

## Guglielmo Ferrero

Go to the *Life on the move*

*Ferrero left Italy in October 1930 never to return. For years he had felt caged in: "So I can't leave Italy; in Italy I can't either travel or stay at home without having the police at my heels". In Switzerland he was offered a chair in Modern history at the University of Geneva and in the same town a teaching assignment at the Institut universitaire des hautes études internationales. Italy had barred him access to an academic career even before Mussolini came to power, despite his international renown as an ancient Romanist. The Ferrero-Lombroso household, first in Florence and then in Geneva, became a meeting place for European and antifascist intellectuals. Nine years after expatriation Ferrero claimed he had found Switzerland "such an understanding and deferential environment that, had I not suffered the most terrible of misfortunes" (the death of his son Leo in the United States), "the years of exile would have been the happiest of my life".*

### A lifetime on the move

Guglielmo Ferrero was born of a Piedmontese family at Portici in the province of Naples on the 21 July 1871. As an engineer, his father had moved to Campania to take up the post of inspector for one of the nascent private railway companies. The years of Guglielmo's education set the pattern of a life on the move. Following another family removal for the father's job, 1875 saw Guglielmo's first taste of schooling, in Florence. After classical high school he read law first at Pisa University, then at Turin. On 14 July 1892 he graduated with a thesis on symbolism in law<sup>1</sup>. While in Turin he met Cesare Lombroso who enticed him towards evolutionary positivism and in particular investigating the origin and development of justice. Ferrero pursued this line of research at Bologna University where he attended the Faculty of Humanities and Philosophy. On 26 July 1893 he received a second degree in Ancient History with a thesis entitled "La decadenza delle colonie greche. Uno studio sulle cause"

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<sup>1</sup> ASUTo, *Facoltà di Giurisprudenza*, "Registro iscrizione 1888-89", Ferrero Guglielmo, enrolment in second year coming from Università di Pisa, and "Verbale esami laurea 1889-95", 14 July 1892 <<https://www.asut.unito.it>> (accessed 13 June 2023).

[Decadence of the Greek colonies. Investigating the causes]<sup>2</sup>. The same year saw publication of the book-cum-survey *La donna delinquente, la prostituta e la donna normale* [*Delinquent Women, Prostitutes and Normal Women*], written in tandem with his master Lombroso, the famous Italian anthropologist and criminologist to whom Ferrero stood as disciple, coworker and son-in-law (when he married the daughter Gina in 1901)<sup>3</sup>.

For over forty years his life with Gina was punctuated by journeys and periods spent abroad. In 1907, accompanied by his wife and firstborn **Leo**, Ferrero stayed for six months in Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil; in 1908-9 he visited the United States, again to deliver cycles of lessons and lectures which brought him international fame as a scholar of Ancient Rome in its transition from republic to empire. In May 1916 the Ferrero-Lombrosos, with their children Leo and Nina, moved from Turin to Florence where they stayed until the late 1920s, by which time restrictions on their freedom and Ferrero's growing difficulty in pursuing his career as a journalist, essayist, lecturer and writer made living in fascist Italy increasingly unendurable.

The reappraisal of Guglielmo Ferrero subsequent to his death has itself been closely bound up with his own and his family's constant life on the move. When she settled in New York in the early 1940s, his daughter **Nina Ferrero Raditsa** with her husband **Bogdan Raditsa**, was at pains to keep alive the memory of her parents. She wrote various autobiographical pieces and above all made a rich collection of documents available to the scientific community. This included a sizable collection of manuscripts and unpublished correspondence which she donated to the library of Columbia University in two phases, in 1961 and 1986.

Though long lying unexplored in various Italian, Swiss and American centres of

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<sup>2</sup> ASUBo, *Facoltà di Lettere e filosofia, Fascicoli personali degli studenti*, f. 257. See also Carlo Galli, *L'inedita tesi di laurea di Guglielmo Ferrero presso l'Università di Bologna* (1893), "Il Pensiero politico", 3, 1983, pp. 411-436.

<sup>3</sup> For Guglielmo Ferrero's marriage to Gina Lombroso and details of their life together, see especially Delfina Dolza, *Essere figlie di Lombroso. Due donne intellettuali tra '800 e '900*, Milan, Franco Angeli, 1990, pp. 140-183.

documentation, these sources have enabled historians to throw light on the figure of Guglielmo Ferrero as an intellectual of international renown in opposition to fascism.

### **The origins of the ‘Ferrero phenomenon’**

The circle attending the Lombroso salon from the late 1880s on and a series of journeys Guglielmo Ferrero made to Germany, England, Russia and Scandinavia between 1893 and 1896 were decisive for his early rise to prominence in the Italian and European cultural milieu. At the Lombrosos’ Turin home at no. 26 via Legnano he got to know first Gaetano Mosca, who became a close friend and future best man,<sup>4</sup> then Luigi Einaudi and Roberto Michels. Again through Lombroso he encountered Georges Sorel and the work of Hyppolite Taine on the psychology of the ‘Latin races’ and the ‘Germanic races’. Ferrero’s observations of European peoples, their political set-ups, customs and lifestyles soon partly appeared in the daily “Corriere della sera” for which he wrote from 1891 on; these, and his theories of the rise of the Nordic countries and decline of the Latin countries, gave rise to a volume *L’Europa giovane: studi e viaggi nei Paesi del Nord* [*Young Europe: studies and travels in the Lands of the North*], a work that gained instant popular success<sup>5</sup>. It came out in 1897 with the Milanese publishers Fratelli Treves with whom he would form a long-lasting friendship and working relationship<sup>6</sup>. The positivist stance of the work was clear from the frontispiece dedication: “To Cesare Lombroso, fruit of a tree of his cultivation”. The influence of late 19<sup>th</sup>-century evolutionary positivism transpired from Ferrero’s proposed method of pinpointing the qualities of peoples that flourish and peoples that wane. Analysing the physiological differences between the Germanic and the

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<sup>4</sup> On relations between Ferrero and Mosca see Carlo Mongardini (a cura di), *Gaetano Mosca - Guglielmo Ferrero. Carteggio (1896-1934)*, Milan, Giuffrè, 1980, and especially the introductory essay to their correspondence, *Mosca e Ferrero: storia di un’amicizia*, pp. 1-71.

<sup>5</sup> Guglielmo Ferrero, *L’Europa giovane: studi e viaggi nei Paesi del Nord*, Milan, Treves, 1897.

<sup>6</sup> Archivio Contemporaneo Gabinetto Vieusseux, *Fondo Gina Lombroso, Subfondo Guglielmo Ferrero, Serie I, Corrispondenza generale*, b. 2, f. 104; Paolo Treves, *Guglielmo Ferrero*, in *Dizionario bibliografico degli italiani*, vol. 47, Roma, Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1997, pp. 17-27, esp. p. 19.

Latin populations, Ferrero went on to reconstruct their various casts of mind and cultural attitudes to productivity at work in the age of industrial capitalism, which he took as the new yardstick of progress in civilization. In this youthful work one also glimpses his own political position which was close to early socialism and critical of the Francesco Crispi government. Ferrero blamed it for its imperialist, authoritarian leanings – “Cesarism” – symbolized by the defeat at Adua in 1896. By that time Ferrero was a strenuous moral opponent of illiberalism in Italy: indeed, part of *Young Europe* was written under house arrest at Oulx in the Upper Val di Susa, a punishment for speaking out in support of a demonstration against the Crispi government which had been brutally repressed by the police in 1894<sup>7</sup>. The popularity of *Young Europe* drew comment from Gaetano Mosca among others. The opening words of his long and favourable review, entitled, “The Ferrero phenomenon”, ran:

For some months now, Italy has been witnessing a new event: a considerable slice of the country that is still capable of reading entirely for pleasure and enlightenment, of thinking about things other than his own profession or satisfying personal vanity or ambition, has been taking a lively interest in the writings and lecturing of one young man<sup>8</sup>.

Pondering the reasons for the book’s extraordinary appeal, Mosca picked on the author’s “fascinating style”, his ability to “write well [...] even when hastily developing theories or hastily appropriating those going the rounds”<sup>9</sup>. Fifty years on, in the 1946 preface to a new Garzanti edition of the book, a personal friend of Ferrero’s and editor of the “Corriere della sera” at the time, Mario Borsa, recalled how the late 19<sup>th</sup> century climate of opinion was ripe for a work of the kind. Northern Europe was topical in music, the theatre and daily conversation at large. This fact contributed hugely to the book’s fortune and circulation:

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<sup>7</sup> On Ferrero’s position vis-à-vis Crispi see Guglielmo Ferrero, *Il fenomeno Crispi e la crisi italiana*, Turin, Ing. Camillo Olivetti, 1894.

<sup>8</sup> Gaetano Mosca, *Il fenomeno Ferrero*, “La Riforma sociale”, 11, 1897, p. 1017. Taking part in the debate on the work *L’Europa giovane* were, besides Mosca, various members of the Lombroso circle, including the anthropologists Alfredo Niceforo and Giuseppe Sergi, and the criminologist Scipio Sighele.

<sup>9</sup> G. Mosca, *Il fenomeno Ferrero*, “La Riforma sociale”, 12, 1897, p. 1163.

Like all young men of his generation, Ferrero felt the attraction of the North which was then in fashion, what with Nansen's polar expedition, Ibsen's plays, Björnson's novels, the writings of Strindberg and Brandès. [...] The century was drawing to a close amid vague expectations of political and social novelty, and Guglielmo Ferrero was the new man<sup>10</sup>.

Ferrero's generalising framework to explain the emergence of highly topical complex phenomena, couched in popularising terms, earned his studies on Europe and later on ancient Roman history unexpected success with the public, though widespread hostility among the factions of Italian idealism.

### **International fame and ostracism from Italian academe**

With his perfect knowledge of French, Ferrero could express himself fluently abroad. From 1892 onwards he wrote for the French journal "Revue des revues" ("La revue", as of 1899). Following his journalistic accounts of his travels in northern Europe, he was offered editorship of the "Corriere della sera", though he turned this down. What he did accept was an invitation from the editor of "Il Secolo", Ernesto Teodoro Moneta, to become a regular correspondent on that radical-democratic Milanese daily<sup>11</sup>. Throughout his life Ferrero was a constant correspondent for various foreign journals: from 1899 to 1941 for the Argentinian "La Nación"; from 1914 to 1938 for the New York American; from 1922 to 1934 for the French "L'illustration"; from 1922 to 1940 for "La Dépêche de Toulouse"; from 1923 to 1928 for The Illustrated London News; from 1926 to 1933 for the Spanish "El sol". In the late Twenties he stepped up his contributions to the Swiss press, especially the "Journal de Genève" and the "Gazette de Lausanne"<sup>12</sup>.

His assiduous supply of pieces for the foreign press brought the name of Guglielmo

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<sup>10</sup> Guglielmo Ferrero, *L'Europa giovane*, Milan, Garzanti, 1946, preface by Mario Borsa, pp. X-XII.

<sup>11</sup> For Ferrero's role as a journalist on "Il Secolo" (1896-1923) see Lorella Cedroni (a cura di), *La vecchia Italia e la nuova*, Naples, Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1997.

<sup>12</sup> Nelly Valsangiacomo, *Nel tempo svizzero di Guglielmo Ferrero*, in Lorella Cedroni (a cura di), *Aspetti del realismo politico italiano. Gaetano Mosca e Guglielmo Ferrero*, Rome, Aracne, 2013, pp. 373-405, esp. pp. 374-378.

Ferrero to the fore as a public intellectual. International renown as a scholar of Roman history came when he published *The Grandeur and Decline of Rome* between 1902 and 1906, a five-volume coverage of Rome's transition from republic to empire<sup>13</sup>. It was a monumental work and earned Ferrero a widespread readership abroad, as witness the thousands of copies sold and its circulation in various European countries (Germany, France, the UK, Spain, Hungary, Russia) and the United States. Towards the end of 1906 he was invited by Albert Sorel to give a cycle of six-eight lessons at the Parisian Collège de France; then in 1907 he, his wife and son Leo set off for Latin America to hold lecture tours in Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay<sup>14</sup>. Between 1908 and 1909 he travelled extensively in the United States, again accompanied by wife and son<sup>15</sup>. The lectures he gave at the Boston and Cambridge University were highly appreciated. The tour continued with a stay at Washington, where the Ferrero family were hosted by President Theodore Roosevelt, and ended in New York where he lectured at Columbia University. These years brought him plenty of international recognition: in France the Académie Française awarded him the Prix Langlois; Columbia University gave him an honorary degree; and in 1910 so did Strasbourg University.

Not so in Italy, where Ferrero's scientific reputation was strictly opposed by most of the Croce school of idealism. They banned him from entering the university world and doggedly denied him the chair of Philosophy of History at Rome University. What caused Benedetto Croce's personal strictures was that Ferrero wrote invented history, building *a priori* hypotheses regardless of the sources and reconstructing history

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<sup>13</sup> In 2016 the work was republished in Italian, for the first time including the appendixes that Ferrero published in the French edition: Guglielmo Ferrero, *Grandezza e decadenza di Roma*, ed. and with introductory essays by Laura Ciglioni and Laura Mecella, Rome, Castelvechi, 2016.

<sup>14</sup> On the Ferrero spouses' journeying in Latin America see Gina Lombroso Ferrero, *Nell'America meridionale (Brasile, Uruguay, Argentina). Note e impressioni*, Milan, Treves, 1908.

<sup>15</sup> Bogdan Raditsa, *Colloqui con Guglielmo Ferrero seguiti dalle grandi pagine*, Lugano, Nuove Ed. di Capolago, 1939, p. 38.

without documents to underpin it<sup>16</sup>. *A posteriori*, Croce's and other Italian historians' judgements seemed unduly severe to some, and perhaps unjust. As the years passed, Ferrero's work came to be appreciated by leading scholars of ancient Rome like Santo Mazzarino. The critical hostility is partly explained by the climate of opposition between positivism and the erudite view of history professed by idealistic philosophy which was prejudiced against what it saw as overly-abstract sociological categories with political connotations, unsuitable for rendering the complexities of history. Gaetano Salvemini drastically summarized the gap dividing Ferrero from the academic historians:

But then, between Ferrero and his small-minded, hair-splitting critics no agreement is possible. Ferrero has a personal conception of the events he narrates; his critics stop short at picking up small inexactitudes which in general gets one nowhere. It is the age-old clash between history and erudition. In that clash Ferrero often lays himself open to erudition. But the erudite will never manage to utter one millionth of the howlers that Ferrero comes out with<sup>17</sup>.

Even his international reputation rankled with such academics: for one thing, few of them yet commanded any readership abroad, while consensus gained overseas was not always seen as a recommendation, even if it came through friendship with President Roosevelt<sup>18</sup>. Gossip columns at the time relayed the following anecdote: touring Italy in April 1910, former US President Roosevelt did without an audience with the Pope, much to Catholic scandal, but was determined to visit the famous scholar Guglielmo Ferrero. Roosevelt went to personal pains to get Ferrero awarded a university chair, but an unaccustomed coalition of historians and politicians

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<sup>16</sup> Corrado Barbagallo, *L'opera storica di Guglielmo Ferrero e i suoi critici*, Milan, Treves, 1911; Benedetto Croce, *Storia della storiografia italiana del secolo XIX*, Bari, Laterza, 1921, pp. 245-250. For the relationship between Croce and Ferrero see also Fulvio Tessitore, *Croce e Ferrero*, "Rivista di studi crociani", 1, 1964, pp. 147-150.

<sup>17</sup> Salvemini to Carlo Placci, Messina 2 October 1907, in Elvira Gencarelli (a cura di), *Gaetano Salvemini. Carteggi, vol. I (1895-1911)*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 1969, pp. 369-371, esp. p. 370.

<sup>18</sup> For details of how Ferrero's work was received in the United States, see Laura Ciglioni, *Between the Old World and the New. The Reception of Guglielmo Ferrero in the United States (1900-1914)*, "Storiografia. Rivista annuale di storia", 16, 2012, pp. 233-250.



scuppered the attempt<sup>19</sup>.

### **World War I: hiatus, and return to Florence**

Some years later Ferrero himself would repudiate a number of his youthful works, admitting that they contained “many parts where I strayed fancifully”<sup>20</sup>. A more general truth is that in his later works he turned his back on Lombroso’s evolutionary positivism, realising that it became pointless to hunt for non-existent scientific laws to account for the trends of his own period with its large social, economic and political transformations<sup>21</sup>. But throughout his career he would retain that particular ethical and cultural penchant for pondering historical events in the belief that he could help to understand and solve his contemporaries’ issues. Likewise, the subject of progress and the ageing of civilization remained central to his scientific output. In that respect the outbreak of World War I marked a major break in his thinking about Europe and Italy. In the past, though a firm anti-militarist, Ferrero had felt esteem for certain forms of progress brought about by German industrial society (including the emancipation of women, the social state, participation by management in the productive system); however, 1914 changed him into a proud anti-Germanic interventionist<sup>22</sup>. As a public intellectual actively upholding the cause of democratic interventionism, Ferrero was staunchly supported by his wife Gina who proved a formidable organizer of meetings in support of Italy breaking off her alliance with Germany and joining in the war on the side of the Allies<sup>23</sup>. Ferrero’s change of heart

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<sup>19</sup> Why the chair did not go to Ferrero was fully discussed in Giuseppe Prezzolini’s “La Voce”. See, for example, Giovanni Papini, Giovanni Amendola, *Per la cattedra a Guglielmo Ferrero*, “La Voce”, 9 June 1910.

<sup>20</sup> Guglielmo Ferrero, *La vecchia Europa e la nuova*, Milan, Treves, 1918, pp. 1-36, esp. pp. 10-14.

<sup>21</sup> B. Raditsa, *Colloqui*, cit., p. 31.

<sup>22</sup> Klaus Heitmann, *Das kurze zwanzigste Jahrhundert (1914-1989). Italien gegen Deutschland: der Erste Weltkrieg (Das italienische Deutschlandbild in seiner Geschichte III/1)*, Heidelberg, Universitätsverlag Winter, 2012, pp. 16-26.

<sup>23</sup> Marina Calloni, *Gina Lombroso tra scienza, impegno civile e vita familiare (Pavia 1872 - Ginevra 1944). Alcuni appunti bio-bibliografici*, in Rita Baldi (a cura di), *Guglielmo Ferrero tra società e politica*, Genoa, Egc, 1986, pp. 273-294, esp. p. 279.



about the war and the peoples of Europe reflected a broader shift in perspective seen in many other Italian intellectuals of the day as they revised their good opinion of German culture and civilization<sup>24</sup>. Like many other European intellectuals, Ferrero began to talk of an imminent and potentially mortal crisis hanging over Europe – a crisis of values rather than economics or politics – of which world war was but one manifestation<sup>25</sup>.

On moving to Florence in May 1916, the Ferrero-Lombrosos still found themselves the target of widespread mistrust among the influential Italian idealist milieu. Their first network of contacts in Tuscany formed largely thanks to a circle of foreign intellectuals living in Florence, including the editor of the “Revue des deux mondes”, René Doumic, the director of the Institut Français in Florence, Julien Luchaire, with whom Ferrero founded and from 1916 to 1919 edited a new journal called “Revue des nations latines”. There were also the French consul, a historian named Albert Pinguad, and Arthur F. Spender, the first director of the British Institute of Florence, as well as sundry writers and teachers who gravitated around those institutions<sup>26</sup>. The history of the habitués of the Ferrero-Lombroso Florence ménage at N° 7 via Machiavelli and their villa-estate Ulivello at Strada in Chianti should also include the names of Pietro Jahier, **Alessandro Levi**, Niccolò Rodolico and Gaetano Salvemini. Thanks to many of them, new acquaintances formed: thus when the two wives **Amelia** and Gina met, the Rossellis and Ferreros struck up a firm friendship<sup>27</sup>. Leo Ferrero

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<sup>24</sup> For the intellectual origins of Ferrero's democratic interventionism see also Salvo Mastellone, *La rivista “France-Italie” (1913-1914) e la corrispondenza Ferrero-Luchaire*, “Il pensiero politico”, XI, 1, 1978, pp. 58-69. Major writings by Ferrero at the time include: *Fra i due mondi*, Milan, Treves, 1913 (also published in French, German and English), *La guerra europea* (Milan, Rava, 1915), *Le génie latin et le monde moderne* (Paris, Bernard Grasset, 1917) and *La vecchia Europa e la nuova* (Milan, Treves, 1918).

<sup>25</sup> On this point see Gabriele D'Ottavio, *When the Decline of Europe Turned Topical. From World War I to Peace*, in Christoph Cornelissen, Marco Mondini (eds.), *The Role of the Media in Political Communication, Narratives, and Public Memory (1914-1939)*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2021, pp. 249-263, esp. pp. 250-254.

<sup>26</sup> For Ferrero's international network while at Florence see also the memoir by Julien Luchaire, *Confession d'un français moyen*, II, 1914-1950, Florence, Olschki, 1965.

<sup>27</sup> For Ferrero's relations with the Rossellis, see Marina Calloni, Lorella Cedroni (a cura di), *Politica e affetti familiari. Lettere dei Rosselli ai Ferrero (1917-1943)*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 1997.

became friends with Nello and **Carlo Rosselli**, and also with Aldo Garosci and Alberto Carocci, the founder of the Florentine review "Solaria"<sup>28</sup>. The esteem and deep friendship between the Ferrero-Lombroso spouses and many of these lasted even after the advent of fascism. When the former chose exile, they kept up close correspondence and continued to meet, generally in Paris where Leo joined them in 1928 or, after autumn 1931, in their large Genevan apartment at no. 8 rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville which the Ferrero-Lombrosos provided as a refuge for intellectuals fleeing Italy.

### **A privileged antifascist**

Ferrero's close monitoring of events continued after the war. In the early Twenties he wrote several articles for "Il Secolo" and a number of short essays<sup>29</sup>. With the advent of fascism he was instantly in opposition, his own democratic position being well-known. To his friend Gaetano Mosca, a senator of the realm at the time, he confided his contempt for the new government, and his deep pessimism about the future turn of events as early as December 1922:

I realise that you who all share the responsibilities of government are endeavouring to cling to the fluttering coat-tails of Hope, the ultimate goddess! But I, looking on impartially from outside, have long bidden hope a definitive farewell. The catastrophe we so dreaded is already upon us. To take recent events, I don't know what is the more extraordinary: the foolish blundering and fatuousness of a bunch of inexperienced youngsters who, lacking science or conscience, ignorant of everything and feeding on glib platitudes, have taken on the responsibilities of power at a moment like this, claiming they will set all to rights; or, on the other hand, the craven stupidity with which journalists, the Lower and Upper Houses, folk with money are prepared to believe that these upstarts will pull off the miracle of sorting things out, without their needing to make the slightest effort or sacrifice,

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<sup>28</sup> On the Ferrero family social life at Florence, see Gina Lombroso, *Lo sboccio di una vita. Note su Leo Ferrero dalla nascita ai venti anni*, Turin, Frassinelli, 1935, pp. 186-190; Nina Ferrero Raditsa, *Gli anni di Leo*, in Manuela Scotti (a cura di), *Leo Ferrero. Il muro trasparente. Scritti di poesia, di prosa e di teatro*, Milan, Quaderni della Fondazione Primo Conti, 1984.

<sup>29</sup> Guglielmo Ferrero, *Memorie e confessioni di un sovrano deposto*, Milan, Treves, 1920; id., *La ruine de la civilisation antique*, Paris, Plon, 1921; id., *La tragedia della pace: da Versailles alla Ruhr*, Milan, Athena, 1923.

but simply cashing in [...] This ghastly spectacle could only have been provided by a demented epoch such as we live in. I believe the catastrophe is by now beyond repair<sup>30</sup>.

In the eyes of a Gaetano Salvemini the attitude Ferrero took, at least in February 1923, might appear ostentatiously forthright but somewhat lacking in boldness<sup>31</sup>. However, Ferrero's opposition to fascism was anything but a pose. He had taken part in events put on by the Florentine Circolo di cultura since it was founded in 1922, a club that owed its inception to a group of antifascists like Piero Calamandrei, Pietro Jahier, Ludovico Limentani, Carlo Rosselli, **Ernesto Rossi** and Salvemini himself<sup>32</sup>. In July 1923 Ferrero severed his connection with "Il Secolo",<sup>33</sup> which had meanwhile swung heavily over to fascism. Along with Giovanni Amendola, Ivanoe Bonomi, Guido De Ruggiero, Corrado Barbagallo and Luigi Salvatorelli he set up the Italian Association for Democratic Control in 1924; together with Carlo Sforza and Meuccio Ruini he campaigned for Amendola's National Democratic Union; on top of which in 1925 he signed the intellectuals' antifascist manifesto got up by Benedetto Croce<sup>34</sup>.

In the same period Ferrero published a number of writings developing the argument that the decline of the liberal State was closely bound up with the rise of fascism<sup>35</sup>. They were immediately impounded by the police. He also contributed to a volume in honour of the socialist Giacomo Matteotti one year after he was assassinated. These works made Ferrero a leading exponent of cultural antifascism<sup>36</sup>. In his view, fascism,

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<sup>30</sup> *Lettera di Guglielmo Ferrero a Gaetano Mosca, Firenze, 22 dicembre 1922*, in Carlo Mongardini (a cura di), *Gaetano Mosca, Guglielmo Ferrero. Carteggio (1896-1934)*, Milan, Giuffrè, 1980, pp. 318-320.

<sup>31</sup> *Gaetano Salvemini. Memorie e soliloqui. Diario 1922-1923*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2022, p. 226; on the Ferrero-Salvemini relationship see Gaetano Quagliariello, *Sui rapporti tra Gaetano Salvemini e Guglielmo Ferrero*, in Lorella Cedroni, (a cura di), *Guglielmo Ferrero: itinerari del pensiero*, Naples, Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1994, pp. 301-335.

<sup>32</sup> Ead., *Guglielmo Ferrero. Una biografia intellettuale*, Rome, Aracne, 2006, pp. 56-57.

<sup>33</sup> Ead. (a cura di), *La vecchia Italia e la nuova*, cit., pp. XII-XIV and pp. 228-231.

<sup>34</sup> Ead., *Guglielmo Ferrero. Una biografia intellettuale*, cit., p. 58.

<sup>35</sup> Guglielmo Ferrero, *Da Fiume a Roma. Storia di quattro anni (1919-1923)*, Milan, Athena, 1923; id., *Le dittature in Italia: Depretis - Crispi - Giolitti - Mussolini*, Milan, Corbaccio, 1924; id., *La democrazia in Italia. Studi e precisioni*, Milan, Edizioni della Rassegna internazionale, 1925.

<sup>36</sup> Emilio Gentile, *Fascismo e antifascismo. I partiti italiani fra le due guerre*, Florence, Le Monnier, 2000, p. 247.

like any dictatorship, must be considered an illegitimate form of government since it negated the prime requirement for democratic legitimacy: the right to opposition, pluralism and the constitutional safeguarding of minorities<sup>37</sup>. Such was the political and cultural background in which Ferrero first devoted himself to the issue of power and its legitimation<sup>38</sup> – a subject that would remain central to his political and historical thinking to the end of his days<sup>39</sup>. In the 1920s he took some refuge in the novel genre, and would write four: the first three, published by Mondadori, fell foul of the censor; the last came out during his exile in Geneva<sup>40</sup>. Given his international fame he was tipped various times for a literary Nobel Prize but it came to nothing in 1923 – owing to the odium incurred by Mussolini's Italy over the "Corfù affair", or so he thought<sup>41</sup> – and then again in 1924 and 1926<sup>42</sup>. One of the few in Italy who backed his candidacy was his friend Gaetano Mosca, who in turn benefited from Guglielmo's international renown when it came to circulating his own works<sup>43</sup>.

Living conditions for the Ferrero family became critical under fascism, especially from autumn 1926 on when the regime clamped down following the botched attempt on Mussolini's life at Bologna by the young anarchist Anteo Zamboni. The situation degenerated despite the relatively privileged lifestyle hitherto enjoyed by the Ferreros

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<sup>37</sup> Giovanni Mario Ceci, *Guglielmo Ferrero di fronte alla crisi dello Stato liberale e alla nascita del fascismo*, in Lorella Cedroni (a cura di), *Aspetti del realismo politico italiano. Gaetano Mosca e Guglielmo Ferrero*, Rome, Aracne, 2013, pp. 343-372.

<sup>38</sup> On this point see the correspondence with Mosca, especially Ferrero's letters, Florence 6 May 1923 and 25 December 1923, in *Gaetano Mosca - Guglielmo Ferrero. Carteggio (1896-1934)*, cit., pp. 330-332 and pp. 347-348.

<sup>39</sup> For Ferrero's thoughts on the issue of legitimacy, see especially the essays by Carlo Mongardini, Giuseppe Sorgi, Maurizio Griffo, Alberto Scerbo, Ken-Ichi Ite and Daniele Ungaro, published in Lorella Cedroni (a cura di), *Itinerari del pensiero*, Naples, Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1994, pp. 423-535.

<sup>40</sup> *La Terza Roma. Le due verità*, Milan, Mondadori, 1926; *La rivolta del figlio*, Milan, Mondadori, 1926; *Sudore e sangue. Gli ultimi barbari*, Milan, Mondadori, 1930, and *Liberazione*, Lugano, Le nuove edizioni di Capolago, 1936.

<sup>41</sup> By "the Corfù affair" Ferrero meant the Italian occupation of Corfù, on 31 August 1923, an act that set international public opinion against Italy. On this point see *Gaetano Mosca - Guglielmo Ferrero. Carteggio (1896-1934)*, cit., p. 344, note 2.

<sup>42</sup> *Lettera di Guglielmo Ferrero a Gaetano Mosca, Firenze, 22 dicembre 1922*, *Ibid.*, p. 320, note 2.

<sup>43</sup> *Lettera di Gaetano Mosca a Guglielmo Ferrero, Roma, 12 giugno 1923*, and *Lettera di Gaetano Mosca a Guglielmo Ferrero, Torino, 11 settembre 1923*, *Ibid.*, pp. 338-339 and pp. 341-342.

thanks to certain of Guglielmo's personal acquaintances in government circles. How the family fared in the mid-Twenties emerges eloquently from a diary that Leo, the son, kept from autumn 1926 until the end of 1927, the last year he spent in Italy<sup>44</sup>. Likewise through a memorandum that, via Gaetano Mosca, Ferrero managed to place with Tommaso Tittoni, President of the Senate at the time:

So I can't leave Italy; in Italy I can't either travel or stay at home without having the police at my heels; all my own and my family's letters are opened. Every two or three months I have to complain to the post office about the inexplicable delays my correspondence is subject to. Several times already people writing letters to me or my wife have got into trouble with the police. The semi-isolation this produces spills over from personal relations to those with editors, hence the furthering of my intellectual life, and even seeks to cross frontiers. I no longer have a newspaper in Italy where I can publish a note, let alone an article, rebutting the constant libels against me that appear in the official and unofficial press. Not a newspaper that dares to print a mildly favourable review of any book of mine, albeit a thousand times removed from politics. There is hardly a bookseller prepared to show a book of mine in the shop window. If it goes on like this, shortly I shall be without any publisher at all, and will have to publish in France or England and just wait until I can do so in Italian<sup>45</sup>.

In April 1927 the Ferrero-Lombrosos removed to their country house at Ulivello, near Strada in Chianti, if only to lighten the political police surveillance. Thanks to determined intervention by Tommaso Tittoni, as mentioned before, their children Leo and Nina managed to renew their passports in December 1927 and leave for England. Leo soon moved on to Paris, while Nina returned to Italy in 1929. Come 1930, Guglielmo, Gina and their daughter emigrated to Switzerland where Ferrero was already a name. When his appearances in the Italian press dried up in the late Twenties, Ferrero stepped up his links with abroad. Perhaps even by that early date he had chosen Switzerland as a country that might offer him the professional and intellectual opportunities that Italy denied.

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<sup>44</sup> L. Ferrero, *Diario di un privilegiato sotto il fascismo*, cit.

<sup>45</sup> "Promemoria a S.M. Tittoni", document kept at ACS, MI, DGPS, AGR, CPC, b. 2033, f. 868, "Ferrero Guglielmo", 1894-1943, undated, but drawn up in 1928, probably late June, quoted in L. Cedroni, *Guglielmo Ferrero. Una biografia intellettuale*, cit., pp. 187-192, esp. p. 191.

## Permanent emigration to Switzerland

When the Ferreros decided to emigrate to Switzerland he had already been offered a chair in Modern History at the Geneva University Faculty of Humanities, and in addition a teaching assignment in Military History at the Institut des hautes études internationales<sup>46</sup>. He and his wife Gina's various applications to renew their Italian passports failed;<sup>47</sup> that the family moved to Geneva in 1930 was only thanks to countless good words on their behalf, including those of Albert Thomas, director of the International Labour Organization (ILO),<sup>48</sup> and King Albert I of Belgium<sup>49</sup>. As one learns from the central political registry files at the Home Office in Rome, "the notorious opponent Ferrero Guglielmo", bearing a passport issued at Florence and renewed by the Royal Consulate in Paris, quitted the Kingdom of Italy together with wife Gina and 18 year-old daughter Nina on 18 October 1930<sup>50</sup>. Switzerland was no random destination. Ferrero had long been known in the French-speaking world. At the same time, moreover, Geneva University and the Institut des hautes études internationales (founded in 1927 by William Rappard and Paul Mantoux) welcomed other European intellectuals well known in Swiss cultural circles of the day, such as the Swiss essayist Edmond Rossier and the French literary critic Albert Thibaudet, as well as scholars such as Hans Kelsen, Ludwig Von Mises and Wilhelm Röpke<sup>51</sup>.

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<sup>46</sup> Guglielmo Ferrero was appointed to a professorship at Geneva University, formally ratified on 14 June 1930, on which fact the Chief of Italian Police was directly informed by the Foreign Office. ACS, MI, DGPS, AGR, CPC, b. 2033, f. 868, "Ferrero Guglielmo", 1894-1943, telegram from Ministero degli Esteri to Capo della polizia, 24 June 1930. My thanks to Patrizia Guarnieri and Giovanni Cistellini for sending me copies of the documents from the political file.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., answer from the Directorate General of the Ministero degli Interni, 21 November 1929.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., "Appunto per il Capo della Polizia", 11 December 1929.

<sup>49</sup> The theory that the Belgian king intervened is borne out by Ferrero's biographer Lorella Cedroni. See Lorella Cedroni, *I tempi e le opere di Guglielmo Ferrero. Saggio di bibliografia internazionale*, Naples, Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1993, pp. 21-23, esp. p. 23.

<sup>50</sup> ACS, MI, DGPS, AGR, CPC, b. 2033, f. 868, "Ferrero Guglielmo", 1894-1943, telegraphic dispatch of 20 July 1930 and telegram 19 October 1930. For the Ferreros' passport renewal via the Paris Consulate General on 10 April 1930 see *ibid.*, telegraphic dispatch to Ministero dell'Interno, 10 April 1930.

<sup>51</sup> For Ferrero's advent to Geneva University, see N. Valsangiacomo, *Nel tempo svizzero di Guglielmo Ferrero*, cit., pp. 381-382, and Sven Stelling-Michaud, *Guglielmo Ferrero à l'Université de Genève*, in *Guglielmo Ferrero: Histoire et Politique au XXe siècle*, "Cahiers Vilfredo Pareto", 4, 9, 1966, pp. 107-128.

The lectures Ferrero gave in the main university hall soon became a fashionable event. Prominently advertised in the local press, his courses and lectures attracted a broad and varied audience. His home in rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville soon became known as a Genevan social venue, and a centre of Italian antifascism. Ferrero's network of international relations was extensive, as we learn especially from Bogdan Raditsa, diplomat, journalist and son-in-law to Guglielmo. A range of European intellectuals "took part in endless lively conversations about the future of Europe": they included Hans Kelsen, Maurice Bourquin, Salvador de Madariaga, Paul Valéry, André Siegfried, Albert Thibaudet, Denis de Rougemont, Léon Blum, Eduard Herriot, Edvard Benes, Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi and Paul Mantoux<sup>52</sup>. The importance of maison Ferrero-Lombroso for the history of Italian émigré antifascism transpires from the personalities who frequented it: Carlo Sforza, Egidio Reale, Adriano Olivetti, Ignazio Silone and Umberto Campagnolo<sup>53</sup>, as well as from Ferrero's correspondence with well-known Italian émigrés such as Giovanni Amendola, the brothers Carlo and Nello Rosselli, and Gaetano Salvemini<sup>54</sup>.

In 1931 Ferrero, his wife and his brother-in-law Mario Carrara, headed a campaign to mobilise international protest at the Italian government's introduction of an oath of loyalty to the fascist regime, binding on tenured and other teaching staff of the royal institutes of higher education. In November 1931 via Carrara Ferrero received a letter from Francesco Ruffini, professor of Ecclesiastical Law at Turin University, addressed to the Nobel physicist Albert Einstein. Ruffini knew Einstein from the days of the League of Nations International Committee for Intellectual Cooperation<sup>55</sup>. The letter

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<sup>52</sup> Bogdan Raditsa, *Ferrero uomo*, in R. Baldi (a cura di), *Guglielmo Ferrero tra società e politica*, cit., pp. 19-30.

<sup>53</sup> On the Ferrero-Lombroso ménage as an antifascist meeting place, see also Henri De Ziegler, *Egidio Reale a Ginevra*, in *Egidio Reale e il suo tempo*, Florence, La Nuova Italia, 1961, pp. 133-147.

<sup>54</sup> Ferrero's correspondence with Amendola, the Rosselli brothers, Salvemini and other Italian exiles is kept at the Rare Book & Manuscript Library of Columbia University, New York (<<https://findingaids.library.columbia.edu>> (accessed 13 June 2023)).

<sup>55</sup> On this episode see Helmut Goetz, *Il giuramento rifiutato. I docenti universitari e il regime fascista*, Milan, La Nuova Italia, 2000, pp. 17-24.



petitioned the famous German scientist to intervene in support of Italy's academics. Shortly afterwards Einstein wrote to the Italian Minister of Justice Alfredo Rocco urging him to advise Mussolini "to spare the cream of Italian intellect a similar humiliation"<sup>56</sup>. Not that Einstein succeeded in changing the regime's mind: in the years that followed it stepped up its policy of 'fascistizing' the Italian cultural world. But Einstein's gesture did highlight the vitality of émigré antifascism as a transnational network, and the importance of Geneva as a centre for tracing and sorting documents and information originating in Italy. Salvemini himself may have slimmed down his relations with Ferrero, but nonetheless sent a number of missives to Gina asking for materials received from Italy<sup>57</sup>. 1931 also saw a tightening of relations between Ferrero and the local Jewish community, especially the writer and essayist Josué Jéhouda with whom he set up the Société genevoise d'études juives, a symposium for intellectuals meeting regularly at the maison Ferrero-Lombroso. And, again in 1931, Guglielmo went to the United States with wife and daughter on a three-month permit. They landed at New York on 7 March and, on their return via Le Havre on 25 May, stayed for a few days in Paris before going home to Geneva<sup>58</sup>.

Guglielmo Ferrero's activism as an antifascist, especially as a member and speaker at the Dante Alighieri Society, the Seminatrice circle and Geneva's masonic lodge Union des Cœurs, as well as his journeys to France and the States, did not escape the vigilant fascist political police<sup>59</sup>. Confidential informers reported in detail on his antifascist articles and seminars, his every movement, his network of relations. One such report,

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<sup>56</sup> On this episode see Leandro Polverini, *Albert Einstein e il giuramento fascista del 1931*, "Rivista storica italiana", CIII, 2, 1991, pp. 268-280, esp. pp. 271-272.

<sup>57</sup> See Salvemini's letters to Gina Ferrero Lombroso published as an appendix to Gaetano Quagliariello's essay, *Sui rapporti tra Gaetano Salvemini e Guglielmo Ferrero*, cit., pp. 329-335.

<sup>58</sup> An account of the "third trip to America" (following the six months in Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil in 1907 and the four-month stay in the United States during 1908-9) is to be found in Ferrero's correspondence with Mosca, especially *Lettera di Guglielmo Ferrero a Gaetano Mosca, New York, 8 marzo 1931*, pp. 414-415, and *Lettera di Guglielmo Ferrero a Gaetano Mosca, a bordo, 28 maggio 1931*, in *Gaetano Mosca - Guglielmo Ferrero. Carteggio (1896-1934)*, cit., pp. 416-417.

<sup>59</sup> ACS, MI, *Divisione di Polizia politica, Fascicoli personali (1926-1944)*, f. 497, "Informativa per il Ministero degli Interni, Direzione generale della P.S.", 18 January 1936.

dated 9 January 1936, informed the police that Guglielmo Ferrero had joined the “Justice and Freedom Movement’ at the invitation of Rosselli and Sforza”<sup>60</sup>. Three days later another missive informed of a lecture given by Ferrero that was attended by a “packed audience [...] of republican, socialist and massonic intellectuals, the shadiest agents of the Intelligence Service and the Deuxième Bureau, as well as all the riffraff that live on the fringe of the League of Nations, not excluding some of our own officials”<sup>61</sup>.

Despite the strict surveillance, Ferrero enjoyed a freedom of speech in Switzerland that few other antifascist émigrés could rival: his social position brought privileges, and he cultivated close links with certain Genevan politicians of a democratic and radical persuasion, outstanding among whom were the politician Albert Picot and the councillor of State Paul Lachenal<sup>62</sup>. Another spying report to the fascist police, dated 22 January 1936, reveals for example that “in the League of Nations milieu a book is going the rounds, written by the émigré Guglielmo Ferrero, published by “Riedex” [sic] publishers of Paris, and entitled *Prisoner of Abyssinia* in the French language”<sup>63</sup>.

In actual fact, Ferrero’s involvement in militancy was on the wane. There had been, first, the tragic death of his firstborn Leo, victim of a car crash at Santa Fé, New Mexico, in 1933; and then the murder of the Rosselli brothers in June 1937, a still more marked call to halt. His part in founding the “Société des amis de Leo Ferrero” in 1940 – an association designed to promote Leo’s literary and theatre pieces, as well as his democratic ideas – may perhaps be seen as one of the last and most poignant expressions of cultural antifascism on Ferrero’s part. It was rare, besides, for

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., “Informativa per il Ministero degli Interni, Direzione generale della P.S.”, 9 January 1936.

<sup>61</sup> Ivi, “Informativa per il Ministero degli Interni, Direzione generale della P.S.”, 12 January 1936.

<sup>62</sup> N. Valsangiacomo, *Nel tempo svizzero di Guglielmo Ferrero*, cit., pp. 390-391.

<sup>63</sup> ACS, MI, *Divisione di Polizia politica, Fascicoli personali (1926-1944)*, f. 497, “Informativa per il Ministero degli Interni, Direzione generale della P.S.”, 22 January 1936. The volume in question is: Guglielmo Ferrero, *Le prisonnier des abyssins*, roman traduit par Paul-Henri Michel, Paris, Les Éditions Rieder, 1935. This is the adapted translation of a text that Ferrero wrote in 1930 in which the Adua debacle is described.

Guglielmo's acts of militant participation to impinge on the liberal Swiss system, for they always lacked the trappings of conspiracy or direct political statement. The most overt clash with the ambivalent world of Swiss neutrality was possibly that which crowned his last work: Ferrero's political strictures on contemporary authoritarian regimes caused the censor for the Genevan area, Alex Jullien, to ban distribution of his book *Pouvoir*. The first French edition actually came out in the USA (via the New York publishing house Brentano) and not in France, which the Nazi regime had meanwhile overrun<sup>64</sup>. Ferrero was just in time to see a printed copy of that work which he considered a kind of spiritual testament – that, and two volumes devoted to French history at the time of Napoleon and the Congress of Vienna<sup>65</sup>.

Ferrero died suddenly on 3 August 1942 at Mont-Pèlerin near Geneva<sup>66</sup>. His funeral was attended by many Genevan intellectuals and political figures, as well as a number of émigré antifascists. This one learns from the last report to the fascist political police concerning Professor Ferrero<sup>67</sup>. Remote from Villa dell'Ulivello in the land of Chianti, Guglielmo's remains were interred in the Geneva cemetery of Plainpalais, near the tomb of the Protestant reformer, Jean Calvin.

<sup>64</sup> N. Valsangiacomo, *Nel tempo svizzero di Guglielmo Ferrero*, cit., pp. 397-403.

<sup>65</sup> Guglielmo Ferrero, *Aventure. Bonaparte en Italie. 1796-1797*, Paris, Plon, 1936; id., *Reconstruction. Talleyrand a Vienne, 1814-1815*, Paris, Plon, 1940; id., *Pouvoir. Les génies invisibles de la cité*, New York, Brentano's, 1942. The three books are available in the Italian edition: Guglielmo Ferrero, *Avventura. Bonaparte in Italia (1796-1797)*, Milan, Garzanti, 1947; id., *Ricostruzione. Talleyrand a Vienna (1814-1815)*, Milan, Garzanti, 1947; id., *Potere*, Milan, Edizioni di Comunità, 1947. As for their significance to Ferrero, see B. Raditsa, *Colloqui*, cit., p. 82. *Potere* was subsequently given better prominence by Luciano Pellicani, who edited and introduced the 1981 edition, published by Sugarco of Milan.

<sup>66</sup> On Ferrero last days of life, see Gina Ferrero Lombroso's letter to her daughter Nina Ferrero Raditsa, published in L. Cedroni (a cura di), *Guglielmo Ferrero: itinerari del pensiero*, cit., pp. 31-35.

<sup>67</sup> "Avv. Egidio Reale e famiglia - prof. Chiostergi Giuseppe e fam. - Ing. Mario Gorni e fam. - dott. Vittorio Della Porta e signora - Marco Corsali - Omobono Frateschi - Ferrod - Emilio Foglia - Cav. Allegra - Giovanni Orsi Odone Galli - Ludovici - Martini - Comunardo Bertoglio - Giov. Battisti Bertoglio - Silvio Stringari - Camporini - lo studente Ottolenghi - dott. Stellar - Antonino Napoletano - Giovanni Bedoni - Fangazio Frà - Dozzio - Inoltre hanno scusato la loro forzata assenza, inviando adesioni: Agostinetti Emilio e prof. Della Torre di Berna - Prof. Delogu - Fernando Schiavetti - Ignazio Silone (Tranquilli) - Armuzzi - Vuattolo - Falar di Zurigo - prof. Panza di Maria e Luigi Zappellai di Losanna - Manlio Sancisi - Olindo Gorni - Generoso Giordano di Ginevra", ACS, *Divisione di Polizia Politica, Fascicoli personali (1926-1944)*, f. 497, note for the Ministero degli Interni, Geneva 18 August 1942.

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