

Fascist Jews in Trieste: Social, Cultural and Political Dynamics 1919-1938

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Abstract

The present article links the empowerment, consolidation and radicalization of Italian Fascism between 1919 and 1938 to the personal trajectories of Fascist and Fascist-sympathizing Jews in Trieste. At the same time, it aims to illustrate the relevance of Trieste as a testing ground for Fascist racism since the 1920ies.

Trieste's ambivalence as a multiethnic city as well as a racist laboratory created a form of "border-Fascism" where a distinctive Anti-Slavism anticipated contents and methods of Italy's 1938 anti-Semitic laws. Becoming part of Italy only in 1919/20, the city's geographical and cultural isolation from the "motherland" created a special political environment that Mussolini described as exemplarily for his – at the time – still nascent movement.

For this article five Jews from different social and cultural milieus in Trieste have been selected, they are: Pietro Jacchia, the founder of the Fascist movement in Trieste (1919), Enrico Paolo Salem, the city's Podestà (1933-1938), Achille Levi-Bianchini (1937-1938) and Marco de Parente (1938-1939), two presidents of the local Jewish Community and, finally, Italo Zolli, Trieste's Chief Rabbi (1919-1940). These figures reflect both interconnections and conflicts between Triestine Judaism and the development of Fascism on a national scale.

Historical Context

Triestine Synergies: Jews, Fascists and Racists

Diverging Biographies of Fascist Personalities (1919-1938)

The Jewish Community of Trieste, its Chief Rabbi and its Presidents

Conclusions

The history of the Jewish Community in Trieste cannot be separated from Trieste's more general culture and history. Linguistic, cultural and geographical diversity in the history of Trieste created a unique political environment. Since the 19th century, Trieste had the reputation of a Central European metropolis, associated with keywords such as *free port*, *tolerance edict*, *multi-ethnic* and

multi-cultural society.¹ Historiography has discussed the ambivalent character of Trieste, stressing the virulence of anti-Semitism, anti-Slavism as well as of a radical border-nationalism.² Founded in April 1919, the local Fascist movement gained momentum through different periods by implementing these “isms,” which describe racist, xenophobic and violent doctrines.

The present article seeks to link the roots and the subsequent consolidation of Fascism in Trieste to the role played by local Fascist Jews and to the wider significance of Trieste as testing ground for Italy’s racial politics. I will proceed by offering some historical context, then the article will focus on the biographies of the five different Jewish personalities selected and on their interdependence with the Fascist movement and regime. I chose these personalities because they held major institutional roles within the local Fascist movement, and for their role in the local Jewish community. In keeping with the title of this *Quest* volume, my analysis is limited to the years 1919-1938.

Historical Context

Trieste stood for more than 500 years under Austrian control (1382-1918) and developed as its most important harbor-city. At the beginning of the 20th century, it ranked as the fourth biggest city of the Habsburg Empire, behind Vienna, Budapest, and Prague. As the only direct Austrian access to the Mediterranean, circa 20% of all the monarchy’s imports and exports were operated through Trieste’s harbor. With the insurance agencies *Assicurazioni Generali* and *Riunione Adriatica di Sicurtà (RAS)*, as well as with the ship

¹ Angelo Ara and Claudio Magris, *Trieste. Un’identità di frontiera*, (Turin: Einaudi, 2007); Giulio Sapelli, *Trieste italiana. Mito e destino economico*, (Milan: Franco Angeli Editore, 1990); Elio Apih, *Trieste*, (Rome-Bari: Laterza editore, 1988).

² Tullia Catalan, “The Ambivalence of a Port-City. The Jews of Trieste from the 19th to the 20th Century,” *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of Fondazione CDEC*, 2 (2011): 69-98; Annamaria Vinci, *Sentinelle della patria. Il fascismo al confine orientale 1918-1941*, (Rome-Bari: Laterza editore, 2011); Almerigo Apollonio, *Venezia Giulia e fascismo 1922-1935. Una società post-asburgica negli anni di consolidamento della dittatura mussoliniana*, (Trieste: Istituto Regionale per la Cultura Istriano-Fiumano-Dalmato, 2004); Almerigo Apollonio, *Dagli Asburgo a Mussolini. Venezia Giulia 1918-1922*, (Gorizia: LEG, 2001); Enzo Collotti, “Sul razzismo antislavo,” in *Nel nome della razza. Il razzismo nella storia d’Italia 1870-1945*, ed. Alberto Burgio, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1999), 33-61; Marina Cattaruzza, “I conflitti nazionali a Trieste nell’ambito della questione nazionale nell’impero asburgico: 1850-1914,” *Quaderni Giuliani di Storia*, 1 (1989): 131-148; Elio Apih, *Italia, fascismo e antifascismo nella Venezia Giulia, 1918-1943*, (Rome-Bari: Laterza editore, 1966); Carlo Schiffrer, *Sguardo storico sui rapporti fra Italiani e Slavi nella Venezia Giulia*, (Trieste: Stabilimento tipografico nazionale, 1946).

companies *Österreichischer Lloyd* and *Cosulich Società Triestina di Navigazione*, four global players and some of Europe's biggest corporations of their kind were based in Trieste.³ Due to its economic, financial and industrial status, consecutive emperors established constitutional privileges that increased Trieste's attractiveness, both economically and politically. Its population increased tenfold within one hundred years and reached 200.000 (Austrian) inhabitants in 1910, consisting of an Italian speaking majority (including *regnicoli*, Italian citizens in Trieste), followed by minorities of Slovenian and German speaking citizens and smaller ethnic groups of German, Croat, Serb, Greek and French population groups.⁴ At the same time, circa 2% of Trieste's citizens were Jewish, representing a fundamental part of both the city's history and identity.⁵

Since the beginning of the Italian *Risorgimento* (1848-1871) and especially since the third Italian war of independence in 1866, the political tension between the Italians in Trieste, the Austrian administration and the Slovenian population rose. Vienna feared the loss of Trieste to Italy, it strengthened its centralized system and increasingly supported the city's Slovenian nationalists, which sought to govern the city within a united Slovenia under Viennese rule.⁶ At the same time, Austrian authorities tried to calm the Italian majority by reforming the suffrage, thus allowing wider political participation. However, electoral campaigns were permanently accompanied by serious street clashes between Italian and Slovenian nationalists, causing the first casualties in 1868.⁷ It was mainly Trieste's Italian liberal-national party made the atmosphere incandescent by focusing on ethnic competition, defaming the whole of the Slovenian

³ Anna Millo, *L'élite del potere a Trieste: Una biografia collettiva 1891-1938*, (Milan: Franco Angeli editore 1989); Anna Millo, *Trieste, le assicurazioni, l'Europa. Arnoldo Frigessi di Rattalma e la Ras*, (Milan: Franco Angeli editore, 2004).

⁴ Authorities probably manipulated the 1910 census of Trieste's population (51.8% Italians, 24.8% Slovenians, 5.2% Germans, 1% Croats and Serbs and 16.8% foreigners, who were almost 80% immigrated Italians): *Ministero dell'Economia Nazionale, Direzione Generale della Statistica-Ufficio del Censimento, Risultati sommari del Censimento della popolazione, eseguito il 1° Dicembre 1921, III. Venezia Giulia*, (Rome, 1925), 4; see also, Marina Cattaruzza, *Trieste nell'Ottocento. Le trasformazioni di una società civile*, (Udine: Del Bianco, 1995), 128-137.

⁵ Jewish Community of Trieste, <http://moked.it/triestebraica/la-storia> (last access, 14 March 2017); see also, Tullia Catalan, *La comunità ebraica di Trieste 1781-1914. Politica, società, cultura*, (Trieste: Lint, 2000).

⁶ Marta Verginella, "La storia di confine tra sguardi incrociati e malintesi," *Qualestoria* 1/35 (2007): 5-12.

⁷ Marina Cattaruzza, "Alle frontiere dell'impero: il litorale asburgico," in *L'Adriatico mare di scambi tra oriente e occidente*, ed. Marina Cattaruzza (Pordenone: Edizioni Concordia Sette. Istituto Regionale Studi Europei del Friuli Venezia Giulia, 2003), 141; Angelo Ara, *Fra nazione e impero. Trieste, gli Asburgo, la Mitteleuropa*, (Milan: Garzanti editore, 2009).

population in town as “hostile invaders.”⁸ The party leadership hired so-called *bande nere*, black vested gangs, to physically fight both Italian and Slovenian Socialists, who cooperated shortly within a united political party in 1907.⁹ Italian nationalists dominated regional politics from 1891 to 1915, continuously supplying the city’s Podestà.¹⁰

As an outcome of the *Risorgimento* and of the three Italian unification wars, the local irredentist movement struggled for Trieste to become part of the Kingdom of Italy. Persecuted by Austrian police, irredentists met in secret and founded Masonic Lodges. Their networks pursued the goal of spreading patriotic Italian writings, involving the wider population, gaining support from high officials in Italy and preparing the unification of the “unreleased” land of Trieste and its region Venezia-Giulia.¹¹ Italian nationalists and irredentists overlapped with regards to their followers as well as their political goals. The freemasons’ preparatory work and the political elections - as well as the open street fights - strongly affected Trieste’s Italian population, which mostly supported the irredentist idea. At the same time, influential Italian business groups remained loyal to Austria, mainly because their welfare depended on relations with the Habsburg Empire. It was an open secret that, when the minute Italy would annex Trieste, its harbor, its industry and its finance-sector would lose the Empire’s *Hinterland* as a trade market.¹² Furthermore, these interest groups would have had to face strong rivals from Venice, Genoa and Naples. Therefore, the whole unification-process was not only an ethnic struggle, but just as much an economic question and one of political influence versus political idealism.

From the perspective of the Jewish citizens in Trieste, a positive argument for the city’s transition into Italian possession was Italy’s anti-clericalism. The fact that

⁸ *Il Piccolo*, June 12, 1909, 2.

⁹ About *bande nere*, *Il Piccolo*, May 6, 1907, 2; *Il Lavoratore*, May 5, 1907, 2; about socialism in Trieste, see Sabine Rutar, *Kultur-Nation-Millieu. Sozialdemokratie in Triest vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg*, (Essen: Klartext, 2004); about the Slovenian-Italian party, which in 1907 won the election for the *Reichsrat* in Vienna, see Eduard Winkler, *Wahlrechtsreformen und Wahlen in Triest 1905-1909. Eine Analyse der politischen Partizipation in einer multinationalen Stadtregion der Habsburgermonarchie*, (München: Oldenbourg, 2000), 182.

¹⁰ Nationalist Mayors in Trieste: Ferdinando Pitteri (1891-1897), Carlo Dompieri (1897-1900), Scipione Sandrinelli (1900-1909), Alfonso Valerio (1909-1915); in AGCTS, *Segreteria Generale, Amministrazioni 1900-1945*.

¹¹ Tullia Catalan, “Massoneria ebraismo irredentismo dal 18 brumaio alla grande guerra,” in *Napoleone e il Bonapartismo nella cultura politica Italiana 1802-2005*, ed. Alceo Riosa (Milan: Guerini e associati, 2007), 197-214.

¹² Angelo Vivante, *Irredentismo adriatico. Con uno studio di Elio Apih: La genesi di “Irredentismo adriatico,”* (Trieste: Edizioni Italo Svevo, 1984).

the Italian constitution secured full religious freedom since 1848 was an important consideration for Jews from Trieste, who experienced anti-Semitism throughout the whole period of Austrian dominion. In fact, Jews – just like all other parts of the population – were a diversified group, amongst them were nationalists, irredentists, freemasons, workers and businessmen, religious and non-religious citizens. For example, some of the main characters of the local irredentist movement, led by the masonic lodge *Alpi Giulie*, grew up in Jewish families but converted or remained religiously unaffiliated. Among them were three grandmasters of the *Alpi Giulie lodge*, Felice Venezian, Camillo Ara and Teodoro Mayer, as well as other highly respected personalities of Trieste, for instance Salvatore Segre Sartorio, vice-director of RAS and later to become a senator of the Kingdom of Italy.¹³ However, in 1910 circa 5.000 citizens of Trieste were still registered members of the Jewish Community.¹⁴

With the beginning of World War I, Austria drafted its male citizens. Many Italian speaking citizens of Trieste deserted, escaped to nearby Italy, changed sides and fought against Austria. Also 101 members of Trieste's Jewish Community fought for Italy between 1915 and 1918, 18 of them perished.¹⁵

From November 1918, with the end of the war, to September 1919, with the conclusion of the conference of Saint-Germain, the status of the territory of Trieste remained vague; nevertheless, Italian troops had already occupied the city. In this atmosphere of a permanent external threat and a lack of internal security, a new movement of armed Italian ultranationalists in black uniforms increasingly took hold of Trieste. The Fascist squads, thriving in the nationalistic, xenophobic and violent atmosphere of April 1919, quickly gained power.¹⁶

¹³ Venezian contracted out of the Jewish Community Trieste in 1885, Mayer, his wife Gilda Ziffer and their children Marcella and Aldo in 1902, the brothers Camillo and Angelo Ara in 1903-1904, Salvatore Segre Sartorio in 1907; see, Millo, *L'élite del potere*, 66/80; Catalan, *Massoneria ebraismo irredentismo*, 80/207.

¹⁴ About the number of Jews in Trieste, Catalan, *La comunità ebraica di Trieste 1781-1914*, 81. About their emancipation, major steps were the inauguration of the first synagogue in 1748 and the end of segregation through the diluting of the ghetto in 1784: <http://www.triestebraica.it/storia/4> [last access, 14 March 2017].

¹⁵ In First World War 1.001 Triestine's fought for Italy. 184 died in the battle. The estimated number of citizens from Trieste fighting for Austria was considered to have been substantially higher, but does not get mentioned since Trieste became part of Italy; *Archivio della Comunità Ebraica di Trieste* (ACET), 1938 *Amministrazione* (1), *Volontari Triestini Ebrei*; see also: Pierluigi Briganti, *Il contributo militare degli ebrei italiani alla Grande Guerra 1915-1918*, (Bologna: Centro di Studi Storico-Militari, 2009).

¹⁶ Stefano Bartolini, *Fascismo antisloveno. Il tentativo di bonifica etnica al confine nord orientale*, (Pistoia: Istituto storico della resistenza e della società contemporanea in Provincia di Cuneo,

Austrian officials and their families mostly left the city as a consequence of military defeat. In contrast, Slovenian Triestines remained. Italian internment camps, installed by the military, were holding at least 500 Slovenians as prisoners, arguing they would be a “danger for law and order.”¹⁷ At the same time, Fascist squads patrolled Trieste’s streets, openly threatening and attacking the Austrian but primarily Slovenians, who were forbidden to speak their language in public. Jewish Triestines did not suffer any harm at this stage, an element which underlined their social status and the degree to which they were accepted. Moreover, Jews participated in the newly-founded Fascist movement, which consisted of a high number of demobilized soldiers and which leaders of Trieste’s nationalist party considered as “young and healthy forces.”¹⁸

The long-prepared takeover had linguistic, cultural and political consequences. Geographically Trieste was located at the periphery of a powerful European Empire and became a border-town of the relatively recently founded Kingdom of Italy (1861), on the border with Slovenia and the (now former) Yugoslavian Empire of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians (1918). The continuity of anti-Slavism of nationalists and Fascists promoted racism and violence as a core message. As early as 1920, local Fascism dominated the political landscape of the city and parts of its surrounding region. Benito Mussolini followed this development very closely. He visited Trieste three times between 1919 and 1921. During the last of these visits, he announced that the “*fasci* of Venice Giulia are the superior element and patron of local politics, capable of forming a great movement of national renovation and of constituting the noble and aggressive vanguard that Italy is dreaming of.”¹⁹ Mussolini elevated the racist Fascist movement in Trieste to the phalanx of his nationwide enterprise about to be established.

Triestine Synergy’s: Jews, Fascists and Racists

2006); Dario Mattiussi, *Il Partito Nazionale Fascista a Trieste. Uomini e organizzazione del potere 1919-1932*, (Trieste: Istituto Regionale per la storia del movimento di liberazione nel Friuli Venezia Giulia, 2002).

¹⁷ The government in Rome ordered the prisoners release in March 1919: Milica Emilija Kacin-Wohinz, *Alle origini del Fascismo di confine. Gli Sloveni della Venezia Giulia sotto l’occupazione italiana 1918-1921*, (Gorizia: Centro isontino di ricerca e documentazione storica e sociale L. Gasparini. Sklad Dorce Sardoc, 2010), 85-88; 91-97.

¹⁸ Giampaolo Valdevit, *Trieste. Storia di una periferia insicura*, (Milan: B. Mondadori, 2004), 22. Specifically about Fascism in Trieste: Vinci, *Sentinelle della Patria*.

¹⁹ Benito Mussolini, *Il Popolo d’Italia*, September 24, 1921, in: Giuseppe Stefani, *Il Lloyd Triestino. Contributo alla storia italiana della navigazione marittima*, (Verona: A. Mondadori, 1938), 459.

Keeping in mind that many Triestine Jews were Italian nationalists, irredentists and volunteers of war, it should not come as a surprise that some of them sympathized and participated in the early Fascist movement right from its beginning in 1919. Mussolini's initially explicitly apolitical movement was open to everyone, as was the Fascist party, the *Partito Nazionale Fascista* (PNF), founded in November 1921. Even Mussolini's accession to power in 1922 did not change the fact that Fascism had no official restrictions against Italian Jews. The atmosphere changed when the Fascist regime turned towards the implementation of the dictatorship (1922-1928), i.e. blurring the lines between the party and the State, merging their institutions, establishing a system where party and state were more closely interwoven, thus tending towards a totalitarian regime. The preparation of Italy's territorial expansion went hand in hand with the "creation of the new man," accompanied by the fusion of newly created state-departments with already existing eugenic and anthropological institutes.²⁰ State-controlled press and propaganda-centers promoted racism with growing radicality. Governmental anti-Slavism complemented anti-Semitic campaigns which were in turn accompanied by colonial Racism since the beginning of the Italian war and genocide in Abyssinia (1935).²¹

Trieste as a Fascist stronghold and as a city with 25% Slovenian population, as well as the home of the country's third largest Jewish Community, played a major role as a laboratory for the development of the regime's racism. While Mussolini's government was responsible for promoting anti-Semitic and colonial-racist propaganda campaigns at the national level, local anti-Slavism in Trieste had been long tested with measures that - for their content and chronology - became the blueprint for anti-Semitism and colonial racism in Italy. As mentioned before, Mussolini had followed the early success of Trieste's Fascist movement very closely.

Augusto Turati, Italy's PNF-General Secretary (1926-1930), had visited Trieste in 1926; here, in a speech in front of the high Fascist council in June of the same year, he claimed that the freemasons in Trieste, guided by a Jewish elite,

²⁰ Francesco Cassata, *Building the New Man. Eugenics, Racial Science and Genetics in Twentieth-Century Italy*, (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011).

²¹ *Der erste faschistische Vernichtungskrieg. Die italienische Aggression gegen Äthiopien 1935-1941*, eds. Asfa W Asserate and Aram Mattioli, (Köln: SH-Verlag, 2006); Gabriele Schneider, *Mussolini in Afrika. Die faschistische Rassenpolitik in den italienischen Kolonien 1936-1941*, (Köln: SH-Verlag 2000), 25-86; Angelo Del Boca, *I gas di Mussolini. Il Fascismo e la guerra d'Etiopia*, (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1996).

represented an unsolvable problem.²² With spreading rumors about a Jewish conspiracy in Trieste, the Jewish Community moved into the focus of high-ranking Fascists for the first time, as underlined by an order from the Ministry of the Interior, directed exclusively at Trieste's prefecture in May 1930, imposing the refusal "of citizenship requests coming from Semitic elements, mainly originating from East and Central Europe, who have a special tendency of flowing into Italy and particularly to settle in the new provinces where they spread ideas and sentiments which dominate the mass of their religious brothers from varying countries of origin and which can create serious inconveniences and threats."²³

With this decision, the Ministry of the Interior primarily seemed to refer to Trieste's status as the most important emigration-point for European Jews embarking towards Palestine and America, which may serve as a partial explanation for singling Trieste out in this manner.²⁴ This Trieste-specific anticipation of a clear Anti-Semitic attitude and policy on the part of the state at large, eight years before the promulgation of the Italian racial laws, is surprising, even though in December 1930 the Fascist government pushed through the creation of an Italian Jewish national organization, the *Unione delle Comunità Israelitiche Italiane* (UCII).²⁵

Concerning the city's Jewish population, the German consul in Trieste, Friedrich Illgen, reported to the foreign ministry in Berlin in July 1933, "diverse businesses in Trieste, [...] as banks, assurance companies, big trading companies in coffee, tobacco, south fruits, wine, coal etc. are almost all under exclusive Jewish control."²⁶ There was no doubt, that Illgen ignored his diplomatic training from democratic Weimar times, by now offering his services to the National-Socialist

²² *Archivio Centrale dello Stato* (ACS), *Segreteria Particolare del Duce (SPD)*, folder 28, p. 4; see also, Mattiussi, *Il Partito*, 86.

²³ *Archivio di Stato di Trieste* (ASTS), *Prefettura, Atti generali*, folder 3458, Ministry of the Interior to Prefecture of Trieste, May 7, 1930. I hereby explain, that all translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

²⁴ Catalan, "L'emigrazione ebraica in Palestina attraverso il porto di Trieste (1908-1938)," *Qualestoria* 2-3/39 (1991): 57-107, 107; see also: <http://moked.it/triestebraica/la-storia> [last access, 14 March 2017].

²⁵ Anselmo Calò, "La genesi della legge del 1930," *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 4 (1985): 334-439; Stefania Dazzetti, *Gli ebrei italiani e il Fascismo. La formazione della legge del 1930 sulle comunità israelitiche*, in *Diritto economico e istituzioni nell'Italia fascista*, ed. Aldo Mazzacane, (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2002).

²⁶ Report Consul Friedrich Illgen, 18th of July 1933; PA AA Berlin, *Rom Quirinal 670*, "Politik: Bd. 2) Juden, Italien und die deutsche Judenpolitik 1933/1939."

and anti-Semitic German government.²⁷ Illgen, as all his successors, played an important role for strengthening the German National-Socialists in Trieste, which advanced greatly through tight collaboration with anti-Semitic Fascists in Trieste.

In a similar way Ottavio Dinale, under his pseudonym “Farinata,” published on the 4th of October 1934 an article in the country’s first Fascist newspaper, Mussolini’s *Il Popolo d’Italia*, claiming that Jews were running Trieste and all important offices within it, even though they represented just two percent of the city’s population.²⁸

Then, in June 1937, an unofficial list circulated. It consisted of 104 pages, and once more caused debates and speculations about a Jewish conspiracy in Trieste. Its anonymous author, who sent the list to Rome and who published the names of all Triestine Jews, reporting their jobs, positions, addresses etc., further pointed out that he had “considered only race as a criterion and not the practiced religion.”²⁹ The list’s content was explosive, it gave a rough overview of the financial and political power of Trieste’s Jewish population. Among them, an elite circle that simultaneously occupied positions within the management of both big assurances, *Generali* and *RAS*, as well as within diverse banks and various economic, political and social associations. The “Triestine List” outlined two things: first the financial and political power of Jews in Trieste and second the nepotism among the listed personalities, whose involvement at the highest level extended across the named sectors. As it were, the list fed existing rumors about a Jewish conspiracy. Even despite claiming “race” as the criterion, the list’s author did neither provide a definition of “Jew” nor of “Race.” These two factors and the list’s strong impact on leading Fascist and Anti-Semitic circles in Rome might have motivated further steps from different sides.

²⁷ From July-December 1935, Illgen was German Consul in Trieste; *Biographisches Handbuch des deutschen Auswärtigen Dienstes 1871-1945*, ed. Auswärtiges Amt, Vol. 2, G-K, (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2005): 406; see also: René Moehrle, “Fascismo, antislavismo e antisemitismo: i rapporti dei consoli tedeschi a Trieste 1919-1945,” in *Gli ebrei nella storia del Friuli Venezia Giulia. Una vicenda di lunga durata. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi, 12-14 Ottobre 2015, Salone d’onore dell’Istituto di cultura Casa Giorgio Cini, Ferrara*, eds. Fondazione Museo Nazionale dell’Ebraismo Italiano e della Shoah and Miriam Davide and Pietro Ioly Zorattini, (Florence: Giuntina, 2016), 237-253.

²⁸ Giorgio Fabre, *Il contratto. Mussolini editore di Hitler*, (Bari: Dedalo 2004), 97.

²⁹ ASTS, *Prefettura Gabinetto*, folder 363, List and Anonymous file note, June 1937; see also: Ellen Ginzburg Migliorino, “Il censimento degli ebrei a Trieste nel 1938,” *Storia e problemi contemporanei* 10 (1992): 33-35; Silva Bon, *Gli ebrei a Trieste 1930-1945. Identità, persecuzione, risposte*, (Gorizia/Trieste: LEG. Istituto Regionale per la Storia del Movimento di Liberazione nel Friuli Venezia Giulia, 2000), 40.

In December 1937, half a year after the appearance of this anti-Semitic list, the UCII Vice-President Aldo Ascoli set up a note addressed to the Jewish Community in Trieste, to which he asked to respond at the latest in July 1938. Ascoli prompted the President of the Jewish Community in Trieste to complete an attached scheme which “for statistic reasons” should document the characteristics of the local Jewish population, their total number, birth- and mortality-rates etc.³⁰ This request could be read as a direct reaction towards the Triestine list from June 1937, assuming of course that leading UCII members knew about its existence.

At the beginning of August 1938, Mussolini’s undersecretary to the Ministry Interior, Guido Buffarini Guidi, ordered a census of all Italian Jews.³¹ The “Jewish Census” was an anti-Semitic act. Reverting back to the example of Trieste, the Prefecture did not act professionally in defining the number of Jewish citizens of Trieste, lacking in method and terminological definitions.³² However, at the end of 1938, the official number of Triestine Jews enumerated with the racist population census was 6.215.³³

The last point to mention in this overview of local anti-Semitism in Trieste concerns Mussolini. He himself publicly mentioned the “Jewish Question” just once, namely in nationwide radio-broadcasted speech held in Trieste in September 1938. It was no coincidence that Mussolini chose the capital of Venice-Giulia as the place for this announcement, because the upcoming launch of official state anti-Semitism was strongly connected to measures taken in Trieste beforehand. Once more Trieste was repositioned, this time not geographically but ideologically, turning from a Fascist playbook to the seat of Jewish/Antifascist conspiracy.

³⁰ ACET, *Stato Civile Anagrafe* 1938, Aldo R. Ascoli, July 12, 1938.

³¹ Michele Sarfatti, *Mussolini contro gli ebrei. Cronaca dell’elaborazione delle leggi del 1938*, (Turin: S. Zamorani Editore, 1994): 131; Francesca Cavarocchi, “Il censimento degli ebrei dell’agosto 1938,” *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel*, 2/78 (2007): 119-130.

³² With Italy’s population census in 1931, in which religion had been an obligatory field to fill in, 4.680 Triestines indicated to practice the Jewish religion: *Istituto Centrale di Statistica del Regno d’Italia*; VII *Censimento generale della Popolazione*, 21 April 1931, Vol. III, Fascicolo 33, *Provincia di Trieste*, Rome 1933, 5/18. Instead in 1938, the *Pubblica Sicurezza* noted for Trieste 5.452 Jewish Community members, ACS, *Ministero dell’Interno*, PS, Div. AA. GG. RR. 1912-1945, folder 201 Gi. Also in 1938, the Prefect of Trieste transferred to the authorities in Rome a total number of 6.030 Jewish Triestines, ASTS, *Prefettura Gabinetto*, folder 368, Eolo Rebuja to Ministry of the Interior, September 25, 1938.

³³ Michele Sarfatti, *Die Juden im faschistischen Italien. Geschichte, Identität, Verfolgung*, (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2014), 347.

Diverging Biographies of Fascist Jews (1919-1938)

Long before the already racist regime turned specifically Anti-Semitic, Jews were commonly found among the participants of the Fascist movement as well as of the PNF. In August 1938, the local PNF in Trieste registered 498 Jewish members, determined even before the regime had given a definition of Jew.³⁴ Twelve of these were enlisted as Fascists *ante marcia* [before the march on Rome], nine were members and three were former members of the local Jewish Community.³⁵

In the following pages I will illustrate examples of Jews from Trieste who were closely related with Fascism: Pietro Jacchia founded the Fascist movement (1919), Enrico Paolo Salem was Podestà of the city from 1933 to 1938, Achille Levi-Bianchini (1937-1938) and Marco De Parente (1938-1939) were presidents of the Jewish Community, Italo Zolli led as its Chief Rabbi (1919-1940). The selection of these personalities is related to their positions as well as to the chronology of the evolution of Fascist policy and of Italian Jewish life.

Pietro Jacchia: the beginning of local Fascism

Vita Ezechiele Jacchia and Clementina Fano were members of the Jewish Community of Trieste. They married on the 15th of August 1880 and had three children, Paolo (17 February 1883), Giusto Pietro (8 April 1884) and Irene (24 May 1889), all born in Trieste.³⁶

All three children went to university, Paolo to study medicine, Pietro and Irene to read humanities. From their adolescence, both Paolo and the younger Pietro participated in the local irredentist movement. Due to being under observation from the Austrian police, Pietro left for some years to live in Bologna, where he worked as journalist for the newspaper *Il Giornale del Mattino*. During World War I both brothers fought for Italy. Paolo served the Navy while younger Pietro joined the Army, ranking as Lieutenant of the *Bersaglieri* [Marksmen], a high

³⁴ Considering the census from August 1938, the value of these 498 Fascist Jews is relatively because it included for example persons who were baptized and born into religiously mixed families. Never the less, Fascist authorities considered them Jewish, what was a failure even in terms of the following “racial” laws, as had demonstrated for instance Enrico Paolo Salem.

³⁵ For overall numbers: ASTS, *Prefettura Gabinetto*, folder 367, Emilio Grazioli to Prefect Eolo Rehua, 22 September 1938. For *ante marcia*, ACET, 1938 *Amministrazione* (1), *Iscritti al PNF prima della marcia su Roma*.

³⁶ ACET, Community Members Register, Vita Ezechiele Jacchia.

mobility infantry unit, where he was decorated with the *Croce al merito di Guerra* [War Merit Cross] in late 1918.³⁷

In those very same days, at the end of the war, “Dr. Paolo Jacchia participated in the expedition to Venice, implemented clandestinely with the steamship ‘Istria’ in November 1918, with the goal to convince the High Italian Military Command to rapidly occupy Trieste.”³⁸ Then, on the 3rd of November, he returned with Italian military troops from Venice to Trieste on board of the cruiser “Audace.” A report from Federico Robba, the captain on duty at the time, and responsible for Trieste’s harbor-traffic, supported the information on the Italian occupation of Trieste, describing Paolo Jacchia as local hero and decisive figure for Trieste’s subsequent affiliation with Italy.³⁹

In Milano on the 23rd of March 1919, Mussolini proclaimed the *fasci italiani di combattimento*, a movement of fighting squads, which mainly consisted of staff from the radical leftwing group of interventionists, *fasci d’azione rivoluzionaria*, founded in 1914. Of about 100 followers, 54 signed up for the program Mussolini’s program.⁴⁰ This was the beginning of Fascism, which from then onwards developed in three forms, as a movement, as a system of government and as an ideology. Among the founders of Italian Fascism in Milano in 1919, up to five were Italian Jews, among them Pietro Jacchia, the younger of the two aforementioned brothers from Trieste.⁴¹

Just ten days later, on the 3rd of April 1919, the newspaper *La Nazione* reported in a brief note that the war veteran lieutenant Pietro Jacchia declared the foundation of a local Fascist unit in Trieste.⁴² In his proclamation Jacchia, who was a free mason as well, stressed the fight “against Bolshevism and governmental institutions,” which he described as “tousled, anti-democratic, inefficient and full

³⁷ ACET, 1938 *Amministrazione* (1), *Volontari Triestini Ebrei*; see also, Briganti, *Il contributo*, 76.

³⁸ ASTS, *Prefettura Gabinetto*, folder 405, Paolo Jacchia. Prefect of Trieste to the Ministry of the Interior, 31 August 1940.

³⁹ Robba approved Jacchia’s request for boat transport to the Military Command in Venice, providing him with the “Istria” under the command of captain Frausin: National Archive Rijeka, 1918/19, folder I-27, Attilio Prodam.

⁴⁰ Herbert Wallace Schneider, *Making the Fascist state*, (New York: Fertig 1928), 56; Zeev Sternhell and Mario Sznajder and Maia Asheri, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology. From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 214.

⁴¹ Giorgio Fabre, *Mussolini razzista. Dal socialismo al Fascismo: la formazione di un antisemita*, (Milano: Garzanti, 2005), 426; other potential participants could have been Cesare Goldmann, Riccardo Luzzatti, Eucardio Momigliano, Enrico Rocca.

⁴² See the article, http://www.atrieste.eu/Wiki/doku.php?id=storia_ts:cronologia:1918_1943 [last access, 14 March 2017]; see also, Mattiussi, *Il Partito nazionale fascista a Trieste*, 6; Tiberio, “Il Fascismo a Trieste negli anni 1919-1923. Documenti e reminiscenze,” in *Partito Comunista di Trieste in occasione del 35° anniversario della fondazione del PCI*, (Udine: Del Bianco, 1956): 14.

of obvious injustice.”⁴³ The contents of his proclamation were largely borrowed from Mussolini’s, even though Jacchia appeared to demand more rather than less democracy. The Fascist fighting unit, *fascio di combattimento Triestino*, attracted a variety of Triestine nationalists as well as a high number of demobilized but still armed and uniformed soldiers, who in thousands remained in the region and its capital after the official end of the war.

The nationalist tension in Trieste directly after the war, as well as the new borders around the city, created preoccupations among civilians, who feared another war. Radical anti-Slavism and the claim of securing law and order lead Fascists to fill a perceived gap of security and identity. The vague and ideology of Fascism was yet to be filled with contents, varying from region to region. Jacchia initiated the launch of Fascism in Trieste, whose Fascist cell counted 14.756 members in July 1920, just after one year of existence, temporarily constituting the biggest *fascio* in Italy.⁴⁴

The reasons for the success-story of Triestine Fascism are threefold. First, the city’s specific geographical and political environment. Trieste was the main center of the newest of Italy’s provinces. It was somewhat isolated, because it lacked a railway connection to the “heartland,” but had to function as an Italian stronghold against the now adjacent Yugoslavia and Austria from one day to the next. Second, the symbiosis of Fascists and politically related nationalists was particularly strong in Trieste due to historical developments. While the former increasingly gained street credibility through on-the-ground work, relying on masses of uniformed troops, the latter added long-standing political experience to the equation and established contacts to the local Italian elite. Third, the quickly consolidated finances of the local movement helped its progress, often – as will be shown – with support coming from Triestine Jewish businessmen.

With his background and role as the founder of Trieste’s local Fascist cell, Jacchia seemed to be the right person to mediate with the higher economic circles, who after the Italian annexation of Trieste in many cases feared repression as (ex-) Austrians citizens who had made a career through their business with Vienna. To continue business and to achieve conciliation with xenophobic Fascists, investments towards the movement seemed to be an adequate method, which at the same time would secure extended political influence, too.

The first and also subsequent meetings of local Fascists took place in the *Café degli Specchi* and the *Sala Dante*, both located within a building right on the

⁴³ Nicola Revelant, “‘Sono Jacchia e voglio andare a Madrid.’ La vita di Pietro Giusto Jacchia (1884-1937),” *Qualestoria* 1/39 (2011): 11-27, 15.

⁴⁴ Mattiussi, *Il Partito nazionale fascista a Trieste*, 20.

market square in the city-center and owned by the *Assicurazioni Generali*, directed by the Jewish manager Edgardo Morpurgo. The stamp tax of the *Il Popolo di Trieste*, the second Fascist paper published in Italy (publication began on December 1920), as well as the rent for its publishing house, the loans and other expenses for its staff, were all financed by the entrepreneur Guido Cosulich, who instead was not of Jewish origin.⁴⁵

Summed up, some of the important financial support for Fascism in Trieste came from influential multinational companies, which rose under the Austrian dominion and which actually had opposed Trieste's annexation by Italy. After the end of the World War I, they adjusted to the new state of affairs. Jacchia's assumable mediating role at this initial stage of the movement's development deserves to be considered. In various occasions he underlined his competence as a far-sighted organizer. For instance, in April 1919, he successfully negotiated an alliance with a nationalist fighting squad under the lead of Fulvio Suvich, that formed the basis for the political coalition between the local nationalist party and the quickly growing Fascist movement. Suvich was another key protagonist of the local irredentist movement. As fraction-leader of Italy's nationalist party - *Associazione Nazionalista Italiana* (ANI) – he would later merge it with Mussolini's PNF in 1923.⁴⁶ The highest Italian military authority in Trieste, General Petitti di Roreto, who governed the city from November 1918 to July 1919, supported the alliance between Jacchia and Suvich, which was named *Comitato antibolscevico d'azione*, the anti-Bolshevist action committee.⁴⁷

In summary, Jacchia established a regional Fascist movement, which quickly developed with solid financial and political grounds to gather momentum. It is no coincidence that the decisive steps for Triestine Fascism's manifestation happened during his time and because of his commitment, his organization skills as well as the crucial and trend-setting coalition with local nationalists. It was exactly this official coalescence that preserved the old liberal-national wing as a sort of a bubble within Fascism, while simultaneously strengthening contacts with the local economic elite, which resisted any state takeover-attempts for the

⁴⁵ Interview with Cosulich's Secretary Carmelich, Livio Sergi: *Io pagavo le squadre e lo stesso Giunta nella sede dell'Associazione industriali*, in *Il Lavoratore*, 21 June 1949. Cosulich was on the board of directors of the family firm *Cosulich Società Triestina di Navigazione* and also high representative of *Österreichischer Lloyd*, cofounded by Jewish Joseph Lazarus Morpurgo, who in 1831 also cofounded *Generali*.

⁴⁶ Anna Millo, "Fra Trieste, Roma e Washington. Note su Fulvio Suvich e la politica estera Italiana durante il Fascismo," *Italogramma* 4 (2012): 405-415.

⁴⁷ ASTS, *Regio Governatorato della Venezia Giulia* (RGVG), folder 51, file 24, *Associazione reduci di guerra delle terre adriatiche*.

entire Fascist period. Pietro Jacchia is to be considered the initiator and most important protagonist of Triestine Fascism from April 1919 to May 1920. Then Francesco Giunta arrived from Florence to take over as charismatic military commander and rhetorically skilled leader. Giunta's anti-Slav, radical and dominant style, which was personally appreciated by Mussolini as he nominated him Italy's PNF-General Secretary (1923-1924), clashed with the interests and the search for autonomy of the old political and economic elites in Trieste as well with Jacchia's Jewish ancestry and political views.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, Pietro Jacchia played his cards well until May 1920 in the leadership of local Fascism. Even if it is not attested, his involvement in Gabriele D'Annunzio's "March to Fiume" on the 12th of September 1919 can be assumed and is strongly suggested by the participation of circa 500 Triestine Fascists. Another hint is the active involvement of his brother Paolo as "Legionnaire of Fiume."⁴⁹ Even if the biographies of the Jacchia brothers would interconnect once more at this stage, the elder Paolo never made a fascist career. It should be taken into account that the retreat from military enterprises since the 1920s might have been the outcome of his private life as a married family man. It was then that he settled and made a name for himself as a pediatrician, while at the same time lecturing at the University of Padua and founding a medical care center for orphans and for the maimed in Trieste.⁵⁰

Pietro, on the other hand, continued a life in uniform. In October 1922 he participated in the "March to Rome," probably expecting a people's revolution. Disillusioned by its absence, the murder of the parliamentary opposition leader Giacomo Matteotti, Mussolini's ban on freemasonry and the authoritarian development of the regime since 1924, Jacchia started to distance himself from the regime.⁵¹ The implementation of an open dictatorship triggered his official resignation from the PNF in 1925. In 1931, he then first emigrated to Holland and in 1936 to the United Kingdom, where he participated in the resistance circle of emigrated Italians. In the very same year, and as a member of a militant Antifascist circle, he transferred to Spain, where he fought on side of the

⁴⁸ Vinci, *Sentinelle della Patria*, III.

⁴⁹ ASTS, *Prefettura Gabinetto*, folder 405, Paolo Jacchia. Prefect of Trieste to the Ministry of the Interior, 31st of August 1940; see also: Michele Risolo, *Il Fascismo nella Venezia Giulia. Dalle origini alla marcia su Roma*, (Trieste: CELVI, 1932), 175.

⁵⁰ Paolo Jacchia had five children from two marriages: ACET, Community Members Register, Paolo Jacchia.

⁵¹ Revelant, "*Sono Jacchia e voglio andare a Madrid*," 18.

Republicans against Franco and Fascist troops from Italy and Germany. Pietro Jacchia died in combat on the 14th of January 1937 in Majadahonda, Spain.⁵² His elder brother Paolo and his family remained in Trieste during all stages of Italian Fascism. The local questor described them as people of “good moral and regular political reputation,” even though Paolo entered PNF only late, on the 31st of July 1933.⁵³ With the promotion of the anti-Semitic laws he tried to plead for special merits, stressing his participation in the D’Annunzio’s occupation of Fiume as well as his social engagement for orphans and handicapped, but encountered the opposition of the local PNF-Secretary, Giovanni Spangaro, who described him as “politically unsupportable and without any outstanding merits for the benefit of the regime.”⁵⁴ Paolo Jacchia, for the sake of his brother, may have suffered under the Fascists and hence may have passively supported the conversion of his brother to Antifascism. The contrary may have been the case, too. As it were, Paolo survived the war and died in Trieste on January 9 1950.⁵⁵ The Italian Resistance honored his brother Pietro, naming the 66th brigade firstly “Pietro Jacchia” and then “Pietro Jacchia Garibaldi.”⁵⁶ The city of Trieste, however, in the postwar did not commemorate either of the ever so influential Jacchia brothers.

Paolo Salem: Podestà of Trieste, supposed Jew and earliest victim of the racial laws

Enrico Paolo Salem was born in Trieste on October 10 1884.⁵⁷ While his father was an Italian Jew from Trieste, his mother was a Catholic born in Vienna who perhaps had Italian citizenship because she descended from an Italian family. While Enrico was baptized and raised as a Catholic, his family had Jewish-Spanish origins. The Salem’s, one of the wealthiest families in Trieste, lived there since 1780. Enrico’s grandfather was the co-founder of the *RAS*-Assurance which is why, traditionally, one of the male family members was on its board of directors. Enrico entered *RAS*-management in 1918 and remained there for 35

⁵² ACET, 1938 *Amministrazione* (1), Community Members Register, Pietro Jacchia.

⁵³ ASTS, *Prefettura Gabinetto*, folder 405, Paolo Jacchia. Questor to Prefect, March 9, 1939.

⁵⁴ ASTS, *Prefettura Gabinetto*, folder 405, Paolo Jacchia, PNF-Secretary to Prefect, February 11, 1943.

⁵⁵ ACET, 1938 *Amministrazione* (1), Community Members Register, Pietro Jacchia.

⁵⁶ Revelant, “*Sono Jacchia e voglio andare a Madrid*,” 27.

⁵⁷ Biographical details about Enrico Paolo Salem, Silva Bon, *Un fascista imperfetto. Enrico Paolo Salem Podestà ebreo di Trieste*, (Gorizia: Centro isontino di ricerca e documentazione storica e sociale Leopoldo Gasparini, 2009); see also, Fabre: *Il contratto*, 97.

years.⁵⁸ At the same time, following his father's political footsteps, he played an active role in the local irredentist movement. Entering the Italian Army long before Trieste's annexation, he underwent military training in nearby Udine, which already belonged to Italy and would have been the Army's headquarter during World War I. In 1912, the Italian Army promoted Enrico to the officers ranks before he participated in the war between 1915 and 1918 and left the military a decorated veteran.⁵⁹

Shortly after the end of war, and similarly to some of his aforementioned contemporaries, the irredentist Salem also participated in the local Fascist movement. In parallel he established a career in the financial sector. The first time he became publicly known was when he saved the savings of hundreds of Triestine's by preventing the bankruptcy of the *Banca Popolare di Credito di Trieste*, one of the city's biggest cooperative banks. In 1933, Prefect Carlo Tiengo proposed Salem, Fascist *ante marcia* and since 1921 registered party-member, as *Podestà* of Trieste. The Ministry of the Interior in Rome agreed with his nomination, after conferring with the Triestine prefect as well as with the PNF-Secretary, who just weeks before received a donation of 200.000 Lire from Salem; a fact which might have influenced his positive vote of confidence.⁶⁰

Nominated in 1933 and confirmed in 1937, Enrico Paolo Salem was the first *Podestà* of Trieste with Jewish roots, one of only two in the whole of Italy.⁶¹

Considering Salem's double role as high ranking politician and part of the *RAS*-management, one could assume that as a Triestine international player he might have undercut the Fascist movement in town. However, he was considered to be an exemplary Fascist and *Podestà*, who modernized the city through his good contacts both with the political and the financial sectors. Salem's economic and financial plan as *Podestà* of Trieste, with a volume of 75 Million Lire, expressed his high political ambitions. Within the first six weeks in office, he visited Italy's well known finance minister Guido Jung in Rome at least three times, to conduct negotiations about a governmental credit, which would allow for the

⁵⁸ Death notice in *Il Giornale di Trieste*, 9 July 1948; see also, Bon, *Un fascista imperfetto*, 127; about *RAS*, Millo, *Trieste, le assicurazioni, l'Europa*.

⁵⁹ Bon, *Un fascista imperfetto*, 49; see also, Millo, *L'élite del potere a Trieste*, 224.

⁶⁰ Salem officially addressed his donation to the party's children section, the *Colonie feriali del PNF*, ACS Rome, SPD, CO, folder 394, files 144-914, *Salem Enrico Paolo*; see, Fabre, *Il contratto*, 98; Bon, *Gli ebrei a Trieste*, 39.

⁶¹ Renzo Ravenna governed Ferrara as *Podestà* from 1926-1938, before escaping to Switzerland in 1943; Ilaria Pavan, *Il podestà ebreo. La storia di Renzo Ravenna tra Fascismo e leggi razziali*, (Rome-Bari: Laterza editore, 2006).

realization of an enormous construction plan in Trieste.⁶² Against public critics who challenged the Podestà's plan, he assured the personal approval of Mussolini for his ambitious project right from the beginning. On the December 22 1933 Trieste's most significant local newspaper, *Il Piccolo*, wrote: "The Duce authorized the master plan for constructions to commence in Trieste and ordered its implementation. [...] The chief of government welcomed Trieste's Prefect, Party-Secretary and Podestà [...] whose working-plan was approved."⁶³ After just two months in office, huge construction-works began, which turned Trieste into a markedly Fascist city from an architectural perspective. More than 180 buildings, and great parts of the old city, were destroyed and substituted by modern buildings designed in neoclassicist style: "cubical, imperial and functional. Salem initiated and spearheaded Trieste's transition into a modern central European metropolis, with new traffic infrastructures, administrative-buildings, a canalization system, a university etc. In the course of the excavations for the new buildings, a Roman amphitheater was found and fully laid bare."⁶⁴ Mussolini highly appreciated this proof of Trieste's ancient Roman roots. Beside this, the interest in the general construction progress seemed to be reason enough for Mussolini to fix a date for an official visit in the city.

As Fascist Podestà, Salem took responsibility for and prepared the whole city for Mussolini's visit in September 1938, pushing forward for the construction to be finished in time, while mobilizing all administrative sectors as well as all citizens and visitors from outside the city. Salem meticulously planned the Duce's three-day stay, which in the end would cost 3.2 Million Lire.⁶⁵ The extensive logistic preparation included a trip in an open limousine useful for the presentation of Trieste's new face to Mussolini. For the visit, Trieste hosted thousands of external visitors, for instance more than 14.000 members of Fascist organizations alone, as well as high ranking politician's (Ciano, Starace, Alfieri etc.), national and international press etc.⁶⁶ On the 18th of September, Mussolini arrived in a destroyer, stepping on land at the Audace-Pier, named after the ship in which Paolo Jacchia had returned from Venice twenty years earlier. More than 150.000

⁶² Salem's travel expense reports documented for the time between January and December 1934 three first class train-trips Trieste-Rom for reasons of "consultation finance minister;" *Archivio Generale del Comune di Trieste* (AGCTS), *Segreteria Generale*, folder 44/1933, *Nomina del Podestà Enrico Paolo Salem*; see also: AGCTS, *Gabinetto*, folder 950/1934, file 715, *Nomina del Podestà a commendatore*.

⁶³ *Il Piccolo*, December 22, 1933, 1; see also, Bon, *Un fascista imperfetto*, 67.

⁶⁴ AGCTS, *Segreteria Generale*, folder I/II, file 36/21-38.

⁶⁵ AGCTS, *Segreteria Generale*, *Uff. X* n 400/1938, n. 666.

⁶⁶ AGCTS, *Segreteria Generale*, folder 36/1938, *Visita del Duce a Trieste*.

spectators awaited Mussolini at the market square, where he began his visit with a speech transmitted nationwide and followed internationally. The few anti-Semitic phrases Mussolini used in the speech would shortly afterward transform the whole country and cause concern to all Italian Jews: “World-Judaism has remained for sixteen years, and despite our politics, a hidden enemy of Fascism. In Italy, our policy has caused among Semitic elements what today one could call a real and direct attempted takeover.”⁶⁷

Going back to Podestà Salem, who had unsurprisingly left office in August 1938, one could interpret Mussolini’s words as a direct strike against him and local Judaism, which leading Fascist’s and anti-Semites had suspected of controlling the city for a long time. Once again, it was no coincidence that Mussolini had chosen Trieste as the place where he publicly introduced the “Jewish-question” to the Nation. It was certainly no coincidence that Salem had to quit just weeks before Mussolini’s arrival. Somewhat ironically, the suspected Jewish Podestà, who was among the first personalities to be removed from the public scene with Fascist anti-Semitism, turned out to be “Arian.” On December 6 1938, Enrico Paolo Salem sent a six-page letter with an attachment of 13 crucial certificates directly to the Minister of the Interior in Rome, successfully defending himself according to the paragraphs provided by the Italian racial laws of November 17 1938:

I was born in Trieste and baptized in accordance with the Catholic ritual [...] on the 2nd of July 1890 (doc. no. 1). My father Vittorio Salem was a Jew from a family which has lived in Trieste for more than two centuries. My mother was Arian catholic (doc. no. 2) and born under Italian nationality in Vienna. My father received the Italian citizenship officially on the 18th of August 1881 (doc. no. 3) [...]. I therefore think to be able to consider myself affiliated to the Arian race and of Italian origin (...). I am asking for the recognition of my Arian and Italian race [...].⁶⁸

The Ministry of Interior confirmed Salem’s request to be recognized as a “Non-Jew” with the Triestine Prefecture on the 9th of March 1939, that recognition would be extended to his whole family shortly afterward. In summer 1939 Salem moved from Trieste to Florence and later on to Rome. Even though German SS-

⁶⁷ Mussolini’s speech, *Foglio d’Ordini, Partita Nazionale Fascista*, in ASTS, *Prefettura Gabinetto*, folder 355, *Visita del Duce 18-19-20 Settembre A. XVI Trieste*; see also Michele Sarfatti, “Il discorso razzista e antisemita di Mussolini a Trieste il 18 settembre 1938,” *Qualestoria* 1/41 (2013): 103-111.

⁶⁸ ASTS, *Prefettura Gabinetto*, folder 409, Enrico Paolo Salem.

troops confiscated properties left behind in Trieste and sought to find Salem in person, he survived the war undetected on Italian soil.

The Jewish Community of Trieste, its Chief Rabbi and its Presidents

Chief Rabbi Israel Anton Zoller, otherwise known as Italo Zolli or Eugenio Pio Zolli

In the late 18th century, “the Jewish community of Trieste became part of the history of Haskalah in central Europe, but by cultural inheritance and its own diverse composition, it belonged as well to the Mediterranean Sephardic rationalist legacies.”⁶⁹ Since 1890 Habsburg law obliged the community to have Rabbis with the Austrian citizenship, so that until the end of World War II key positions were occupied by of Ashkenazi Rabbis.⁷⁰

Israel Anton Zoller, born in 1881 in Brody, Galicia (modern Ukraine), as the youngest of five sons in a Jewish family with Polish origins, held the office of the Chief Rabbi in Trieste from 1920 to 1940.⁷¹ As early as 1918, when Zwi Peretz Chaijes left the position of Trieste’s Chief Rabbi to take over the same office in Vienna, the new Italian governor, who entered the city shortly afterward, nominated Zoller as his designated successor. This decision was influenced by Zoller’s reputation as an Italian nationalist and natural supporter of Trieste’s local irredentism. A broad documentation of the case by Italian High Commissioner reported that Zoller, since he had moved from Florence to become Vice-Rabbi in Trieste in 1911, had been promoting irredentism, especially by protecting and saving Italians from Austrian arrest towards the end of the

⁶⁹ Lois C. Dubin, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste. Absolutist Politics and Enlightenment Culture*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 215; about the Jewish Community of Trieste in specific see Catalan, *La comunità ebraica di Trieste 1781-1914*.

⁷⁰ Triestine Rabbis: Abram Vita Cologna (1826-1833), Marco Tedeschi (1858-1869), Sabato Raffaele Melli (1870-1907), Zvi Perez Chajes (1913-1918), Israel Zoller (1918-1939).

⁷¹ In 1904 Zoller started studying in Vienna and then in Florence, where he took his degree in religious studies and humanities (Greek literature, philosophy and psychoanalysis) in 1911. His first wife died in 1917. Zoller married again in 1920 and became father of a second daughter: Gabriele Rigano, *Il caso Zolli. L’itinerario di un intellettuale in bilico tra fedi, culture e nazioni*, (Milan: Guerini e associati, 2006).

war.⁷² Zoller officially became Chief Rabbi of Trieste throughout the nomination by the Community's assembly on the 20th of February 1920. A contract regulated Zoller's competence as a religious leader (on marriages, teaching, the participation at council meetings etc.) and clarified in detail his salary, which would be renegotiated two times.⁷³ However, and from a religious point of view, Zoller's most active period started right in that moment. The highly respected Rabbi not only fulfilled his religious duties, but also lectured as Professor of Philosophy, Hebrew and Semitic languages at Padua University and at the same time published different books and articles in Italian as well as in German.⁷⁴

As has been shown, Zoller supported irredentism as an Italian nationalist. Many Jewish irredentists in Trieste were almost natural precursors of Fascism, which does not mean that this development is due to Zoller's influence of course. Since April 1927, Fascist law forced all Italian citizens with non-Italian-names to Italianize their surnames.⁷⁵ Israel Anton Zoller chooses to become Italo Zolli (henceforth named thus in this article). At the same time, this clearly political statement was a conscious sign from the religious leader to his Community. Zolli never condemned Fascism, on the contrary he expressed loyalty toward Italy and the Fascist regime. Despite the anti-Semitic laws from 1938, he proclaimed even in late 1945 in the book *Antisemitismo* that "Italy virtually always remained immune of the plague of anti-Semitism."⁷⁶ Yet Zolli himself witnessed

⁷² Zoller was supposed to have: 1. saved Jewish Triestine's, hold by Austrian military in Pola; 2. protected from Austrian arrest a Triestine irredentist as well as Jewish soldier's from Galizia; 3. hidden Italian Triestine students in one of the city's Jewish temple's: ACST, *Commissariato Generale e Civile per la Venezia-Giulia. Atti Generali*, folder 106; see also, PCM, *Ufficio Centrale per le nuove Province al Commissariato Generale e Civile per la Venezia Giulia, oggetto: rabbino Zoller di Trieste, Roma, 31 ottobre 1919*; see also: Rigano, *Il caso Zolli*, 57.

⁷³ Details about Zoller's loan claimed the contracts biggest space. The Community assured him an annual salary of 34.887 Lire, a life-insurance of 50.000 Lire, bound to a yearly sum of 3.000 Lire for his wife. In November 1938 he received an extra payment of 1500 Lire, which he had asked for (ACET, *Carte del Col. A. Levi Bianchini 1937, Rapporti fra la Comunità Israelitica e il Rabb. Prof. Zoller*).

⁷⁴ Eugenio Zolli, *Due privilegi concessi ad Ebrei triestini nel sec. XVII*; Id., *Le origini dei primi due oratori pubblici a Trieste*; Id., *Israele. Studi storici-religiosi*, Udine 1935; Id., *Il Nazareno. Studi di esegesi neotestamentaria alla luce dell'aramaico e del pensiero rabbinico*, (Udine, 1938); Id., *Antisemitismo*, (Roma, 1945).

⁷⁵ Maura Hametz, "Naming Italians in the Borderland 1926-1943," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 15/3 (2010): 410-430.

⁷⁶ Here, Zoller composed a history of Anti-Semitism from ancient Egypt to modern Europe in 1945, also discussing racial theories of the 19th century in several chapters, not mentioning Fascism

Mussolini's speech in September 1938 in Trieste, which was crucial for the following national anti-Semitic campaign and which he personally commented just seven days later:

I would like to end [...] with an appeal to Mussolini's heart. [...] If unfortunately it is true, that groups of Jews have shown and still show that they do not understand the high values of Fascism [...] it is not less true, that within the Duce's discourse in Trieste, one could hear vibrate a deep sense of humanity. I hope that the magnificent Duce will receive our declaration. [...] Our Judaism conserves in his history and in his memory the names of his irredentists, of his volunteers, fallen and injured, of his Fascists, of his legionaries in Spain. Like the Judaism of all of Italy, the Triestine one also has always loved and still desperately loves [...] the nation. The Italian Jews, as before, remain honestly devoted to the Fascist Regime. [...] We have faith in the love of God and in the goodness of the Duce's soul. And it is in the name of this double belief, that we announce in this celebrative moment the inauguration of the new religious year, with God's blessing to Italy, his King Emperor, his Duce.⁷⁷

The attitude presented in this official speech might serve as one of the reasons why Zolli was surprisingly nominated Chief Rabbi of Rome in 1940, in a time when Italy entered the war and the persecution of Jews reached another climax.⁷⁸ This unexpected decision from the Roman Community, to whose members Zolli was virtually unknown, might have been planned well in advance and therefore influenced by the former President of the *Unione delle Comunità Israelitiche Italiane*, Federico Jarach. Both Jarach and his Vice-President Aldo Ascoli were powerful personalities and Fascists of the first hour, who collaborated with Mussolini's government.⁷⁹ Both maintained for their whole mandate a close relationship with the Presidency of Trieste's Jewish Community.⁸⁰ Marco De Parente, President of Trieste's Jewish Community and relative of one of the five members of the UCII' board, was in the position to

once, Eugenio Zolli, *Anti-Semitismo*, ed. Alberto Latorre, (Cinisello Balsamo: San Paolo, 2005), 201.

⁷⁷ ACET, 1938 *Amministrazione* (1), Italo Zolli, File Notes, September 25, 1938.

⁷⁸ Rigano, *Il caso Zolli*, 151.

⁷⁹ Pavan, *Il comandante. La vita di Federico Jarach e la memoria di un'epoca 1874-1951*, (Milan: Proedi, 2001).

⁸⁰ ACET, 1938. *Pratiche. Rapporti con la Comune e l'Unione*. UCII report no. 8/1938.

exert an influence in Zolli's transition to Rome, a passage which comported prestige as well as influence. In the following pages I will illustrate, primarily, the exchange between the UCII and the Jewish Community in Trieste for the decisive years 1937 and 1938.

The Community's Presidents (1922-1938)

Little is known about the Presidents of the Jewish Community in Trieste during the Fascist era. Despite the lack of organigrams or biographies, various finance and administration folders in the Community's Archive provide information about its Presidents in this crucial phase. They were Giacomo Seppilli (1922-1937), Achille Levi-Bianchini (1937/1938) and Marco de Parente (1938/1939). Considering the lack of studies over larger portions of the archive's files for the period, the following contents provide some limited insights.

In an official report from December 1930, President Seppilli summarized a positive overall situation for the Community, from a financial point of view as well as considering the number of Torah-students and contributing members.⁸¹ Yet in 1936, exactly six years later, the Community was in a deep crisis, ideologically as well as financially. The increase in anti-Semitic acts in Trieste, the regime's growing anti-Semitism and the Italian alliance with Germany lead an increasing number of Community members to opt out, to convert or even to emigrate. Due to the critical financial situation, President Seppilli acted modestly but still with self-confidence when addressing a letter to the local Party Secretary. Representing the Jewish Community, as legal proprietor of the printing house and of the aforementioned Fascist newspaper *Il Popolo di Trieste*, Seppilli asked for outstanding rent payments of 40.000 Lire (29 monthly rates).⁸² This situation reflected the disequilibrium between PNF and the Jewish Community very well. In this context, the "Fascist greetings" located at the end of Seppilli's letter, which appeared in almost every official letter of the time, need not to be

⁸¹ In 1930, the Community had 5.000 paying members, 165 Triestine and 60 external Talmud-Students, 60 children in the asylum. In this healthy year, the Community donated 365.000 Lire for the Jewish caritas in the city and acquiesced real estate like a school, as well as a 3000qm² Park for a children holiday camp: ACET, *Carte del Col. A. Levi Bianchini* 1937, Giacomo Seppilli, *Discorso*, December 18, 1930.

⁸² Since the renewal of the contract between Jewish Community and PNF-Journalist-Inspector in Rome in 1930/31 permanent payment retardations had occurred: ACET, *Carte del Col. A. Levi Bianchini* 1937, President Seppilli to Triestine Party Secretary, December 1, 1936.

interpreted as a sign of the President's ideology or belief. Furthermore, there were no signs of Seppilli having any particular sympathies for Fascism.

On the 13th of July 1937, circa 4.000 contributing members of the Community elected a new council of nine.⁸³ Advertisements accompanying the election promoted "Italian and Fascist candidates."⁸⁴ Unlike the Fascist salutation in official letters, this annunciation was at least a clear nationalist statement. In addition, the council's appointment of war-veteran and army-colonel Achille Levi-Bianchini as new President of the Jewish Community in Trieste was a sign towards the UCII, which expected nationalist commitments from its Communities.

In early 1938, UCII-President Jarach went one step further by officially supporting the *Comitato degli italiani di religione ebraica* (CIDRE- Committee of Italians of Jewish Religion), a national-Fascist association of Italian Jews created in 1937. Jarach sought Italian Jewish Communities to participate adhere to the CIDRE. He did not convince Levi-Bianchini. Instead, he did convince Mario Rava, Chief Rabbi in Gorizia, who then urged his colleague in Trieste to project "an Italian and Fascist rhythm to the Community."⁸⁵ Angelo Sullam, President of the Jewish Community in Venice (1919-1930) and major Zionist personality in Veneto, also repeatedly wrote letters to Levi-Bianchini, pushing in the same direction:

It would be useful to constitute also in Trieste, as has been done in Venice already, a little core of Jewish Fascists. [...] I visited Rome together with my brother in law Max Rava (*magna pars* of this movement) and we fully agreed with the representatives in Rome, Florence, Livorno, Ancona, Turin etc. One can state, that in this moment many Communities, which amount to more than 50% of Italian Jews, are joining the movement. Anyhow, the adhesion of Trieste is strongly desired, also because of the particular situation of your community. My brother in law Max Rava talked about this with Seppilli on the phone, but it seems, that he is not in favor (...). That is what I contact you for, because you, with your very brilliant past as perfect officer and absolute guarantor of fervid patriotism, may be able to

⁸³ In 1938, the decrease from 4.000 to 1.171 paying members lead as well to the council diminution from nine to seven members: ACET, 1938 *Amministrazione* (1), Italo Zolli, File Note, December 13, 1938.

⁸⁴ ACET, *Carte del Col. A. Levi Bianchini 1937, Agli Elettori della Comunità Israelitica*, June 1937.

⁸⁵ ACET, *Carte del Col. A. Levi Bianchini 1937*, Mario Rava to President Levi-Bianchini, September 20, 1937.

reunite also in Trieste some trusted friends with a doubtless Italian spirit.⁸⁶

Instead, Levi-Bianchini resisted by explaining, ultimately on 4th of January 1938, that the Community of Trieste “with its more than 4.000 members, with its council – aorta of one unique and totally Fascist list, which had the unanimity suffrage” refuses to “take an official position towards the invitation of the named committee, because it intends to avoid (...) disagreements.”⁸⁷ President Levi-Bianchini emphasized two points worth mentioning: first, the existence of an “entirely Fascist” council and second, the existence of local or internal disagreements, concerning an openly Fascist denomination of the Jewish Community. However, the President continued resisting external and internal pressures to participate in the Fascist Jewish association, even when he suffered from a serious illness. Less than three weeks later, on 23rd of January 1938, Rabbi Zolli informed the Community about Levi-Bianchini’s death, caused by *angina pectoris*.⁸⁸ Vice-President Marco de Parente stepped in as Interim-President before the Community’s Council officially elected him as President in February 1938.⁸⁹

De Parente, who stood as consultant on the UCII-board already since 1937 and who was and one of the ten UCII-Council members, was the first and maybe the only President of the Jewish Community of Trieste who was not only registered in the PNF but also a Fascist *ante marcia*.⁹⁰ His name appeared in a letter sent to the UCII which listed, among other categories, members of the Jewish

⁸⁶ ACET, *Carte del Col. A. Levi Bianchini 1937*. Angelo Sullam to President Levi-Bianchini, February 6, 1936.

⁸⁷ ACET, *Carte del Col. A. Levi Bianchini 1937*, Levi-Bianchini, Appeal to the Community, January 4, 1938.

⁸⁸ Levi-Bianchini died of *angina pectoris* at the age of 59 on January 23, 1938: ACET, *Carte del Col. A. Levi Bianchini 1937*, *Cedola di Constatazione di Morte*, Achille Levi-Bianchini.

⁸⁹ ACET, *Carte del Col. A. Levi Bianchini 1937*, Emilio Grazioli to Marco de Parente, July 18, 1938.

⁹⁰ President: Federico Jarach; Vice-President: Guido Zevi; Consultants: Riccardo Bachi, Enrico Bises, Marco de Parente, Bettino Errera, Mario Falco, Salvatore Foa, Sabatino Lopez, Alberto Musatti, Angiolo Orvieto, Carlo Alberto Viterbo; In March 1938, UCII-Council-members from Trieste were Riccardo Nagelschmidt, Arturo Coen and Giacomo Seppilli. After the UCII-voting for the five highest Rabbis in Italy, Israele Zolli covered together with three other Rabbis the sixth position (*Unione Comunità Israelitiche Italiane. Roma. Ordine del Giorno. Seduta del 18 Giugno 1937-XV*).

Community in Trieste who were registered in the PNF since before the March to Rome.⁹¹

Several letters with similar content underlined two things. First, De Parente personally stood in very close correspondence with UCII-President Jarach, who was a PNF member since 1926. Second, both Jarach and De Parente were aware, at least since August 1938, about the upcoming anti-Semitic legislation. On the 19th of September 1938, just one day after Mussolini's speech, and still during his visit to Trieste, the UCII sent for a second time a formal request to the Jewish Community in Trieste, which contained precise details and word-for-word quotes of paragraphs that became written anti-Semitic law just weeks later:

"In the first half of August, a friendly request was transferred to President De Parente and President Seppilli asking by when they wished to provide with particular precision the crucial data concerning the participation of Italian Israelites of this Community to the national cause. [...] First, participants in World War I – fallen in the field or in consequence of injuries – wounded – mutilated and invalids – decorated [...]. Second, PNF-members before the March to Rome (or wounded for Fascist cause) – *San Sepolcristi* – martyrs of the revolution. Third, merits in the following wars: Italian-Turkish, Libya, Italian Easter Africa and Spain. Fourth, other services rendered for the State or civil, artistic or scientific merits. [...] Vice-President Aldo R. Ascoli."⁹²

This was a repetition of the request originally formulated in August by the UCII with a circular letter which had been sent to all Italian Jewish Communities. It obviously pointed out that Trieste had not reacted yet. Consistent with the previously mentioned politics of "avoiding disagreements," the President and the Council of the Jewish Community in Trieste had blocked any transfer of information that the government might have used against them. However, the impact of Mussolini's anti-Semitic proclamation induced steps out of their comfort-zone. Even though fears and reservations towards the regime proved well-founded, the UCII- proclaimed loyalty from all Italian Jewish Communities towards the regime, despite its anti-Semitism. Jarach's attitude had effects on subordinated Presidents of the Italian regions, especially on the undecided ones. Several of his writings, directly addressed to Mussolini, were similar in content to the following quotation:

⁹¹ "PNF-Members before the March to Rome" and "Jews still registered in the Community": Marcello Forti, Egone Mayer, Bruno Manli, Tullio Velicogna, Arturo Coen, Angelo Fano, Marco Mordo, Marco de Parente, Paolo Bellaudi. "Fascists *ante marcia*" and "Jews not any more registered in the Community": Nino Battino, Leone Brunner and Lucian Gattegno: ACET, 1938 *Amministrazione* (1), *Iscritti al PNF prima della marcia su Roma*.

⁹² ACET, 1938 *Amministrazione* (1), Aldo R. Ascoli to Marco de Parente, September 19, 1938.

“Duce, with the speech at the Gran Council’s meeting, you will be pleased to hear the clear and unanimous reaffirmation taken by the Council of the Union of the Italian Jewish Community that Italian Jews do not have and never had anything in common with any Jewish or freemason or Bolshevik or anti-Italian or Antifascist international group. We have sworn fidelity and respectful devotion to the Sovereign of the House of Savoy, who has granted us liberty. We have sworn devoted obedience to you, the Duce of Fascism, because you have given us confidence towards the renovated greatness of our imperial nation. Testimonies for our fidelity are not missing. For Italy, for Fascism we ask to be able to work in dignity and peace and to die with honor in war still. [...] In the name of the Italian Jewish Community, President Federico Jarach.”⁹³

Conclusions

On the 20th of October 1938, the President of Trieste’s Jewish Community De Parente and its Chief Rabbi Zolli produced a letter addressed directly to Mussolini. It stressed their patriotism, “their firm love for the motherland and their unlimited devotion for the regime of the Duce, from whom they simply await comprehension and justice.”⁹⁴ Attached to this text was a list of Jewish Community members who supported their initiative. The first signatures among twenty were those of Paolo Jacchia, Giacomo Seppilli and Bruno Tedeschi.⁹⁵ Other appeals of the same kind followed within the following month.⁹⁶ However, none of them received any reply from Rome.

The impact of the Italian racial laws struck the Jewish Communities. Like Jarach, many Italian Jews with a professional responsibility remained in Italy. He resigned in 1939, as most probably did De Parente. Zolli, on the other hand, remained in office taking the role of Chief Rabbi of Rome. With the German occupation, all three successfully found shelter and survived the war. In February

⁹³ ACET, 1938 *Amministrazione* (1), Jarach to Mussolini, October 4, 1938.

⁹⁴ ACET, 1938 *Amministrazione* (1), Marco de Parente and Italo Zolli to SPD, October 16, 1938.

⁹⁵ The other signers were Alfredo Brunner, Rodolfo Brunner (*Fascist ante marcia*), Ettore Delvecchio, Angelo Fao, Ida Finzi, Emanuele Freud, Renzo Fubini, Mario Levi, Gino Macchiorio, Guido Manni, Arturo Nathan, Gino Parin, Salvatore Sabbadini, Felice Spiegel, Leopoldo Winternitz. See, *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ “The Jewish Community of Trieste demonstrated on different occasions, along with the Union of Jewish Communities in Italy, her profound devotion to the nation and the regime, as well as resolute aversion to unjustified interferences, coming from abroad and regarding Italian Judaism.” ACET, 1938 *Amministrazione* (1), De Parente and Zolli to SPD, September 25, 1938.

1945, Zolli converted to Catholicism and changed his name to Eugenio Pio Zolli, consciously referring to Pope Pius XII.

In conclusion, and picking up the introductory question concerning the relationship and connection between the Fascist minority of Trieste's Jews and local Fascism, there can be no doubt about strong ties and interdependencies, at least on a personal level. Pietro Jacchia participated in the constitution of Mussolini's Fascist movement in Milano in 1919 before he founded Trieste's Fascist cell just weeks later. The early symbiosis of its fighting squads and the ranks of the established nationalist party in town was connected to Jacchia's efforts, who also seemed to have provided the movement with a solid financial foundation. Until the promulgation of the Italian Anti-Semitic laws, 498 local Jews were registered in the PNF, circa 10% of the members of the Jewish Community in Trieste. But just as the diverse paths of the protagonists of Trieste's irredentism has shown, they were often related to Jewish families but not necessarily to Judaism as a religion. Enrico Paolo Salem - active Italian nationalist, decorated war veteran, *ante marcia* Fascist and PNF-Member since 1921 and supposedly a Jew - was the earliest victim of Fascist anti-Semitism in September 1938, when lost his position as Trieste's Podestà, yet a few months later he could prove his "Italian Arian" ancestry. Indeed, different high-ranking members of the local Jewish Community supported ambiguous relations with Fascism, trying to separate religious faith and political convictions. In the end, expressions of Fascist and patriotic sentiment addressed to Mussolini by Rabbi Zolli together with Community President De Parente missed their mark, as did similar efforts on the part of the UCII.

Anti-Slavism, the various correlations between Jews and Fascists, the enormous and unbreakable power of global players like *Generali* and *RAS*, as well as the repeated rumors about a Jewish Antifascist conspiracy led high-ranking Italian anti-Semites and Fascists increasingly looking with ill favor at Trieste. Mussolini's September 18 1938 speech was the preliminary act of some rapid anti-Semitic undertakings that focused on Trieste, underlining the cities key role in the dictator's broader strategy.

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