Italy

Francesco Cassata

Introduction

The political rise of Benito Mussolini was followed with enthusiasm and trepidation by many admiring foreign eugenicists. At the Eighth Meeting of the International Federation of Eugenic Organizations (IFEEO), held in Rome in 1929, the German eugenicist Eugen Fischer praised Mussolini as "the great statesman who, in the Eternal City, shows more than any other leader today, both in deed and word, how much he has the eugenic problems of his people at heart." Through Fischer, the IFEEO asked Mussolini to interest himself not just in the quantity of the population but also in its quality:

We pray that what was denied to earlier cultures may here be achieved in grasping fortune's wheel and controlling and turning it! Quality as well as quantity! The urgency brooks no delay: the danger is imminent. *Videat consul!*¹

The IFEEO's hopes were soon to be disappointed. Far from adopting the "Nordic," hereditarian eugenic model, since the late 1920s Italian Fascism promoted a Catholic-oriented, neo-Lamarckian, and "quantitative" eugenics, based largely on two different scientific paradigms: Corrado Gini's pronatalist "regenerative" eugenics and Nicola Pende's constitutional biotypology.²

In the last two decades a conspicuous international historiography has investigated the connection between Italian eugenics and the fascist quest for the New Man, thoroughly exploring a number of complex and interrelated issues, such as political and ideological discourses, population and public health programs, educational agendas, and propaganda campaigns.³ Drawing on this vast literature, the aim of this chapter is to shed light not on the "spiritual," but on the "material"—endocrine-oriented—construction of the fascist New Man, by focusing in particular on the role of the physician Nicola Pende and his relevant biotypological program.

A world-renowned endocrinologist in the interwar period and one of the most prominent eugenicists of Fascist Italy, Nicola Pende (1880–1970) (Figure 2.1) still