ASPECTS OF ITALIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS

1922-1935

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The problem which is to be examined is the state of Italian-American relations for the years 1922-1935. For the purpose of this study certain dates are taken as pivotal points. The events of 1922-1927 showed the extent of Mussolini's popularity reflected in such things as tourism, and the attitude of the large financiers and the banking community in America. During 1927-1931 the relations with Italy were strained by Mussolini's attempt to build a Fascist type organization among the Italian-American population. He attempted through his agents, both political and diplomatic, to subvert the attempts of the Italian-American to join the American way of life. Yet there was an apathy on the part of some of the American people with respect to the Fascist influence. But through articles in leading periodicals and the help of some members of the Congress Mussolini's attempt failed.

In his attempts to undermine the American system in respect to the Italian-American Mussolini attempted to gain control of the educational system. He was successful in gaining control of the Italian House of Studies at Columbia University. This control was exercised through Italian professors who had come from Italy and were openly fascist.
These, in turn, appointed professors who were openly pro-fascist. Those professors who had come from Italy were in contact with the Italian Embassy in Washington. A leading periodical tried to alert the president of Columbia, Nicholas M. Butler, to the danger that existed on his campus. This made an interesting commentary on the interest in academic freedom versus the greater danger of the corruption of the student.

The years of 1931-1934 are represented not only by the Columbia University controversy but by General Smedly D. Butler, who attempted to rouse the public interest in the fascist movement. There was his famous speech at Philadelphia and the resulting furor in trying to make him apologize to Mussolini. The general later appeared before the Dickstein committee which was investigating the Fascist influence in the United States.

The final chapter attempts to round out the study of the era by showing the trade and international complications during the Ethiopian war. Our position in regard to sanctions and the Embargo Act of August 31, 1935 are examined showing the eventual disintegration of relations between the two countries.

I. EARLY RELATIONS 1922-1926

When one authority looked at references to Italy in the chronicle of American affairs in the 1920's and 30's,
He found only two recurring problems: war debts and the reduction of naval armaments. However, it is possible to look deeper and examine other areas which also affected both countries.

The Italy in the early 20's was ripe for revolution. The government was inept and for the most part made up of make-shift cabinets living from day to day. The Fascist element led by Benito Mussolini took advantage of the weakness of the central government and in 1920 began its attempts to seize power. To gain that end the Fascists launched a series of campaigns designed to arouse terror in the rural areas.

In town after town they attacked Socialist headquarters with no interference from the local police. By 1921 the government had begun to openly wink at these depredations of the Fascist party. Only at the end, in October, 1922, did Premier Luigi Facta offer any real resistance. On October 26, 1922 he went to H. M. King Victor Emmanuel and asked for a proclamation of martial law. The King, however, refused to sign and on October 29, 1922 Benito Mussolini was called upon, by the King, to form a ministry.

An American press correspondent in the Italian capital, reporting in The Literary Digest wrote of Mussolini as follows:

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1Stuart Hughes, The United States and Italy (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1953), p. 6.

2Ibid., p. 20.

3Ibid., p. 67.
Mussolini's intention has obviously been to form a cabinet representing all groups in the Chamber with the Fascisti in control. He has reserved for himself the arduous task of shaping both the internal and foreign Italian policies, as he will himself keep the portfolios of the interior and of foreign office. . . . Mussolini now has Italy in the palm of his hand.1

The Literary Digest said that, of particular interest to American readers, was the economic entente that Mussolini wished to form between Italy and the United States.2 The Italian press, reported The Literary Digest, was quite happy with the emergence of this strong man and felt that Italian policies were bound to take an upsurge. They, as a whole, objected to the term "dictatorship" of Mussolini. They felt his acceptance of the ministry was constitutional and in keeping with the policy of the King "to avoid civil war."3

The American press was not so much concerned with the advent of a fascist government as with that government's chance of survival. A significant change of opinion was visible throughout the American press concerning Mussolini's "staying power."4 Papers like the Chicago Journal, Omaha Bee, Cincinnati Times-Star, Baltimore Evening Sun and many others felt Mussolini had a sporting chance to survive. The

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1"Italy's Blackshirt Government," The Literary Digest, LXXV (November 11, 1922), 20-21.
2Ibid., p. 20. 3Ibid.
4"Mussolini, Garibaldi or Caesar," The Literary Digest, LXXV (November 18, 1922), 17.
Cincinnati Times-Star, perhaps, summed up the general opinion
of the smaller papers:

It should be remembered that the Fascisti are
patriots. And out of it all may come a new order
in Italy which will carry that historic land to the
greatest destiny of which Mazzini and Garibaldi and
Cavour dreamed.

The New York Herald, perhaps the most favorable according to
The Literary Digest, of the larger American papers, empha-
sized another aspect of the situation:

As a soldier Mussolini knew no hours of duty except
those which discipline demanded: ... These lessons
he applied to his present duties: ... his Cabinet
begins with: ... the promptness of the soldier.

Yet in spite of those optimistic hopes The Literary Digest
stated that a large part of the American press had doubts
concerning the new regime. Such influential papers as the
New York Times, pointed out the difficulties that faced the
new government. They mentioned the lack of a majority in
the Chamber of Deputies, the financial instability, and the
problem of dividing the large estates. Some felt that the
new regime would have difficulties with Yugoslavia and also
wondered if it would ratify the Washington Naval Treaty.

As for the personal qualities of Mussolini, the press
waxed eloquent Clarence K. Streit, Rome correspondent of the
New York Evening Post, gave this thumbnail portrait for his
readers:

1. The Man Who Stands Over the Italian King," The
Literary Digest, LXV (December 2, 1922), 51.

1 Ibid. 2 Ibid. 3 Ibid., pp. 17-18.
Punch...sums up Premier Mussolini in one word.
...there is punch in his eyes, the darting thrust of a rapier. There is punch in the light springy step with which he carries his well-built body.¹

For the American and British observers who may doubt his sincerity Mr. Streit said:

Some American and English observers conclude from Mussolini's bearing and some of his acts that he is a 'poser' and that success had gone to his head. But it should at least be noted that what strikes unemotional persons as theatrical may be very real to the passionate Italians.²

The "honeymoon" was on and the American reader would be subjected to praise of the regime and its leader by press and by word of mouth until the truth of the regime would come as a decided jolt.

One of the contributing factors to the praise of Mussolini during the latter part of the 20's was "tourism." This tourism was a result of the American desire to see new places, and high on that list was Italy. An average tourist, alighting on his native pier, had a paean for Fascism and heralded its glory in his various groups of friends and relatives.

For he had not gone to Italy as an explorer or missionary; he had only wanted to relax and enjoy whatever aspect of life might by chance catch his eye.³

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¹ "The Man Who Stands Over the Italian King," The Literary Digest, LXXV (December 2, 1922), 51.
² Ibid.
Food and climate were excellent, the rate of exchange reliable, and trains ran on time. By an understood compact between Fascism and Tourism, Italy, having been the battlefield of European armies and being now, almost no less cruelly, the arena of European diplomacies, was made furthermore a resort of cosmopolitan vacationists, with as many Italians as possible ministering to the comfort and even the caprice of the guests.  

In 1924 alone the tourists spent, it was estimated, 2,862 million lire in Italy. So clever was the regime, in keeping the tourist favour, that if there were a complaint by an English speaking gentleman about his hotel bill, he just had to hand it over to the nearest blackshirt and a week later, amazed, he would find a substantial refund in his wallet.  

If the tourist felt any doubt as to the real situation in Italy he needed only to hear the endorsement of the poet Ezra Pound who said: "As a personal testimony to personal feeling, I feel freer here than I ever did in London or Paris." The tourist could also take cheer in Santayana, the poet-philosopher, who endorsed the government with much the same enthusiasm.  

Another contributing factor to the praise of Mussolini in America was his accessibility to tourists and
especially to itinerant foreign correspondents. It can, perhaps, be said that the newspaper men of the American press corps were to blame for the creation of the idea that Mussolini was the greatest man in the world. Their home newspapers printed with pleasure the thousands of words of praise for Mussolini. The tourist who was acquainted with a correspondent might even get a personal interview with Mussolini.

In fact the eight hundred specialized policemen guarding the Duce's life night and day were no impediment to the foreign pilgrim. He had never shaken hands with the king of England or the president of the United States: he had never seen a dictator except perhaps the coloured hero of O'Neill's Emperor Jones and yet to his own amazement he was admitted to the actual presence of this most powerful man on earth, of this most colourful personality in modern history. . . . Ten minutes of contact with such a maker of history was, for a college president or a banker the thrill of a lifetime.2

Among those "blessed" with a handshake were men like Otto Kahn and Irvin S. Cobb. Those handshakes were figured in the Fascist budget as the equivalent of millions in publicity.3 Any correspondent had access to Mussolini.

Fredricka Blankner, who might be considered as fairly typical, in commenting on an interview, spoke of Mussolini having no false modesty, no personal ambition, nor did he seem to seek any personal glory. She described the interview

1George Seldes, Can These Things Be? (Garden City, New York: Garden City Publishing, 1931), p. 298.


3Arthur Livingston, "Italo-American Fascism," Survey, LVII (March 1, 1927), 750.
as inspirational! At the close of the interview Mussolini commented that the United States and Italy understood one another and he had many friends in the United States who were friends of Fascism and his form of government. 1 In this latter statement, that he had "friends," Mussolini was quite correct. Among his greatest advocates in this country were the financiers and big-business men.

J. P. Morgan and Company was one of the first to extend credit to the regime. The company extended fifty million dollars in credits in order to aid the Italian currency. One former ambassador summed up the Morgan loan this way:

As the firm of J. P. Morgan and Company does not take leaps in the dark the extension of this credit seems to Robert Underwood Johnson, a former Ambassador to Italy, "authentic proof that the condition of the peninsula is steadily improving." 2

The Boston Herald commented on the credit: "her entire population is at work. She has the moving forces of pride and optimism." The full listing of the loans shows a fair percentage of the banking life of the United States.

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1 Fredricka Blankner, "Ourselves and Italy," The Forum, LXXVII (May, 1927), 643.
2 "Morgan's Millions to Aid Mussolini," The Literary Digest, LXXXV (June 20, 1925), 12.
3 "Why Our Bankers Like Mussolini?" The Literary Digest, LXXXVIII (February 12, 1926), 11.
Debtor | Interest | Amount | Creditor
---|---|---|---
Kingdom of Italy | 7's | 100,000,000 | J. P. Morgan
City of Rome | 61/2's | 30,000,000 | J. P. Morgan
City of Milan | 61/2's | 20,000,000 | Guaranty
International Securities | | 35,000,000 | Bankers Trust
Italian Public Utilities | 7's | 20,000,000 | Blair, Chase

An article in *The Literary Digest*, "Why Our Bankers Like Mussolini?" reported the near unanimous admiration of American corporations and banking firms for Mussolini and his regime. Lamont defended the regime in Italy during a New York luncheon. The conservative *Wall Street Journal* was quoted in the article:

> Members: What is the closest possible parallel in the business men's mind for the complete or partial dictatorships operative in Europe, and, insofar as Mussolini is concerned, with notable success? They correspond to receiverships in bankruptcy with the object of reorganization.

The businessman saw that the bank deficit had been cleared the Chamber of Deputies of the Italian Parliament. On June 10, up, that the chaotic conditions were on the decline, that 1924, the day before he went to Greece, he was able to show a large scale were law enforcement, and, most of all, there was less there was labor unrest. To the businessman this was a safe market and all the events under the regime justified his support. The events in this country were noticed with the stability.

As the *Brooklyn Eagle* said: "their business in life is the government and if Mussolini's star was about to...

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1 Seldes, op. cit., p. 312.
2 "Why Our Bankers Like Mussolini?" *The Literary Digest*, LXXXVIII (February 12, 1926), 11.
3 Ibid.
4 "Italy's Press under Fascism," *The Literary Digest*, LXXXIV (March 7, 1925), 19-20.
getting things done and Mussolini gets things done."¹

However, there were those who raised their voices to criticize the regime. The problem of the war debt was the one which caused the most bitterness. On the floor of the Senate attacks were made which were so savage after the ratification of the Debt Compact of April 21, 1926, that Secretary Andrew Mellon felt compelled to issue a statement: "I know that the expression made in heat of debate against a friendly government and its rulers do not represent the views of the American people."²

The attempts of Mussolini to crush newspapers that opposed the Fascist government were not greeted with acclaim. Members of the press were driven to the opposition camp after the ruthless suppression of news during and after the Giacomo Matteotti affair.³

Matteotti had been a millionaire Socialist member of the Chamber of Deputies of the Italian Parliament. On June 10, 1924, the day before he was to have exposed a large scale scandal in the government of Mussolini, a scandal which might have touched the Duce, he was abducted and murdered. The press reports in this country were concerned with the stability of the government and if Mussolini's star was about to wane.⁴

¹Ibid., p. 12.
²Ibid.
⁴"Italy's Press under Fascism," The Literary Digest, LXXXIV (March 7, 1925), 19-20.
fall. Some newspapers were outraged. The Brooklyn Eagle said: "He is just as great an evil as Napoleon or Lorenzo de Medici." But the strong conservative element which had swung to Mussolini as the upholder of law and order was mainly regretful that the ideal was in danger. The statement of the Italian Ambassador to the United States, Prince Gelasio Caetani, gave tone to the entire situation:

Fascism will come out of this storm stronger and more respected than ever. The supposed murders called themselves Fascisti, but they were unworthy of such a name, for they violated all the ideals of Fascism.

On the first anniversary of the murder in 1925, one correspondent, George Seldes of the Chicago Tribune, was declared persona non grata by the Italian Foreign Office and expelled. His cables to the home office were viewed in Italy with much disfavour and the American State Department felt obliged to urge, viewed this order as "wise paternalism" proving honour the Italian government's request that Seldes be forced Mussolini's greatness as a constructive statesman. But to leave The American reporters in Rome were most unhappy store had been raised which would close Italo-American relations and requested to see Dino Grandi, the Foreign Minister. Grandi agreed to see them but no discussion of the Seldes expulsion was to be permitted. Seldes went home to become one of the leaders in the anti-Mussolini press.

Footnotes:
1 "Political Murder in Italy," The Literary Digest, LXXXII (July 5, 1924), 18.
2 "He is just as great an evil as Napoleon or Lorenzo de Medici." The Literary Digest, LXVII (December 26, 1925), 10.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
In December, 1925 came an order from Mussolini to all embassies, legations and other diplomatic headquarters to establish cultural centers in areas where Italian nationals lived. These centers were to be devoted to sports, manual training, physical exercise and to promote effective Italian cultural propaganda. The order would, if carried out, have a hold on Italians and prevent proper assimilation. It was considered by some to be--Pan-Italianism and the order met with a storm of protest. Some papers considered it to be a storm that would not be easily calmed. With the State Department this order was as popular as a "polecat." In the Congress, Hamilton Fish, Jr., a congressman from New York, asked for a resolution investigating Fascism in the United States. To be sure, some papers, among them the Washington Star, viewed this order as: "wise paternalism" proving Mussolini's greatness as a constructive statesman. But a storm had been raised which would cloud Italo-American relations for the rest of the twenties and into the thirties with increasing vigour by those opposed to a totalitarian regime.

However, for the most part, oceans of foreign praise had been let loose, with some emphasis on the capability of

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1"Mussolini's Hands Across the Sea," The Literary Digest, LXXVII (December 26, 1925), 10.
2Ibid.
3Ibid.
4Ibid. Literary Digest, LXXX (June 21, 1928), 22.
Mussolini's government and its success at home and abroad.¹

CHAPTER II

The Fascist Attempt in the United States 1927-1932

The years 1927-1932 saw the growth and the eventual formation of the Fascist party in the United States. The party, as it was known in this country, received its greatest impetus from the "March on Rome." But during this time the Fascio was under attack by segments of the American press. Leading the attack on the Fascio were such influential periodicals as The Nation, The New Republic. On the other side, more favorable to fascism, were such magazines as Survey and Business Week, together with the official silence of the State Department and public apathy. A move that sought to ban the Fascio and its actions in this country had able allies in Congress. Senator William Borah of Idaho was disturbed at the Fascist growth in the United States. During its "heyday" the Fascio would for a time become a "quasi-state within a state" with its own constitution, military and army.

The Fascio in the United States had actually begun with the "March on Rome." But after October 29, 1922 it entered into a new phase of growth and gained status.¹ It

¹"Fascism's Iron Hand," The Literary Digest, LXXXI (June 21, 1924), 22.

The years 1927-1932 saw the growth and the eventual dissolution of the Fascist party in the United States. The Fascio, as it was known in this country, received its greatest impetus from the "March on Rome." But during this period the Fascio was under attack by segments of the American press. Leading the attack on the Fascio were such influential periodicals as Harpers, The Nation, and The New Republic. On the other side, more favorable to fascism, were such magazines as Survey and Business Week, together with the official silence of the State Department and public apathy. Those that sought to ban the Fascio and its actions in this country had able allies in Congress. Hamilton Fish, Jr., congressman from New York, and Senator William Borah of Idaho were disturbed at the fascist growth in the United States. During its "heyday" the Fascio would for a time become a virtual "state within a state" with its own constitution, judiciary and army.

The Fascio in the United States had actually begun before the "March on Rome." But after October 29, 1922 it passed into a new phase of growth and gained status.  

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1 Arthur Livingston, "Italo-American Fascism," Survey, 750, LVII (March 1, 1927), 739.
also became more organized. One of the first things some Italians did after the advent of Mussolini was to seek his favor, for he was the founder of this new fascism. ¹ Mussolini was scarcely in power when one Italo-American named Di Silvestro, of the Sons of Italy, took the first boat to Italy and presented the new Duce with the oath of allegiance of over 300,000 Italo-Americans. However, he was not able to validate his claims to speak for the Sons of Italy and nothing came of his abortive attempt to gain Mussolini's favor. ² However, this action of Di Silvestro did cause Mussolini to set up a special agency in Rome, the Fascio al' Estro, with himself as head, to deal with Fascism abroad. ³ With the formation of this agency Italo-American relations would take a new turn. Mussolini would attempt to prevent Italo-Americans from being assimilated into the cultural pattern of the United States.

Italy (that is the Italian Foreign office) had always viewed with a jealous eye that loss of manpower and money represented by the annual expatriation of some two hundred thousand souls; and one of the constant principles of the Italian propaganda abroad had been to retain the loyalty of those sons of Italy. ⁴ Mussolini was quite aware of this traditional Italian view of those who emigrated. For Mussolini the question was: How to keep their loyalty and by what

¹ Ibid. ² Ibid. ³ Ibid., p. 740. ⁴ Ibid., p. 750.
means could their allegiance be used to help his aims? Another point which he considered was: What if the Italian had taken out foreign citizenship, would this hinder any program? However, this latter question did not long deter Mussolini, for, as he stated in one of his more expensive moments: "My order is that an Italian citizen must remain an Italian citizen no matter in what land he lives, into the seventh generation."\(^1\) American officialdom took no notice of this bizarre idea of citizenship. Few Americans, it was thought, were likely to come under such a directive. To carry out the directive of Mussolini, the Fascio had to become more organized and be quite careful to avoid, at all costs, official notice of the organization for they felt that any formal fascist type organization would be liable to the censure of the State Department.

Mussolini began his plans in this country by sending over a good friend, Count Ignazio Thaon Di Revel, who was to be the head of the Fascist activities in the United States. An interesting point concerning Di Revel was that he was not an American and did not intend to become one.\(^2\) Under the guidance of Revel a constitution was drawn up, in order not to injure any American sensibilities. Revel said it would make the Fascio an organization likened to the Knights of Columbus and have activities similar to the Young Men's

\(^1\) Ray Tucker, "Tools of Mussolini in America," *The New Republic*, LII (September 14, 1927), 89.

\(^2\) Ibid.
sent the individual members in line with the threat of the Christian Association, and would, he said, have a "tenuous" removal of the "card." Any infraction could result in the connection with Mussolini. There was to be a Fascist council with Revel as the head and under the council would be local groups called Fascios. The Fascist council incorporated the whole society and was called "The Fascist League of North America." The new organization grew quite rapidly and by November of 1929 there were over 120 Fascios established throughout the United States wherever there were Italian communities. These locals were under the direct control of Revel who was in turn subordinate to Mussolini. These local Fascios had between six and seven thousand dues-paying, card holding, members. There was no estimate made of the non-dues-paying members. The constitution as drawn up in 1926 required of each person an oath which in effect was an allegiance to the Duce through the hierarchy of the Fascio:

I swear to make every effort to improve my culture, my body, and my mind, so as to render myself worthy of participation in that minority chosen to serve and guide the nation in the great hour. I swear to subject myself to the discipline of the hierarchy of the Fascist League of North America.

Included in the constitution was a rudimentary judicial system which was fully established in 1927. This judicial system

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1 Livingston, op. cit., p. 740.
2 Marcus Duffield, "Mussolini's American Empire," Harpers, CLIX (November, 1929), 662.
3 "President Butler and Fascism," The Nation, CXXXIX (November, 1929), 79.
4 Tucker, op. cit., p. 90.
5 Duffield, op. cit., p. 663.
kept the individual members in line with the threat of the removal of the "card." Any infraction could result in the removal of the "card." To have this penalty inflicted on the members was most severe. For without the card he could not travel in Italy nor could he do business with Italian firms. Quite often one would see in the Italo-American press the notice "none but Fascists need apply." One of the basic goals of the Fascio was to prevent the Italian population in the United States from taking out citizenship papers and to try and prevent them from learning American customs and language. For in the eyes of the Fascio any Italian who tried to take up residence in the United States but managed to bring all but one or two Italian language papers or attempted to assimilate was a "bastard of Italy." If the Italian was already an American he could legitimize his status through association with the Fascio movement.

It was the aim of the Fascio and its agents to dominate the lives of the Italian population in the United States. To help the Fascio gain the loyalty of the Italo-American, one of the factors that enabled the Fascio to gain control of consular agents and embassy officials were utilized under another press was through advertising. To control the press and directive of Mussolini, whereby all consuls and embassy officials were placed under the Duce as lieutenants directly responsible to him. Embassy officials, therefore, had two functions, diplomatic and political:

1Tucker, loc. cit.
2Biffle, op. cit., p. 662.
3Tucker, op. cit., p. 89.

"President Butler and Fascism," The Nation, CXXXIX (November 14, 1934), 551.
In a recent address before an audience, which numbered many naturalized Italians, Ambassador (Giacomo) di Martino, exhorted them to wage a militant campaign against Mussolini's foes and 'the lying propaganda damaging to Italy.'

The Fascio used three means in their attempt to dominate the lives of the Italian population in the United States. First, through the fraternal clubs that were already established; secondly, forcing the Italian journals to cease attacking the Duce; and lastly, making businessmen who traded with Italy conform or else. Their attempts were most successful with the silencing of the journals. They were especially sensitive to attack by that medium but managed to bring all but one or two Italian language papers under their control. The two papers who resisted were Il Nuovo Mondo and Il Martello. Two papers that the Fascists controlled were considered to be the official organs of Fascio. They were the Grido of New York and Newark, and Giovinezza, a monthly published in Boston.

One of the factors that enabled the Fascio to gain control of the press was through advertising. To control the press and give a favorable impression of the Duce to the Italo-American reader, and if possible others, was a prime goal of the League.

The Fascio established many centers in key cities which became local headquarters for training the young Italian. They were to be trained in the ideals of Fascism. If no center could be used, Fascio officials tried to influence the local

1Tucker, loc. cit.  2Ibid.  3Livingston, loc. cit.
school system. It was discovered during an investigation of Fascist activities that the Italian government had given subsidies to a school board in Pittsburgh to buy Italian books.\(^1\) At the same time, a teacher was found to have been discharged because in her Italian classes she felt she should not teach what the embassy had put out concerning Italian doctrine. She was dismissed and an Italian teacher was sent from Italy to be her replacement.\(^2\) Also, in Pittsburgh, an assembly had been called to celebrate the "feast of Fascism" and at this meeting a young student had made a speech extolling the merits of Fascism and of the duties of young Italians to the ideals of Italy.\(^3\) By the use of every possible means—the press, cultural centers and by word of mouth—Mussolini attempted to subvert the Italo-Americans' assimilation and keep their loyalties tied to Italy.\(^4\)

The means that the Fascio used to "get their way" were many and varied. There was the danger of reprisals, blacklistings of firms and of individuals; finally, if all else failed, actual physical violence. Many Italians who had become Americans and went back to Italy for a visit, thinking things from the League or articles concerning Mussolini. Yet they would be safe, were seized and made to serve military time. Passports of some were taken away and—lost. Or else

\(^1\) Duffield, op. cit., p. 666. \(^2\) Ibid., p. 665.

\(^3\) Ibid.

\(^4\) Marcus Duffield, "Mussolini's Red Herring," The Nation, CXXIX (November 27, 1929), 644.
the people would turn up missing. An example of the "state within a state" concept was the bachelor tax. A bachelor Italian living in the United States had to pay this "bachelor tax" to the Italian government through its agents in the United States, the Fascio. If he did not pay, his relatives in Italy were liable for the payment. The fact that these were American citizens being taxed meant nothing especially when one's relatives in Italy would have been punished and held up as an example.¹ Yet all the protests that were made to our State Department were of no avail.²

The business of the Fascists in the United States was conducted quietly without ostentation and Americans in general never heard of it at all. The Fascios' purpose was summed up by Di Revel in 1927, as reported by Tucker, in The Literary Digest:

They say we foster radicalism and anti-Fascism by our campaign: . . . provoking those elements to retaliate against us, that may be so, but I will make this offer: If the propaganda and attacks on Fascism will stop we will disband the League and call off our campaign.³

In other words the American press was to be quiet and obey orders from the League on articles concerning Mussolini. Yet it is surprising that not until the end of 1929 would there be any reaction to those actions of the League and its basically un-American attitude. It might be said that the

¹Duffield, op. cit., p. 670. ²Ibid. ³Tucker, op. cit., p. 91.
American attitude to Fascism in this country was this:
"the whole American scene is not interested in Fascism;
they look too close at Fascism and all perspective is lost." 1

Overseas observers saw the same situation, although, they
limited it to a specific class:

Certain sections of the upper class abroad identifying conservatism with mere material repression, are
given to praising Signor Mussolini in a way which clearly implies an appreciation scarcely flattering to
our people. 2

Throughout the late twenties articles which would praise Mussolini continued to appear. One such which really
showed the extreme was published by the Etude magazine, a
music magazine which went to educators and teachers of music.

Benito Mussolini blessed of the stars--dynamic mind
of modern Italy--giant of destiny--the most powerful
and celebrated man in Europe finds daily recourse to
his violin, as a means of resting and refreshing his soul. In this he shows that wisdom which had been
responsible for so much of his extraordinary success.
He realizes that high power men must have safety valves.

He rides his horse like a cavalryman. He engages in sports. He reads enormously. But most of all he
insists upon the exalting influence of the higher class
of music... We confidently believe that music is one
of the potent factors that make Mussolini possible.
Without its regenerating, restorative influence the mentality of such a man might collapse long before his
mission on earth was accomplished. 3

Fredricka Blankner writing in the Sunday edition of the
Herald Tribune, in 1928 said that God protected Mussolini,

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1 Livingston, op. cit., p. 750.
2 Count Carlo Sforza, "Italy and Fascism," Foreign Affairs, III (April, 1925), 368-369.
3 "When Mussolini Plays," Etude, XLVI (June, 1929), 421.
and that Mussolini was a believer. Mussolini claimed that no human force could stop him because he believed in God and God protected him.\footnote{Seldes, op. cit., pp. 299-300.}

The conservative element, spoken of by Sforza, was still behind Mussolini. In March of 1927 Thomas W. Lamont, in an article for \textit{Survey}, wrote of the changes in the economy of Italy and in the social progress since the advent of the Fascist government. He prefaced his remarks with a statement that he was not interested in Fascism as a political system. He was interested only in the economic conditions about which he was familiar and had an opinion.\footnote{Ibid., p. 722.} He pointed out that the American tourists who visited Italy before 1922 and had come back now five years later could see the tangible results of the new regime. The economic situation at that time (1922) had been colored by inept governments and had been tottering on the brink of bolshevism or fascism.\footnote{Thomas W. Lamont, "Italy's Economic and Social Progress Since 1922," \textit{Survey}, LVII (March 1, 1927), 723.} Now in 1927 the whole picture had changed. Unemployment was down, and, what was better, the workers were not able to seize the factories as they had in 1922. The government was paternalistic; a corporate state had been set up. The unemployment figures were the most impressive; from 541,000 in 1922 to 78,000
in 1927. In other areas the figures were also impressive. In electrical power in 1919 only 1,700,000 kilowatt (K.W.) hours were produced; in 1925 there were over 6,900,000 kilowatt (K.W.) hours. But most important of all was the fact that Mussolini had balanced the budget, and, to Lamont, this was the selling point for the entire regime.\(^1\) Lamont concluded the article, saying that the system of government is fine for the Italians but would not work in the United States because of our Anglo-Saxon background.

But by 1929 there were some negative reactions to Mussolini and the Italian government. Tourism, one of the contributing factors to the popularity of the Duce, received criticism from an article in *Harpers* in December, 1929:

In a brief motor trip he [the tourist] may have crossed half a dozen customs boundaries; he will recall that he could motor two weeks in America without thinking of customs. He may be arrested in Italy as the result of having spoken disrespectfully of the Duce; he will discover that once arrested he has lost all civil rights of counsel and of facing his accusers and the presumption of innocence. He will then begin to appreciate the difference between Roman law and English law and the significance of *habeas corpus*.\(^2\)

The articles written in *Nation* and *Harpers* in November and December, 1929 were reviewed by *The Literary Digest* in the issue of November 16, 1929. Influential newspapers took up

\(^1\) *Ibid.*

\(^2\) Hiram Motherwell, "The American Tourist Makes History," *Harpers*, CLX (December, 1929), 73.
the issue of the Fascio and its control. The Chicago Tribune said: "The business of the Fascist League is to prevent the absorption of Italians by American life." The Brooklyn Eagle demanded a firm word from Washington on the subject. However, Fascio was quick to sense the change in the public feeling. Mussolini abruptly dissolved the League in January of 1930 only two months after the rigorous attacks made in the periodical press. Revel ended the League in a farewell address on ship while awaiting departure for Italy. He denied the charge in the article exposing the League in Harpers; he also denoted the fact that Mussolini was in direct control of the Fascio in this country and the charge that the Italian consul had influenced the school curriculum in Pitts-
burgh. In effect, Revel, denied everything: and stated that the League "was no more." Yet, although the organization was defunct, the centers were still in operation and the influence of the Fascio was still to create problems.

It is noteworthy to see that official opinion at this time through the late twenties and the first five years of the thirties was one of seeming contradiction. Henry Stimson said in his memoirs:

2. Ibid. "When Grandi Visits Hoover," The Literary Digest, CVII (November 14, 1931), 16.
Stimson cited his meeting with Benito Mussolini in July of 1931, stating that he was impressed with the Italian leader for wanting a disarmament conference. Mussolini further impressed Stimson at a press conference where he stressed the need for peace and disarmament. Stimson considered Mussolini to be rather stiff in formal talks at the Venezia Palace but rather informal in the private meetings. Yet in spite of the official opinion of the Secretary of State, when a Joint Statement was issued, it was clear that the United States was not going to be involved in international financial stabilization. Stimson attempted to present the document to the press as an indication of the many significant and widespread developments in the international community.

In the end, Mussolini was more interested in his safety. There were to be no ticker tape parades in any of the cities, especially in New York; the visit, though official, would be quiet; there would mainly be private events for him and the official party. The State Department was most anxious to avoid any anti-fascist demonstrations. It would seem that there was a large scale anti-fascist sentiment that the State Department did not wish the Italian Foreign minister to see.

Footnotes:
3 Stimson, op. cit.; p. 268.
4 "When Grandi Visits Hoover," The Literary Digest, CVIII (November 14, 1931), 16.
However, the visit was an official success and a joint statement was issued:

"Full advantage has been taken of the opportunity afforded by this visit for a frank and cordial exchange of views respecting the many problems of world importance in which the Governments of Italy and the United States are equally interested. Realizing that restoration of economic stability and confidence within our respective national boundaries can only find ultimate achievement through the further establishment of international financial stability ... We have attempted to continue the efforts already initiated towards this end by a candid discussion of the many significant and related international problems, the solution of which have become a recognized necessity." \(^1\)

The statement went on to point out the financial crisis, and the concern over arms and the stabilization of exchanges. It closed with mention of a naval agreement:

"We believe that the existing understandings between the principal naval powers can and should be completed and that the general acceptance of the proposal, initiated by Signor Grandi, for a one-year's armament's truce is indicative of the great opportunity for the achievement of concrete and constructive results presented by the forthcoming conference for limitation of armaments ... We feel confident that the relationships fostered during this visit will prove valuable in laying the foundation for beneficial action by our respective governments."

Although there were some disagreements among the Fascist and non-Fascist groups until 1932, there were no open disturbances. At that time a riot broke out in New York on July 4, 1932, showing the animosity the two groups held for others which were still open. The Congress was asked in January ... \(^2\)

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\(^2\) New York Times, July 15, 1932, p. 3.

Ibid., p. 649.
each other. Over one hundred policemen were involved and it resulted in one death. The police at one point had to use clubs to restore order. The riot began when the leaders of the anti-fascist bloc of the Sons of Italy went to place a wreath on the statue of Garibaldi on Staten Island, where the Italian patriot had lived during a period of exile. The Italian ambassador was one of the speakers and the crowd took amiss some of his remarks. A riot ensued and the two opposing groups were broken up by the club wielding police. The groups were herded onto a train and sent back to New York. However, the riot broke out anew on the train and in the melee a shot intended for a non-fascist hit Salvatore Arena, a pro-fascist. His funeral later was attended by the Ambassador and heads of the Italian mission. It was discovered later, in the course of the murder investigation, that Arena had been a small-time "hood" in Montreal and was wanted for murder in that city. However, that did not prevent him from having a huge funeral in the United States and a state funeral in Italy.

A flurry of interest was apparent in Congress about this incident and other alleged incidents of consular interference in the schools and about the activity of the cultural centers which were still open. The Congress was asked in January of 1932 to make an investigation into Fascist

\[1 \text{New York Times, July 15, 1932, p. 3.} \]  
\[2 \text{Ibid.} \]
activities:

By Mr. Fish, Joint resolution (H. J. Res. 169) against any foreign interference in our internal affairs through the creation of centers to inculcate foreign ideals and allegiance in the United States.

However, the resolution never left the committee. Other senators had tried to influence the Congress to investigate at different times but nothing came of their efforts. Among these was J. Thomas Heflin, Senator from Alabama, who in 1929 tried to get the Senate to investigate Fascist activities. He had inserted in the Congressional Record an editorial, concerning the Duffield article in Harpers, by the New Leader of New York:

Mussolini's ambassador--Italy has no ambassadors, as that nation is a slave state ruled by bandits--last week said that the charges of Fascist terrorism in the United States are 'lies.' He added that 'critics of Fascism are tools of bolshevistic propaganda.' De Martino knows very well that the labor-union movement of the world, as well as thousands of journalists, authors, scientists, and other eminent men who are not communists, are opposed to everything represented by Fascism. . . .

The senator urged an immediate investigation as a "solemn duty." Again in February of 1930 Senator Heflin had read into the Congressional Record a letter he wrote to the Birmingham News. He castigated those members of the press who praised Mussolini's regime and said that many complaints

had been received by him, concerning the activities of the Fascio in the United States and over the Fascio's attempts to get the young Italian-American into their Junior organization. He claimed there was too much eulogizing of Fascism over the American democratic forms of government. This he said must stop.¹

The Italian embassy denied all charges concerning the activities of its consular agents and in August of 1932 they made official note of the anti-Fascist press in New York.² In an attempt to smooth the temper of opinion, Mussolini, in a statement reported by Ambassador De Martino, agreed to the closing of the cultural centers in New York.³ But the only concrete example of this being done was the return of Revel to Italy. Mussolini's agents had another area in the attempt to spread Fascist propaganda. That was to be the field of higher education; the Fascists would gain control of one of the United States's largest Graduate schools of Italian Studies—the Casa Italiana at Columbia University.

¹U. S. Congressional Record, 71st Cong., 2nd Sess., 1930, LXXII, Part 3, 2996.
³Ibid., p. 457.
CHAPTER III

FASCISM AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

1934-1935

From 1931 to 1935 there were many investigations of
the Fascist influence in the United States. The Samuel
Dickstien Committee was interested in the influence that
the Fascisti, Nazis and Communists had in the affairs of
the United States. A bill was prepared making it illegal
for an alien living in this country to engage in propaganda
and political influence. If he did so he would be liable
to expulsion for those activities.¹

In 1934 there appeared in The Nation, a liberal maga-
zeine, an article which dealt with Fascism at Columbia Uni-
versity. The Nation began a running controversy with the
president of Columbia, Nicholas M. Butler, with The Nation
contending that he should step into the picture and censure,
the heads of the Italian House of Studies as being pro-
Fascist and under the direct control of Mussolini in Rome.
The Italian House of Studies, or Casa Italiana, was a
resident house of study for those engaged in graduate study
of the culture, literature and general history of Italy.

There were on the campus other similar resident houses, the

¹ "Should Congress Pass the Dickstien Bill to Terminate the Stay of Alien Propagandists?", U. S. Congressional Digest, XV (November, 1935), 284.
Spanish and also the German. These houses attempted to inculcate the ideas of the various countries into the students through the teaching by professors who had either first-hand experience with the countries or were born in the country and were citizens of that country. It was the contention of The Nation that the Casa Italiana was a center of Fascist propaganda. The Casa was not giving a complete picture of the situation in Italy but was giving a pro-Fascist slant. To let Columbia University, in the thirties, had as its head the distinguished educator Nicholas M. Butler, who was considered to be one of America's leading liberals.¹ The start of the controversy involving him and the members of the Casa began on October 5, 1934 with an article which appeared in the student magazine, the Spectator. The article, written by the students, asked Butler to take a firm stand against fascism. It carried comments from Sir Anthony Jenkinson, former Oxford student-editor, which in effect deplored the American universities' apathy to Fascism.² It was felt that, in the light of Dr. Butler's frequent stands against communism and fascism, it was surprising that he did not know of the subtle type of propaganda on his own campus.

The point of attack of the students and of The Nation's article was the Italian House of Studies. Its approach to the

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¹"Fascism at Columbia University," The Nation, CXXXIX (November 7, 1934), 530.
²Ibid.
problems of Italy were considered by The Nation to be quite pro-fascist. The Nation in its article gave some examples why this approach was considered to be slanted. The heads of the Casa refused to permit any publication of Italian studies or of the lecturing of any individual who was known to be at variance with fascist dogma. The facilities of the Casa were closed to many educators who had fled to this country of Italian affairs and of elementary standards of try in order to escape Fascism. The Casa had refused to let such liberals as Count Carlo Sforza or, the noted philosopher, Gaetano Salvamini, speak at any function despite the efforts of some unbiased students. The furniture for the Casa had been given by the Italian government, but, most of the Italian Americans who had given money originally for the building had been alienated by the Casa’s director’s subsequent conduct. 

The head of the Casa was Guiseppe Prezzolini, who in the early twenties had been a crusading liberal and the editor of the Italian paper Voce. But now, as of 1933, he had come out for Mussolini and was well known as a "fellow traveler." Before he had come to the Casa in 1933 a big build-up had labeled him the "precursor" of Mussolini. A doctoral dissertation on the Threshold of Fascism by Peter Riccio was used in the campaign. Riccio, as of 1934, was an assistant professor in the Casa. The position had been a reward for his work on the educational bureau. The purpose of this agency was to

Ibid.

1Ibid., p. 531. 2Ibid.
the doctorate. The dissertation had been attacked by an independent Italian language paper in the United States, the La Stampa Libera, as a fraud and the paper's editor wondered how Columbia could accept such a dissertation: and ideals.

With uncontrovertible evidence it brought out the equivocal structure upon which the dissertation rested and declared 'one of the worst and most disgraceful dissertations ever written in the history of higher education,' revealing astonishing ignorance of Italian affairs and of elementary standards of scholarship. All the lead articles were.

It was felt by the La Stampa Libera that special pressure had been brought to bear and that the department was dominated by fascist influence. Actually Prezzolini was the head of the Casa in name only. The real power was Dino Gnocchi Bigonogari. It was he who had sent for Prezzolini and had re-Riccio write the dissertation. Riccio had a great deal of help from Bigonogari in the process of writing the dissertation as Bigonogari was an avowed fascist who tried in every way possible to bring fascist ideas in the conduct of Italian studies.

Another point of controversy for The Nation was the conduct of the students: a consideration by The Nation to be

Student gatherings for the purpose of discussing matters of fascist rule are forbidden: a critical attitude of mind among students is discouraged. The professors have the power of withholding higher degrees in their department from students who view contemporary Italy with an open mind.

One of the most active of the Casa's activities was the educational bureau. The purpose of this agency was to

\[^1\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 531.}\] \[^2\text{Ibid.}\]
instill Italian nationalism into the Italian population of New York. To gain this end, graduate students of Italian ancestry went into the Italian quarters of the city of New York speaking for adherence to Italian customs and ideals. For this particular function of the Casa the Italian consul had contributed three thousand dollars.

The Casa's publication each month was quite slanted to in favor of the Fascist cause. All the lead articles were written by Benjamin de Ritis who wrote only the Fascist line. In the preceding nine months of 1934, not one point of controversy was reported by the magazine excepting the invitation. The Nation felt that Casa was being used as an agency of a foreign government and felt certain that a regular correspondence was being carried on between the Casa, the Italian embassy in Washington and also the Fascio al'Estro in Rome, which was the headquarters for the overseas program. A number of letters were received by The Nation after the publication of the article on Fascism. These letters came from the student leaders of the Casa. The statements made in those letters were considered by The Nation to be irrelevant and astounding. The students felt that they must remain on friendly terms with those countries they were studying. In other words, as The Nation pointed out, there

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1 Ibid. 1935
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., p. 130.
was to be no free political discussion at Columbia for it would turn the Casa and other similar houses into "chaos and pandemonium." \(^{1}\) The students themselves admitted that no discussions could be permitted. The letters, from the students to The Nation, went on to say that they had scheduled Salvamini for a lecture during the coming year. It was interesting to note that after the dispatch of the letter to The Nation, denying the charges originally made, it took three and one-half weeks for the students to issue the invitation to Salvamini. \(^{2}\) The students, however, gave the excuse of other work in their letter. Salvamini, in accepting the invitation, requested that the invitation come from Prezzolini, the head of the Casa. \(^{3}\) Prezzolini refused to issue the invitation over his name. The students involved, thereupon, terminated their membership in the Casa. But, in the meantime, an inner fight was being waged and the three signers of the letter to Salvamini were forced to resign from the Graduate Council of Italian Studies at the Casa. The invitation to Salvamini was revoked by those placed in charge of the student group. Salvamini congratulated the students who had resigned from the Casa and had been forced from the Graduate Council:

\(^{1}\) "Fascism at Columbia," The Nation, CXXIX (November 21, 1934), 590-591.

\(^{2}\) "Gaetano Salvamini and the Casa," The Nation, CXXXX (January 30, 1935), 129.

\(^{3}\) Ibid., p. 130.
I am sure that they, and those who pull the strings behind the scenes, will not remain anonymous to their superiors in Rome, and will therefore receive an appropriate reward for their laudable zeal. The president of the university, Nicholas M. Butler, answered the article of The Nation with a stern letter denying the existence of a fascist center at the Casa. In his rebuttal he mentioned some of the Italian scholars who had been invited to speak at the Casa and were known to be anti-fascist, but had been forced to decline. One named, by Butler, was felt Guglielmo Ferrero, writing from Switzerland, denied ever having been invited to speak at the Casa. Butler went on to refute, as he thought, the entire article, and refusing to act as there was nothing to act on. The Nation in turn took each piece of evidence that it had and examined it in detail for Dr. Butler. Butler had called the professors of the Casa eminent in their fields. This was refuted in the Belgian review Res Publica, by Salvamini in December of 1932, and in an article in La Stampa Libera, the independent Italian-language paper, on the "Academic Scandal" at Columbia. These articles were directed at Riccio and his dissertation. The articles claimed the dissertation was a false view of the Italian situation. To the two reviews the dissertation was

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false and unacademic. Butler went on in his letter claiming that other than non-fascists had been housed in the guest wing of the Casa. He mentioned Mr. Max Ascoli and his wife as a case in point. However, The Nation pointed out that this was in 1931 two years before Prezzolini had come to the Casa. Butler's assertion that Prezzolini was so "conspicuous and anti-fascist" was rejected by The Nation on the basis of his allegiance to Mussolini in 1931.

All of Butler's answers were refuted. The Nation felt that he had been taken in by the integrity of men who had deceived him. He had, when the original article in The Nation had come out, gone to the heads of the Casa and the answers in the letter to The Nation had come from them over Butler's signature. The Nation suggested a congressional investigation, but before that, Columbia should be given time to clean its own house. The Nation, in summation, contended that the Casa was under the direct control of Mussolini.

Dr. Butler was one of America's leading scholars and was consulted at frequent intervals by the Presidents of the United States on matters of economic and international importance. He was no lover of fascism but had a high regard for Mussolini in respect, that is, to the service he had rendered

1 "President Butler and Fascism," loc. cit.
2 Ibid., p. 552.
3 Ibid.
to the Italian people by improving their domestic administration in a great variety of ways.\textsuperscript{1} Butler in 1927 had an audience with Mussolini and he commented on it thusly:

I must say of Mussolini that he is the only outstanding political leader or dictator whom I have ever met who would permit free and open debate with him on his doctrines and yet keep up friendly relations. . .although he knows perfectly well what I feel and think about the Fascist philosophy.\textsuperscript{2}

Butler did not mince words with Mussolini at this interview in 1927 yet he still had some admiration for the qualities Mussolini had shown in vitalizing Italy. It was Butler's opinion that Mussolini had kept before him the conception of restoring his country in the twentieth century to a position of influence comparable to that which ancient Rome occupied when at the height of its power.\textsuperscript{3}

In the building of Columbia Dr. Butler had the idea that the school should be a national and international house of scholarship and service.\textsuperscript{4} To him the relationship between the ideals of a true university and politics was quite definite. Politics was the doctrine of how men may live together happily and helpfully in an organized society. It is precisely to the service of politics so defined that the University aims to bring the fruit of its labours through the lives of those

\textsuperscript{1}Nicholas M. Butler, \textit{Across the Busy Years}, Volume II (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), p. 154.

\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., pp. 155-156. \textsuperscript{3}Ibid., p. 179.

\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., p. 442.
as teachers or students have come under its training and influence. ¹

This may in part be the reason that Dr. Butler did not intend to investigate the Casa and its activities. It was to him a question of academic freedom. Therefore, he would do nothing. ²

Perhaps the strongest indictment of the Casa came in November of 1935. At that time The Nation reviewed an article appearing in the Italian press: "The Duce has received Guisepi Prezzolini who reported to him on the activities of the Casa Italiana of Columbia University."³ This article appeared in the Popolo d'Italia of Rome, June 17, 1935. The Nation asked why if Butler was so sure of the lack of fascist control or of political significance of the Casa, why then, did its director make a report to the Fascist government?⁴ For The Nation charged those at the Casa and Prezzolini, in particular, of obeying the directives issued by The Italian Ministry of Education of August, 1934, which said in part:

> When moreover, professors intend to go abroad to lecture... the minister must be informed, if possible at least two months before the date fixed for the departure, so that measures may be taken... for the guidance of our authorized diplomatic representatives concerning the proper propaganda to be carried on in the interests of our culture.⁵

¹Ibid., p. 443.
²"Mussolini and the Casa Italiana," The Nation, CXXXIX (November 27, 1935), 610.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid.
Prezzolini was an Italian national and was carrying out the wishes of his government, of the New York Board of Education, in May of 1935 at a commencement at the University of Alabama, the Secretary of the Interior, Harold L. Ickes, made reference to the Fascist activity in some universities.

One or two liberal magazines have been concerned about the attempt that they fear Fascism has been making to gain a foothold in one of our universities, but this charge has never been made, to my knowledge, by those who support the absurd accusation that our colleges are teaching communism. The explanation of this curious circumstance is not far to seek, there are selfish men in this country who, in their hearts, would like to see the United States swing to Fascism.

The Secretary went on to say that these men would destroy the liberties of the United States and build an economic state to exploit. He went on to warn of the purposes of those who would try and establish fascism: Fascist element was in control.

The sinister purposes of those who would establish a Fascist state on our free American soil are clear from the very nature of this bold assault upon our institutions of higher learning. Therefore, the weight of evidence is that the Fascist element in Count America that would muzzle our professors and put wax in the ears of their students is the primary step in the direction of the establishment of a dictatorship in this country of and by and for, the beneficiaries of special privilege.  

The Nation further bolstered its arguments that a Fascist group had control of the Casa by enumerating some of the activities of the Casa in 1934.

2 Ibid., p. 756
government for services to that state. It gave a reception to President George Ryan, of the New York Board of Education, who had just returned from a trip to Italy and the study of the Italian educational system. Mr. Ryan waxed eloquent over the Italian system and wished that it could be established in the United States.¹ A rally was held October 20, 1934, at the Casa, when the new Italian Consul was received. The consul was greeted by the fascist salute and gave it in return. The anthem "Giovanezza," the political anthem of the Black-shirts, was played.² All these things tended to uphold the charges which Nicholas M. Butler had denied. It would seem in the light of evidence given by The Nation, based on its own, and evidence in some foreign papers as the Res Publica and the Popolo d'Italia, that a fascist element was in control of the Italian House of Graduate Studies.

One thing Butler did, in order to show that Columbia was unbiased and would let anyone speak, was to invite Count Carlo Sforza to speak at the Casa. This was not at the invitation of Prezzolini, the director, but came from the President.³

It would seem on the basis of the evidence presented by The Nation that there was influence of a Fascist nature at

¹Gaetano Salvamini, "Salvamini and the Casa," The Nation, CXXX (February 27, 1935), 234.
²"Mussolini and the Casa Italiana," The Nation, loc. cit.
³Robert Bolaffio, "President Butler on Dead Universities," The Nation, CXXXII (February 5, 1936), 159.
Columbia University. It perhaps bears out the observations of Sir Jenkinson that there was apathy at American universities regarding Fascism and its influence.

General Smadely Butler was senior general in the United States Marine Corps. In January of 1931 he was the commanding general of the marine base at Quantico, Virginia. He served with distinction in Haiti and in China. He received Congressional Medals of Honor and had been publicly praised by the Navy for his excellent job in China during 1926-1928. General Butler was known to be loyal to his party, he knew military psychology and the men respected him to a high degree.

In 1924 General Butler had been called upon by the city of Philadelphia to "clean up" its police and law enforcement agencies. Butler in military fashion, brooked no opposition. Yet after promising to clean up the city in forty-eight hours he failed to clean up the city in twice as many weeks. He thought all work would be done quickly. He failed to understand the nature of a police officer or the ward heeler. Under his nose, a man said, "I thought that everybody was honest. I thought that what they wanted was to make
MAJOR GENERAL SMEDLEY D. BUTLER AND THE FASCISTS

General Smedley Butler was senior general in the United States Marine Corps. In January of 1931 he was the commanding general of the marine base at Quantico, Virginia. He had served with distinction in Haiti and in China. He held two Congressional Medals of Honor and had been publicly praised by the Navy for his excellent job in China during 1927-1928. General Butler was known to be loyal to his men; he knew military psychology and the men respected him to a high degree.

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1 "When a Marine Tells It," The Literary Digest, CVIII (February 14, 1931), 7.
2 Ray T. Tucker, "The Bad Boy of the Marines," The Outlook, CLVII (February 25, 1931), 292.
3 Ibid., p. 294.
the citizens of Philadelphia believe it had been cleaned up. After this fiasco of his semi-civilian career Butler returned to the Marine Corps on active duty.

The incident which involved the General happened in Philadelphia during an address to the Contemporary Club, January 19, 1931. In that address Butler made a number of remarks concerning Italy's leader. He warned that the Duce was polishing up helmets. One particular story got back to the Italian embassy and as a result protests were lodged in Washington. The story as told by the General, involved an unnamed friend, later identified as Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., and a ride Vanderbilt had been taken on by Mussolini. In the course of the ride a child was struck; said Butler:

He [Mussolini] did not stop when the child was hit, or slacken his pace. My friend, the American, screamed as the child's body was crushed [sic] under the wheels of the machine. Mussolini put a hand on my friend's knee. 'It was only one life! he told my friend 'what is one life in the affairs of a State?'

The court-martial should have taken place the latter The Italian embassy was most unhappy and on January 31, 1931, the United States Secretary of State, Stimson, made a formal apology to the Italian government. The Secretary of the Navy, at the same time, ordered Butler to be court-martialed. It is interesting to note that almost the entire press, in editorials, was favorable to the apology of our government. But there were

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1 "The Trend of Events," The Outlook, CXLIII (February 11, 1931), Ibid.
3 "When a Marine Tells It," The Literary Digest, loc. cit.
some objections, not so much at the apology, but, that the idea of a court-martial was too severe. The Springfield Republican, Raleigh News Observer, and the Charleston Post were among the papers that felt the punishment by court-martial was too severe for such a brilliant officer. The Outlook said it is regretted that no one could spank Mussolini as one could spank Butler. Even though most of the press united behind the State Department, one paper, the New York Telegram, felt that the apology went too far and seemed to show a strange timidity toward Mussolini. It held that a brilliant officer's career was in danger over opinions privately expressed and privately held. Some columnists, as Heywood Broun, voiced their objections thusly:

If Smedley Butler is found guilty, of saying the things attributed to him, I know a great many Americans who would like to mark the event with another dinner at which all the doors would be locked and he can talk about Italy's leader to his heart's content.

The court-martial which was to take place the latter part of February never took place. Before it came to trial the case was dropped. The versions of the alleged story were many and the heads of the State Department and the Navy realized that a court-martial would avail nothing; and, perhaps, disturb Italo-American relations. Besides Mussolini had

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1 "The Trend of Events," The Outlook, CLVII (February 11, 1931), 205.
2 "When a Marine Tells It," The Literary Digest, loc. cit.
3 Ibid.
already sent word that "he had forgotten all about it."\(^1\) Butler, however, refused to give apology to the Italian Embassy or a personal apology to Mussolini. The State Department decided to give him a simple reprimand.\(^2\) Butler was not out of the picture, for, from time to time, in the thirties he would make his voice heard in unpopular causes such as the bonus bill for veterans, gang warfare in the United States, the danger of war with Japan, and the profit that was to be gained from such a war.

Butler in 1934 was called before the Samuel Dickstien congressional committee investigating business practices of the large corporations in the United States. Butler during his testimony said that he had been asked by a Gerald P. MacGuire, a New York bond salesman, to lead a bonus army of 500,000 soldiers who would march on Washington and strip Franklin D. Roosevelt of his powers and install a Fuhrer.\(^3\) This story was denied by Mr. MacGuire. Butler also incriminated J. P. Morgan and Company, of whom MacGuire was an agent. An official of J. P. Morgan Company branded the story as a "lie." It is interesting to note that Dickstien was unable to get an adequate explanation of the reported offer to Butler.

\(^1\)Ibid.

\(^2\)"Our Comic-Opera Court-Martial," The Literary Digest, CVIII (February 28, 1931), 10.

\(^3\)"Recovery Drive Mapped As New Congress Nears," The Literary Digest, CXIX (December 1, 1934), 8.
to set up a Fuhrer. Dickstein was of the opinion that someone was trying to shield somebody or something, that looked to him, "rotten." 1

Butler's parents had both been Quakers and they had allowed him to enlist only because of his threat to run away from home and do it anyway. His career as a soldier had brought him into close contact with war. For the remainder of his life he would hate war and the causes of war.

In an article on war, and its causes, Butler made an attack on those who make war for profit and their own ends. 2 "The only way to stop war," he said, "was to conscript capital before conscription of the Nation's youth." 3 He made a point of showing how the United States would go to war over the protection of the Philippine trade of $200,000,000. 4 He was against foreign entanglements and against the capitalist who was the only one who made a profit out of war. He foresaw the war clouds and the war the United States would have with Japan.

As a leader in unpopular causes he took the side of the veterans of the first World War who were fighting for a "bonus." He was most bitter and in one speech, addressing the

1Ibid.
2Smedley D. Butler, "War Is a Racket," The Forum, LXXXII (September, 1934), 140.
3Ibid., p. 143.
4Butler, loc. cit.
veterans, told them to elect the right Congressmen so that they would be sure of the bonus. He also told them to forget about defeating Roosevelt for they did not have $5,000,000, and besides they did not know anything about electing the president anyway.¹

He advocated the founding of a state police that would be on the lines of the Marine Corps. He felt that if the larger states would take hold of the idea it would filter down to the smaller states. He felt that the establishment of an elite corps would be the only way the United States could get rid of the "gangs" that had such wide control in the cities. His ideas were in part adopted when the Federal Bureau of Investigation was established.²

General Butler tried to alert the American public to the dangers of Fascism and its methodology. His one great error was not understanding the prudent way to go about getting his ideas across. His outspoken nature was a potent factor in making him a patron for the lost or desperate causes.

¹"Deaths on the Keys Arouse Veterans," The Literary Digest, CXX (September 28, 1931), 8.
The world in 1935 was concerned primarily with the preliminaries of the Italian-Ethiopian war which broke out October 3, 1935. The League of Nations had taken the unprecedented step of applying sanctions against Italy.\(^1\)

The United States had been in advance of the League. The League meeting at Geneva October 7, 1935 voted 49-2 in favor of economic sanctions. The League, hitherto, had not deemed it necessary to use this severe action. In previous disagreements, the Chaco War and the Manchukuo incident, they had not taken this extreme step. Italy was most disturbed in the event of war between foreign states, the President at this time of events and felt that the members of the League were being unfair, especially in the light of the League's past actions.

The effect of sanctions on Italy would have been felt in many ways. Italy needed war materials to keep her war machine, now in motion, operative.\(^2\) Ninety-nine per cent of the cotton of Italy's cotton, ninety-five per cent of her coal and seventy-six per cent of her other war materials had to be imported.

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1"Italy First Nation Found Guilty by League," The Literary Digest, CXX (October 19, 1935), 9.

Supporting her economy was the tourist revenue and the emigrants' remittances from foreign countries. These added to her supply of foreign exchange.

It is interesting to note that the trade with the United States from Italy was on a steady decline for nearly every year from 1925 through 1935 but that the trade with Germany increased nearly every year even through the depression years.¹

The United States had been in advance of the League in preparing for the Italo-Ethiopian conflict by passing in Congress the Embargo Act of August 31, 1935. The Act was designed to prevent the shipping of arms or implements of war to belligerent countries. The Act in substance declared that, in the event of war between foreign states, the President could proclaim that exports of ammunition and implements of war from the United States would be unlawful.² The President could enumerate the type of arms that was to be prohibited by the resolution. It provided that from ninety days of the approval of the Act every person that was engaged in producing arms or munitions should register with the Secretary of State. It further read that Americans who traveled on board belligerent countries' vessels did so at their own risk.

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¹See Figures 1 and 2.
Figure 1. Italian Trade with Principal Countries (in Millions of Dollars), Exports.*

Figure 2. Italian Trade with Principal Countries (in Millions of Dollars), Imports.*

On October 5, 1935 the President issued the proclamation declaring that there was to be an embargo on arms. In view of the state of war that existed between Italy and Ethiopia, it was the wish of the State Department to issue the proclamation before the League in order to disavow any connection with the action that was to be taken by the League. In the clarification of the Emargo Act, Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, at a press conference on October 10, 1935 said:

"Technically, of course, there is no legal prohibition apart from the proclamation governing the export of arms--against our people entering into transactions with the belligerents or either of them."

That same evening in a radio address, Hull said there was a moral influence throughout the world in support of peace and hope for a peaceful settlement of the controversy.

In this regard the United States previous to October 3, 1935 had attempted through its diplomatic mission in Rome to facilitate a peaceful settlement of the Ethiopian question. Throughout 1935 the United States attempted to enforce the Kellogg Briand pact to which both Italy and Ethiopia were signers. The United States, aware of the League's desire to

1 "How the Law Has Been Administered," U. S. Congressional Digest, XV (January, 1936), 15.

2 Ibid.

place sanctions on the Italian government, informed the
Italian Foreign Office that it would not be part of the
League's desire for sanctions. 1 The Italian government was
quite gratified and expected such action to be in agreement
with the American policy of non-interference in European
affairs. 2 The United States, while refusing to go along with
the League's desire for sanctions, did speak of a "moral iso-
lation" of the Italian position. 3 However, the United States
had been informed by Italy as late as August of 1935 that the
Italian position in regard to Ethiopia was justified and Italy
advanced the plea that they were advancing civilization. 4

In an effort to avoid hostilities the President felt
obliged to send a personal message to Mussolini endeavoring
to stop the war machine which Mussolini was preparing for use
against Ethiopia. The message sent on August 18, 1935, read,
in part:

1"Charge in Italy (Kirk) to the Secretary of State,"

2"Charge in Italy (Kirk) to the Secretary of State,"

3"Charge in France (Mariner) to the Secretary of State,"

4"Charge in Italy (Kirk) to the Secretary of State,"
I am asked by the President to communicate to you, in all friendliness and in confidence, a personal message expressing his earnest hope that the controversy between Italy and Ethiopia will be resolved without resort to armed conflict. In this country it is felt both by the Government and by the people that failure to arrive at a peaceful settlement of the present dispute and a subsequent outbreak of hostilities would be a world calamity the consequences of which would adversely affect the interests of all nations.

The Italian leader answered the President's note the following day August 19, 1935 in a long and historical summation of the Ethiopian situation. It was reported to the State Department by the charge in Italy (Kirk). Mussolini regretted that it was too late to avoid conflict and noted that Italy had mobilized a million men and spent two billion lire. No nation, and he mentioned the United States, could expect Italy to draw back and in the process destroy her prestige. Musso-

lini, quoted by the charge Kirk stated:

The conflict with Abyssinia he repeatedly char-
acterized as a matter of vital interest in Italy. This conflict must be settled once for all at this time for the effort which had been expended and the sacrifices which were being made could never be repeated.

Breckinridge Long, our Ambassador in Italy, made an appeal to Mussolini, as a private citizen, asking for a

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peaceful settlement to the problem. Long gave him a number of alternatives if he should find any of them unacceptable. One alternative was to annex the part of Ethiopia that he had submitted to the League as part of his original claims. But Mussolini refused to even consider this plan. The only question that he asked during Long's appeal: "What would I do with my army of a million?" So, for Mussolini, there was to be no turning back. On October 3, 1935, Mussolini declared war and pushed across the borders of Ethiopia. The Embargo Act was put into effect by proclamation October 5, 1935. As requested by the President, on board the "USS Houston," the declaration was issued before any action of the League which came October 7, 1935.

In the beginning the Italian reaction to the Embargo Act was quite mild, considering that the effects of such an action would mainly be felt by Italy as our trade with Ethiopia was quite small. Within a short time the Italian economic situation was in desperate circumstances. In New York sales to Italy were

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4 Ibid.
on a cash basis only as she had been cut off from all credit in New York and London. Her economic position was further weakened by the fact that Mussolini could not keep up his foreign commitments without dipping into his gold supply. The Italian Ambassador to the United States, Luigi Rosso, was most apprehensive over questions asked by the United States Treasury about Italian credit and banking operations. He was of the opinion that the United States had gone beyond mere neutrality in requesting such information. However, the United States said it was merely the usual thing done monthly to evaluate various countries' credit. It did though order a similar investigation of Ethiopian credit.

In Italy the effect of the sanctions was felt especially in the cost of living. Various food prices went up and the average Italian felt the psychological effects of the European sanctions. There were cases in which individual Italians boycotted British Shell, and used American products.

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1 "Sanctions Economic Dilemma for Mussolini," The Literary Digest, loc. cit.
3 Ibid.
The attitude, at the beginning of the war, of the Italians to the United States was one of cordiality.\(^1\) An American was always treated with favor, although, quite often prompt identification was needed. He might possibly be thought to be British.\(^2\) The average Italian was ignorant of the intricacies of the eventual progress of American policies. The reason was an excessive censorship.\(^3\) The government was suspicious of American policies and attitude, and, as of November, 1935, the Italian government was unable to decide what the policy of the United States would be. But the feeling against the English and England was quite pronounced.

The United States official policy in regard to the embargo was soon noticeable. The United States ordered an cessation of all trade activities as of November 13, 1935. It demanded to know of any transactions attempted by American interests in Italy. By November 18, 1935, the Italian government placed the United States in the same category as the sanctionist states.\(^4\) By the end of December the Italians


\(^2\)Ibid.

\(^3\)Ibid.

were quite aware of the position that the United States was taking. The gasoline embargo in the eyes of the Italian government was most unfair. They informed the United States that if it were carried out it would result in all the automobiles in Italy being stopped. Ambassador Rossi said that the United States was involved in "economic war" and it was felt that the United States was allied with Italy's enemies. The Italian government regarded the embargo as an unfriendly act. In the United States the Embargo Act caused some consternation. The Wall Street Journal warned it would be applicable only if we were willing to pay the way in trade lost. American sympathy seemed to be with the idea of sanctions. Behind the neutrality policy was a national peace sentiment. It was felt, by Business Week, that this sentiment might prove powerful enough to prevent the sale of iron, machinery and scrap because there was not very much political support behind those commodities. But Business Week did

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3 "Neutrality: Warnings and Support," The Literary Digest, CXX (November 9, 1935), 8.

question if the farmers and miners would tolerate a policy that would injure them. Business Week felt that the United States had no authority to include such important exports as cotton, oil, copper and steel. Business as a whole was most displeased as the government began to extend the list beyond the arms and implements in the original proclamation. The government had a "black list" made up of exporters who continued to sell to the belligerent powers.

An Italo-American got a court order requiring the Secretary of State and other members of the Munitions Board to show cause why they should not be restrained in extending the list to oil, cotton, iron and copper. Business life was not pleased with the president when it was stated:

The American people are entitled to know that there are certain commodities such as oil, copper, trucks... which are essential war materials. This class of trade is directly contrary to the aims of the Neutrality Act.

Exporters were incensed at the government's attempts to extend the listings. They contended that such a ban was inoperable as the European countries were unable to agree on such a ban.

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4 Ibid.

5 "How the Law Has Been Administered," U. S. Congressional Digest, loc. cit.
They felt that the United States was tacitly cooperating with the League which had failed to cooperate with its own members in the imposition of the sanctions.¹

The feeling of the oil industry was that oil should not be curtailed unless the United States and Great Britain agreed to the sanctions. There was no unified position and the exporter felt the Embargo was useless. The oilmen felt that the Embargo Act was weak and was inoperable unless all the great producing nations cooperated.² It was felt that:

Since concerted action seems improbable we should not take the initiative in enlarging the definition of munitions, barring to our industry, agriculture and labor, markets which would simply transfer their purchases elsewhere.³

American oil firms felt that there would be reprisals after the war from the Italian government.⁴

The manufacturers felt that if the belligerent powers took delivery for implements of war in this country and paid cash they should be permitted to do so.⁵

²"Oil for War or Business," Business Week (December 7, 1935), 30.
³Tbid.
⁵"Oil for War or Business," Business Week, loc. cit.
The position of our government regarding the Italian venture in Ethiopia was felt by the Italian government to be unfair and unexpected. This feeling contributed to the general disenchantment of the American public with the Mussolini regime.

By 1926-1927, the "honeymoon period" for the regime; (2) 1927-1931, transition period; and (3) 1932-1935, the enthusiasm had worn off and Mussolini's regime was revealed in its true colours.

From time to time the public was influenced by such incidents as the Seditious affair and the uxorialism of Italian tourists. Only when these acts were reported by the press did the American public realize the nature of fascism.

The events recorded through the 1920's and 30's can be seen as a gradual evolution of Italian-American relations. From the start of the twenties there was the impact of tourism on the Italian economy. The average number of visitors during the twenties was about 100,000 per year, mainly Americans. The impact was a gradual evolution of the tourist industry in Italy and a change in the character of tourism from a French and British dominated business to one that was mainly American. The American tourist industry began to develop in the twenties, and the increase in tourism to Italy was helped by the building of the Fascist party. The Italian government was largely guided by the Mussolini regime.
The era from 1922 to 1935 can be divided into three periods: (1) 1922-1927, the "honeymoon period" for the Mussolini regime; (2) 1927-1931, transition period; and (3) 1931-1935, the enchantment had worn off and Mussolini's regime was revealed in its true colours.

From time to time the public was influenced by such isolated incidents as the Seldes affair and the seizing of Italian tourists. Only when these acts were reported by the press did the American public realize the danger of fascism.

The events recorded through the 1920's and 30's can be seen as a gradual evolution of Italian-American relations. At the start of the twenties there was the impact of tourism on the Italian economy. The average number of foreign visitors during the twenties has been estimated at over 100,000 a year—mainly Americans. The tourist economy compensated in part for the difficult financial situation in Italy during the 1920's. The banking houses in the United States, and the exporters contributed, in part, to the buildup of the Fascist regime in Italy. The large loans granted to the Mussolini government by the bankers did much to further the regime.

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2 Ibid.
regime guaranteed American business support. In 1926 alone the flow of loans became quite noticeable as the Italian market began to attract the American investors. The conditions of the country after the take-over by Mussolini warranted American capital. Adverse opinion toward the regime was felt when George Seldes, the correspondent for the Chicago Tribune in Rome, was expelled in 1925 for making derogatory comments about the Italian leader in his reports to the United States. In spite of incidents like the Seldes expulsion, Mussolini's prestige was never higher than at the end of 1927.

During the latter part of the twenties and first years of the thirties a new element began to gain attention in the United States. The Fascio, an American counterpart of Italian Fascism, began to grow. The Fascio reached out to inculcate large portions of the Italian-American population in Fascist ideals. This attempt was at first successful, but, action by congressmen and press and periodical opinion were able to rouse an interest in having Fascio's activities curtailed.

In the area of education Mussolini attempted to gain control of the Italian House of Studies at Columbia University. The Nation, a liberal magazine, attempted to warn Nicholas M. Butler of the danger that was on his campus.

\(^1\) Ibid.

\(^{1}\) \textit{Ibid.}\n
\textit{supra}, pp. 93-4.
However, Butler did not deem it necessary to interfere in the Casa's activities despite the evidence submitted by The Nation. Secretary of the Interior, Harold L. Ickes, also commented on Fascist influence in some higher educational institutions of the United States. But public interest in the Casa Italiana was not aroused and nothing was done. True, some committees were formed as the Dickstien Committee, in Congress, but those committees did not succeed in having any bills passed.

General Smedley Butler attempted to rouse public interest in the dangers of fascism and of a future war. But his methods and approach to gain public attention were imprudent and again nothing came of his efforts.

There was a steady crop of trade in nearly every year, from 1925-1935, with the United States. However, there was a gradual upsurge of trade with Germany in the same years. Figures 1 and 2 further show the dependence of Italy on imports. The Ethiopian crisis and war began to show the dangers of fascism to world peace. In the United States the war was anticipated by the Embargo Act of 1934. This act was designed to prevent the sale of munitions and the implements of war. However, the American government extended this list as they saw fit to include any item that would be used by warring powers in carrying out of war. The business life of the United States

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1 Supra., pp. 53-54.
was most displeased over this attempt of the government to curtail their activities especially when the sanctionist countries could not agree on the curtailing of trade and were doing business as always. The American trader felt that he was losing markets and the effect of the Embargo Act would eventually cause the Italians to retaliate and then more business would be lost.

The war brought a change in the Italian government's feeling toward the United States. Up to November of 1935 they did not fully realize the implications of the Embargo Act and to what degree it would be put into effect. When the realization of the loss of trade (especially oil) was felt the Italian government took the attitude of classing the United States with the sanctionist countries. The Italian government considered the United States actions to be unfriendly towards the Italian government.

It can be said that the events of the twenties and the thirties merely led to the final break in 1939. The tradition of friendship between Italy and the United States was made difficult by the actions of Italy's consuls and the treatment of the Italian-American when he went to Italy.
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