

AAEISS, PXII Asterisco Italia, pos. 1054, ff. 1097-1103. Draft by Father Pietro Tacchi Venturi [undated but ca. December 18, 1943. My thanks to Prof. Tommaso Dell'Era who first brought my attention to this document during our first week in the newly opened Vatican archives in March].

VERBAL NOTE

ON THE JEWISH SITUATION IN ITALY

The Jewish situation in Italy does not have the same exceptional seriousness as in other Nations, partly due to the limited number of Jews resident in the Kingdom, partly due to the huge number of marriages celebrated between Jews and Aryans, a phenomenon that is not found in any other Nation.

A true sentiment of diffidence toward the Jews, if one excepts the very small group of anti-Jewish scholars, is not widespread in Italy other than toward the Jews of the lowest classes, who practice the trades characteristic of the ghetto. In fact, before the racial Law of November 17, 1938-XVII, N. 1728, about 45,000 Jews who were native born and Italian citizens lived in Italy. However, by 1941 they were already reduced due to emigration abroad to about 40,000, and currently are barely 38,000 out of a population of over forty-five million. In all, they form about 10,000 families, of which 6,820 are mixed families, that is linked by kin with Aryan families, and more specifically there are about 4,000 Jewish men married to Aryan women and about 2,800 Jewish women married to Aryan men. There is, therefore, a phenomenon of the most pronounced infiltration of Jewish men who, contrary to their racial spirit, have contracted marriage with Aryan women, and a lesser number of Aryan men, belonging for the most part to rather elevated social classes, who have chosen a Jewish woman as their life companion.

The fruits of such mixed marriages do not represent a large demographic number. In fact, about 2,200 of these mixed couples have no children and the other 4,600 have produced about 13,000 children, of whom only a quarter were initiated into the Jewish religion, while three-quarters received a non-Jewish spiritual direction, that is they were baptized at birth and educated in the practice of the Catholic religion. Consequently, they became and they are children of the Church, which cannot in any way fail to interest itself in them. On the contrary, it is called on to care for them spiritually as its true subjects.

The extremely high percentage of mixed marriages explains the fact that there does not exist in Italy an Aryan environment that is decisively hostile toward the Jewish milieu, which has come to be pacifically tolerated, even when they don't pass over to Christianity, but retain their attachment to the Synagogue.

If this were not so one would not be able to understand how, before the above-cited Law of November 17, 1938, many reached very high positions, which they have now lost, as quite a few of them were named Senators, a large number of others married into distinguished and noble families of pure Aryan stock, and as, lastly, many of them took part in the wars of Italian independence and in the formation of the Kingdom of Italy, showing great merit in the one and the other as well as in the Fascist Revolution.

Taking this faithful exposition of the true state of the Jews in Italy into consideration, an exposition rooted in statistics that were carefully compiled by the [Italian government's] General Office of Demography and Race, one understands why the recent most serious measures of the German Authorities against the Jews born in Italy and furnished with Italian citizenship have been greeted so unfavorably and viewed badly by the Italians. No one can see what danger they could have and can constitute for Germany and what advantage it gains by having deported them outside of Italy and keeping them in miserable concentration camps, confusing all, without a shadow of regard for their social qualities, for their religion and so on. Such a measure greatly offends the good sense of the Italian people, who, recognizing the great military and cultural qualities of the German people, feel afflicted in seeing them adopt measures so contrary to their character. They think that the racial Law sanctioned by the Fascist Government against the Jews five years ago is sufficient to contain the tiny Jewish minority within its proper limits.

The recent measures adopted against a miniscule nucleus of Israelites and the harsh way with which they were carried out seemed designed to bring shame on those who thought to order them.

For these reasons one nourishes the firm faith that the German Government will want to desist from the deportation of the Jews, whether that done en masse, as happened this past October, or those done by single individuals, as word has it is the intention of repeating in the near future.

It should also be kept in mind that in Italy, with the above-cited racial law of 1938, observed rigorously, the unquestionable inconveniences caused by Judaism when it comes to dominate or to enjoy great credit in a nation were already taken care of.

But since at present this is not happening in Italy, one does not understand why and what need there is to return to a question that Mussolini's Government considered already taken care of.

If one renews the harsh measures against the minimal Jewish minority, which includes a notable number of members of the Catholic religion, how will the Church be able to remain silent and not loudly lament before the whole world the fate of men and women not guilty of any crime, toward whom it cannot, without failing to carry out its divine mission, deny its compassion and all its maternal care?