

## Honoring War Criminals: The Monument to Rodolfo Graziani

(January 30, 2013)



Graziani was notorious as Benito Mussolini's military commander in colonial wars in Ethiopia and Libya where he carried out massacres. Recently in Rome was honoured with a mausoleum and memorial park. January 31 at 6:30 pm (John D. Calandra Italian American Institute - 25 West 43rd Street, 17th fl.) a roundtable - free and open to the public - will discuss Graziani's role under fascism, rehabilitation attempts of Fascist war leaders in Italy and public opposition to this political trend. With Lidia Santarelli (Brown University), Yemane Demissie (New York University). Moderator: Andrea Fiano (journalist and former Chairman of CPL). Respondent: Girma Abebe, Former Counselor, (Ethiopian Delegation to the UN).



A political clash is growing in Italy after the dedication of a memorial to Fascist commander Field Marshal Rodolfo Graziani, a convicted war criminal. Graziani was honored with a mausoleum and a memorial park, all built at taxpayers' expense, in a village south of Rome. He was notorious as Benito Mussolini's military commander in the colonial wars in Ethiopia and Libya, where he carried out massacres and used chemical weapons against the local population. [[BBC News](#) [2]].

Associations including ANED (Italian Association of Deportees), ANPI (Association of Resistance Partisans) and UCEI (Union of the Italian Jewish Communities) have made formal requests to remove the mausoleum. This roundtable will discuss Graziani's role under fascism, rehabilitation attempts of Fascist war leaders in Italy and public opposition to this political trend.

Historian of Italian colonialism Lidia Santarelli will discuss Graziani's role in Italian colonialist wars in Africa as well as his interventions in domestic politics. The panel will also address the failure of international sanctions and protests against the first use of poison gas against civilians. Ethiopian filmmaker Yemane Demissie will show and comment his documentary work on Ethiopian survivors of the 1937 massacre ordered by Graziani. The program is presented in collaboration with the Global Alliance for Justice - The Ethiopian Cause.

### About the Speakers

**Girma Abebe** was born in Bulgs, Ethiopia. In his early life he witnessed the invasion of Ethiopia by Fascist Italy during which Field Marshal Rodolfo Graziani ordered the murder of thousands innocent Ethiopians in their homes. Dr. Abebe recalled the destructions of countless homes and churches, including Tekle-Haimanot, in his own village. Dr. Abebe studied at the University of London and subsequently received a Master's degree from the Baruch School of Business and Public Administration at the City University of New York and a doctorate from New York University.

In the 1950s, he joined the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and served in the Department of the United Nations and at the Ethiopian Embassy in Rome. He later entered the Ethiopian Mission at the United Nations in New York, beginning a 22-year career during which he had the rank of First Secretary, Senior Counselor, and Secretary of the Trusteeship Council in the Department of Political Affairs and Decolonization.

**Yemane I. Demissie** is an award-winning independent filmmaker. His work has earned him numerous awards, including the John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship, the Walter Mosley award for Best Documentary, the Locarno Film Festival Production Grant, the American Film Institute's Filmmaker's Grant, the Paulin Vieyra Merit Award for Outstanding Work in the Cinema, the California Arts Council Artists Fellowship, and the Fonds Sud Writing Grant. His films include two narrative features, *Tumult* and *Dead Weight*, and a documentary, *Twilight Revelations: Episodes in the Life and Times of Emperor Haile Selassie*.

Currently, Mr. Demissie is producing *The Quantum Leapers: Ethiopia 1930-1975*, a six-part documentary series focusing on Ethiopian social, artistic, intellectual, political, and cultural history between 1930 and 1975. He is also developing a narrative feature film set during the 1918 Spanish Influenza pandemic, a worldwide catastrophe in which over fifty million people lost their lives.

Mr. Demissie teaches in the Undergraduate Department of Film & Television at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts.

**Lidia Santarelli** is a historian specializing in Italian colonial history. She received a Ph.D. in history and civilization from the European University Institute, Florence, Italy. She was an Associate Research Scholar at Columbia University (2006-2007), and Assistant Professor in European and Mediterranean studies at New York University. She is currently a fellow at Brown University and at the Italian Academy at Columbia University. For her Charles H. Revson Foundation Fellowship for



Archival Research, Dr. Santarelli conducted research on "Diplomacy of Aiding, Living Space, and the Jews: Fascist Italy and the Holocaust. Greece, 1940-1943."

Dr. Santarelli's research focuses on Italian Fascism and nationalism in the Balkans; systems of occupation; and the history and memory of war crimes in post-1945 Europe. She has published widely on these topics. Dr. Santarelli is the author of *La Marcia su Atene. L'Italia Fascista e l'occupazione della Grecia 1940-43* [The March on Athens: Fascist Italy and the Occupation of Greece 1940-1943] (Bologna: Il Mulino). The book grew from her doctoral thesis that received the Rotary Prize from the European University Institute for best doctoral dissertation in History for 2003-2005. Among her other awards, Dr. Santarelli is the recipient of a 2005-2006 post-doctoral fellowship at Princeton University.

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[2] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-19267099>