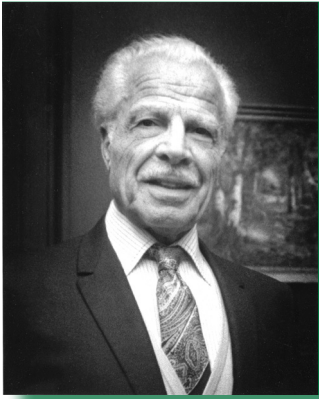


RENZO TURCO

1896-1963



International lawyer, humanist, man of letters and languages, writer, scholar—Lorenzo (“Renzo”) Turco was born on June 3, 1896, in Castelnuovo Don Bosco, Provincia di Asti, Italy, the son of Evasio and Cesarina Turco. During World War I he served in the Italian Army, achieving the rank of captain, motorized artillery, and was awarded a bronze medal for military valor.

In 1920, Renzo Turco graduated from the University of Turin with the degree of *Juris Doctor*, and then spent a post-graduate year in 1921 emphasizing business studies at the Turin Institute of Commercial Sciences.

With graduate and post-graduate degrees and a license to practice law in Italy, Renzo Turco nevertheless travelled to the United States in 1922 seeking a better life. He enrolled in the University of California, Berkeley, School of Law—the Common Law—heretofore unfamiliar and probably even forbidding to an Italian lawyer who studied the great and ancient Roman and Continental juridical systems, which had been mastered in Italian and Latin, while British and American law as taught so far from home would now require a thorough familiarity with American English.

Turco was equal to the challenge. The rigors of recent legal studies in Italy and the habits of organized thought forged in him by the undergraduate disciplines of classical languages, literatures and history were a winning combination, ensuring him academic success. He graduated from the University of California, Boalt Hall, in 1926, receiving an LL.B. degree, and successfully passed the California Bar Examination. He thus began his brilliant legal career that spanned sixty years of California practice, as well as practice in Italy to include many cases for transnational clients and cases involving public and private international law. In 1928 he also became a U.S. citizen.

What better career for someone with an unquenchable thirst for know-ledge, and an ambition to write about ancient history after travelling to the four corners of the world. Cases and clients took him and his beloved Marguerite, whom he married in 1934, around the globe. These journeys involved not only work for clients, but also time to learn, absorb and study so that he would return home with all the necessary information needed to lecture on current world affairs and to add chapters to his tome on ancient history and civilization. He was a frequent guest speaker for groups such as the Commonwealth Club, the World Affairs Council and the First Unitarian Church.

Of course, at Il Cenacolo there would always be a standing forum at his disposal. Renzo Turco’s life and Il Cenacolo’s founding and development were inextricably and happily intertwined. He was, as we’d say, present at the creation, one of the original founding members of Il Cenacolo, formed in 1928, with others who were among the elite of Italy’s diplomatic corps, its academics teaching in the United States, and Italian businessmen. They would meet at Campi’s Restaurant on Bush Street, owned and managed by the parents of past-president, Frederic Campagnoli. Performers from the San Francisco Opera would rendezvous there for a post-performance supper, and they would join these distinguished members, who would soon refer to these memorable and animated gatherings as “Il Cenacolo.”

—Adolph Capurro

ALBERT BENDER
1863-1941



In 1991 the Renzo Turco Scholarship Award was significantly enhanced by the “Bender Benefaction.” For many years, Il Cenacolo retained in its possession a large Buddhist Temple Painting (on silk) from the 17th century, donated to the club by one of its early members, Albert M. Bender. The Board of Directors in 1991 determined to have the work appraised, and if its value was significant, as was likely the case given Bender’s reputation as a collector, to offer it for auction and add the proceeds to the Renzo Turco Scholarship Endowment Fund. The Buddhist Temple Painting was sold at Butterfield’s in November, 1991, bringing a substantial price. Added to the existing funds, the Bender Benefaction will assure the continuation of the Turco Scholarship Awards for many years to come.

Albert Bender was born in Dublin, Ireland in March, 1863, the son of Albert Philip Bender, Rabbi of St. Mary’s Abbey Synagogue in Dublin. He came to San Francisco in 1882 where he began his career as a successful insurance agent and broker. By the mid-1920s, that success allowed him to give generously to the University of California at Berkeley, Stanford, Mills College (of which he was a trustee), Occidental College, University of San Francisco, and the San Francisco Art Institute. His gifts were often in the form of books and works of art. The Asian Museum of San Francisco holds a Bender collection which he had given to the California Legion of Honor. The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art for its first five years from 1935 was almost wholly dependent on works which he donated.

Albert Bender’s devotion to printing made him an important patron of John Nash and of the Grabhorn Brothers and other fine presses. He collected paintings by Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, Orozco, as well as sculptures by Benjamin Bufano and photographs by Imogene Cunningham, Edward and Brett Weston, and Ansel Adams. He is reported to have given Ansel Adams his first serious camera.

Albert Bender served on the San Francisco Library Commission from 1927 until his death in 1941. He received honorary degrees from UC Berkeley and Mills College. St. Mary’s College presented him with the Moraga Crest “in recognition of distinguished intellectual achievement in consonance with the European tradition of culture.” He was honored with awards by the French and Italian governments.

In 1955, Monroe Deutch, Vice Chancellor of UC Berkeley, recalled that Bender was “devoted to truth and beauty and justice,” and that he “wended his way through life with the gaiety of a troubadour and the generosity of a Maecenas.”

With all that, Albert Bender was gregarious, convivial, gave great parties, exulted in being Irish and Jewish, was known to his friends as “Mickey,” and came to celebrate St. Patrick’s Day as his own. He was an outstanding early member of Il Cenacolo and contributed immensely to its cultural and artistic presentations.

If Renzo Turco Scholarship winners have some reverence for books, for the quality of the paper on which they are printed, for the appropriateness of the type in which they are set, if they see them as a culmination of the best of art and craftsmanship, and if they find joy and pleasure in their learning, then Albert “Mickey” Bender will be well pleased.

—Warren White