

THE NATIONAL EUROPE CENTRE AT ANU PRESENTS:



PUBLIC SEMINAR

A NOT SO BRUTAL FRIENDSHIP: ITALIAN RESPONSES TO NATIONAL SOCIALISM IN AUSTRALIA

Dr Gianfranco Cresciani

Thursday 16 November 2006, 12.30–2.00pm

ANU National Europe Centre, 1 Liversidge St [67C], The Australian National University. Light refreshments will be served after the seminar. Parking available in Balmain Lane, opposite University House. This lecture is free and open to the public. Please forward this invitation to anyone who may be interested.

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This seminar will examine the main strands of the policy pursued by Fascism towards Nazism in Australia, the liaison between Fascist and Nazi officials and party-controlled organisations, as well as Australian attitudes towards the activities by the Axis Powers in Australia. It will also examine propaganda and other responses by Italian internees and prisoners-of-war carried out in Australian camps during the Second World War in support of Nazi Germany. Following the defeat of Fascism and Nazism in 1945, Fascist activities, overt and covert, continued in Australia, among several migrants and businessmen who in 1943–45 militated in Mussolini's *Repubblica Sociale Italiana* (RSI), the puppet regime created by Hitler at Salò in Northern Italy. These expatriates reached Australia through a support network reminiscent of ODESSA, that facilitated the escape of former Nazi to South America.

Many Italian migrants, some of whom had served in the infamous Italian SS Corps under German command, as well as Italian businessmen who, after 1945, escaped abroad in order to avoid the de-fascistisation trials, continued to remember with nostalgia their not so brutal friendship with the German ally. Their quest for recognition was realised when, under the second Berlusconi Government (2001–2006), a former RSI officer, later President of Italy's Comitato Tricolore degli Italiani nel Mondo, Mirko Tremaglia, was granted political legitimacy by being appointed Minister of the Italians Abroad. The circle had closed. A former Fascist (who in 2002 declared, commenting on Erwin Rommel, that at El Alamein "the wrong side won"), was now in charge of a Ministry looking after the interests of Italians abroad. A role similar to the one performed during the Regime by Piero Parini, also a leading Salò Fascist, who previously had been in charge of the Fascist Branches Abroad.

Gianfranco Cresciani was born in 1940 in Trieste and emigrated to Australia in 1962. In 2004 he resigned from the NSW Office of the Minister for the Arts and now consults on arts and history projects. He is Vice-President of the Regional Committee on Migration of the Italian Regional Government of Friuli-Venezia Giulia. He was awarded the *Cavaliere Ufficiale* from the Republic of Italy and a Doctorate in Letters, *Honoris Causa* from The University of New South Wales for services to historical writing. He has published several articles and books, and has produced radio and television programs in Australia and Italy on multiculturalism and on Italian migration to Australia. His most recent volumes are *The Italians in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, 2003. and *Transfield: The First Fifty Years* ABC Books 2006.

The views in this Lecture are those of the presenter and do not necessarily represent the views of The Australian National University

