Mussolini & Racism

Julius Evola

Renato Bertelli, Profilo continuo di Benito Mussolini

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967 words

In September of 1941 I was summoned to Palazzo Venezia. I did not imagine that Mussolini himself wanted to speak to me. [Alessandro] Pavolini led me to him and was present during our conversation. Mussolini told me that he had read my work Sintesi di dottrina della razza [Synthesis of the Doctrine of Race], which had been published by Hoepli, that he approved of it and that he saw in the ideas presented in it the basis for the formulation of an independent and antimaterialist Fascist racism. “This is exactly the sort of book we need,” he said.

To understand the significance of these statements one must recall the situation at that time in Italy with regard to racism. Several months earlier, Mussolini had thought it necessary to take a stance on the issue of race and align himself with our German ally in this matter, too. But his most immediate motive was his desire to vivify the Italians’ sense of race and of racial dignity with regard to the natives in Italy’s new colonies. A further reason was the antifascist stance of international Jewry and in particular North-American Jewry. The racial question brings together inner, selective, cultural and ethnic problems. That is why Mussolini had encouraged the publication of the so called “Manifesto of Italian Racism” that contained ten or so points; a journal was founded, Difesa della Razza [The Defence of the Race], and later on two offices of race were created — one in the Ministry of Popular Culture and the other in the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Unfortunately, on the whole these measures were unsatisfactory. They had not been preceded in Italy by serious preparation and specific studies, and racial ideas were completely uncharted territory for Italian “intellectuals.” Thus, the group that had written the “Manifesto” and even the staff of Difesa della Razza was heterogeneous and hastily put together. Some anthropologists of the old scientistic school were put in the same bag with opportunistic journalists and writers who had stepped up for the occasion and had become racists overnight, as it were. The general impression they conveyed was one of amateurism, and too often petty controversy and slogans took the place of a serious and unified doctrine, a doctrine that should not have lost itself in biological specialism or vulgar anti-Semitism, but should ideally have presented itself as a coherent worldview and acted as a politically and ethically formative idea. I was personally moved to tackle this subject because of the less than flattering remarks I heard from abroad regarding Fascism’s handling of the racial issue. I began to extract from the traditional and aristocratic ideas to which I adhered, everything that could be deduced from them as a particular application to the issue of race, and thus could form an organic racial doctrine. Thus the first articles and notes appeared in various Fascist periodicals, and then the aforementioned book.

The central thesis, defended by me, was, in short, the following: with regard to man, the question of race cannot be discussed in the same terms nor have the same meaning as for a cat or a purebred horse. True men, beyond the biological and bodily element, are also soul and a spirit. Thus, comprehensive racism had to consider all three terms: body, soul, and spirit. Accordingly, one may speak of a racism of the first degree, concerned with purely biological, anthropological, and eugenic issues; next, of a racism of second degree, concerned with the “race of soul,” in other words the inner form of man’s character and emotional reactions; finally, of the crowning “race of spirit,” which is concerned with the supreme frontiers that differentiate men and make them unequal in their general world-view and notions of the beyond, of destiny, of life and of action, in other words, their “highest values.” The classical ideal, interpreted racially, is the harmony and unity of these three “races” in a superior type.

Mussolini accepted these views without hesitation. I cannot, like some memoir writers, quote the exact words spoken by the Duce. However, I can still relate in general terms the gist of what Mussolini told me, which showed that he was remarkably knowledgeable. “The conception of tripartite racism,” Mussolini said to me, “avoids the zoological conception and biologistic errors of German racism; it establishes the primacy of the spiritual values that are an essential part of our tradition and of the Fascist idea. Furthermore, it possesses great political value, since you have correlated the three aspects of the problem of race with the three parts of the human being distinguished by Aristotle. But it would actually be better to refer to Plato [here I dare say that I am repeating Mussolini word for word], who correlates those three parts with the three castes of the social corpus. The race of the body corresponds to the mass, to the demos, ‘which in itself is nothing, but is a force through which the dominators act’ [these were his exact words]; the race of soul could correspond to Plato’s ‘warriors’ or ‘guardians,’ while the race of the Spirit could correlate with the apex, the caste of thinkers, philosophers and artists.”

Actually, despite the alarmed signs of comrade[1] Pavolini, at this point I permitted myself to interrupt Mussolini and say: “Mind you, Duce, Plato would have banished from his state thinkers, philosophers, and artists in the modern sense. It is the sages — sophoi — something entirely different, that Plato placed at the top of his ideal state, not ‘intellectuals.’”

“Very well then, let’s say sages,” said Mussolini, smiling.

Note

1. Evola writes “amico,” “friend,” the term used by Fascists in place of the term “comrade,” which was associated with the Communists.

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Mussolini & Racism, Part 3

Blood & Spirit

Julius Evola

MussoliniFuturist1,249 words

After Mussolini considered the arguments presented in my previous articles, I told him that his approval of my formulation of racial issues would be help me in initiatives that I had already begun abroad under my own responsibility. For a long time I was in contact with certain German circles, having been invited to give lectures and presentations, and racial issues were among the topics I had discussed.

Now, my formulations had generated a particular interest and the basis of deep cooperation could be seen in the encounter between the Roman-Aryan myth and the Nordic-Aryan myth, which could have spiritually fortified the political union of the Axis. For that purpose we had discussed the creation a new Italo-Germanic journal. And this interested my German friends most of all, because while particular necessary criticism of biologistic, materialistic, and violently nationalistic racism would never be tolerated from a German, statements of an Italian author would have met with a different reception.

I had presented all of this to Mussolini and asked him if I might be allowed, on the basis of his more than flattering appreciation of my book, to develop such initiatives and present my formulations as official Fascist ones. Mussolini said yes without hesitation. Thus he gave me the right to give the German translation of my book that was in the works an official Fascist endorsement (its German title was Foundations of the Fascist Racial Doctrine, Grundrisse der faschistischen Rassenlehre (Berlin: Runge Verlag) with his seal of high approval.

As for the project of a journal, which was to be called Blood and Spirit — Italo-Germanic Journal of Worldview and Race, Mussolini told me that he approved of it as well. It could be published in both languages and distributed accordingly, under the direction of both the Fascist and the National Socialist parties. However, Mussolini wanted a few fundamental programmatic points to be defined first together with the those who were to make up the staff of the journal.

And here I had begun a somewhat thankless job, as this meant gathering more or less qualified elements and then bringing them to a consensus. The head of the race office in the Ministry of Popular Culture, one Guido Landra, a racist by circumstance and opportunism, who “decamped” after June 25th [when Mussolini was deposed in a coup], was successfully replaced with a more qualified Fascist who had numerous international connections, Dr. Alberto Luchini. With his agreement a number of tiresome meetings were organized with people who, when the matter became known, immediately stepped forward from various sectors of Fascism (it would be amusing to name them, to see what became of these Fascists and racists later). In the end we defined the desired program points. I personally presented them to Mussolini. He accepted them in full, after that we talked about going to Berlin and organising analogous activities. In the German capital I reestablished my contacts with Alfred Rosenberg, Walter Groß, and other people, and we began discussing the formulated points and the journal’s direction.

But at this moment I had found out about certain steps taken by the Italian embassy that perplexed my friends so much so that nothing serious could be accomplished, and I had to return to Rome. That is how I found out about the sabotaging of my initiatives that had taken place while I was away. Firstly, the representatives of the first “Racial Manifesto” had responded to my attacks — they were afraid that the new, more organic formula would oust them from their positions. Then some Catholic machinations had occurred. Some professor found a way to meet with Mussolini on the premise of wanting to present to him some books on Christian archaeology. But in reality this meeting was used in order to express to Duce concerns in the Catholic sphere that had arisen after the approval of my initiatives. While Catholics could tolerate a biological racial doctrine, they felt threatened by the formulation of the racial problem on the spiritual plane, and by the “Aryan” revision of numerous conventional values of questionable origin, present in the religious beliefs and morality that have come to dominate the West. A closer and more official cooperation with the German team made the whole thing even more dangerous from their perspective. With Jesuitic diplomacy, this man tendentiously tried to show that aspects of the doctrine of race, with its principle of selection, of superiority and difference within a single people, were incompatible with the premises of mass nationalism. And so on in the same way. All of this had in my absence perplexed Mussolini, and what happened in Berlin was a reflection of that. I requested an explanation and further instructions, but was told to wait. Meanwhile another one of my initiatives could be given the green light via Luchini.

This was the publication of an Atlas of the Italian Race, the result of the first systematic research done in this field. Naturally the name “Italian race” is nonsense. Races are elemental realities that cannot be identified with a people. In a people, races enter various combinations, and certain elements that dominate now become subordinate to others at other times. The topic was the first study of such components. In various regions of Italy prefects had to report to us certain typical and old families, whose representatives were evaluated by a special commission. This commission was lead by Luchini. It was also made up of Dr. Rossi for the anthropological aspect (race of body), head of experimental psychology at the University of Florence, by professor L. F. Clauss (Berlin) for the “race of soul,” and finally by myself for “spiritual race.” The results were compiled in a beautiful publication, richly illustrated with vivid pictures of the most significant types encountered in our research and above all those who still retained the higher, original “Roman-Aryan” type of our people. Everything had already been prepared. Unfortunately, in the meantime crisis was approaching, and energies had to be transferred to a number of more urgent tasks, and the racist revolution, which might have had an impact on Fascism that should not be underestimated, did not continue. Still, it is good to make this known, and that is the reason for these retrospective articles.

A few more words of a personal nature. After Mussolini had spoken to me about my book [Synthesis of the Doctrine of Race] with such unexpected high praise, he told Pavolini to bring it to the attention of the press, because he wanted to see what impression it made. A directive was sent to the newspapers. But in recent times there had been many of these and they were only rarely executed; and practically all the Italian “intellectuals” had agreed to sabotage “racist” ideas no matter what — pour cause. As a result, the big newspapers published very few reviews my book.

This annoyed Mussolini, who issued a more categorical order. Naturally, a shower of articles followed which of course all praised the book highly. As a result my name gained a fame that it would perhaps never had obtained through my other books. And many came to know of me only as a “racist,” and this reputation lasts to this day. But as I said, I only delved into racism accidentally, as part of formulating a much larger ensemble of political traditional ideas, in an effort to prevent deviations that could already be seen in this field in both Italy and Germany.

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