

A20  
I-A\9\3

### Italian mentality

The item consists of three legal-sized pages of notes, probably for the talk, 'National Mentalities of Europe' (see TOC bibliography 41.5.1, 1983 = 20). The first page is an outline or synopsis. The next two are text. The full item follows.

[1]

[Handwritten at top: move to point to speak of Nazi movement--Action]

Italian Mentality. Not external beauty: blue sky, sea, mountains, vine-

Three points:	[hand:] We shall be
1. The National Tradition.	faced with similar
2. Characteristic Humanism.	problems
3. The Revolutionary Idea.	avoid mistakes
	understand--distinctions

Can't form an idea from a casual acquaintance with emigrants: a) Al Capone. b) labourers. (built r'lw's) c) shining fruit.

1. The National Tradition.  
One of the oldest, most exquisite cultures of Europe.
  - a) Imperial Rome: not domination but law; not uniformity (Gleichshaltung but tolerance); not an endless strain of petty wars but peace. Culture, older Etruscan origins, traditions of city state, Gk influence; Livy Tacitus Sallust; Virgil Horace Lucretius; Cicero Caesar; Cat Tibur
  - b) Byzantine Rome: centre moved to Const; Rome focus for constructing Europe; odour pomp display of greatness that was Romanità: laws principles; adaptiveness elasticity
  - c) Medieval Univ. Pisa Bologna (med); Dante Boccaccio Petrarch; as southern France midway between phil & romance of Arabs and crude ferocity simple Xtianity of north; so also Italy but/greater flowering/; rest barb
  - d) Galileo, Volta, Marconi; Einstein's maths, Riemann Gauss, also Civitta Rex Conte Cruiser that went to Australia; electrified rlwys, expresses
  - e) painters, sculptors, architects
  
2. The National Characteristic.  
Difficult: Milan Naples Sicily; Aberdeen Liverpool Southampton
  - a) Politeness, respect for humanity: more culture in the flourish with which a newsboy of Naples -- friendliness

Aristocracy: greatest exactitude, House of Savoy & Roman aristocrats

Bourgeois: can't learn Italian, won't correct you

- b) Tempo: time is money, never heard of it
- Fascists like doing things in a rush: botched
- Contracts: no time clause - Rome wasn't built in a day - blue-prints ok for sheep and Germans
- Dismounting train, pian piano
- Siesta: streets deserted, shops closed from 12 to 2 or 3
- Evening walk: public gardens, motor out to Frascati
- Family life: children adored, dressed
- grievance agst Fascism: taking children away; run and take off that masquerade and then I'll give you a kiss

### 3. The Revolutionary Idea.

- a) Musso (socialist blacksmith) kicked out of school; exile (Lenin's most brilliant pupil); war wounded
- Nationalism; Georges Sorel and theory of violence (make em ridiculous, castor oil); March on Rome; Kerensky period; Parliament not dissolved till 1934 5. (Att Ch V 8th etc.
- b) Philosophy of AZIONE: meet events as they come.
- General scepticism: to historicism; Hegelian influence in universities, Croce, Gentile; England got the jump on the world in introd of machine age, creditor nation (rentier), empire; that age is over; New Age not self-interest but communal interest; Leader and Party; efficiency, modernity, vigour, public services; credere ubbidire combattere; Italiani al estero; sources of raw materials (property vs process); empire.
- c) First movement: reconciliation, joy to masses, crucifix in schools, Letter to Figaro, Stressa.
- d) Abyssinian Campaign, sanctions, Spain, Sept 39 (Greek) March 40 (asse commerciale) April (50 generals) May (Pope's telegramme; Osserva black-listed, civilta / Take Osser secretly

### 4. Why does the Pope not speak?

- a) How? As divine vice-roy deposing Muss? Medieval theory, held by some then
- How? As teacher. In general principles? In concrete instances?
- b) For the good of the taught. Start worldwide persecution; Catholics can't be relied on; depend on foreign power. Elizabethan tradition. For good of Italians? How speak? Wireless (interference). Pastoral (censored) Pilgrim group (concentration camp). (Can be done Mbr Sor)r [sic] Would they listen? 60 years of no religion in school, with whole-hearted approval of Protestant world; 10 years with dribble of rlg's education overlaid with intense Fascist propaganda.

[2]

It would be much easier to speak to you to-night about German mentality and the Nazionalsozialist movement than about Italian mentality and Fascismo. Not only is the German movement far simpler and easier to comprehend but also it can more readily be illustrated [sic] by local parallels; for instance, Hitler's initial campaign against the Jews could be paralleled with the Ontario campaign calling itself Protestant Action and devoting its efforts to reviling Roman Catholics; just as religion in Ontario so the Jewish question in Central and Eastern Europe provided an abundance of inflammable material, a facile opportunity for the unintelligent to excite mass-passions, and on that excitement to ride to notoriety and power. Further, just as you here ridicule the ineptitude of such a campaign and pooh-pooh the idea of it ever amounting to anything - the good sense of the people of Ontario is proof against such nonsense - so also in Germany was Hitler for ten years regarded as a vulgar nuisance of no importance. I sincerely trust you are right in your estimate of the fomenters of an indigenous Hitlerism, that you have good grounds for being certain that the individuals in question never heard of Georges Sorel, that they have no knowledge of revolutionary technique, no ambitions of creating a solid national spirit based on ignorance and hatred, and no hope of success in their effort to stimulate latent prejudice and passion into a massive intolerance. But one thing is certain: not only the people of the province of Quebec but even its Premier, Mr Godbout, who is no anglophobe, cannot arrive as rapidly as you do at your comfortable and reassuring judgment; and even though the Quebec Premier has been reassured on the point, it remains that such a campaign does infinite harm because it saps the very foundations of Canadian unity and makes ever so much more difficult the task of increasing the technical unity and centralization of the country to meet its economic problems.

It is in terms of such deeper problems that one has to approach a study of Fascism, and if this adds to the difficulty of our inquiry, it also adds to its interest. First, then, let me state what that deeper problem is. Mr. Christopher Dawson, perhaps the profoundest English thinker of the present time, predicted a number of years ago that every modern state would assume an ever greater and greater control over the lives, the actions, the speech and the thought of all its citizens. The basis of such a prediction is, of course, the modern economic structure: modern economy is not a patch-work of relatively [3] isolated units, as were the feudal manors and the medieval free cities; it is a net-work of complementary functions in which no part can enjoy even the vestiges of self-sufficiency. In a primitive economy each small group attends to all its needs and exchange is merely an incidental appendage, a means of getting rid of surplus products and obtaining conveniences and luxuries in their stead. In an advanced economy exchange moves from its former minor and supplementary role to become the centre and pivot of the whole of our material lives. As the depression so forcibly imprinted on our minds, there is a vast machine, the economic system, that sometimes works well, and we enjoy prosperity, and sometimes works ill, and then rich men are reduced to penury, and the poor working labouring classes wander aimlessly about in search of work that does not exist. Because there is

the vast machine which does not always function, which needs direction and control, Dawson concludes that inevitably there will be evolved another vast machine to direct and control it. Because the economic machine is a pattern of exchanges and because exchange is at the very basis of our material lives, it follows that the controlling machine will have to enter into our lives. Because exchange is the term of economic activity, because in itself it is a psychological and moral act, because such acts are greatly influenced by all that is said and written, one immediately comes to Mr Dawson's conclusion: the modern state will assume an ever greater and greater control over the lives, the actions, the speech and the thought of all its citizens.

This problem is world-wide: all modern states are highly centralized and the less centralized among them will be more so in the future. As you know, the present state of the question in Canada is discussion of the Sirois Report, momentarily shelved, but not at all dead. Accordingly, an examination of the Italian experiment in centralization should provide many useful lessons for our own future; it can teach us, above all, never to be over-confident, never to be deceived by appearances, never to take it for granted that the 90% excellence of a programme is not going to be dominated by its 10% error.