

Roberto Funaro

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It was his sons – an architect and a Bocconi graduate in economics – who convinced him: the best thing to do was to leave Italy and move to the United States. After all, Doctor Funaro had wanted the boys to go abroad when they were university students. It was time to join them, with his wife, in America. The English language remained tough for him, but he was a paediatrician with long experience and, in the small Italian community of Jewish and immigrant anti-fascists in and around New York, he was the children's doctor. And they still remember him.

Many relatives and his studies

He was soon left an orphan on the death of his mother, who bore the flowery name Ortensia. In Livorno, where he was born on 11 November 1883, the only son of Angiolo – an esteemed high school chemistry teacher, president of the popular University of Livorno, a music enthusiast – Roberto grew up surrounded by numerous uncles and aunts, cousins male and female of various degrees (including his future fiancée and wife) and he decided to become a doctor like his uncle Lionello Funaro, whose family lived in the apartment next to theirs, in via Indipendenza 2¹. At the age of almost twenty-three, on 9 July 1906, Roberto graduated from the University of Pisa,² but he soon devoted himself to specialization in the early years, which was still lacking in the university of Pisa. Paediatrics had a national reputation, on the other hand, in Florence, where the first university clinic for children's diseases

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¹ There is a brief account of Roberto's childhood in Alessandro Polsi, *Una famiglia borghese: i Salmoni-Funaro-Bonaventura*, in Michele Luzzatti (ed.), *Ebrei di Livorno tra due censimenti (1841-1938). Memoria familiare e identità*, Livorno, Comune di Livorno - Belforte, 1990, pp. 175-188, with a family tree, where the Roberto Funaro's branch also appears, p. 174.

² His thesis «On myasthenic reaction», kept in the University Library of Pisa, Thesis 720, was partially published (see below, in Principal Publications).

had been set up in 1882 by Professor Moisè Raffaele Levi,³ just by the oldest orphanage, in the city centre. In the fifteenth-century Spedale degl'innocenti, under Brunelleschi's loggia, a medical service for children and wet-nurses had been set up in 1890⁴. More precisely, the university paediatric clinic was located in the adjacent maternity ward, where those who went to give birth were especially all «secret pregnancies», so called because, being unmarried, they were hiding their pregnancy, as well as pregnant women who for some medical condition could not deal with a normal birth at home. Then in 1901 the clinic, directed by Professor Giuseppe Mya (1857-1911), was transferred to the modern children's hospital financed by the Russian gentleman Giovanni Meyer and inaugurated in 1891⁵.

Social medicine

It was in that intertwining between children's institutions and mothers in difficulty, with social medicine's typical approach, alert to the relationship between disease and the environment, that the young Funaro found his own path. On 5 January 1907 he enrolled at the Institute of Practical and Advanced Studies in Florence for the two-year specialization in medical paediatrics and surgical paediatrics, and on 6 July 1908 he defended his thesis on «the fight against infant mortality and ways to engage with it»⁶. In the same year he spent a period of research in Berlin, publishing a note in

³ See Patrizia Guarnieri, *L'insegnamento della clinica delle malattie infantili a Firenze prima di Mya*, «Pediatria notizie», 8, 2000, pp. 1-2, and Ead., *Guardare avanti: Firenze per la cura dei bambini*, in Enrico Ghidetti (ed.), *Una nuova sanità per Firenze capitale*, Florence, Polistampa, 2016, pp. 163-193.

⁴ And within the Spedale degli esposti, paediatricians were trained on the job; for Florence see Patrizia Guarnieri, *Non del tutto abbandonati. Dottori, donne e neonati nel brefotrofito degl'Innocenti*, «Medicina e storia», 4, 7, 2002, pp. 7-51, which continues in Ead., *Dall'accoglienza alla cura. La riforma sanitaria nel brefotrofito degl'Innocenti di Firenze 1890-1918*, Ibid., 7, 2004, pp. 57-100.

⁵ Ead., *Mya, Giuseppe*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 77, Rome, Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 2012, pp. 645-647. See the later mentioned socio-medical investigation by G. Mya, *Inchiesta sulle condizioni dell'infanzia in Firenze. Eseguita per incarico della Giunta comunale dal prof. G. Mya consigliere comunale*, Firenze, Tip. Chiari succ. Cocci, 1909. On Meyer's hitherto unexplored historical archive, see the research by Domenica La Banca, Anna Badino, *Le cartelle cliniche pediatriche come fonte storica. Intorno a un archivio fiorentino (1881-1945)*, «Contemporanea. Rivista di storia dell'800 e del '900», 2, 2021, pp. 269-303.

the important «Biochemische Zeitschrift». He continued to associate with Professor Mya's group in Florence, which from 1907 to 1909 conducted on behalf of the Municipality a careful *Survey on the conditions of childhood* in Florence; he collaborated with the «Rivista di Clinico Pediatrica» founded in 1903 by Mya and Luigi Concetti; and on April 8, 1912 he submitted an application to the Ministry of Education to undergo the competitive examination which permitted university teaching of the subject. After he had passed the exams, the committee unanimously recognized Dr Funaro as qualified in all the tests he had passed. By Ministerial Order of 29 December 1914 he became a *libero docente* in paediatrics⁷.

Shortly after, however, he was called up by the Livorno military district, and «without interruption from 7 June 1915 to 17 July 1919 [...] He was an officer in the war zone attached to equipped trains, then in Albania with the 203rd Infantry Regiment»⁸. His regiment was part of the Tanaro Brigade, which engaged in offensive guerrilla warfare, with constant movements in southern Albania as far as Tirana.

The best pediatrician in Livorno and beyond...

He married Piera in April 1910, when she was not yet twenty. When he left for the war, their children were little: Bruno was four, and Giorgio not even one.

⁶ ASUFI, registration form no. 4321, «Funaro Roberto», though his file is missing from the Student Section. See *Ibid.*, R. Istituto di studi superiori, Sezione di medicina e chirurgia, «Registro delle carriere degli studenti», vol. 15, p. 57, which shows that he had completed the compulsory courses with Mya and passed the diploma exam on 6 July 1908 with a score of 48/50. 2 days later he deposited his thesis, which is still kept at the biomedical library of the University of Florence.

⁷ ACS, MPI, DGIS, Div. I, *Liberi docenti, 1° versamento*, b. 146, f. «Funaro Roberto», contains the dossier and committee minutes for the following meetings: Florence 20 December 1912, 12 June 1914, 13 June 1914, with the results of the votes and a detailed final report. See also the certificate, Florence 8 January 1915.

⁸ *Ibid.*, statement by Captain Siracusa, of the Livorno Military District, 18 April 1920. Various reports on the operations of the Regiment and Brigade to which Funaro belonged, formed in January 1916 and dissolved in October 1919, in Stato maggiore dell'Esercito. Ufficio storico, *L'esercito e i suoi corpi*, vol. III, t. 1, Rome, Tip. Regionale, 1979, pp. 448-449, digitized here: <<https://issuu.com>> (accessed 25 July 2022), and in the page *Storia e memoria di Bologna, La spedizione italiana in Albania 1917-1918* <<https://www.storiaememoriadibologna.it>> (accessed 25 July 2022), with links to the press of the time.

Finally back home, after more than three years away, he wanted to be closer to them. In May 1920, therefore, he submitted to the Ministry of Public Education a reasonable request to be transferred, as a *libero docente*, to the University of Pisa, which was more accessible from Livorno. They lived in via Indipendenza 2, then in Corso Umberto 5,⁹ and Dr Funaro was already practicing his profession as a paediatrician there, so much so that he did not enrol in the Doctors' Association in Pisa, but remained in that of his city¹⁰.

He worked in the Livorno institutions for the care of children and the most disadvantaged mothers, with the dual purpose of providing assistance and of studying and doing research:¹¹ in the Aiuto materno of the Congregation of Charity, and from 1923 in the orphanage for abandoned children, where he became director in charge in October 1934, when it was completely reorganized¹². This was in via Roma 100, a late eighteenth-century villa that the last owner, George Henderson, a seafaring captain and merchant, had handed over to the Livorno provincial administration¹³. In place of the orphanage there was the provincial Istituto per la protezione e l'assistenza all'infanzia (Institute for Child Protection and Assistance, IPPAI), specializing in paediatrics and childcare, with related training and care activities as stated in the application of the Royal Decree «On the organization of assistance

⁹ ACS, MPI, DGIS, Div. I, *Liberi docenti, 1° versamento*, b. 146, f. «Funaro Roberto», R. Funaro to the Minister of Public Education, request for transfer, Livorno 2 May 1920. Here are two contemporary postcards of Corso Umberto, so called from 1871 <<http://lavecchialivorno.blogspot.com>> (accessed 25 July 2022). After the war the Corso became Corso Mazzini and was no longer named after the so-called «machine gun king», who had approved the repression of General Bava Beccaris and was killed by an anarchist in 1900. The change of name in Livorno was decided by the committee headed by Furio Diaz.

¹⁰ Liana E. Funaro, *Profilo di un pediatra livornese: Roberto Funaro (1883-1955)*, Livorno, Media Print, 2008, p. 27n, asserts his enrolment in the Livorno Doctors' Association from 1912-13 to 1937, but without citing her source. The year of his suspension would therefore be earlier than the law of 1939 which provided for the removal of Jews from the registers. Due to the lack of response to our request to the Livorno Medical Association, no verification was possible.

¹¹ See Ibid. (the author of this booklet specifies that she is not a relative of the biographee).

¹² Roberto Funaro, *Il primo anno di funzionamento dell'Istituto provinciale di protezione e assistenza dell'infanzia di Livorno*, Livorno, Arti grafiche Belforte, 1936, taken from «Bollettino consorziale», 22, 12, 1936.

¹³ Since 1980 Villa Henderson has been rebuilt to house the Provincial Natural History Museum founded in 1929. Here the photo: <<http://musmed.provincia.livorno.it>> (accessed 25 July 2022).

services for illegitimate children abandoned or at risk of abandonment, entrusted to the provincial administration», approved with regulations in 1927¹⁴. As Funaro explained, the IPPAI in Livorno included the Infants' Counselling Centre built in 1911, as well as the Mothers' Home, and finally the nursery for infants and young children, next to the mothers' dining hall, opened in 1931 and named after Princess Maria of Piedmont¹⁵.

There were fascist-leaning operations and designs in the very naming processes, when everything was increasingly tightening around the Fascist Party even in Livorno, which in the 1924 elections had resisted the advance of the fascists¹⁶. Suffice it to say that the Mothers' Refuge was named after the countess mother of the party official Galeazzo Ciano, a native of Livorno, who was an undoubted force, especially after marrying Edda Mussolini in 1930, thus becoming the son-in-law of the Duce (who was to have him shot on 11 January 1944). It should be remembered, however, that maternal and similar assistance services had existed long before. Funaro's own professor, the paediatrician Giuseppe Mya, had encouraged them among his collaborators in Florence and throughout Tuscany, starting with Lucca and Prato in 1911, that is, well before the time when Fascism boasted of having invented it, with the Opera nazionale maternità e infanzia (ONMI), established in 1925¹⁷. The president of the provincial federation of the ONMI of Livorno was in fact Funaro, who believed in the opportunity of a widespread network of assistance even in small rural centres, as he entitled his speech to the Tuscan

¹⁴ The IPPAI collection is in the historical archive of the province of Livorno, awaiting inventory on a digital platform. The national regulations are the RDL 8 May 1927, n. 798, *Sull'ordinamento dei servizi di assistenza dei fanciulli illegittimi abbandonati o esposti all'abbandono, affidati all'amministrazione provinciale* [On the organization of assistance services for illegitimate children abandoned or exposed to abandonment, entrusted to the provincial administration] and the Royal Decree of 29 December 1927, n. 2822, for the enabling regulation.

¹⁵ R. Funaro, *Il primo anno di funzionamento*, cit.

¹⁶ See the volume by Matteo Mazzoni, *Livorno all'ombra del fascio*, Florence, Olschki, 2009, with election data, pp. 40-41 and notes.

¹⁷ On this, see P. Guarnieri, *Dall'accoglienza alla cura*, cit., especially pp. 84-88.

Section of the Italian Society of Paediatrics, of which he was a member, in Pisa in June 1927¹⁸.

For all this involvement, Dr Funaro was awarded in March 1935 the title of Officer of the Crown of Italy, with the authorization granted by the then rector of the University of Pisa, who was Armando Carlini¹⁹.

Lapsed «through abandonment of office»

In order to teach at the University of Pisa, Funaro made arrangements with Alberto Michelazzi in the medical clinic. He suggested to him that he would offer a lecture course on paediatrics in 1920-21, entitled «Infant physiology, hygiene and pathology», in which he devoted many lectures to breastfeeding, whether by the mother or by a wet-nurse, and to bottle feeding, with or without breastfeeding²⁰.

By decree of 21 June 1920, the new minister, Benedetto Croce, who had taken office a few days earlier, authorized Dr Funaro to transfer his teaching to Pisa. The rector and newly elected senator David Supino informed the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, chaired by the pathologist Antonio Cesaris Demel (1866-1938), and they declared that they had no objections²¹.

But something went wrong in the years following. For 1922-23 Funaro was in charge of the Paediatric Clinic²². Then he is no longer mentioned in the

¹⁸ ACS, MPI, DGIS, Div. I, *Liberi docenti, 1° versamento*, b. 146, f. «Funaro Roberto», report by R. Funaro to the rector of the University of Pisa, 15 October 1928.

¹⁹ ASUPi, *Liberi docenti*, b. 1426, f. 732, «Funaro Roberto», draft dated 18 March 1935 in response to the note from the Ministry of 14 March 1935.

²⁰ Ibid., handwritten declaration by Alberto Michelazzi, Pisa 22 June 1920, and syllabus of the free course to be held in the Royal University of Pisa by «libero docente Dr Roberto Funaro», who signed it, Pisa 21 June 1920.

²¹ Ibid., the rector to the dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, and to Dr Roberto Funaro, 25 June 1920. A whole file on the transfer contains various papers on payments, the authorization of the Faculty for the transfer, communicated by the rector to the ministry, 25 May 1920; a note shows Funaro's Livorno address; see ACS, MPI, DGIS, Div. I, *Liberi docenti, 1° versamento*, b. 146, f. «Funaro Roberto», the minutes of the session of the Faculty of Medicine of Pisa, 21 May 1920. On the dean at that time, see the entry by Mario Crespi, *Cesaris-Demel, Antonio*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 24, Rome, Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1980 <<https://www.treccani.it>> (accessed 25 July 2022).

²² «Annuario della R. Università di Pisa per l'a.a. 1922-23», p. 67.

university yearbooks until the academic year 1925-26. On 4 May 1925, the new rector of the University advised the director of the medical clinic that with an ongoing decree from Pietro Fedele (now the Mussolini government's third minister for public education), Funaro «was dismissed from the office of voluntary assistant at this medical clinic», with retrospective effect from 1 December 1924.

The measure was officially triggered by Funaro's «abandonment of office» as recorded in the ministry's communication to the rector dated 6 April 1925²³. This, however, was «in response to the document of 24 March 1925» sent by the rector regarding the aforementioned Funaro, concerning his «lapsing as a voluntary assistant», since he had ceased – it was declared –, to serve from the beginning of the current academic year.

This adverse ruling had thus been set in motion by the University of Pisa, no longer governed by David Supino, the Jewish rector who had been in office for over twenty years but was just then, in 1925, about to retire from the university²⁴. From 1 April 1923 to 15 December 1925, the new rector was Giovanni D'Achiardi, who would return to office ten years later, from 1935 to 1939, and be the rector who applied the racial laws at the University of Pisa²⁵.

²³ ASUPi, *Liberi docenti*, b. 1426, f. 732, «Funaro Roberto», letter from the rector on headed paper to the director of the General Medical Clinic, 4 May 1925, preceded by the «Note» of the Ministry of Education, DGIS, to the rector, 6 April 1925, and from the rector to the ministry, 24 March 1925.

²⁴ On this Pisa rector, in office from 1898 to 1920, Marco P. Geri, *Supino, David*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 94, Rome, Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 2019 <<https://www.treccani.it>> (accessed 25 July 2022); see also Romano P. Coppini, Alessandro Breccia, Mauro Moretti, *L'ateneo di Pisa tra l'Unità e il fascismo*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», XIV, 2010, pp. 51-64, a booklet dedicated to the history of the University of Pisa, with an article on the Medical Faculty which, however, does not give any details on paediatrics. See also Mauro Moretti, *Questioni di politica universitaria pisana (1928-40)*, in Barbara Henry, Daniele Menozzi, Palo Pezzino, *Le vie della libertà. Maestri e discepoli nel «laboratorio pisano» tra il 1938 e il 1943*, Rome, Carocci, 2008, p. 15-31.

²⁵ I am grateful to Daniele Ronco, the ASUPi archivist, for providing me with the precise dates of the rectoral offices; these are indicated only by year in *L'elenco dei rettori dell'Università di Pisa dall'Unità ad oggi* <<https://www.unipi.it>> (accessed 25 July 2022).

Yet confirmed as a *libero docente*

A few years after this far from clear 'incident', by a decree of 18 March 1929 the new minister Giuseppe Belluzzo, who had succeeded Fedele, conferred on Dr Funaro the final confirmation of his qualification for lecturing and sent it to the rector of Pisa, who meantime had also changed²⁶. In place of Vittorio Aducco, a physiologist in the Faculty of Medicine to whom Funaro had paid tribute in various of his publications,²⁷ and rector from 16 December 1925, after less than two years Armando Carlini had taken over, and from 16 November 1927 would remain in office for as long as eight years. He was Giovanni Gentile's successor in the chair of theoretical philosophy; according to some, one of Gentile's tools, according to others, an increasingly obstructive presence to Gentile himself, yet very close to him. In any case, Aducco felt that he had to express, at least in private, to the very powerful Gentile his admiration for his lecture on «The essence of Fascism» – «so clear, so profound, so passionate»²⁸.

Funaro submitted an application for confirmation to the minister on 14 October 1928, and to the rector on the following day. He declared that he had been involved in lecturing in 1924-25 but not the year before, «since until October 1924 he had been in charge of the official teaching in the paediatric clinic», nor the year after, that is, in 1925-26, because, as there were too many *liberi docenti* in relation to the number of students, he had considered it appropriate to carry out the course every two years²⁹.

²⁶ ACS, MPI, DGIS, Div. I, *Liberi docenti*, 1° versamento, b. 146, f. «Funaro Roberto», Funaro Roberto, letter from the Royal University of Pisa to the ministry, DGIS, Pisa 23 March 1929, signed by Biagio Brugi (1811-1034), dean of the Faculty of Law who two months later became a senator also at the proposal of the aforementioned colleague David Supino; see the card in Senato della Repubblica, *Senatori dell'Italia fascista*, Brugi Biagio <<https://notes9.senato.it>> (accessed 25 July 2022).

²⁷ L.E. Funaro, *Profilo di un pediatra livornese*, cit., p. 24n, refers to copies dedicated to Aducco of extracts kept at the Institute of Physiology and Biochemistry of the University of Pisa.

²⁸ Fondazione Gentile, Rome, *Archivio Giovanni Gentile*, *Corrispondenza*, letter from Vittorio Aducco to Giovanni Gentile, 10 May 1928, digitized in <<https://patrimonio.archivio.senato.it>> (accessed 25 July 2022).

²⁹ ACS, MPI, DGIS, Div. I, *Liberi docenti*, 1° versamento, b. 146, f. «Funaro Roberto», R. Funaro in his request to the rector of Pisa, 15 October 1928 [?].

This was a not entirely convincing justification, given that he claimed to have also taught in 1926-27 and in 1927-28 consecutively. Someone checked up, and noted in pencil in the margin on Funaro's request that only the second course had been completed. As for his alleged neglect of office in 1924-25 and the consequent decree of dismissal from post, no one mentioned it or took it into account, so much so that the lecturing was confirmed without discussion. In the Ministry's records of professors there is a typed, unsigned declaration, which asserted Funaro's «uninterrupted teaching activity ... in the last five years» before the confirmation³⁰. The rector Carlini instead certified, on stamped paper, that in the same period under examination Dr Funaro had conducted the lecture course for just two years, 1924-25 and 1927-28³¹. In this last year he had taught on the postgraduate course in paediatrics, and on the childcare course at the same clinic, at the invitation of the professor of paediatrics clinic finally appointed by the University of Pisa³². This was his contemporary Gennaro Fiore (1882-1953); they had trained together in Giuseppe Mya and Carlo Comba's paediatrics school in Florence, where they had learned to practice both neonatal medicine, the study and care of children in the first months of life, and paediatrics, which included normal child development and not just child pathology³³. Fiore immediately turned to an academic career, so much so that he had already been successful in competitive examinations in Cagliari and in Pisa, whereas Funaro's activity had «been largely absorbed» by the direction of the Children's Home and assistance to mothers,³⁴ with an overriding professional commitment to

³⁰ Ibid., R. Università di Pisa, undated, but 1929.

³¹ Ibid., the rector A. Carlini, «Certificato», Pisa 15 October 1928.

³² These curriculum notes are declared by Funaro in his application to the rector of Pisa, 15 October 1928 (ibid.).

³³ See the brief entry by Mario Crespi, *Fiore, Gennaro*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 48, Rome, Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1997 <<https://www.treccani.it>> (accessed 25 July 2022).

³⁴ ACS, MPI, DGIS, Div. I, *Liberi docenti*, 1° versamento, b. 146, f. «Funaro Roberto», request to the rector of Pisa, 15 October 1928.

services and private practice, while maintaining a relationship with the academic world.

Forfeited and struck off, but different in behaviour

At the age of 56, by ministerial decree of 18 March 1939, with retrospective effect from 14 December 1938, Funaro was «disqualified from his qualification as being Jewish by race». This note came directly from the ministry to the rector on 2 June 1939. In all, twenty Jewish academics at Pisa, of various grades, were included in the census enjoined by Bottai on the rectors in the summer of 1938, with half belonging to the Faculty of Medicine, including five *liberi docenti* such as Funaro and his fellow citizen Renzo Toaff³⁵. Among the academics affected by the racial laws, there were declared supporters of the regime, such as Aldo Lopez, who was a fascist from before the March on Rome, the professor in charge of the ENT clinic, who obtained exempted status for fascist merit, and Attilio Gentilli, a clinician of gynaecological obstetrics, who while not giving up his post as full professor not only presented a false baptismal certificate but claimed to be the illegitimate son of his mother, while she was betraying her husband with a (Catholic) organist at the cathedral. Thus he managed to become Aryanzed, paying no heed to the contempt shown to him by even his Jewish relatives; two of his nephews, when expelled from the university, preferred to emigrate to Brazil rather than «pass from persecuted to persecutors» by accepting their uncle's offer to become Aryanzed too³⁶. It is interesting that in this manoeuvring with false documents Gentilli appears to have been helped by

³⁵ See the list (1997) in Angelo Ventura, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei. Il razzismo antisemita nell'ideologia e nella politica del regime*, Rome, Donzelli, 2013, p. 176, where Funaro's name is missing, though he is mentioned by Francesca Pelini and Ilaria Pavan, *La doppia epurazione. L'Università di Pisa e le leggi razziali tra guerra e dopoguerra*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2009, p. 67.

³⁶ The refusal is by Renato Salmoni, the husband of Anita Cividalli, the daughter of Gentilli's sister, and both were expelled from the University of Padua. See Anita Salmoni Cividalli, *Você voltaria?*, Shalom, São Paulo, 1979, pp. 166-167, and the whole story was made known in 1996 by A. Ventura, *La persecuzione fascista contro gli ebrei nell'università italiana*, now in Id., *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, cit., pp. 90-91n. On the case of Gentilli, «reinstalled sui generis», see F. Pelini, I. Pavan, *La doppia epurazione*, cit., pp. 87-95.

the queen, because he was one of her doctors³⁷. Funaro too had contacts with the queen and the king, as paediatrician to the royal grandchildren when they were on vacation in San Rossore, near Livorno. But he neither requested nor received help similar to that which Gentilli benefited from, though Funaro often had the opportunity to visit him, both at the ONMI and in the orphanage in Livorno where the fascist professor worked.

In the Pisa medical faculty the *libero docente* in ophthalmology, Salvatore De Benedetti, also presented an application to obtain the benefits of exemption; the Demorazza rejected it as «undeserving», since he had not even been registered with the PNF in 1933-34³⁸. That very year Funaro had presented himself, following the «invitation from the rector» Carlini, on 25 May 1934, to pronounce the formula of the oath to fascism³⁹. It was actually a somewhat belated oath, since the obligation had already come into force the year before, even for *liberi docenti* who were not tenured staff. Whether, however, he also applied for exemption is uncertain⁴⁰. A Demorazza file in his name has not so far been identified, and any request would be at odds with some testimonies, though these are not borne out by documentary

³⁷ See A. Ventura, *La persecuzione fascista*, cit., p. 90.

³⁸ ACS, MI, *Direzione generale Demografia e razza (Demorazza), Atti amministrativi [ora Divisione razza, Affari diversi]*, b. 6, f. 28; «Domande di discriminazione respinte per demerito», with the clarification of the lack of a PNF card by De Benedetti, in F. Pelini, I. Pavan, *La doppia epurazione*, cit., p. 66n and p. 67. The requests for accepted exemptions, however, are in several folders, and those for «military merits» in ACS, MI, *Demorazza, Divisione razza, Affari diversi*, b. 5, f. 24.

³⁹ ASUPi, *Liberi docenti*, b. 1426, f. 732, «Funaro Roberto», R. Università degli studi di Pisa, «Verbale di giuramento», 25 May 1934.

⁴⁰ For one of his requests, which would have been accepted, there is a brief mention in L.E. Funaro, *Profilo di un pediatra livornese*, cit., p. 27n., without citing the source, and in F. Pelini, I. Pavan, *La doppia epurazione*, cit., p. 67, citing a list of «Accepted applications for exemption» with the same signature as the rejected ones, which, however, is relevant only to the latter in the summary inventory (1960) entitled «Atti amministrativi» compiled by Costanzo Casucci relating to the ACS collection, MI, Demorazza. On the basis of this inventory, the requests for consultation have not provided results (as of February 2022), neither a file in the name of Roberto Funaro nor a possible request from him. For these checks in ACS, I thank Gaia Ciccarone and the ACS staff.

evidence, on his complete refusal to take advantage of a special dispensation from anti-Semitic laws which the king himself would have offered him, provided that he stayed in Italy to look after his royal grandchildren⁴¹. According to another acquaintance of theirs from Livorno, the queen had invoked the help of her consort Vittorio Emanuele III so that the professor could keep his post, but the king's eloquent silence had convinced Funaro to expect nothing. Then Queen Elena, «who was so good», would have obtained an American visa for him⁴².

These are hearsay memories, often contradictory, repeated several times. What is certain is that, apart from having lapsed from the title of *libero docente*, Dr Funaro could no longer maintain his various medical posts in the provincial and municipal institutions, and the Fascist Doctors Union of Livorno removed him from the professional register in accordance with a law that, almost a year after the provision against Jews in schools and universities of September 1938, struck at «citizens of Jewish race» in the exercise of their professions. It was the DL no. 1054 of 29 June 1939, published in the Official Gazette of 2 August and coming into force immediately afterwards .

Joining their children

On 18 August 1939 Roberto Funaro finally obtained the permits he was waiting for, which he had requested for himself, for his wife, and for his daughter: these were the visas for emigration to the United States issued in

⁴¹ The testimony comes from a very affectionate former patient from Livorno, who emigrated as a child with her parents to New York, and remembered their paediatrician as «one of my heroes». See interview with Elena Ottolenghi Nightingale (Livorno 1 November 1932-), in Marjorie Agosin, *Uncertain Travelers. Conversations with Jewish Women Immigrants to America*, Hanover (NH), University Press of New England, 1999, p. 65.

⁴² See the words of Rita Castelli in *Ebrei di Livorno tra due censimenti*, cit., p. 120.

Naples. The United States consulate existed in many other Italian cities, especially port cities, and in Leghorn since 1794: Livorno in fact boasted the oldest consular office⁴³. Three days later, they embarked at Livorno, and on the steamship Excambon they left Gibraltar on the 26th of the month to land in New York⁴⁴.

To find work abroad, documentation to attach to one's CV could be useful. And many in fact requested this from their respective universities or other places of work. Funaro also submitted an application to the rector Giovanni D'Achiardi, to have certification of the duties carried out in the university: he had been part of the teaching staff of the Postgraduate School in Paediatrics, teaching Therapy, from the year of its establishment. Someone had added in pencil «up to the year 1935-36 inclusive», and also specified that the carrying out of lecturing at the university since 1929 (i.e. from the year of confirmation), declared by the interested party, had consisted of just a lecture course in the year 1933-34⁴⁵. This, in fact, was certified for him on 11 March 1937. Why had he asked for this so far in advance? Maybe it was not a coincidence. It was just at that time that his son Bruno was preparing to leave for New York, where he had already gone several times for study and work. This time it was to stay there. And not alone, because afterwards Giorgio would follow him: he went there in October 1938. They kept themselves ready too, with Nina, who was about to turn 18.

⁴³ See the list of US Consulate Generals, in *A Guide to the United States' History of Recognition, Diplomatic, and Consular Relations, by Country, since 1776, Italy* <<https://history.state.gov>> (accessed 25 July 2022).

⁴⁴ The Statue of Liberty - Ellis Island Foundation, Passenger Search, «Robert Funaro», 1939 <<https://www.libertyellisfoundation.org>> (accessed 25 July 2022). For details of the crossing on Excambon, of which there is no information, see *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ ASUPi, *Liberi docenti*, b. 1426, f. 732, «Funaro Roberto», Roberto Funaro to the rector, with annotations by others in pencil, 10 March 1937. The draft of the requested declaration was ready the next day.

Italian expatriates

In the boarding documents, even though he never wanted to change it, his Italian name was immediately Americanized: Robert, 56, doctor; followed by Piera Funaro, 49, sculptor, and Carinna [sic] Funaro, 18, student. These were respectively his wife and his daughter, all three registered as *Italian*, rather than as *Hebrew*, as the ship manifest almost always did. They were entered with 'in quota' visas, incorrectly registered as 'not in quota' and then corrected. To the usual questions they replied that no, they did not intend to return to reside in their country of origin and that they would remain permanently in the United States, going to their son «Burno» [sic] at 257 West 86th Street, NYC⁴⁶.

Other Italians were also travelling with the Funaros: an older married couple, the banker Raffaele Soria and his wife Amelia, aged 72 and 63, who were joining their son; and a thirty-year-old lady, Paola Sereni, who was going with her two children, Giorgio and Mario, aged 5 and 2, to join her husband, whose address was the same as Dario Soria's, in Manhattan, on the East side⁴⁷. In fact, they were all relatives; the Sorias and the Serenis of Rome were respectively uncles and cousins of Piera, the wife of Dr Funaro, who gave as reference in Italy Dr Montalcino, via Marradi 17, Livorno, who was his wife's maternal uncle.

They landed in New York on 6 September. Waiting for the Funaros were Giorgio and Bruno with his American wife, Viola, a musician. Their boys were enterprising; they would help them settle in, and they would not remain idle even though they were no longer young. Even the over seventy-year-old banker Raffaello Doria, known as Lello, originally from Livorno, already had in

⁴⁶ See The Statue of Liberty - Ellis Island Foundation, Passenger Search, «Robert Funaro», 1939 <<https://www.libertyellisfoundation.org>> (accessed 25 July 2022), and the others mentioned in the text for the same crossing. In all eight trips to New York recorded in the Ellis Island Foundation database up to 1954, the name is always Roberto Funaro, except in the first, where it is Robert.

⁴⁷ Ibid., in the names of Raffaele Soria and Paola Sereni respectively.

mind to start new businesses in New York. And he did so⁴⁸. Roberto was the only one of the entire family group who boarded the Excambon to declare that he also knew English. His wife and his daughter neither spoke nor understood it, but Nina was still a student and she would soon learn it. And the doctor? Did he know it well enough? Enough at least to pass the exam that he was waiting for to obtain the license needed to practice his profession in America?

Fear of not passing

That exam was the bugbear of all Italian doctors who emigrated to New York, and elsewhere. Generally all younger than him. Roberto Funaro found himself a fellow student, also recently arrived in America, a former consultant at the hospital in Bergamo as well as a *libero docente*. Their specialties were different, but they had other things in common, and were almost the same age, though the ophthalmologist Achille Viterbi born in 1881 was two years older than him. Together they attended a language course at the City University of New York, and tried to prepare for the exam, in English, on any subject in medicine.

For them, a very difficult but specific exam on their discipline would have been a thousand times better. They were not general practitioners or newly qualified students, but renowned specialists with long experience and numerous publications. To become a paediatrician, Funaro had passed a very demanding competition in Italy, which lasted almost two years. Leading university professors sat on the Ministry's appointment committee: Carlo Comba from Florence and Luigi Concetti from Rome for paediatrics, the anatomical pathologist Giulio Chiarugi, dean of the medical faculty, and the luminary of the medical clinic, Pietro Grocco⁴⁹. He still remembered it: he had had to prepare a scientific dissertation, worthy of publication, on the theme

⁴⁸ The success of the business was due to his son, for whose happy career record see Eugenia Scarzanella, *Un «ebreo fortunato» (?) a New York. Dario Soria, dagli spaghetti ai Long Playing (1939-1958)*, «Altreitalie», 61, 2020, pp. 5-50.

chosen by lot among five proposals, which for him was «The importance of helminths in childhood pathology».

He had had a year to write it and he afterwards defended it, and gave a lecture on cerebrospinal meningitis, a topic also drawn by lot. Finally, he had faced the practical test, which consisted of the clinical examination in the Paediatric Clinic of a nursing infant, whose mother he also questioned before the committee. The committee was strict, as can be seen from the minutes of the various examinations, but he passed all of them well⁵⁰.

He did not pass the American exam, however, and neither did Viterbi. They had to retake it a second time. And Funaro tried two, three, even six times, according to a former child patient, with not very reliable memories.

That «wonderful man [...] went on to pass the medical test but didn't pass the English exam. The medical part was in English, how was it possible? There was no way. Professor Funaro never managed to obtain a medical licence» in the United States⁵¹.

Andrew Viterbi recalls, on the contrary, that, after the first rejection like his father, they both took it⁵².

In 1949, the *Enciclopedia biografica* dedicated to (*successful*) *Italiani in America* – printed in New York by Cocce Press at 9 Barrow Street, whose employees were all Italian-Americans⁵³ – provided a highly complimentary profile of Dr

⁴⁹ See, for example, Arnaldo Cantani, *Comba, Carlo*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 27, Rome, Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1982 <<https://www.treccani.it>> (accessed 25 July 2022), and Paolo Zampetti, *Grocco, Pietro*, in *Ibid.*, vol. 59, 2002 <<https://www.treccani.it>> (accessed 25 July 2022). The *libero docente* Gaetano Finizio from the University of Bologna also took part in the committee.

⁵⁰ ACS, MPI, DGIS, Div. I, *Liberi docenti, 1° versamento*, b. 146, f. «Funaro Roberto»; very detailed progress of the examinations in the committee minutes, R. Istituto di studi superiori, pratici e di perfezionamento, Sezione di medicina e chirurgia, for the following sessions: 12 June 1914, 13 June 1914, with the results of the votes and a detailed final report, undated.

⁵¹ Thus Elena Ottolenghi Nightingale, in M. Agosín, *Uncertain Travelers*, cit., p. 65.

⁵² Statement by Andrew Viterbi to the author, and, on the examination that terrified their respective fathers, his memories and those of Guido Calabresi in Gianna Pontecorboli, *America nuova terra promessa. Storie di ebrei italiani in fuga dal fascismo*, Milan, Brioschi, 2013, pp. 97-98.

⁵³ See the picture by the photographer Marjory Collins (1912-1985), New York, New York. *Linotypers in the Cocce press on Barrow Street. All workers are Italian-Americans. They print the weekly newspaper La Parola, among others. The make-up desk is in the background*, January 1943,

Funaro, as well as the exact address «where he practices»: 370 Central Park West, NY⁵⁴. If he had not been licensed to do so, publishing the details of his business would have got him into trouble. Certainly, he was in good standing, but at first «he came to an understanding with an American doctor who was in the same building to allow him to visit his young patients and then send them to himself for prescriptions and other services that required a licensed doctor», his nephew Julius Funaro recalls⁵⁵.

The children's doctor

Certainly Dr Funaro, who had treated many children in Livorno, also treated Andrea in America when he caught scarlet fever with his cousin,⁵⁶ as well as Eleonora with her three sisters, and Simona and the other girls, and little Haim, son of Mrs. Carla Coen Pekelis and her husband, the lawyer Alexander Pekelis, who arrived in New York in 1940 with three children, and later had two more. They lived in Larchmont, where the Rosselli ladies – Amelia and the widowed Marion and Maria – had also settled with their seven children. All of them (Pekelis and Rossellis) were attended by the same paediatrician – Dr Funaro – like the three children of Roberto and Eleonora Coen Pirani, the chemist from Pisa and his wife, who had become anti-fascists precisely upon the experience of exile⁵⁷. In 1939 the family of the composer Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco had also gone to live in the same town, with their two

in *Library of Congress* <<https://www.loc.gov>> (accessed 25 July 2022).

⁵⁴ See *Roberto Funaro*, in *Italiani di America. Enciclopedia biografica compilata da Ario Flamma*, vol. III, New York, Cocce Press, 1949, pp. 146-147. Not all the details mentioned there are supported by documentary evidence.

⁵⁵ Written statement from Julius Funaro to the author, 25 November 2021.

⁵⁶ This anecdote is related by Andrew Viterbi, in G. Pontecorboli, *America nuova terra promessa*, cit., p. 97.

⁵⁷ On this point the statements made to the author by Andrew Viterbi and Simone Pekelis McCray respectively on 8 July 2022 are in agreement; the testimony of Leo Pirani, another young former patient of his, has already been mentioned here in the story of *Roberto Coen Pirani*.

little boys, and had several Italian doctors among their acquaintances, including «dear Roberto Funaro»⁵⁸.

In New York a little later, «he was now a highly respected paediatrician [...] a renowned paediatrician», Flora Aghib Levi D'ancona, a long-time friend of his wife Piera, was able to attest⁵⁹. Fathers and mothers who arrived from Italy to New York and its neighbourhood called on him for their children. Trust was conveyed by word-of-mouth, in a network predominantly of Jews as well as anti-fascists. Flora advised her cousin Lalla, married to Enrico Fermi, to write to Funaro in case he might have news of her father Capon (not knowing that he had already died in Auschwitz), through the American Jewish Congress «with which Roberto is actively involved»⁶⁰. And in which an important role was played by the lawyer Pekelis, a Zionist and decidedly anti-fascist.

Alongside the statements from the young patients of the time, it is worth remembering that of Julius Funaro, on his grandfather's volunteer work «with poor African American children in public hospitals, which was a completely new and in many ways difficult experience for a European paediatrician»⁶¹.

In 1946 Roberto Funaro obtained his naturalization, and that same year he and his wife made their first trip to Italy, returning to New York from Le Havre on 14 October⁶². They again returned to Italy in 1948 and after that every summer, except perhaps one, until 1954. He resumed contact with some Italian colleagues, especially with Gino Frontali, director of the paediatric clinic in Rome, whom Funaro involved in the most advanced American studies of vitaminology, at the National Vitamin Foundation in New York.

⁵⁸ See Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, *Una vita di musica (un libro di ricordi)*, edited by James Westby, introduction by Mila De Santis, editorial oversight by Ulla Casalini, Fiesole, Cadmo, 2005, p. 317.

⁵⁹ Flora Aghib Levi D'ancona, *La nostra vita con Ezio e Ricordi di guerra*, edited by Luisa Levi D'Ancona Modena, Florence, Firenze University Press, 2021, pp. 157, 164.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 267, letter from Flora to Laura Capon Fermi, 25 December 1944.

⁶¹ Written statement of Julius Funaro to the author, 25 November 2021.

⁶² See The Statue of Liberty - Ellis Island Foundation, Passenger Search, under name <<https://www.libertyellisfoundation.org>> (accessed 25 July 2022), from whose ship manifest we also learn of the issue of the naturalization, though with an incorrect date.

They were both from the renowned pediatric clinic in Florence, where Frontali, 6 years younger, had remained until 1925⁶³.

Roberto Funaro died of a heart attack in New York at the age of 72, on 11 March 1955. On 2 October of the same year, the provincial administration staged a commemorative ceremony in Livorno, which was held in via Roma 100, at the headquarters of the IPPAI, to which he had been devoted. In addition to the city authorities, the directors of the IPPAI and of hospitals and paediatric clinics from several provinces were invited. The address was entrusted to the directors of the university paediatric clinics of Pisa and Rome, or rather to Gino Frontali⁶⁴.

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⁶³ See Roberto Burgio, *Frontali, Gino*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 50, Rome, Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1998 <<https://www.treccani.it>> (accessed 25 July 2022) and the brief profile *Morto a Roma l'insigne pediatra Gino Frontali*, «L'Unità», 29 September 1963.

⁶⁴ Among the papers of the Archivio storico della Provincia di Livorno, *Fondo IPPAI*, f. 24/2, «Amministrazione Provinciale di Livorno - Onoranze al Prof. Dott. Roberto Funaro - Livorno 2 October 1955», is a list of guests invited to the commemoration by the provincial administration. The IPPAI Collection in Livorno, sanitized by the Historical Archive of the Province of Livorno in the spring of 2022, needs re-ordering. It is not known, for example, how long Funaro's name was attached to the Institute. Excerpts from Frontali's commemorative address are given in Provincia di Livorno, *Istituto Provinciale di Prevenzione e Assistenza*, Livorno, Tip. O. Debate, 1956, where the place and date of his death are shown. I thank Elena Amadori for the copy of the papers and the information.

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