

In the end, *Les universités germaniques* is a better guide to the latest and best techniques in doing university history than it is to the German universities. Its two central essays on the German universities assume the reader knows a good deal about their administrative and curricular arrangements and thus emphasize methodological matters instead. But in the compass of fewer than two hundred pages, it would be silly to expect a close and concrete inquiry into German university life. The book aims to show how cross-national comparison is possible, and to attend to forms of evidence and argument that make sense in many places and many times. In these aims, it is a success and makes essential reading for anyone wishing to understand university history as practised in the 1990s.

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George L. Williams. *Fascist Thought and Totalitarianism in Italy's Secondary Schools: Theory and Practice, 1922-1943* (Studies in Modern European History, vol. 10). New York: Peter Lang, 1994. Pp. xii, 267. U.S.\$49.95 text edition.

George Williams' work examines Italian Fascist educational theory and practice from the appointment in 1922 of the Hegelian philosopher Giovanni Gentile as Fascist Italy's first Minister of Public Instruction to Il Duce Mussolini's removal as prime minister in July 1943. The author is concerned with elucidating to what extent the Italian Fascist government succeeded in establishing a systematic educational structure that aimed at furthering the goals of the Fascist state. He focusses on three main themes: Fascist ideology as expounded by official Party organs and ideologues; curricular policies, particularly those relating to the teaching of Italian, history, and philosophy, in secondary academic schools; and the relationship between ideology and actual instructional practice. Williams also supplies two introductory chapters which provide useful background information on Italian Fascist ideologists and ideology and on the history of Italian education from 1859 to 1943.

Williams stresses the evolutionary nature of the Fascistization of Italian Schools. The seed was sown with the Gentile Reform of 1923, though this was still within the humanist tradition of Italian education. But as the Fascists became a stronger power in the state, school policy increasingly reflected the Party's political, social, and cultural ends. When Giuseppe Bottai's School Charter was issued in 1939 it marked the culmination of the school as "a state

instrument of Fascist indoctrination" (p. 225). The result of this sixteen-year evolution from the Gentile Reform to the School Charter is particularly manifest in the curricula of secondary academic schools. Curricula "in the fields of history, philosophy (including Elements of Law and Political Economy) and Italian literature were modified, evolving from a program of humanistic studies to a highly Fascistic and nationalistic one" (p. 86).

Fascist education aimed at moulding the whole person. To this end careful attention was paid to the moral, cultural, political, and even warlike education of Italian students. Fascist ideology permeated all aspects of secondary school life. For example, by means of carefully chosen curricula, textbooks, homework, radio programs, and films, schools strove to foster absolutism and totalitarianism whereby citizens would consider themselves totally subordinate to the power of the state. Not surprisingly, works by John Stuart Mill and the eminent anti-Fascist Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce were condemned. In like manner Rousseau's *Social Contract* and von Humboldt's *Limits of the State's Operation* were eliminated. Though Machiavelli's *Il Principe* naturally found favour, his *Discourses on the First Decade of Tito Livy*, which lauded the Roman Republic, was removed from the curriculum. To further Italy's totalitarianism, as many aspects as possible of school life were placed under the direct control of the state. There was great pressure on teachers to join the Fascist Party. After 1937 all teachers were obliged to enroll in the Associazione Fascista della Scuola (Fascist Association of the School or A.F.S.). After being placed under the direct jurisdiction of the Ministry of National Education in 1935 teachers could be sacked for espousing views contrary to Fascism or even for not motivating students with Fascist principles (p. 210).

To imbue students with the ideal of the Fascist corporatist state, history and political economics textbooks presented this model "as the final and ultimate solution to all economic life, superior to those of the socialistic and democratic states" (p. 212). Patriotic and nationalistic subject matter was stressed in the classroom. Italian language, culture, and traditions dominated school curricula. Particular attention was assigned to the influence of Ancient Rome, above all the glories of the Roman Empire. Pupils even were obliged to use the Roman salute in schools and wear the Littorio, the Roman symbol, attached to their uniforms "as a reminder that they were the heirs of the glory of ancient Rome" (p. 215). Curricula emphasized the imperialistic and militaristic mission of the Fascist state. The Ethiopian conquest was applauded in history textbooks; all schools commemorated Colonial Day annually; literary works on imperialistic topics by the likes of Oriani and D'Annunzio were part of the examination in Italian literature. In addition, pupils were to honour the ideal of dictatorship, and in particular to esteem the personage of Benito Mussolini. Not only was his portrait displayed in all secondary classrooms but

pupils learned to yell his name at public demonstrations. Schools were also to build myths about Il Duce, creating the image of an all-powerful, omniscient leader. Textbooks praised his accomplishments in philosophy, in economics, in political theory, even in literature.

A particularly offensive element of Fascist Italy's secondary education system was the state-promoted racism which aimed at ensuring "the physical, spiritual, and traditional heritages of Italians" (p. 219). Jews bore the brunt of the racial laws. After 16 October 1938, the Council of Ministers decreed that no Jewish student, teacher, principal, or director could attend or work in any public or private secondary school. Separate Jewish schools could, however, be established and operated by Jews. Although it is true that persecution of Jews in Italy was not as horrific as in Germany, Fascist racial laws fostered an intense atmosphere of anti-Semitism and aided the removal of the Jewish schools by the Germans after the latter occupied Italy in 1943. As Williams asserts, "the relegation of Jewish students and teachers, solely because of race, to separate schools can be considered one of the most distasteful episodes during the Fascist Regime" (pp. 148–49). Anti-Jewish sentiment extended to books written by Jews. In an appendix Williams provides the text of an abhorrent circular issued in 1938 by the Ministero dell' Educazione Nazionale providing the list of 114 Italian Jewish authors whose works were to be banned from Italian schools. Even the great historian of the ancient world Arnaldo Momigliano makes the cut.

Frequently Williams' text betrays its origin as a doctoral dissertation. Naturally, a good dissertation is characterized by a comprehensive examination of the subject matter. Williams' work passes this test. However, in many places there is excessive factual information with insufficient analysis. Despite the two introductory chapters, the reader who knows little of Italian history during the 1920s and 1930s may have difficulty comprehending the education system against the broader background of Italian society. Moreover, the presentation is at times somewhat dull. The bibliography, though ample, could have been improved by the inclusion of works dealing with more popular history and oral accounts of the period. Although Williams in chapter 7, "Compositions in Italian Classes" provides extracts from student essays that well illustrate the extent to which indoctrination had pervaded the Italian secondary school, the Fascist schoolroom rarely comes to life. This problem could have been alleviated by more anecdotes of real people—pupils, teachers, parents, bureaucrats. Nevertheless, Williams' work deserves praise for its comprehension, its scholarly strengths, and its filling of a void in English-language coverage of the subject area.

Today, the far right is making disconcertingly large gains in Europe. Racist politicians once again abound in Germany. In France the leader of the National

Front, Jean-Marie Le Pen, is basking in his stunning electoral appeal, having received over 15 percent of the vote in the first round of the 1995 presidential election. In Austria the crudely anti-foreigner political party Freedom Movement, led by the far-right Joerg Haider, is also enjoying distinct success. The appeal of fascism in Russia is increasing at a great rate. Even in Belgium fascist and far-right parties are more and more popular. National Front politicians are now in the European Parliament. In Italy itself the Italian Social Movement political party contains strong elements of neofascism. Led by Gianfranco Fini, who has a violent right-wing past, this party was established to keep alive the views of Benito Mussolini. Patently, Williams's work is useful not only for the light it sheds on a chilling historical phenomenon but also for the lessons the reader might adduce when considering similar political phenomena today. With specific regard to school systems, pedagogy, and curricula both in North America and in Europe, the far right is attacking the liberal democratic foundations of the educational structure. Italian Fascist educational theory and practice in the period 1922–43 was, as Williams thoroughly demonstrates, an horrific experiment that fortunately was superseded. Contemporary educators should ensure that no analogous experiments are ever again attempted.

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