

**Notes and Reflections on the Italian Law instituting the Holocaust
Remembrance Day. History, Memory and the Present**

by Michele Sarfatti

Abstract

The “[Holocaust] Remembrance Day” was established in Italy by a bill made into law in 2000, following a years-long debate. The law covers chiefly the Fascist and Nazi anti-Jewish persecution from 1938 to 1945, but also the deportation of political opponents and of Italian POWs, and likewise considers non-Jewish Italians who rescued Jews. The date chosen for the day of commemoration is the January 27. The historical events, the categories of victims and the date specified in the law’s final text are the result of a complex process of elaboration and carry a deep meaning. The law’s text contains words and concepts that relate to a democratic national civic memory.

The Italian law is part of a continental process. Compared to its French and German equivalents, it appears both poorer and richer.

In the Italian civic calendar, the “[Holocaust] Remembrance Day” can be considered alongside other commemorations that mark historical occurrences, chiefly “Liberation Day,” established in 1946 and celebrated on April 25; also the “Memorial Day” established in 2004 for Italian victims in the border territory between Italy and Yugoslavia, which is celebrated on 10 February.

In Italian society, the January 27 is a deeply-felt commemoration day; numerous events are organized every year for schools and for the citizenry. The activities for schools are expressly mentioned within the law and have raised the question of the relationship between history and memory (and the present).

Each topic is presented and analyzed through its own specific sources: newspaper articles, parliamentary debates, documents of organizations, legislative texts, popular information material, statistical data, personal involvement, etc.

Introduction

In 2000 the Italian Parliament instituted the *Giorno della Memoria* [Remembrance Day], to be celebrated on the anniversary of the liberation of the

Nazi extermination camp at Auschwitz on January 27, 1945.¹ By mixing history, memory and the present, the law raises many complex issues.

The first of these issues is the official name chosen for the for day. The title of the Italian law reads: “Institution of the ‘Remembrance Day’ in memory of the extermination and persecution of the Jewish people and of Italian political and military deportees in the Nazi camps.”² In the law’s title the words *Giorno della Memoria* [Remembrance Day] are emphasized and separated from the rest of the title by quotation marks, thus indicating that this, and only this is the name for the day of commemoration, without further specification, such as might have been: “Remembrance Day for the Victims of the Shoah,” or “Remembrance Day for Nazi and Fascist crimes,” etc.

This succinct and clear-cut name identified that “Remembrance” as all-encompassing and absolute, assigning to it a supremacy, almost a monopoly, somehow, within national civic memory.

As will be said further on, this choice of name, combined with other aspects, has given rise to manifold tensions with the remembrance of other events, most notably with the pre-existing public remembrance of the Liberation from Fascism and the end of World War II, which has been celebrated on April 25 since 1946, and the new public memory of the events (that will be outlined later) in the border area between Italy and the Balkans, officially established in 2004

¹ Legge n. 211 del 20 luglio 2000 per l’istituzione del “Giorno della Memoria” in ricordo dello sterminio e delle persecuzioni del popolo ebraico e dei deportati militari e politici italiani nei campi nazisti, *Gazzetta ufficiale della Repubblica italiana*, n. 177, July 31, 2000. Tullia Catalan, “La journée de la mémoire en Italie: le rôle des institutions entre centre et périphérie (2000-2013),” *Revue d’histoire de la Shoah* 206/3 (2017): 85-105; Andrea Pugiotto, “La memoria della Shoah in Parlamento: i nodi problematici della legge n. 211 del 2000,” *Il Giorno della Memoria all’Università di Ferrara. Iniziative realizzate dal 2002 al 2014*, eds. Marcella Ravenna, Giuditta Brunelli, (Florence: Giuntina, 2014), 125-38; Rebecca Clifford, *Commemorating the Holocaust. The Dilemmas of Remembrance in France and Italy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); David Bidussa, *Dopo l’ultimo testimone*, (Turin: Einaudi, 2009); Robert S. C. Gordon, “The Holocaust in Italian Collective Memory: Il giorno della memoria, 27 January 2001,” *Modern Italy* 11/2 (2006): 167-88; Goffredo De Pascale, “Viaggio di una legge,” *Diario*, (supplement to issue n. 4), January 27, 2001, 12-8.

² [“Istituzione del ‘Giorno della Memoria’ in ricordo dello sterminio e delle persecuzioni del popolo ebraico e dei deportati militari e politici italiani nei campi nazisti”]. The translation is by Gordon, “The Holocaust in Italian Collective Memory,” 169; but in my own text I have used the term “Remembrance Day” instead of “Day of Memory,” in accordance with international usage.

with the institution of a *Giorno del Ricordo* [Memorial Day], to be celebrated on February 10.

One should add that between 2002 and 2017 the Italian Parliament instituted other “Memorial Days” or, more rarely, “Remembrance Days” dedicated to the victims of the earthquake in 2009 (April 6), to the seamen lost at sea (September 9), to the victims of immigration (October 3), to the victims of environmental and industrial disasters (October 9), to the servicemen and servicewomen fallen in international peace missions (November 12); and has defined the 9 November “Day of Liberty (in memory of the fall of the Berlin wall).” In 2007 Parliament established the “Day of Memory” for the victims of terrorism, to take place on May 9,³ and in 2017 the “National Day of Memory and Engagement” in memory of Mafia victims, to be held on March 21,⁴ thus confirming a date already celebrated in civil society. The latter two celebrations are very popular in Italy, but we should keep in mind that they revolve around a recent past and present reality, not around something that happened back during the Second World War. Recently, in December 2017, the Parliament established the “Day in Memory of the Righteous of Humanity,” of which more will be said further on.

All these laws have nullified the monopoly on memory that in 2000 had been assigned to the Shoah and to the deportees. Leaving aside the enormous difference between the kind of victims and of events that are commemorated, one can say that the law on the January 27 served as a trailblazer, in the sense that it set an example to be followed, and was not a solitary achievement.

As already mentioned, in 2004 the Italian Parliament passed a law titled: “Institution of the ‘*Giorno del Ricordo* [Memorial Day]’ in memory of the victims of the *foibe*, of the Istrian-Dalmatian Exodus, of the events along the eastern border, also awarding testimonials to the relatives of the *infoibati*.”⁵ The

³ Legge n. 56 del 4 maggio 2007 per l’istituzione del “Giorno della Memoria” dedicato alle vittime del terrorismo e delle stragi di tale matrice, *Gazzetta ufficiale della Repubblica italiana*, n. 103, May 5, 2007.

⁴ Legge n. 20 dell’ 8 marzo 2017 per l’ Istituzione della “Giornata nazionale della memoria e dell’impegno in ricordo delle vittime delle mafie, *Gazzetta ufficiale della Repubblica italiana*, n. 58, March 10, 2017.

⁵ Legge n. 92 del 30 marzo 2004 per l’istituzione del ‘Giorno del ricordo’ in memoria delle vittime delle foibe, dell’esodo giuliano-dalmata, delle vicende del confine orientale e concessione di un

foibe are sinkholes and caves in the Karst Plateau, into which were sometimes thrown, during and after the Second World War, the bodies of victims of the political or nationalistic repression carried out by Yugoslavs; exodus refers to the emigration of Italians from the territories of the Julian March and of Dalmatia that after 1945 were handed over to Yugoslavia. In the law's title, the words "*Giorno del Ricordo* [Memorial Day]" are emphasized by quotation marks, which means they are the official name of the celebration, without anything added or specified. The day chosen for the commemoration is the anniversary of the signing of the Paris Peace Treaty between Italy and the Allies on February 10, 1947, which assigned Istria/Istra and the towns of Fiume/Rijeka e Zara/Zadar to Yugoslavia, and established the Free Territory of Trieste.

A comparative reading of the two laws on the January 27 and on the February 10 shows that the first ends expressing the hope that "similar events may never occur again," whereas the second focuses only on the past. It also inserts into Italian public life a harsh criticism of an international treaty which, without going now into the historical situation that determined it and its actual contents, or into how it is nowadays viewed by historians, was in any case aimed at ensuring a lasting peace.

In post-war Italy, the memory and the historical awareness of the *foibe* victims had long been neglected. That there is a law acknowledging their significance is therefore to be commended; what is unacceptable is the nationalistic rancour that pervades it.

Italians are aware that, among all the commemorations that have been established in these early years of the 21st century, the two of the January 27 and February 10 are, from a historical point of view, the most important. Both Members of Parliament and public opinion, however, were well aware that the latter law was intended as a response to the first, following the equation Hitler = crimes of the Right, Tito = crimes of the Left. The approval of both laws evidences the violent clash in the country and in Parliament itself between Left and Right, and the extent to which both sides were able to win votes in the in-between and even in the opposite area. Contrary to the law on the January 27, the one on the February 10 highlights the failure in building up, and therefore

riconoscimento ai congiunti degli infoibati, *Gazzetta ufficiale della Repubblica italiana*, n. 86, April 13, 2004; Giovanni De Luna, *La Repubblica del dolore. Le memorie di un'Italia divisa*, (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2011), 74-81.

the lack of, a solid national identity, democratic in nature, capable of coming to terms with the official past, which was Fascist, Imperialistic and allied with the Third Reich, but also fought alongside the Allies and in the end supported the Resistance, and with the population's past, which included nationalism, Fascism, racism and anti-Semitism, but also anti-Fascism and anti-anti-Semitism.

As for the law of 2004 establishing the “Memorial Day,” it should also be mentioned that the following year Slovenia and Croatia instituted two celebrations, equivalent and opposite to the Italian one, to be held on 15 September and 25 September respectively, and dedicated to the reunification (or annexation) of Istria/Istra, Fiume/Rijeka and Zara/Zadar. The date chosen by Slovenia is that of the day the Paris Peace Treaty of 1947 came into force, the Croatian date refers to the day the Resistance issued a proclamation about territorial unity. Both days are celebrated as national festivities, not as days of remembrance and grieving.⁶

Without wishing to apportion blame for having started this conflict, the fact that three European countries have chosen different dates and opposing contents for one and the same event highlights the great obstacles encountered on the common path towards shared European values, identities and memories.

By oversimplifying we may say that in every country the great tragic events of the past can be divided into four great categories: that which our country or at any rate our predecessors have inflicted on other countries or other peoples, what others have inflicted on us, what we have inflicted on ourselves, what others have inflicted on others.

Within this – clearly simplistic – pattern the Italian law on the January 27, in so far as it includes also the persecution against Italian Jews carried out by the Fascist regime, partakes also of the category “what we have done to ourselves,” whereas the law on February 10 belongs only to the category “what others have done to us.”

If we add the failure in 2006 of the proposal to institute in the Italian civic calendar a day dedicated to the crimes committed by Fascist Italy in Ethiopia in

⁶ Patrizia Audenino, *La casa perduta. La memoria dei profughi nell'Europa del Novecento*, (Rome: Carocci, 2015), 109-12; Guido Crainz, “Il difficile confronto fra memorie divise,” in *Naufraghi della pace. Il 1945, i profughi e le memorie divise d'Europa*, eds. Guido Crainz, Raoul Pupo, Stefania Salvatici, (Rome: Donzelli, 2005), 188-91.

the Thirties and in the Balkans during the war,⁷ which would have been a day dedicated to “what we have done to others,” we must conclude that the law on the January 27 has been an entirely exceptional gesture and that after it official Italy has retreated to the commemoration of wounds suffered at the hand of others, displaying just how limited is its capacity for ethical dimension.

After all, a comparison between the speeches in commemoration of the Second World War by the highest authorities of the State in Italy and in Germany shows how the former, contrary to the latter, have almost always kept silent about the national responsibilities in the conduct of war and in the occupation of territory, “remembering with great pathos crimes suffered while omitting all references to those committed.”⁸

If we now analyze in detail the Italian law on the January 27, we must first observe that the word “Shoah” – employed in the text of the 2000 law – is the one most frequently used nowadays in Italy when referring to the persecution of Jews. Its use is constantly expanding. Its first mention in an Italian legislative text actually is in the law instituting the “Remembrance Day [*Giorno della Memoria*].” The term arrived in Italy in the wake of the sensation over Claude Lanzmann’s film by that title, which was circulated in the country as early as 1985 and was dubbed in Italian in 1987. A factor in the diffusion of the term was its gradual adoption by the Holy See as a form of respect for the victims (on September 26, 1985 John Paul II actually mentioned it as film title).⁹

Also, the term Holocaust, despite being widely used, particularly following the 1978 American TV series by that name, which was broadcast in Italian in 1979, had never truly taken root in Italy. This was due also to the fact that in Italian the word evokes only ancient religious practices and implies no reference to massacres, as it does in English.

One should also add that in Italy the murderous persecution at the time was aimed only at Jews, not at Roma and Sinti or other ethnic minorities; therefore

⁷ Filippo Focardi, “Il passato conteso. Transizione politica e guerra della memoria in Italia dalla crisi della prima Repubblica ad oggi,” in *L’Europa e le sue memorie. Politiche e culture del ricordo dopo il 1989*, eds. Filippo Focardi, Bruno Groppo, (Rome: Viella, 2013), 73.

⁸ Aline Sierp, *History, Memory, and Trans-European Identity. Unifying Divisions*, (London: Routledge, 2014), 66.

⁹ http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/speeches/1985/september/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19850926_ex-deportati-guerra.html (accessed September 15, 2017).

employing a word belonging to the Hebrew language has not given rise to situations in which victims of the genocide might feel excluded or placed in competition among themselves.

In order to understand the reasons behind the choice of the January 27 as the date for the commemoration, one needs to briefly outline the history of the Shoah in Italy. There were two distinct stages, which I have named “the period of the attack on Jewish rights” and “the period of the assault on Jewish lives.” The first took place under the Kingdom of Italy and the Fascist dictatorship from the summer of 1938 to the summer of 1943; the second was carried out under Nazi occupation and under the new Fascist government of the Italian Social Republic, from September 1943 until the Liberation (that is until June 1944 in Rome and until April 1945 in Northern Italy). Italy was perhaps the only European country in which these two stages of persecution were clearly circumscribed in time, without overlaps (this makes Italian events particularly interesting to those who wish to study the specific features of each stage).

The main anti-Jewish laws were passed by Benito Mussolini’s dictatorship in September and November 1938; the Nazi and Fascist orders for arresting Italian Jews were issued in mid-September and on November 30 1943 respectively; the biggest roundup of Jews was the one carried out by Nazi police in Rome on 16 October 16, 1943. The great majority of victims of the Italian Shoah were murdered in the extermination camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau.¹⁰

These are the main chronological and geographical references the initiators and the deciders of the Italian “Remembrance Day” might have considered when choosing the date for the commemoration.

The idea of instituting in Italy a “Remembrance Day” was first broached by a journalist, Ricardo Franco Levi, in two articles published in the daily newspaper *Il Giorno* on February 23 and October 15, 1993.¹¹ He mentioned the French decree

¹⁰ Michele Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy. From Equality to Persecution*, trans. by John and Anne C. Tedeschi, (Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 2006); Liliana Picciotto, *Il libro della memoria. Gli Ebrei deportati dall’Italia (1943-1945). Ricerca della Fondazione Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea*, 2nd ed., (Milan: Mursia, 2002).

¹¹ Ricardo Franco Levi, “Olocausto, scegliamo la data per ricordarlo,” *Il Giorno*, February 23, 1993; Ricardo Franco Levi, “Cinquant’anni fa l’olocausto in Italia. Lo ricorderemo?” *Il Giorno*, October 15, 1993; Michele Sarfatti, “Giorno della Memoria,” *Per non dimenticare. Newsletter Associazione Figli della Shoah*, November 4, 2000.

issued but a few days earlier, on February 3, establishing a “journée nationale commémorative” of the racist and anti-Semitic persecutions carried out by French authorities between 1940 and 1944, to be held on July 16,¹² and requested that Italy too should “dedicate a day to the memory of what happened during the racist and anti-Semitic persecution,”¹³ “just as the values of Liberation and Resistance are celebrated on April 25.”¹⁴ Levi suggested that the date should be October 16, the day of the Rome roundup in 1943, which had been similar to the one carried out in Paris on July 16, 1942. What scant debate followed these two articles took place mainly in the Jewish press.¹⁵ In an interview to the *Corriere della Sera* the jurist Alessandro Galante Garrone suggested that the commemoration should be set for November 17, on the anniversary of the main anti-Jewish law passed by the Fascist regime in 1938.¹⁶

In the autumn of 1996 Ricardo Franco Levi took up again his proposal, this time in the *Corriere della Sera*, again citing the October 16 as the suitable date.¹⁷ Shortly after that I entered the debate myself, in support of the proposal but suggesting the date of November 30, the day the Italian Social Republic in 1943 issued the decree ordering the arrest of the Jews.¹⁸

On both occasions the debate centered on whether to opt for the most massive roundup operation, which had been carried out by Nazi police (with only bureaucratic assistance from Italian police), or for a significant decision taken by Fascists on their own, either in 1938 or in 1943. In short: which event and whose responsibility should be emphasized?

In 1996 the proposal was better received than in 1993, and the need of an *ad hoc* bill began to be discussed. Meanwhile Tullia Zevi, President of the *Unione delle Comunità Ebraiche Italiane* [Union of Italian Jewish Communities], had entered the debate and prompted a reflection that took into account present times and not just the history of persecution. She voiced the opinion that the date and the

¹² Décret n. 93-150 du 3 février 1993 instituant une journée nationale commémorative des persécutions racistes et antisémites commises sous l'autorité de fait dite “gouvernement de l'État français” (1940-1944), *Journal officiel de la République française*, n. 29, February 4, 1993.

¹³ Levi, “Olocausto, scegliamo la data per ricordarlo.”

¹⁴ Levi, “Cinquant'anni fa l'olocausto in Italia. Lo ricorderemo?”

¹⁵ “Cinquant'anni. E dopo?” *Shalom*, November 30, 1993, 21-4; “50 anni: e dopo?” *Shalom*, December 31, 1993, 16-7.

¹⁶ Dario Fertilio, “Giornata dell'Olocausto. Quella proposta divide,” *Corriere della Sera*, April 22, 1993.

¹⁷ Ricardo Franco Levi, “Un ‘Giorno della Memoria,’ per gli ebrei e tutti i perseguitati,” *Corriere della Sera*, October 16, 1996.

¹⁸ Michele Sarfatti, “L'olocausto? Sul calendario,” *L'Unità*, October 22, 1996.

law's text should not fuel further controversy and differentiation between the remembrance and awareness of the persecution and the specific deportation suffered by Jews and the remembrance and awareness of the specific deportation suffered by political opponents of Nazism and Fascism.¹⁹ The *Associazione nazionale ex deportati politici* [National Association of Former Political Deportees], which had also Jewish survivors of Auschwitz among its members, was in favor of the proposal, but requested that the commemoration be called "Deportee Day," meaning that it should be dedicated to all deportees, whether "political" or "racial."²⁰ The date they suggested was May 5, the anniversary of the liberation in 1945 of Mauthausen, the concentration camp that had been the main destination for Italian political deportees, and of the Red Cross's arrival in the camp at Terezin.²¹

The debate – in which I too continued to take part – was complex. The solution that brought it to a close mixed past history, its present significance, tensions of the present and the future. Based on the fact that some Italian political deportees had been for some time interned at Auschwitz,²² it was deemed that the day of that camp's liberation – the January 27 – might unite both categories of victims, without lessening the gravity of the persecution suffered by Jews, and without at the same time forgetting the repression suffered by political opponents. I don't remember if at the time anybody pointed out that Primo Levi had mentioned the arrival of Soviet soldiers at Auschwitz on January 27 both towards the end of *If this is a man*, and at the onset of *The Truce*; however, those passages with the mention of the date were already quite well-known.

Meanwhile, in early 1996 Germany had proclaimed the January 27 "Day of Remembrance of the Victims of National Socialism,"²³ and I remember feeling at the time that this proximity between the two former Axis allies, however different their specific roles had been, was not without interest.

In February 1997, the MP Furio Colombo, of the *Democratici di Sinistra*, submitted to the Lower Chamber a motion urging the government to institute the new commemoration day; the following month Senator Athos De Luca, of the Green Party, introduced to the Senate an actual bill on this subject. The motion submitted by Colombo retained the suggested date of the October 16

¹⁹ Clifford, *Commemorating the Holocaust*, 177-8.

²⁰ Associazione nazionale ex deportati politici, "Ordine del giorno approvato dal Consiglio nazionale del 29-30 ottobre 1996," *Triangolo rosso*, February, 1997.

²¹ Clifford, *Commemorating the Holocaust*, 175-6; De Luna, *La Repubblica del dolore*, 68-9, 188.

²² Giovanna D'Amico, "La deportazione dei politici italiani ad Auschwitz," in *Auschwitz-Birkenau*, eds. Marcello Pezzetti, Bruno Vespa, (Rome: Gangemi, 2010), 28-33.

²³ "Proklamation des Bundespräsidenten," January 3, 1996; *Bundesgesetzblatt*, 17 (1996).

and considered anti-Jewish persecution in all its stages, the bill introduced by De Luca was in favor of the January 27 and concerned both Jewish and political deportees. Both submissions had to face a very troubled journey through Parliament and were finally abandoned.

Eventually Colombo succeeded in crafting a new bill, centered on the date of the January 27, and introduced it to the Lower Chamber on January 20, 2000. There followed a very tortuous parliamentary debate, during which some right-wing MPs even went as far as to request that the commemoration be extended to include “all acts of violence and massacres perpetrated in the name of oppressive ideologies before, during and after the war of 1939-1945” or at least the “hundreds of thousands of Italian prisoners in Russia.”²⁴ Colombo, however, managed to bring his proposal to conclusion and the bill was approved without significant alterations by the Lower Chamber on March 28, 2000 and by the Senate on the following July 5, thus becoming national law.²⁵

Among the changes effected in Parliament to Colombo’s proposal, the most important was the provision that the events for “Remembrance Day” should take place “particularly in schools of each category and level;” this is an aspect I will examine further on.

In regard to the timing within the European context, the idea of an Italian “Day of Remembrance” was first put forward after (and in consequence of) the French decree of 1993; it was first introduced to the Italian Parliament after the 1995 resolution by the European Parliament calling for a “European Day of Remembrance of the Holocaust” (a resolution which ascribed the responsibility for the Shoah to Nazism only)²⁶ and after the German proclamation of 1996; it was finally submitted again to in the Italian Parliament in early 2000, after Italy in June 1999 had joined the Task Force for International Cooperation on

²⁴ See the texts of a bill submitted to the Senate on February 3, 2000 and of the speeches in the Lower Chamber of March 27 and 28, 2000 in:

<http://www.parlamento.it/japp/bgt/showdoc/frame.jsp?tipodoc=Ddlpres&leg=13&id=5558>;
<http://leg13.camera.it/dati/leg13/lavori/stenografici/sed702/so30.htm>;
<http://legislature.camera.it/dati/leg13/lavori/stenografici/sed703/s140.htm> (accessed September 15, 2017).

²⁵ Catalan, “La journée de la mémoire en Italie,” 86-92; Pugiotto, “La memoria della Shoah in Parlamento,” 126-8; Clifford, *Commemorating the Holocaust*, 171-81, 221-30; Gordon, *The Holocaust in Italian Collective Memory*, 169-72; De Luna, *La Repubblica del dolore*, 67-71; De Pascale, “Viaggio di una legge,” Giovanni De Luna, “Giusto ricordare la Shoah ma non per decreto-legge,” *La Stampa*, August 2, 2000; Michele Sarfatti, “Chi vuole annegare la Shoah?” *L’Unità*, March 6, 2000.

²⁶ European Parliament Resolution of 15 June 1995 on a day to commemorate the Holocaust, *Official Journal of the European Union*, July 3, 1995.

Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research, after the government of the UK in October 1999 had initiated consultations about establishing a “Holocaust Remembrance Day” (later called National Holocaust Memorial Day) on January 27, and before the first meeting of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust on January 26-28, 2000; it was approved a few months after the said Stockholm meeting and after the European Parliament on March 16, 2000 had “encourage[d]” Member States to mark “Shoah Day” on the January 27.²⁷ The parliamentary readings of the Italian bill took place at the same time or slightly later than those of the new French bill which changed the name of the 16 July commemoration to “Journée nationale à la mémoire des victimes des crimes racistes et antisémites de l’État français et d’hommage aux ‘Justes’ de France,”²⁸ but I have not found any trace of reciprocal influence between the debates in the two Parliaments.

Looking back after twenty years upon on the Italian debate in 1997-2000 and on the right-wing proposals to equate Nazi extermination camps with Soviet gulags and the Jews murdered in the gas chambers with the invading and defeated Italian soldiers in Russia, one may observe that these juxtapositions prove the lack of a shared democratic judgement on the history of Fascist Italy. I do feel, however, that they were also the unintended consequence of renaming the two years from 1943 to 1945 as “civil war.” This renaming, put forward by a famous Italian book,²⁹ has unfortunately obscured the definition of the Resistance as “anti-Fascist and anti-Nazi insurrection.”

The law’s text, in Robert Gordon’s translation, reads:

Institution of the ‘Day of Memory’ in memory of the extermination and persecution of the Jewish people and of Italian political and military deportees in the Nazi camps. Article 1. The Italian Republic recognizes the day of 27 January, date of the pulling down of the gates of Auschwitz, as the “Remembrance Day [*Giorno della Memoria*],” to

²⁷ European Parliament Resolution of 16 March 2000 on countering racism and xenophobia in the European Union, Official Journal C, December 29, 2000
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P5-TA-2000-0122+0+DOC+XML+Vo//EN> (accessed September 15, 2017).

²⁸ Loi n. 2000-644 du 10 juillet 2000 instaurant une journée nationale à la mémoire des victimes des crimes racistes et antisémites de l’État français et d’hommage aux ‘Justes’ de France, *Journal officiel de la République française*, July 11, 2000; Clifford, *Commemorating the Holocaust*, 212-3.

²⁹ Claudio Pavone, *Una guerra civile. Saggio storico sulla moralità nella Resistenza*, (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1991).

remember the Shoah (extermination of the Jewish people), the racial laws, Italy's persecution of its Jewish citizens, Italians who underwent deportation, imprisonment and death, as well as those, with differing positions and allegiances, who opposed the extermination project and, risking their own lives, saved others and protected the persecuted. Article 2. On the occasion of the 'Remembrance Day' (for which see art. 1) there will be organized ceremonies, initiatives, meetings and shared moments of recounting of events and of reflection, particularly in schools of all categories and levels, on what befell the Jewish people and the Italian military and political deportees in the Nazi camps, so as to preserve for the future of Italy a memory of a tragic, dark period in the history of our country and of Europe, in order that nothing similar might ever happen again.³⁰

The focus of the Italian "Remembrance Day" therefore is on a main event, which the law itself refers to as either Shoah, or anti-Jewish laws, or "Italy's persecution" of Jews, and also on three categories of persons: Italian and European Jewish victims, Italian victims of deportation for political or military reasons, people "with differing positions and allegiances" who risked their own lives to save Jews. If we compare this text to those of the 1993 French decree and of the 1996 German decree, we see that the French "day" refers only to the racist and anti-Semitic persecution carried out by French authorities from 1940 to 1944, whereas the German "day" refers to all the victims of Nazism throughout the European continent. The Italian law on the contrary does not mention either the Fascist governments, or the people who were victims of Italian Fascism outside of Italy. Seen from another viewpoint, the Italian law is on one hand similar to the

³⁰ [*Istituzione del 'Giorno della Memoria' in ricordo dello sterminio e delle persecuzioni del popolo ebraico e dei deportati militari e politici italiani nei campi nazisti. Articolo 1. La Repubblica italiana riconosce il giorno 27 gennaio, data dell'abbattimento dei cancelli di Auschwitz, 'Giorno della Memoria', al fine di ricordare la Shoah (sterminio del popolo ebraico), le leggi razziali, la persecuzione italiana dei cittadini ebrei, gli italiani che hanno subito la deportazione, la prigionia, la morte, nonché coloro che, anche in campi e schieramenti diversi, si sono opposti al progetto di sterminio, ed a rischio della propria vita hanno salvato altre vite e protetto i perseguitati. Articolo 2. In occasione del 'Giorno della Memoria' di cui all'articolo 1, sono organizzati cerimonie, iniziative, incontri e momenti comuni di narrazione dei fatti e di riflessione, in modo particolare nelle scuole di ogni ordine e grado, su quanto è accaduto al popolo ebraico e ai deportati militari e politici italiani nei campi nazisti in modo da conservare nel futuro dell'Italia la memoria di un tragico ed oscuro periodo della storia nel nostro Paese e in Europa, e affinché simili eventi non possano mai più accadere"]; English translation from Gordon, "The Holocaust in Italian Collective Memory," 169-70; see note 2.*

French approach in that it centers on the anti-Jewish persecution, and on the other hand follows one aspect of the German law, in that it mentions the victims, including political deportees and military internees.

I still view it as negative that the law fails to mention explicitly Fascism and its responsibilities, even more so if one considers that the word “Nazi” appears both in the title and in the text,³¹ because the absence of such a mention shows that the Italian Parliament of 2000 lacked a shared historical awareness and a shared national identity.

Over time, however, while maintaining this view, I have come to value the presence of the words “Italy’s persecution of Jewish citizens,” insofar as they do anyhow point to the responsibility of one part of the country, and include those people who participated in the persecution despite not being ideologically Fascists. As far as I know, the law on the January 27 is the only Italian law that, through the words “the Italy’s persecution,” contains a drastic condemnation of an event in the nation’s past; the importance of this is enormous, given the widespread reluctance to judge our own past by the same criteria applied when judging the past of other countries or peoples.

As for the date, I continue to consider it regrettable that no date specific to the history of the nation was chosen. On this also, while I still maintain this opinion, I have however added a different conclusion, based on the considerable response to a specific statistic in Liliana Picciotto’s *Libro della memoria* concerning the persons responsible for the arrest of Jews in Italy: 2444 arrests were carried out by Germans, 1951 by Italians, 332 by both and 2079 by persons whose nationality has not been ascertained.³² Since the vast majority of those arrested was deported (by German police) to Auschwitz-Birkenau, and since the Italian Social Republic was aware of this,³³ it follows that the date of the liberation of that extermination camp is not irrelevant to the question of Fascist responsibilities.

The inclusion of rescuers differentiates the Italian law from the 1993 French decree, from the German decree and from the European Parliament resolution of 1995; moreover, having been included as early as January 20, 2000, in Colombo’s draft, it anticipated the declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust concerning the commitment to “honor those who stood against it

³¹ Michele Sarfatti, “La Shoah senza fascismo?” *L’Unità*, April 7, 2000.

³² Picciotto, *Il libro della memoria*, 29.

³³ Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy*, 178-202.

[the Holocaust],” a wording that includes also Jewish rescuers.³⁴ The way in which they are described in the Italian law echoes the Yad Vashem’s definition of “Righteous among the Nations.” The purpose of the words “as well as those, with differing positions and allegiances,” is to include the rescuers who were Fascist. Historically, we can say that such did indeed exist, and that in some cases – given the situation of war and dictatorship – it was precisely their political affiliation that made their rescue action and its successful outcome possible. From a politico-historical point of view we can remark that the phrase “differing positions and allegiances” was an unprecedented mention in the text of an Italian law of a positive behavior on the part of Fascists, and thus enabled right-wing MPs to vote in favor of the bill.

On another level, since the wording used includes only those who directly opposed the purpose of the Shoah, it disregards all those who risked their lives fighting as partisans to put an end to Nazi-Fascism and therefore also to the anti-Jewish persecution. Thus, along with the absence of any mention of Fascism’s responsibilities, we are also confronted with the absence of any mention of the merits of anti-Fascism. And the words “as well as those” in the phrase “as well as those, with differing positions and allegiances,” is too slender a reference to the full context of that time.

The wording used, moreover, does not even mention Jewish rescuers, that is those victims of persecution who doubly risked their lives to protect other victims of persecution. Ignoring them is not only “not right,” it also has a serious consequence in that it portrays the Jews of the time solely in the role of victims.

As to rescuers in general and the risks they incurred, it needs to be made clear that sheltering a Jew and assisting him while he lived in hiding was not punishable by death, although it is true that rescue actions entailed risks, in some cases even mortal risks.

In themselves, the rescuers are not a category of victims, such as Jews or other deportees. By including them in the text, the law has acquired a further educational role, implying that disobeying criminal rules is both possible and meritorious.

The Italian law on the January 27 also refers to political prisoners and members of the military who were deported by Nazi German authorities in 1943-1945. The “politicals” were opponents of the Third Reich and of the Italian Social Republic and many of them were murdered in the concentration camps. In previous

³⁴ *Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust*, January 28, 2000, <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/about-us/stockholm-declaration> (accessed September 15, 2017).

decades their memory had not found a proper place within the Resistance, due to a tendency to favor the memory of partisans who died in battle.

The “military internees” were soldiers and officers taken prisoner in Italy and in the occupied territories, mainly in the Balkans. The latter, especially, had fought an often merciless war of aggression, only to become themselves the victims of a half-allied and half-enemy foreign army. In the law on the “Day of Remembrance” there is not the slightest hint at the complexity of those events. This absence goes hand in hand with the silence about the victims of Fascist wars and occupations, so that the national politics of remembrance that has developed in Italy on this subject – leaving aside the just acknowledgement of the soldiers’ sufferings after September 8 1943 – is centered exclusively on “what others have done to us,” and is the entire opposite of the national memory politics that has emerged in the former Axis ally.

From a technical point of view, the Italian “Day of Remembrance” occupies an intermediate ground between the March 8, Women’s Day, that has no support whatsoever in legislation, and the May 1 and April 25, which are official holidays, when workplaces and schools are closed.

The second section of the law on the January 27 assigns a specific task to the latter, by directing that “ceremonies, initiatives, meetings and shared moments of recounting of events and of reflection” must be organized “particularly in schools.” This emphasizing of the school sphere was inserted into the law’s text during the debate in Parliament.

I have been unable to ascertain fully how this addition came about. We may consider that the resolution on a day to commemorate the Holocaust adopted in 1995 by the European Parliament urged member States to organize on that day “activities which recall the Second World War and the Holocaust and illustrate the dangers of totalitarian and racist ideologies to young people in particular;”³⁵ and that the declaration of the representatives of European governments adopted at the Stockholm Forum of January 26-28, 2000 – that is before the start of the parliamentary debate on the bill introduced by Colombo – proclaimed: “We will promote education about the Holocaust in our schools and universities.”³⁶

I believe, however, that this addition to the bill was influenced mainly by the course initiated in previous years by the Minister of Public Education, Luigi

³⁵ European Parliament Resolution of 15 June 1995 on a day to commemorate the Holocaust, *Official Journal of the European Union*, July 3, 1995.

³⁶ *Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust* (January 28, 2000), <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/about-us/stockholm-declaration> (accessed September 15, 2017).

Berlinguer, of the *Partito Democratico della Sinistra*, who in 1996 had changed the history curriculum in the three stages of the Italian school system, decreeing that the last year of each should be entirely devoted to learning about the 20th century.³⁷ (In 2004 the new minister, Letizia Moratti, of Forza Italia, cancelled contemporary history from the curriculum of the first stage – ages 6 to 11 – and greatly restricted it in the other two).³⁸ In October 1998 Minister Berlinguer – two years after his reform of the history curriculum and on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Fascist anti-Jewish laws of 1938 – decided to promote and fund projects in upper secondary schools aimed at studying the anti-Semitic persecution and including at the end a “visit to one of the Nazi extermination camps.”³⁹ The initiative was called *Il 900. I giovani e la memoria* [The 20th Century. The Young and Memory], was repeated the two following years and then rendered permanent from October 2002. I believe it was this context that originated the change in the text that singled out schools as the main venue for implementing the new law.

In this respect, we should reflect upon the fact that the title of the 2000 law refers to “remembrance” and that the activities suggested for schoolchildren include “reflection,” and also “recounting,” but none of the terms more suited to schools, such as teaching, learning, research, study. Moreover, for some years now the contest between schools held by the ministry is called *I giovani ricordano la Shoah* [The Young Remember the Shoah].” As if teenagers and children should not begin by engaging in the study of the Shoah, in order to develop first an awareness and finally the memory of it. Whereas the Stockholm Forum emphasized the need to “promote education,” Italy requires its young to “remember,” without first “knowing.” (On another level, it should be kept in mind that even the Stockholm declaration of 2000, as already the European Parliament declaration of 1995, attributes the responsibility for the Shoah to Nazism only).

I believe that this prevalence of an approach based on memory over one based on teaching is at the root of serious historical errors, such as for instance the widespread mention by Italian schoolchildren and teachers of the “yellow star” [*Judenstern*] in connection with the history of the Shoah in Italy, although it was

³⁷ Decreto ministeriale n. 682, (November 4, 1996); it came into force in the school year 1997-1998.

³⁸ Decreto legislativo n. 59, (February 19, 2004), Definizione delle norme generali relative alla scuola dell’infanzia e al primo ciclo dell’istruzione; Allegato B – Indicazioni nazionali per i piani di studio personalizzati nella Scuola primaria, *Gazzetta ufficiale della Repubblica italiana*, n. 51, Supplement n. 31, March 2, 2004.

³⁹ Circolare del ministro della Pubblica istruzione [Circular issued by the Ministry of Public Education], October 9, 1998, n. 411, cited in *Il 900. I giovani e la memoria*.

not used in this country, and of entirely inappropriate gestures, such as the compulsory minute silence in memory of the victims, held in various schools on the January 27 since 2002 at the request of the Ministry of Education led by Letizia Moratti,⁴⁰ of unions and of teachers' associations, who clearly have not stopped to consider that any teaching of the Shoah and of other crimes against humanity must inevitably have an anti-authoritarian and anti-rhetorical content.⁴¹ The “memory of the Shoah” cannot be a “duty,” nor can it be a substitute for the study of it.

As a matter of fact, the general guidelines issued to the Italian national school system have not, until now, placed any great importance on the study of the Shoah. As mentioned already, in primary school contemporary history as a whole is not included in the curriculum, the national guidelines for lower secondary school (ages 11 to 14) don't even mention Fascist anti-Jewish persecution and Nazi extermination, and only for some types of upper secondary schools (ages 14 to 19) there is a cursory mention of “the Shoah and other genocides of the 20th Century.”⁴² As of late 2017, however, the Minister of Education, University and Research Valeria Fedeli, of the *Partito Democratico* [Democratic Party], was engaged in setting up specific guidelines for the teaching of the Shoah, so as to issue them on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the anti-Jewish laws of 1938 and before Italy assumes the Chairmanship of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (formerly the Task Force for Education, Remembrance and Research) in 2018-2019. As for the history books on contemporary history used in lower and upper secondary schools, several researches have shown that even today they contain omissions and misrepresentations on the subject of anti-Jewish persecution, particularly on the persecution carried out by Italian Fascism.⁴³

⁴⁰ Circulars issued by the Head of the Department for Territorial Services and for the Development of Education in the Ministry of Education, University and Research, January 14, 2002, n. 37 and by the Director General for Communications of the said Ministry, January 23, 2002, n. 171.

⁴¹ Communiqué by the main teachers' unions, in *27 gennaio. Giornata della memoria*, [2005], which mentions that the proposal had been launched three years earlier.

⁴² Maila Pentucci, “Metodologia, percorsi e strumenti per una didattica della Shoah,” in *Carissimi Primo, Anne ed Elie. Studi e interventi per la Memoria della Shoah nelle università, nelle scuole e nei musei d'Italia*, ed. Clara Ferranti, (Macerata: Eum, 2016), 164-5.

⁴³ Francesca Costantini, “L'histoire des juifs à l'époque fasciste dans les manuels scolaires italiens de l'enseignement secondaire de premier et deuxième cycle,” *Revue d'histoire de la Shoah* 206/3 (2017): 257-72; Alessandra Minerbi, “La Shoah nei manuali delle superiori,” in *Dopo i testimoni. Memorie, storiografie e narrazioni della deportazione razziale*, eds. Marta Baiardi, Alberto Cavaglion, (Rome: Viella, 2014), 327-41; Antonio Gioia, *Guerra, Fascismo, Resistenza*.

The calendar of civil celebrations in Italy includes various important dates. Among them, the one thematically closest to the January 27 is the April 25, anniversary of the 1945 partisan insurrection in Milan and in other towns of Northern Italy. On April 22 1946, when great celebrations were already being prepared in Milan, the government decreed that April 25 should be a “national holiday,” as it was the anniversary of the “total liberation of the Italian territory.”⁴⁴ This decision was confirmed three years later by a general law on national holidays.⁴⁵ The choice of April 25 was meant to emphasize the military and political role of Italian anti-Fascism in defeating Italian Fascism and German Nazism, although victory was obtained with the essential contribution of the Allies and although the war on Italian territory ended officially on May 2.⁴⁶

On April 25 schools and most places of work are closed. The most important event nation-wide is the great march that takes place in Milan. Over the decades the participation in the various events across the country has decreased. In the mid-Nineties, when parties that had no connection with the legacy of the Resistance or even had roots in Fascism rose to power and formed the government, participation in the Milan march rose again.⁴⁷

With the exception of this event in Milan, popular participation in the Day of Resistance continued to fall. This decline has very complex causes, including the failure of movements and personalities that are direct heirs of anti-Fascism to engage in the creation of places and buildings dedicated to the knowledge of the causes and the reality of Fascism and anti-Fascism – such as, for instance, a great

Avvenimenti e dibattito storiografico nei manuali di storia, (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2012), 247-61; Lidia Gualtierio, “La Shoah e le leggi razziali italiane,” in *C’è manuale e manuale. Analisi dei libri di storia per la scuola secondaria*, eds. Lidia Gualtierio and others, (Viterbo: Sette città, 2010), 24-30; Antonio Frecina, “La Shoah nei manuali delle scuole medie inferiori,” also Paolo Visentin, “La Shoah nei manuali delle scuole medie inferiori,” and Mariarosa Davi, Patrizia Guantieri, “La Shoah in alcuni manuali di storia di scuola superiore,” all published in *Pensare e insegnare Auschwitz. Memorie storie apprendimenti*, eds. Gadi Luzzatto Voghera, Ernesto Perillo, (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2004), respectively 135-40, 141-3, 144-9; Antonella Ferraris, “Il dovere della memoria. I manuali e l’antisemitismo,” *Quaderno di storia contemporanea* 16/14 (1993): 119-31; Giovanni Battista Novello Paglianti, Laura Wofsi Rocca, “Lezione di storia: le leggi antiebraiche nei manuali degli anni Ottanta,” *La rassegna mensile di Israel* 65/ 1-2 (1988): 495-500.

⁴⁴ Decreto legislativo luogotenenziale n. 185, (April 22, 1946), Disposizioni in materia di ricorrenze festive, *Gazzetta ufficiale del Regno d’Italia*, n. 96, April 24, 1946.

⁴⁵ Legge n. 260, (May 27, 1949) Disposizioni in materia di ricorrenze festive, *Gazzetta ufficiale della Repubblica italiana*, n. 124, May 31, 1949.

⁴⁶ Maurizio Ridolfi, *Le feste nazionali*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003), 200-3; Cristina Cenci, *Rituale e memoria: le celebrazioni del 25 aprile*, in *Le memorie della Repubblica*, (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1999), 345-7.

⁴⁷ Focardi, *Il passato conteso*, 71.

national didactic history museum – aimed at providing roots for awareness and memory.

At the same time, as we have seen this decline in the importance of the April 25, we have witnessed the intrinsic force shown by the January 27, inspired by the unparalleled gravity of the Shoah. The April 25 also suffers from not having a law that requires schools to treat the subject. However, as there is no specific research on this aspect, it is hard to determine if the January 27 has somehow contributed to the partial decline of the April 25, or if it has counteracted it through its anti-Fascist and anti-Nazi message.

Leaving aside the differences between the two and the specific nature of each, clearly the participation in both celebrations is related to the fact that both commemorate a liberation (even if the liberation of Auschwitz on January 27 did not immediately put an end to the Shoah), while the scant appeal of the “Memorial Day [*Giorno del Ricordo*]” arises from the fact that its date and the reason underlying it do not offer an opportunity for leaving behind the old conflict.

At the end of 2017 a new official celebration has been added to the Italian calendar. On December 7, 2017, a law instituting on March 6 the “*Giornata in memoria dei Giusti dell’umanità* [Day in Memory of the Righteous of Humanity],” that is of those who “in whatever time and whatever place have done good by human lives, have fought for human rights during genocides and have defended the dignity of the human person,” was approved by the Parliament.⁴⁸

The day is universal in scope and concerns human rights and humanity. However, since the term “righteous” has been borrowed directly from the one employed by the State of Israel and by Yad Vashem, one may be forgiven for supposing that the rescuers of Jews will quite often be the focus of the March 6 events, as after all already happens with the celebrations taking place in some locations following the “support” declared by the European Parliament in favor of the institution of a “European Day of Remembrance for the Righteous.”⁴⁹ There is a serious risk that the joint presence of this celebration and that of the January 27 will determine a prevalence of the memory of non-Jewish Italian rescuers over the memory of the persecutors, the persecuted and the indifferent; a

⁴⁸ Legge per l’istituzione della Giornata in memoria dei Giusti dell’Umanità (forthcoming in *Gazzetta ufficiale della Repubblica italiana*).

⁴⁹ European Parliament, Declaration of 10 May 2012 on support for the establishment of a European Day of Remembrance for the Righteous, *Official Journal of the European Union*, September 10, 2013.

prevalence that is bound to be damaging in a country with such a poor shared awareness of its own past.

The main features in the way the “Remembrance Day [*Giorno della Memoria*]” is celebrated are: the great number of events that take place throughout the country, and the differences between events meant for schools and those meant for the citizenry, as well as between those with a serious approach and those with a rhetorical approach.

The law on the January 27 is not centralistic: instead of a national celebration it institutes a great number of “ceremonies, initiatives, meetings and shared moments of recounting of events and of reflection.” Being a law, all authorities and branches of the State, from the President of the Republic to the mayors, are required to apply it. Since 2009 the initiatives of the highest national authorities are coordinated by the Coordinating Committee for the Celebrations in Memory of the Shoah established by the Office of the Prime Minister, whose members are the representatives of various ministries, of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities and of the *Fondazione Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea* [Foundation Contemporary Jewish Documentation Centre – CDEC]; the Committee’s name mentions only the anti-Jewish persecution.

Besides the numerous events held by central and local authorities there are those organized by cultural associations, political movements, sports clubs, etc. Then there are all the activities carried out by schools, theatre performances, book launches, the expansion of websites; finally, ample space is devoted to the occasion by newspapers and TV-channels. In some cases, the study trips or “lay pilgrimage[s]”⁵⁰ of schoolchildren to the extermination camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau (or to the concentration camps of Dachau or Mauthausen), to the Italian camps at Fossoli and Trieste, to Jewish and Holocaust museums in Italy and in other European countries take place just towards the end of January.

The Jewish Communities give ample support, but leave the main responsibilities for handling and organizing the day to public authorities, because the January 27 is a celebration instituted by a national law, not a Jewish “day.” The Communities themselves organize instead ceremonies on the anniversary of the main episode of persecution in the various towns (in Rome on the October 16) or on *Yom Ha-Shoah*.

Over the years, the event organized by the Office of the President of the Republic on January 27 has taken on an ever increasing importance. It includes conferring

⁵⁰ Laura Fontana, “Are trips to Auschwitz the panacea for a history sick society? A case study of Holocaust teaching: the Italian memorial trains to Auschwitz,” *Jednak Ksiazki*, 6 (2016): 96.

decorations on former political deportees, awarding the prizes for the schoolchildren's competition on the anti-Jewish persecution initiated by the Ministry of Education, University and Research, and introductory speeches by the President and by an intellectual.

As a whole, the events for the January 27 are undoubtedly more numerous and attract a greater audience than those for the 10 February. A comparison with the April 25 is harder to establish, because while the Day of Liberation is experiencing a constant decline in local events, participation in the great national march in Milan remains high.

After 2001 there was also a march in Milan for the January 27; attendance however dwindled rapidly and the march was discontinued after 2009.⁵¹ Its termination suggests that the kind of mobilization generated by the liberation of Auschwitz is different from that generated by the liberation from Fascism.

As no analytical research has been carried out on all these events, either for a single year or extending over several years, I must confine myself to a certain amount of random data all referring to 2015. The regional authority of Apulia has set up a project called *Il Mese della Memoria* [Remembrance Month] that includes over 50 events throughout the entire region.⁵² The regional authority of Tuscany on the other hand has published a general list of over 120 events initiated by the authority itself or by other organizations and associations,⁵³ and even so the list is very much incomplete, as for instance it does not include 25 events that can be found in a separate list about Pisa and its territory.⁵⁴ As to the events in Tuscany, most of them focused on the Shoah, and only a tiny number concerned political and military deportees, the persecution of Roma or of gays (neither of which, by the way, are mentioned in the law on the January 27), Jewish history and culture before and after the Shoah, or the Resistance. No event in Apulia or Tuscany centered on the rescuers of Jews, who actually are

⁵¹ David Bidussa, "Attorno al Giorno della Memoria," in *Storia della Shoah in Italia. Vicende, memorie, rappresentazioni*, eds. Marcello Flores, Simon Levis Sullam, Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci, Enzo Traverso, (Turin: Utet, 2010), vol. 2, 558.

⁵² I Presìdi del Libro, "Mese della Memoria 2015 – VII edizione. Programma," <http://www.regione.puglia.it/web/files/Servizio%20Stampa%20G.R./PROGRAMMA.pdf> (accessed September 15, 2017).

⁵³ Regione Toscana, "27 gennaio. Giorno della Memoria 1945/2015," <http://www.regione.toscana.it/documents/10180/12221233/Giorno+della+Memoria+2015.+Programma+delle+iniziative+in+Toscana/f2972d8a-396d-4db4-82a2-fc68d89c52aa> (accessed September 15, 2017).

⁵⁴ Prefettura di Pisa, Comune di Pisa, "27 gennaio. Giorno della Memoria. Programma 2015," http://www.provincia.pisa.it/uploads/memoria_2015_depliant_Pisa_def.pdf (accessed September 15, 2017).

mentioned in the law. Mine, however, are only cursory comments; and it should be kept in mind that in 2015 neither of those regions had a center-right government.

As I already said, we still need to take a census and assess all events that take place every year throughout Italy during the Day or Month of Remembrance.

What I have listed here, at times all too briefly, are some of the main questions arising from and surrounding the Italian law on “Remembrance Day” and its implementation.

Generally speaking we can say that to interrogate it involves reflecting upon manifold relationships of a historiographical, or ethical, or didactic nature: between history and memory, between awareness and memory, between historical narrative and present-day politics, between anti-Semitism and the history of Italy, between “uniqueness” of the Shoah and “normality” of human history, between responsibility of the Nazi State and party and responsibility of other States and other anti-Semitic parties (including – as stated in the law – the Italian State, not just Fascism), between supplying knowledge and enforcing remembrance, and so on and so forth.

All scholars who have written about “Remembrance Day” have stressed the need to rescue it from “a mix of perfunctory routine and rhetoric,”⁵⁵ and not to perceive it as “the settlement of a debt” (David Bidussa).⁵⁶

Anna Rossi Doria has emphasized that it is not clear “if the January 27 is meant to be an occasion for remembrance or for knowledge: the two obviously diverge. [...] Increasingly, no distinction is made in the celebrations for ‘Remembrance Day’ between the two [remembrance and history] or, even worse, the first is taken as a substitute for the latter, decontextualizing the narrative or the testimony, thus risking at every turn to fall into one of two opposite and specular errors, the banalization of the Shoah or seeing it only as something done by diabolical monsters.”⁵⁷

I am also persuaded, as I have already said, that it is necessary to reaffirm that for individuals, and particularly for schoolchildren, no “duty” to remember the Shoah can exist. And that within history we should avoid monumentalizing

⁵⁵ Antonella Castelnuovo, Sara Valentina Di Palma, “Il senso del ricordo e il ruolo della memoria. Considerazioni sulla giornata europea della memoria,” *La rassegna mensile di Israel* 77/ 1-2 (2011): 48.

⁵⁶ David Bidussa, “La politica della memoria in Italia. Appunti sulla storia e la pratica del Giorno della Memoria,” *Annali del Dipartimento di storia*, 3 (2007): 90.

⁵⁷ Anna Rossi Doria, *Sul ricordo della Shoah*, (Turin: Zamorani, 2010), 32-3.

those events, a process that, arising from a lack of critical discernment, tends to perpetuate it.

Moreover, as already said, we must continue to assert that in school knowledge must definitively prevail over memory, whatever the law may seem to suggest.

Essentially, those who put into practice the Italian law on the January 27 must employ part of their resources to carry it out properly and to defend the law from the risks inherent to the law itself.

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