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Fascism's European Empire: Italian Occupation During the Second World War

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riages in the empire, justified as a “defense of the race.” The Aryanization of Italians and a definition of Jews as “other” were the next steps needed to extend this legislation to the Jewish community. The pivotal year was 1938. In preparation for their total exclusion Mussolini demanded that the number of Jews in the army and public security services be ascertained. The religious faith of foreigners entering Italy had to be listed, and Austrian Jews were excluded. In April orders went out to exclude Jews from newspapers and journals. By mid-year a Jewish census was undertaken. In July the Aryanist “Manifesto of the Racial Scientists” was published and was followed in autumn by laws officially designating Italians as Aryans and Jews as racially non-Italian. Once embarked on this course, the Fascist regime joined its Nazi counterpart in a convoluted effort to define full Jews, half Jews, quarter Jews, and so on, but the essential characteristic was biological.

From 1938 to 1943 Sarfatti traces the ever more punitive measures taken. Mussolini considered revoking Italian citizenship for all Jews but drew back and hit only the recently naturalized. Echoing Nazi Germany, Jews were eventually excluded from public schools, forced to change names back to more “Jewish” ones, banned from using kosher butchering, forbidden to hire non-Jewish servants, excluded from the entertainment sector, including ownership of dance studios, and from all professions requiring state licenses (medicine, veterinary medicine, law, engineering). Sarfatti finds no indication that these measures created strong resistance on the part of the general public. Christian Italians moved in to take the vacated positions. Only after the fall of Fascism in July 1943 did the struggle against the German invaders merge with efforts to aid Italian Jews. But, as Davide Rodogno’s recently translated and equally important *Fascism’s European Empire: Italian Occupation during the Second World War* (2006) pointed out, Fascist Italy’s protection of Jews during the war, while undoubtedly true, is somewhat misleading. Fascist authorities were reluctant to hand over Jews under their jurisdiction, but they acted from 1940 to 1943 not primarily to save Jews but to defend their rights and prestige against the Nazis, Vichyites, and Croatian Fascists. Despite awareness of the ongoing Holocaust, the military and civilian authorities turned many fleeing refugees to their fate of deportation and death.

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DAVIDE RODOGNO. *Fascism’s European Empire: Italian Occupation during the Second World War*. Translated by ADRIAN BELTON. (New Studies in European History.) New York: Cambridge University Press. 2006. Pp. xxi, 504. \$99.00.

Davide Rodogno offers an illuminating appraisal of Fascist Italy’s ambitions, achievements, and failures in the occupation of Mediterranean Europe from 1940 to 1943. Originally published as *Il nuovo ordine mediterraneo: Le politiche di occupazione dell’Italia fascista in*

Europa (1940–1943) (2003), the book is an ambitious comparative undertaking. Rodogno sets Italian against German policies in Axis attempts to impose a new European order. He then compares and contrasts Italian Fascist experiences in the various occupied European territories stretching from “metropolitan” France and Corsica to Macedonia and Greece.

Rodogno’s research, based largely on archival sources, points to the subtle differences in Italian attitudes and approaches that affected the formulation and execution of Italian policies. For Rodogno, the “discrepancy between the regime’s ambitions and its actual accomplishments” (pp. 72, 144, 411) serves as the basis for understanding the variety of occupation experiences. Italian actions in Mediterranean Europe sprang from a sense of “moral duty” to transmit the values of a “superior” and advanced Italian civilization (p. 67). Although subordinate status to Germany and limited resources that required a flexibility and willingness to compromise inconsistent with authoritarian control thwarted Italian achievement, involvement in occupied territories fueled competition. Using a strategy based on Benito Mussolini’s enlistment of “faithful vassals ready to defend Italy’s *spazio vitale* against German encroachment” (p. 142), Italians “sought to carve out a broader role for themselves than their ally was willing to grant” (p. 108).

With respect to racial policies, Rodogno argues that Fascist aims differed from those of the Nazis, that rather than “aiming to annihilate the subject population,” the Fascists sought to “affirm a ‘natural right to expansion’” and to fulfill “a moral obligation to ‘civilize’ the territory conquered” (p. 47). He agrees with the findings of comparativists who see the ideologies of Fascism and Nazism as diverging most significantly in the approach to race and makes fine use of the works of Michele Sarfatti, Liliana Picciotto Fargion, and Enzo Collotti in discussing Italian occupation and the Jewish question. His analysis supports challenges to the popular conception that humanitarian instincts inspired Italians to save the Jews from German clutches. Italian authorities’ actions are linked instead to political aims to expand and counter German interference.

While the Italian occupiers did not eschew violence, and became involved in a “spiral of violence, reprisal and revenge” (p. 196), Rodogno maintains that their deteriorating position and limited resources particularly in 1942 and 1943 forced flexibility and compromise. In the “economic valorization” and exploitation of occupied lands, Fascism failed due to reliance on Nazi models that were simply beyond Italian capabilities.

Rodogno contends that Italianization of the new territories centered on refashioning local populations by first identifying Italian and Fascist citizens and then developing policies to shape the nation in the occupied territories. This discussion is illuminating; however, emphasis on “Fascistization” and competition with Nazism overlooks the roots of Italianization schemes in Italy’s unification policies and irredentism, in particular

the revival of liberal authorities' policies to "redeem" the populations of the former Habsburg lands in the wake of World War I.

Rodogno is perhaps at his best analyzing the occupation of the various territories of the Yugoslav state. Careful to avoid resorting to reified categories of ethnic enmity, he delineates the territories with the aid of well-chosen maps and explains the various conflicts and stages of occupation, painting a complicated picture of competing political loyalties, religious differences, and historical alignments. Particularly enlightening is the contrast between the occupation in annexed provinces of Slovenia and the occupation in the collaborating state of Croatia.

Scholars have long been struck by Italian actions in Greece and France and in the varying receptions afforded Italian and German troops in their occupying zones. Rodogno interweaves memoirs, literature, and military reports to argue persuasively that the Italians benefited from Greek assumptions that Italian ideas of civilization were closer and more sympathetic to their own than German ones were. In France, no such population sympathies emerged to mitigate Italian difficulties.

Although Italy's colonial exploits in Africa fall outside the author's scope, a more detailed examination of colonial policies would have enriched the book. Rodogno includes some material on Africa in his discussion of tactics of repression and violence, but this limits unnecessarily the scope of the impact of Italy's African colonial experience. Experiences in Africa affected wartime occupation policy in Europe and, as several of Rodogno's short biographical sketches demonstrate, Mussolini often assigned officers with colonial experience to administer territories in occupied Europe.

Rodogno intends the book as "a point of departure" with a discussion of themes that should "be deepened" (p. 416). This is too modest a claim for such a superb book. The author's detailed analysis and skillful interweaving of material on Fascist occupation set a high standard. Contributing much to our knowledge and understanding of Italian Fascism, the book is certain to stimulate further comparative study of occupation policy.

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MARCIN WODZIŃSKI. *Haskalah and Hasidism in the Kingdom of Poland: A History of Conflict*. Translated by SARAH COZENS and AGNIESZKA MIROWSKA. (The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.) Oxford and Portland, Oreg.: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2005. Pp. xi, 335. \$59.00.

Contrary to the expectation created by its subtitle, this book gives little detail about the conflict between the adherents of Hasidism and Haskalah (Jewish enlightenment) in nineteenth-century Poland. Marcin Wodziński includes short sections detailing "conflict in daily life" between Hasidim and Maskilim (lit.: enlighteners,

i.e., modernizers) and refers to the "daily harassment" that Maskilim suffered at the hands of Hasidim. This book is not, however, a systematic history of the strife between the two camps. It is rather, as the subtitle of the Polish edition (*Dzieje pewnej idei*) implies, the history of an idea. That idea is Hasidism as conceptualized by the Polish Maskilim. Wodziński traces the evolution of maskilic attitudes toward Hasidism in the territory of the so-called Congress Kingdom of Poland, dating from before its formal creation in 1815 and extending into the early twentieth century. These attitudes were marked by an initial relative lack of attention to Hasidism because it was regarded by Maskilim as a marginal phenomenon in Jewish society. In the 1840s Maskilim saw Hasidim first as competitors in the struggle to replace the institutions of the traditional Jewish community and then as a cultural enemy, primarily responsible for keeping the Jewish people mired in religious fanaticism, social backwardness, and cultural stagnation. In the 1860s this view changed into an appreciation of some positive qualities of Hasidim (e.g., their unity, their devotion to education), combined with the conviction that to win the fight to emancipate and modernize the Jewish people, Haskalah must defeat, through education and rational means, reactionary Hasidism. Next the Hasidim were taken to be a political entity that threatened to win recognition by both Jews and the government alike as legitimate representatives of Polish Jewry. Finally, the modernizers, or—as Wodziński dubs them post-1860—the integrationists, developed a fin-de-siècle nostalgia, finding in Hasidism an echo of authentic Jewishness, a treasury of Jewish folklore, and a wellspring of uncorrupted values. Presenting these attitudes in their social and cultural context and with sophisticated, critical analysis, Wodziński utilizes them and their expression (especially in the periodicals *Jutrenka* and *Izraelita*) as a lever to enable characterization of Polish Haskalah and to make some statements about Jewish society in Eastern Europe in general.

The most significant pronouncement in this book is that there indeed was a "Polish Haskalah." Conventional Jewish historiography has long either ignored or disparaged the Jewish modernizers of the Congress Kingdom. Wodziński observes that this was because, in contrast to the Maskilim of Galicia or of the Polish territories annexed by Russia, Polish modernizers were concerned mainly with social and economic—not religious and ideological—issues. Their desire to improve the material and social status of Polish Jewry meant that they were essentially in sympathy with the non-Jewish critique of separatist Jewish society and the integrationist policies of the Polish government (Wodziński emphasizes that there *was* a Polish government that operated separately from the Russian one to which it was subordinate, maintaining its own approach in Jewish affairs). Seeking to influence government positions and actions, as well as elite and public opinion, Polish Maskilim wrote mainly in Polish (though not neglecting Hebrew), and they welcomed the opportunity