

discussion of the responsibilities of the Vichy regime, which has been going on for more than a decade and has produced films and novels as well as academic books and articles.<sup>37</sup> In August 1993 the Japanese government admitted responsibility for the behaviour of troops and administrators in Korea and China before and during the Second World War, and official admissions of responsibility have continued since then, despite considerable polemics within Japan. The internment of Japanese Americans after Pearl Harbour is part of every American high school student's curriculum. In contrast, in Italy it is almost as if these episodes had not taken place.

It is true that Angelo Del Boca, Giorgio Rochat and Luigi Goglia have done much excellent work uncovering Italy's colonial past, but they all tell of episodes when the past was rejected and on some occasions of attempts actually to suppress it. As late as the summer of 1995, Indro Montanelli, editor, journalist, popular historian and soldier in Ethiopia maintained that the Italian army had not used gas in the Ethiopian war. As far as the Balkan theatre is concerned, there is almost total silence; the little that has been published comes from associations or minor publishing houses and has not had wide distribution.<sup>38</sup> The wars and manifest atrocities which have taken place in ex-Yugoslavia since 1991 have overshadowed the Italian actions in World War II in magnitude as well as obviously being closer in time. At a personal level, I can add examples of obstruction or passive resistance before the break-up of Yugoslavia; a BBC Timewatch programme on Italian war crimes broadcast in the UK in November 1989 was immediately bought by the Italian state broadcasting system's channel 1, apparently for a high price. More than seven years later it has still not been shown. When I wrote an article for an Italian newspaper<sup>39</sup> on the camps and the war crimes, the paper's military correspondent, General Luigi Calligaris, refused to write a comment on the piece 'because these things should not be brought up'; he did not deny the truth of the account but justified himself by saying 'they [the Libyans, Ethiopians or Yugoslavs] did worse things to our people'. Finally, a book by an American writer, Michael Palumbo, which was due to be published by Rizzoli in 1992, was withdrawn after complaints by one of the people mentioned, a retired prefect who had been convicted of war crimes by the Greek government, again without the facts being contested.

The political changes in Italy have also contributed to the way the fascist period is considered. At the end of 1993, Gianfranco Fini, the leader of the neo-fascist MSI, made great efforts to enlarge the electoral base of his party and remove the stigma of fascism. He did this not only by projecting his own image as a moderate and changing the party's name to *Alleanza nazionale* but

<sup>37</sup> Jean Rousso, *Le Syndrome de Vichy* (Paris, 1990), examines this phenomenon in detail.

<sup>38</sup> The Gonars doctor, Mario Cordaro, who died in 1994, spent considerable energy trying to make his experiences known: 'My father was very concerned that young people should know about that period of our history because, as he continued to repeat to my children, he thought it was paramount that the younger generation knew that the internment camps had been used not for criminals but for ordinary people'. Personal letter from Maria Cordaro, 25 April 1995. But he was exceptional.

<sup>39</sup> *Indipendente*, 12 March 1992.